

Newsbytes

The First Watch

March 11, 2020

No. 960

Since 2001

Newzbytes is a ministry of Calvary Chapel of Appleton

www.ccapleton.org

“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

Since there is nothing on the news except the virus, I will have to tailor the Newzies around that, so we’re going to make the best of it. Behind every major headline is another headline, as you prophecy students know well. There is likely a lot more going on in the world but it’s not trickling down to the average news follower...but I think these articles are interesting anyway. You just can’t make some of this up.

Now, some are saying the virus is a “judgment”; I have two thoughts on that to help clarify events such as this to unbelievers without being sensational which can discredit our witness. Firstly, a more concrete assessment is that it’s birth pangs, and you can take them to the bible passages that talk about that. Speculating on what God is doing is not helpful to anyone. Secondly, if it’s actual judgment, I don’t think we will have to guess. Stand by on all that! Maranatha!

California mega-church cancels its ‘faith healing’ hospital visits, citing coronavirus

By Ryan Sabalow March 10

A prominent Northern California mega-church whose members believe their prayers heal the sick and raise the dead is advising the faithful to wash their hands, urging those who feel sick to stay home, canceling missionary trips and advising its faith healers to stay away from local hospitals.

Bethel Church leaders say they’re in close contact with local health officials, but they’re not yet canceling services for the 6,300 people who attend services each week in Redding, one of the largest regular gatherings in far Northern California.

“Through email communications, signage, and church announcements, we are actively encouraging health practices and precautions to our whole community,” Aaron Tesauro, a church spokesman, said in an email. “We believe that wisdom, modern medicine, and faith are meant to work together, and express the value for each in the pursuit of continued health and healing.”

Shasta County officials announced Saturday a 50-year-old man had tested positive for COVID-19. Two others — including one possibly exposed to the novel coronavirus on a cruise ship — tested negative last

week, health officials said. Tesauro said no members of the church are believed to have caught the virus.

Bethel is one of the north state's largest institutions. Some 2,400 students from around the globe are enrolled at the Redding church's School of Supernatural Ministry. The church has around 9,100 other members in Redding, Tesauro said.

Bethel faithful are well known in Redding for approaching strangers and offering to touch them and to pray away their ailments including at local healthcare centers — a practice that is now at odds with public health officials' campaign to limit the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Health officials advise practice "social distancing measures" such as keeping at least six feet of space between people in public settings.

One Redding woman told The Sacramento Bee on Saturday that on Jan. 31, she was approached by two Bethel students in the emergency room at Mercy Medical Center in Redding. The pair said "they would pray over the people there and put Jesus in their hearts and this would heal us all and we didn't need to stay at the ER and could go home," the woman said in a text message. She asked not to be identified to protect her family's privacy.

She said she filed a complaint with the hospital after one of the students touched her 5-year-old daughter without permission. Mercy didn't return a message seeking comment.

Tesauro said that while students regularly visit hospitals to offer healing services, church leadership is now advising against it.

"Though we believe in a God who actively heals today, students are not being encouraged to visit healthcare settings at this time, and moreover, are taught that even under normal circumstances, they must receive permission from both the facility and the individual before engaging in prayer," Tesauro said in the email.

Kerri Schuette, a spokeswoman for Shasta County's Health and Human Services Agency, responded cautiously when asked what someone should do if approached by a stranger seeking to faith heal them.

"I would say that having a healthy barrier between yourself and other people is a good way to protect yourself from any of the diseases that are circulating right now," she said.

Religious skeptics respond

For skeptics of faith healing, Bethel probably would have been criticized no matter what it did in response to the virus.

As it was, there was no shortage of schadenfreude that a church known for claiming to have healed everything from brain tumors to deafness is now telling people to wash their hands to keep disease at bay.

"It's clear that when it comes to something really serious like coronavirus, their actions speak louder than their words," said Michael Shermer, the editor of Sceptic magazine and a professor at Chapman University in Southern California. "So, God is omniscient and omnipotent and can cure diseases if he wants, but just in case: wash your hands!"

Bill Johnson, the church's founder, says on his website that not everyone who wants to be healed will be.

"Many visit Redding weekly, hoping that God will touch them. I am happy to report that many leave well and whole," Johnson wrote. "But many others leave in the same condition in which they came. I refuse to

blame God for this, as though He has a purpose in their disease. While Jesus did not heal everyone alive in His time, He did heal everyone who came to Him. His is the only standard worth following.”

Tesauro, the church spokesman, said the Bethel faithful believe in the healing power of prayer, but God also wants believers to practice common sense. “Healing happens, but it’s foolish to take risks,” he said in an interview.

Bethel is among a group of “charismatic” Pentecostal Christian churches whose beliefs are controversial among evangelicals. During religious functions at Bethel, church members reportedly speak in tongues and members claim gold dust and angel feathers appear out of the air.

