

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

Of course, the conspiracy theorists are out in droves, figuratively speaking, so I won't be posting anything that suggests we're all going to take the mark by next Thursday. But this article below from Forbes is very intriguing because I have been watching the rise of digital currency for a few years when few gave it any chance at all. When they speak of “digital ledger entries” below, they mean the “blockchain”, which DOES have the ability to track all transactions in the world in real time. I did a booklet on it where I explain all the basics. If you are interested in getting that, let me know.

New Coronavirus Stimulus Bill In Congress Creates U.S. Digital Dollar

Jason Brett I write about blockchain regulation and policy forbes.com

As the markets continue to drop and the U.S. looks to Congress for agreement on a massive stimulus package to save the economy from impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, the newest offer by House Democrats includes a very forward-looking kind of stimulus: the creation of a ‘digital dollar’ and the establishment of ‘digital dollar wallets.’ In what will send shock waves through the cryptocurrency and blockchain industry, particularly for those following central bank digital currencies around the world, this signals the U.S. is serious in establishing infrastructure for a central bank digital currency.

Both Speaker Pelosi’s ‘Take Responsibility for Workers and Families Act’ and the ‘Financial Protections and Assistance for America’s Consumers, States, Businesses, and Vulnerable Populations Act (H.R. 6321),’ introduced by Chairwoman Maxine Waters of Financial Services Committee, introduced these concepts today as a way of delivering the economic stimulus payments to U.S. citizens.

The bill establishes a digital dollar, which it defines as ‘a balance expressed as a dollar value consisting of digital ledger entries that are recorded as liabilities in the accounts of any Federal Reserve Bank or ... an electronic unit of value, redeemable by an eligible financial institution (as determined by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System).’ Additionally, a digital dollar wallet is identified as ‘a digital wallet or account, maintained by a Federal reserve bank on behalf of any person, that represents holdings in an electronic device or service that is used to store digital dollars that may be tied to a digital or physical identity.’

A mandate also requires all ‘member banks’ establish a ‘pass-through digital dollar wallet’ to all customers

eligible for the stimulus. Member banks include those banks that are 'members' of the Federal Reserve and regulated by the Fed. Additionally, 'Non-Member' state banks - those that not members of the Federal Reserve and regulated by the FDIC - could opt-in to offer pass-through digital dollar wallets as well.

The Federal Reserve banks themselves would also make available a digital dollar wallet to any U.S. person eligible for the payments as well. Additionally, the U.S. Postal Service would aim to help unbanked individuals and/or those without proper ID to establish their identity be provided a digital dollar account, and would set up ATMs for customers to access their funds.

Daniel Gorfine, founder of fintech advisory firm Gattaca Horizons and former chief innovation officer at CFTC, as well as a founding director of the Digital Dollar Project, stated to Forbes, 'It is worth exploring, testing, and piloting a true USD CBDC and broader digital infrastructure in order to improve our future capabilities and resiliency, but it is also important that this effort not delay the government from deploying critical emergency funds using existing channels during this crisis. While the crisis underscores the importance of upgrading our financial infrastructure, broadly implementing a CBDC will require time and thoughtful coordination between the government and private sector stakeholders.'

Carmelle Cadet, Founder and CEO of EMTECH, a modern central bank technology and services company, is a technology provider in the world's first live retail CBDC with the Central Bank of Bahamas called the Sand Dollar. She has recently started a new initiative in the U.S. called 'Project New Dawn' to ensure the unbanked and underbanked receive economic stimulus payments. Pointing to a FDIC report in 2017 that identified 63 million people that are unbanked and underbanked in the U.S., she notes, 'If checks are the form of payment, the stimulus is not going to reach many of them. That would be approximately \$100B underutilized of stimulus for lower income householders.'

Everything Will Be Shaken

By Howard Green March 23, 2020 raptureready.com

In the last fifty years, the world has seen its share of economic, social, and geopolitical unrest. While events like the Vietnam War, the assassination of JFK, and Black Monday had the collective attention of only segments of society, there are primarily two events that have galvanized the attention of the entire planet for an extended duration. One is September 11th, 2001, and the other is the current global onslaught of the Coronavirus (Covid 19). Both of these events and their effects have literally captured the attention of the entire planet. Much of what is occurring on the world stage is a rapid convergence of events that will ultimately culminate in the second coming of Christ. We can't afford to be lukewarm or apathetic when it comes to eternal matters because everything that can be shaken will be shaken (Hebrews 12:25-28).

The writer of Hebrews is reiterating Haggai 2:6 and warns that a stronger shaking is coming in the future. Many people that God created continue to spurn his loving gift of salvation through Jesus. Even now, the unrepentant masses are in denial about how global events are pointing toward the soon return of Jesus. As a Bible teacher, I often use end-time Bible prophecy as a primer to witness to people and to turn conversations toward important matters of salvation and eternity. It is no different given the current Covid 19 crisis, as people want to know what, if anything, this situation has to do with the biblical end-time scenario.

Regarding the Coronavirus, these are my thoughts and conjecture, and I'm in no way saying, "Thus saith the Lord" except for what is clearly written in his word. In Luke 21:11, Jesus gives us a series of events that will certainly take place before his return, and one of the signs mentioned is pestilence. Plagues and pestilence have assailed humanity for centuries including the recent SARS and MERS outbreaks. Unlike

those recent outbreaks, Covid-19 (2019 Novel Coronavirus) has the collective attention of the entire planet. There is a multiplicity of reasons for this, specifically, its impact on the global economy. The Stock Market and global markets are reeling in recent weeks, and words like recession and depression are now common on Wall Street.

What do these recent events have to do with Bible prophecy and the return of Jesus? Everything, because we are just beginning to see conditions that could easily set in place the events Jesus mentioned in Matthew 24:4, Luke 21:7-11, and Revelation 6:5-8. One thing we should be diametrically opposed to is unbiblical nonsense including the sort of hype that defined Y2K, Bible Codes, and supposedly knowing the day of Christ's return. But we also want to avoid the equally unbiblical knee-jerk response of completely ignoring end-time Bible prophecy.

A lot of people and, unfortunately, some 'Bible teachers' are speculating this is the start of the Tribulation, which it is not. First, in the Bible, the word tribulation means trial or trouble (thlipsis) but the Great Tribulation is mentioned. It is the latter half of the seven-year period Daniel mentions that will end history as we know it. This seven-year period begins with a peace accord with Israel and Antichrist, not with any preacher's special revelation.

Here's the thing: Coronavirus may come and go. I don't know if it is one of the end-time pestilences Jesus warned would come, but I have no reason to believe it isn't one. We may very well be approaching the birth pains and beginning of sorrows Jesus warned about as these events are increasing in frequency and severity like never before.

One thing is certain; for years, the world, and especially those of us in the West have had a sense of invincibility, self-reliance, and insulation from events that wreak havoc in other parts of the globe. That rose-colored optimism was obliterated in recent months. We've witnessed global markets in a nose-dive, governments struggling to cope, events canceled, schools and churches closed, and food scarcity unheard of in the West in recent history. Governments are pumping billions into faltering economies with little effect.

A time is coming and may soon be here when these pestilences and other conditions Jesus warned us about will render the world economy, governments, and infrastructure unrecognizable. A global leader will soon emerge, and he will be able to bring about a one-world government, economy, and religion in the wake of catastrophic geopolitical events. When I read Matthew 24, Luke 21, and Revelation 6, I don't feel like I'm reading about the distant future, but rather current news headlines.

As a believer, I'm deeply troubled and saddened about the human toll and the effects of Coronavirus. No one should be cheering this on as a catalyst for end-time hype; but amid all of the deprivation and suffering, our hope should be in Christ. Saints of old would greet one another with the word Maranatha. It's an Aramaic word which means, "Come, O Lord," or "The Lord is coming." True disciples are looking for end-time Bible prophecy to be fulfilled because it culminates in Jesus' return as the Prince of Peace, and he will put an end to human suffering, sin, and death.

So, what do Christians do as we see events leading up to Christ's return?

Jesus told us what to do in his word. We are to be salt and light in this dark world. In just the past few weeks, we've seen the best and worst in humanity. Although there have been pockets of compassion, the sheer lack of human kindness is appalling. 2 Timothy 3:1 comes to mind as we are witnessing what Paul warned would come. As believers, I want to exhort you toward personal holiness, prayer, and time in the word. I also want to encourage you to witness to others. People are desperately looking for peace at a time when peace is hard to find. We have the gospel of peace. We can keep a safe distance while praying with people, distributing Bibles, and telling others about coming judgment, repentance, and what it means to be wretched before a holy God. Explain to them what it means to be born-again and to come to saving

faith in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8).

This is no time for apathy, business as usual, or ignorance and arrogance toward Bible prophecy because everything that can be shaken, will be shaken. It's a dereliction of duty for anyone in Christian leadership to neglect the teaching of end-time Bible prophecy. If you fail to protect and warn your flock, you are a hireling, not a shepherd.