Late last year, hundreds of church members gathered in an attempt to resurrect a 2-year-old named Olive Heiligenthal, hours after the toddler had stopped breathing and died on Dec. 14. Church members gathered to sing, “Come alive/ Come alive/ Come alive, dry bones/ Awake, arise/ Inhale the light.” Thousands of people posted on Instagram with the hashtag #WakeUpOlive.

In October 2008, a Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry student moved to Washington and started a “dead-raising team” that worked with members of the local fire department to pray over bodies found on emergency calls, according to the Redding Record Searchlight.

Johnson’s church produces a popular preaching subscription streaming service called Bethel.TV, and it sells products including apparel and books.

Bethel is perhaps best known internationally for its Christian music. Justin Bieber is a fan. The Bethel track “No Longer Slaves” was one the top three songs on his iPod playlist, according to a 2017 BuzzFeed News article. The song’s YouTube video has been played 115 million times.

Bethel’s belief in the power of resurrection at one point factored into a local attempted murder investigation.

In 2010, a Redding man claimed in a lawsuit that he became paralyzed after he was either pushed or allowed to fall off a cliff above the Sacramento River by two members of the School of Supernatural Ministry after a night of drinking together, the Record Searchlight reported.

Rather than call authorities, the suit alleged the two students, who believed he had died, attempted to reach him so they could pray him back to life. After spending hours unsuccessfully trying to ford the river and push through blackberry bushes, they eventually notified authorities, who found the unconscious man and took him to a local hospital.

For a time, Redding police investigated the incident as a possible attempted murder, but no charges were filed.

Bethel Church has deeply ingrained itself into Redding’s political scene.

In 2011, the city was nearly forced to close its dilapidated Civic Center from a lack of funds. Bethel founded a nonprofit that now manages the facility. The building is still owned by the city, and the church says the nonprofit is an independent entity from the church.

The Civic Center receives \$750,000 a year from the church, which uses it for its School of Supernatural Ministry. The building also is featured prominently on the church’s website.

World Health Organization Promotes Cashless Society Over Virus Fears

By Tyler Durden/Activist Post March 09, 2020

Following reports that Beijing had "quarantined" dirty cash, the WHO warned on Monday that the virus could survive on banknotes, potentially spreading Covid-19 within communities, and across the world. To reduce the risk of being infected by money, the WHO advised citizens in countries struggling with outbreaks to favor digital payments when possible, the Daily Telegraph reported.

That the WHO is telling the public to avoid cash is hardly a surprise: research has found that coronaviruses have been found to live on surfaces for as long as 9 days.

During the statement, a WHO spokesman referenced a Bank of England study claiming that banknotes "can carry bacteria or viruses" and urged people to wash their hands. Other studies have shown that 90% of US \$1 bills had bacteria present, and one Swiss study found that viruses had survive on the faces of Swiss francs for days.

The WHO's warnings follow the People's Bank of China last month started disinfecting currency deposited at Chinese banks using ultraviolet light, before quarantining the bills for a week before releasing them back into circulation.

Brits, and their fellow Europeans, should be increasingly careful as the virus spreads across Europe, the WHO warned, via the Telegraph:

"We know that money changes hands frequently and can pick up all sorts of bacteria and viruses," a spokesman told the Telegraph.

"We would advise people to wash their hands after handling banknotes, and avoid touching their face. When possible, it would also be advisable to use contactless payments to reduce the risk of transmission."

Of course, that one of the world's major NGOs is seizing the opportunity to proclaim the virtues of 'paperless' money is hardly a surprise: the globalist push toward a 'cashless society' has been underway for years now, having had its biggest successes in Scandinavia. Sweden has gone virtually "cashless", and in such a short time, they've already confronted the many drawbacks of relying exclusively on digital money.

The establishment then suggests that paper money be removed from the system because it is a viral spreader. China is already pushing this solution now.

Magically, we find ourselves in a cashless society in a matter of a year or two; which is what the globalists have been demanding for years. Everything goes digital, and thus even local economies become completely centralized as private trade dies.

A viral outbreak is a significant danger to us all, but an even greater threat is the supposed cure. Trading our economic and social freedom in the name of stopping the coronavirus? No matter how deadly the bug, it's just not worth it.

Eight earthquakes rattle Oklahoma in 24 hours, geologists say

By Simone Jasper March 06, 2020

Eight earthquakes hit Oklahoma in less than 24 hours, becoming the latest tremors to rattle the state this month, geologists say.

The quakes hit northern and central parts of the state from 8:54 a.m. Thursday to 7:43 a.m. Friday, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

The most powerful was a 3.4-magnitude earthquake, which had a 6-mile depth and hit about 11 miles northwest of Lindsay, records show. The area is roughly 50 miles south of Oklahoma City.

Some people near the tremor reported little damage and “moderate” shaking from the earthquake.

But places as far away as Pryor, about 200 miles to the northeast, felt “weak” impacts and had no damage, according to the USGS website.