Dear Christian, the Coronavirus didn't catch God by surprise. He isn't in heaven pacing the floor wondering what to do. He is in control, and his concern is saving sinners. You can be a bold witness for Jesus at a time like this. Although we can't meet for church, we are still the church, the Body of Christ. I want you to understand that it's a loving thing to warn people. I'm giving you a loving warning and exhortation based on biblical authority that things won't always continue as they have been (2 Peter 3:4). In a day when many professing Christians are sinking into apostasy, I want to encourage you to keep oil in your lamp and contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. This is certainly the time to love as Jesus loves, as people are in desperate need of salvation. Go into all the world and preach the gospel. Maranatha! (Revelation 21:4)

A personal note of encouragement:

Many people are worried and anxious about the coronavirus and all the uncertainty that it brings. Jesus said he would give us his peace. Dear Christian friend, I want to invite you to contact us, and we will certainly stand in prayer with you. *We have believers from all over the world visiting our site, so please comment below this same article on our site at www.concerningthetimes.com; that way other Christians can encourage and pray for you as well. If you want to know about Jesus and what he says about eternal life, please contact us.

All for Him,

Howard Concerning The Times Ministries

Iran afflicted by large swarms of desert locusts, amid coronavirus woes

'The density of locusts in the swarms is so high that a 10 to 15-centimeter layer of dead locusts forms on the ground after spraying pesticides.'

By TZVI JOFFRE MARCH 5, 2020 jpost.co.il

The large swarms of desert locusts that have invaded much of east Africa and the Arabian peninsula have now entered southern Iran, leading government officials to state that they can only handle the swarms with the use of pesticides, according to Radio Farda. The swarms come as the Islamic Republic also battles with a severe coronavirus outbreak in which over 90 people have died.

The swarms have entered the provinces of Hormozgan, Sistan and Baluchestan, Bushehr, Fars and Khuzestan, according to Reza Mir, Spokesman of the Plant Protection Organization.

Biological methods to handle the swarms are ineffective due to the size of the swarms and time constraints involved. "Allowing the pests to [recreate] is much more damaging than the side-effects of using chemical pesticides," explained Mir.

Over one million hectares of agricultural lands may be sprayed this year. The number of locusts is predicted to be seven-fold compared with the swarms last year, according to Keykhosrow Changanvai,

Head of the Agricultural Jihad Organization of the south-western province of Khuzestan.

"Last year the swarms were between one to one and a half kilometer long but this year they measure between seven to 10 kilometers," said Changelvai, according to Radio Farda.

Changelvai warned that "the danger of these locusts is not less than coronavirus." The new swarms are immature and more damaging than last years swarms as they will eat everything in their path.

Swarms of desert locusts are plaguing several countries worldwide, including China, Jordan, Pakistan, Kenya and Sudan.

East Africa is being hit particularly hard by the swarms, with the United Nations warning of an unprecedented threat to food security in the region, according to Bloomberg News. The outbreak is being caused by an increased number of cyclones and could become worse if weather trends continue. The swarms have reached Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Sudan, Uganda, South Sudan and Tanzania, among other countries.

UN Sec.-Gen. Antonio Guterres warned that "there is a link between climate change and the unprecedented locust crisis plaguing Ethiopia and East Africa. Warmer seas mean more cyclones generating the perfect breeding ground for locusts. Today the swarms are as big as major cities and it is getting worse by the day," according to Bloomberg News.

The infestation originated on the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen, with Saudi Arabia being impacted by the swarms as well. In June, Yemen saw an outbreak of desert locusts for the first time in three years. Yemenis took advantage of the infestation as an alternative food source.

In Jordan, the Ministry of Agriculture announced an "utmost state of emergency" as swarms descended on Saudi Arabia via Yemen. Minister of Agriculture, Ibrahim Shahadeh said that an emergency room had been set up with the cooperation of the Royal Jordanian Air Force, the Royal Badia Forces and the Jordan Customs Department, the Civil Defense Directorate (CDD), and Aqaba Region Authority to coordinate their response, Roya News reported. The Ministry is also closely monitoring regular reports issued by the Locust Forecast Center, situated within the Food and Agriculture Organization.

Syria, which also borders Israel, is reportedly preparing for an outbreak as well.

Israel is also preparing for the possibility of the first desert locust infestation in seven years, according to Channel 12 news. The infestation in 2013 caused hundreds of thousands of shekels in damage to Israel's agriculture industry. In a recent situation evaluation, Agriculture Minister Tzachi Hanegbi said that there is currently only a low chance that the locusts will come to Israel, but stressed that the forecast could change and preparations should be made in advance.

In Asia, Pakistan has declared a national emergency to combat the locust infestation. The swarms there have reached northwest India and are approaching China as well.

A one sq. km. swarm of locusts can eat the same amount of food in one day as 35,000 people, according to the FAO. UN Food & Agriculture Organization locust forecasting expert Keith Cressman explained that a locust swarm that enters a field in the morning can eat the entire field by midday.

Cressman warned that, "we have a very short window of time to act." FAO Dir.-Gen. QU Dongyu urged greater and faster action in order to prevent a humanitarian crisis in East Africa.

One swarm in Kenya was three times the size of New York City, according to CNN. The number of locusts could grow 400 times by June if not treated.