The earthquake was one of three to hit the central part of the state in the past day, officials say. The others were 0.8- and 1.8-magnitude quakes that hit close to the nearby city of Blanchard, according to geologists. Five others, ranging from 0.6 to 2.6 magnitude, hit north of Oklahoma city, a map shows. Two each shook the ground near the cities of Cherokee and Fairview, while another was reported near Pawnee.

The quakes were the latest of more than 200 to hit Oklahoma since Feb. 5, according to a statewide map. Several of the tremors were clustered near the cities of Pawnee, Lindsay and other parts of the state, officials say.

A swarm, a series of small quakes at the same location, is often linked to geothermal activity, according to the USGS.

“Swarms are usually short-lived, but they can continue for days, weeks, or sometimes even months,” geologists say.

Each year, there are about 30,000 earthquakes of magnitude ranging from 2.5 to 5.4, according to the Michigan Tech website. They are “often felt” but cause just “minor damage,” officials say. People usually don’t feel tremors less than 2.5 magnitude, the website says.

Trump To Provide Israel Technology It Needs To Take Out Iran

By David Sidman/BIN March 09, 2020

If Israel indeed decides to take out Iran, the Trump administration has just made it much easier.

That's because the U.S. State Department approved an Israeli request to buy eight KC-46A Pegasus aerial tankers reports the Middle East Forum. This includes support equipment, spare parts, and training. The entire deal is valued at \$2.4 billion. The first aircraft shipment is set to arrive in 2023.

The deal "supports the foreign policy and national security of the United States by allowing Israel to provide a redundant capability to U.S. assets within the region, potentially freeing U.S. assets for use elsewhere during times of war," the State Department's Defense Security Cooperation Agency said in a statement. "Aerial refueling and strategic airlift are consistently cited as significant shortfalls for our allies. In addition, the sale improves Israel's national security posture as a key U.S. ally."

So long as the sale is approved by the U.S. Congress -- which is likely -- is notable from several perspectives. This will be the first time Washington sold tanker aircraft to Israel. To date, Israel's Air Force has 11 tankers. This includes seven American-manufactured Boeing 707 airliners and four Lockheed Martin C-130H transports. However, it was the Israelis themselves who upgraded these planes into tankers.

The problem is that the majority of Israel's tankers are outdated - 60 years old to be precise. Israel is so desperate to maintain aerial refueling capability - which enables its aircraft to fly long-distance across the Middle East - that in 2017, it bought an old Brazilian Air Force 707 just for its spare parts.

The KC-46A Pegasus has a range of over 6,000 miles. A direct flight path between Jerusalem and Tehran is less than a thousand miles each way.

It is based on Boeing's 767 airliners, the twin-engine KC-46A can hold 106 tons of fuel to fill up empty jet fighters.

Oil drop, coronavirus are "perfect storm" for MidEast, N. Africa -World Bank

Davide Barbuscia

DUBAI, March 10 (Reuters) - A record drop in oil prices, added to the coronavirus outbreak, has left the Middle East and North Africa more exposed than other regions to fallout from a possible global recession, the World Bank said.

Oil prices suffered their biggest one-day fall in nearly 30 years on Monday, after the unexpected collapse of a production agreement between Saudi Arabia, Russia and other major crude producers triggered a price war.

Meanwhile cases of the new coronavirus, COVID-19, are rising across the two regions. Iran is one of the global epicentres of the outbreak, with more than 8,000 cases and almost 300 fatalities, the health ministry said on Tuesday.

"As the world struggles with the fear of recession, the Middle East and North Africa could be the hardest hit by what is arguably a perfect storm: the coronavirus spreads to the region and oil prices collapse," the World Bank said in a briefing paper by Rabah Arezki, its chief economist for MENA, and a second economist, Rachel Fang.

All Gulf Arab states, which have economies heavily reliant on oil revenues, have recorded cases of COVID-19.

"If the decline in oil prices persists, it will erode the fragile macroeconomic and social stability of countries, especially in the Middle East and North Africa, that have been hit by the novel coronavirus," the brief said. Oil prices jumped 10% on Tuesday, partly recovering from Monday's low, but they remain down over 40% since the beginning of the year as the epidemic dampens economic activity worldwide.

Income for Gulf oil-exporting states likely decline this year, while oil-importing countries in the Middle East will experience lower foreign direct investments, remittances and grants from exporters, said the World Bank.

It said Gulf countries that have accumulated ample financial wealth, should use it.

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“Other oil-exporting countries, such as Algeria and Iran, are exhausting their buffers and will have to rely on flexible exchange rates to manage the current situation and conduct much-needed reforms in private-sector development and broader economic transformation.”

Iran’s rial currency has plunged. On Tuesday, the dollar was being offered at as much as 155,500 rials compared with its official rate of 42,000 rials, according to foreign exchange website Bonbast.com. (editing by John Stonestreet)