The Virus: Death of Globalization or a Rebirth?

by Amir Taheri Gatestone Institute March 22, 2020

Is this the end of globalization? That is the question we were supposed to debate at a colloquium in Paris this week before we were all ordered by the government to "confine" ourselves to our dwellings at least for the next 15 days. The concept of globalization attained wide circulation when cheap goods made by cheap labor in China started to flood world markets from Tokyo to Timbuktu. Thus, if globalization is to end, it is only fair that it should also come to a close with a Chinese fanfare in the form of the coronavirus.

Before globalization whatever happened in China reached the rest of the world as a distant echo. The Opium Wars, the black series of famines, the atrocities committed by various foreign occupiers, the civil war, the Korean War, the annexation of Tibet and East Turkestan, the deaths of millions of people under Mao Zedong were all perceived as exotic events in a remote fantasyland that affected the rest of the world only incidentally.

Both fascinating and frightening, China was the stuff of many dreams about Oriental wisdom and many phobias expressed in Kaiser Wilhelm's "Yellow Peril" warning.

Less than three decades after the start of globalization, China has been included into our day-to-day world and banalized as just another as a major economic power in search for access to resources and a growing share of markets.

At the start of globalization, the Chinese economy represented three percent of the global gross domestic product. Today, China's share has risen to around 20 percent. Establishing itself as the world's major manufacturing center, China has contributed to almost two decades of low inflation and economic growth that has lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty in all continents. At the same time China has started to develop an appetite for playing big power.

So far, the model China has chosen is closer to that of Holland during its empire-building period, that is to say focusing on business and trade and steering clear of involvement in politics, local or international, in contrast with British and French colonial strategies that put political domination top of the agenda.

There are, however, signs that China may be developing a new strategy in which tighter political control at home is combined with a higher big power profile abroad. Is China going the way that the European colonial powers went after the Berlin Conference?

The best answer is that even if China did adopt such a strategy it would not be able to implement it. The European colonial powers of the Berlin Conference combined their quest for security abroad with democratization at home. In China today, we witness a different configuration. Regarding almost all its neighbors, with the possible exception of Pakistan, as unreliable if not hostile, China is, in fact, fomenting insecurity through its aggressive power projection. This aggressive option is highlighted with ambitious plans for developing a 19th century style blue-water naval power capable of challenging the United States in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean.

China's feeling of insecurity abroad is combined with President Xi Jinping's increasingly authoritarian style at home. Chinese friends who had welcomed Xi's rise to power as a promise of liberalization now regret what they call "our childish illusions". To be sure, Xi's China is certainly not as repressive as that of

Chairman Mao in its heyday. Apart from the Uighurs and the Tibetans, who are subjected to tighter control, most Chinese still enjoy freedoms that they could not dream of before Deng Xiaoping put the country on a different course. Even in Hong Kong which is bubbling with protests, Beijing has not yet taken its gloves off. Nevertheless, the optimism that we noted in our latest trip to the People's Republic in 2014 now seems a distant dream.

Is the cursed coronavirus the latest result of China's turn towards greater secrecy and tighter control? There is no doubt that the big boys in Beijing knew of the outbreak of the epidemic weeks before they officially admitted it. It is also possible that face-saving considerations and attempts at hiding things contributed to delays in taking decisions needed to prevent the epidemic from becoming a global pandemic.

As always, fear and insecurity foment petty nationalisms that regard globalization as arch-enemy. Last Sunday's local elections in France, the first test of the public mood in a major democracy after the coronavirus, gave petty nationalist candidates a major boost against rivals cast as defenders of globalization. The closing of frontiers all over the world is inspired more by a desire to reassure the people that "virus-bearing foreigners" are kept out than by any proven scientific model for coping with a pandemic.

However, it is increasingly clear that a global pandemic cannot be dealt with by local efforts alone. If anything, a greater pooling of resources is needed to rescue the more defenseless societies from total catastrophe. Global cooperation is also needed to speed up the development of a vaccine, making it available to the rich and the poor alike.

And that is not to mention the need for global cooperation to cope with the economic consequences of what may turn out to be the gravest crisis since the 1920s that pushed the world to the edge of an abyss.

Far from calling for a burial of globalization as a concept, we may have to work for its rebirth in a broader concept that goes beyond business, trade and economic issues to include moral, cultural and political domains as well. To be sure, this does not mean that we should all conform to a single model of existence, something that human nature, if such a thing exists, would shun under most circumstances. But a rule-based global system could also mean a measure of transparency, popular participation in decision-making, free flow of information and a systemic sharing of scientific and technological resources to deal with global emergencies.

The warlike situation that the coronavirus has imposed on almost all of us, rich and poor, must remind us that we live in a single global reality in which the flapping of a butterfly's wings in the Amazons could affect the whole world.