

Newsbytes

The First Watch

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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

But the Calm Before the Storm

By Joe Southerland April 19, 2020

“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see” (Revelation 6:1).

“And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices” (Revelation 10:3).

“And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps” (Revelation 14:2).

“And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great” (Revelation 16:18).

A Time Like No Other

Throughout the world, mankind’s overly busy, hectic lives have come to a screeching halt. In a time like no other in history, nearly half of the world’s population of now over seven billion is in a forced lock-down imposed by their governments. Vast swaths of humanity are now in a mandatory, isolated pause relegating us to small groups and social distancing. They are also being told the best thing they can do is stay isolated. It is a time like no other, when we are almost all individually forced to stop and reflect. People are reassessing their lives amidst the backdrop of an ever-lurking invisible killer which is bringing forth random death and chaos about us.

COVID-19 is a global event which is occurring to nearly all mankind simultaneously, and its lingering impact is yet to be determined. This pandemic is unlike any other before. Due to the interconnected global community sharing entertainment, commerce, and transportation, the virus has rapidly spread more quickly than any previous pestilence in history.

Pestilence Allowed to Unfold

If you believe that GOD is sovereign LORD over His creation and is actively involved in shaping the course of history, it is evident that GOD is allowing COVID-19 to occur for His greater purposes. Furthermore, He has loosened his mighty, controlling hand but a fraction and allowed a single, deadly, natural force bounded upon earth to run its course.

We are now experiencing the largest rippling birth pain in generations. Jesus warned us this would come before His return. "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matthew 24:3-8).

Is the Bubble about to Burst?

Within God's timeline we reside in the Church Age or Age of Grace, which is a period where God has endured longsuffering as He has patiently prepared His Bride, the Church. For eternal salvation He only requires of mankind that we make a free-will decision of faith in His Son, who died for our sins and rose from death to life after three days. He wants none to perish but all to obtain salvation (2nd Peter 3:9).*

Beyond the ultimate gift of His Son, God further graced mankind with two other mighty gifts: The Holy Spirit to dwell in us and guide us in all things, and the mind of God, His Word. We are in an age truly blessed because we need but to believe in order to become Children of God.

However, according to the scriptures, this magnificent Age of Grace shall end. That is not an IF, but a WHEN. Beyond any doubt, COVID-19 is awakening many in mankind from their deadly spiritual slumber. This is in preparation for what shall come upon the face of the earth before He Returns in Triumph.

Accordingly, COVID-19 is but the calm before the storm.

As a Believer and teacher of God's Word, I can neither dismiss nor ignore what Jesus has told us shall come to pass before He will return. According to the scriptures, far more calamitous and miraculous events shall unfold, for the heavens shall peel back and the full glory, power and majesty of the Son of God, the Lamb of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ shall arise from His heavenly throne. Then His mighty thunders shall roll forth as the time of the great unleashing of the supernatural begins upon mankind. It will be a time like never before in all God's creation.

During the Church Age, the Lord God has been consciously restraining the fullness of His almighty supernatural power and miraculous works. In terms of the supernatural, the Age of Grace can be categorized by "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." However, God soon shall unveil His supernatural, almighty powers, which have been sealed in a Seven-Sealed Scroll from creation, for a time of great unleashed judgments upon mankind!

Church Harvest Nearly Complete

As the last soul is sealed into the Church (Romans 11:25), the Lord God will reintroduce the world to His supernatural omnipotence by removing all born-again Believers at the Rapture. Thus, the Lord God will begin reclaiming and cleansing the world of Satan's lies, shaking mankind's perception of their universe; a universe in which man falsely claims he is the measure of all.

In the split second after the Rapture occurs, all mankind shall fall into complete spiritual darkness for the first time in history (I shudder at the thought). The Lamb will leave mankind utterly naked in their corruptions and abominations; there will be absolutely none left who do good. All those who are left are those who say in their hearts, "There is no God."

This unparalleled supernatural event will throw the world's people into chaos as they experience a phenomenon that shatters their man-made perception of reality. This unleashing of the supernatural begins as God lifts His mighty, restraining hand and Satan's dark forces are unleashed upon the earth.

The Lamb of God Unleashes

Surrounded by His Church, the Lamb who was slain shall step forth as the only one found Worthy to open the Lord God's great Seven-Sealed Scroll. As he opens the first seal, thus begins the Seven-Year Tribulation period, Daniel's Seventieth Week. In ripples like the birth pains which preceded this time, the Lamb shall unleash a series of supernatural seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments upon those who dwell on the earth. The judgments are sequential and shall come with power and flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder, all proclaiming to the earth that God alone is to be feared, glorified and acknowledged as their Creator.**

Unleashing the Seal Judgments

In Revelation chapter six, God begins by unleashing five of the seven seals judgments. In the first four, God loosens the restraints on Satan. His son, the False Christ/the Antichrist/the Beast shall ride forth bringing the promise of peace by war. On his heels shall follow starvation, plague and death over one fourth of the earth. At first man will say: it is just another war, it is just another famine, it is just another plague. However, it shall bring the bloodiest death toll the world has ever seen.

As the grim bloodbath's toll mounts, many people will start to question if it is something more. Is the new world leader's promised utopia to come true? Or is the hand of God in this?

In the sixth seal, the Lord God answers those who will listen, as he shakes the earth in his mighty hand. Mankind will then experience an earthquake like no other, accompanied by the sun shrouded in thick darkness, the moon turned blood red, and meteor showers filling the skies and falling to earth. At that point mankind will say, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" But many will refuse to repent and glorify him.

Unleashing the Trumpet Judgments

In Revelation chapters eight and nine, prior to God allowing six of the seven trumpet angels to announce their judgment, there is reverent silence in Heaven. God and all heavens sorrow over the righteous wrath about to be unleashed against rebellious man. On earth there will also be a gap of time following the great earthquake as mankind recovers. People will ask, "Was it a divine act of God or was it Mother Nature responding to man's continued misuse?"

God will answer by unleashing four successive unparalleled judgment blows against earth and those remaining in it. Hail and fire mixed with blood will fall upon the earth. A blazing huge mountain will plummet from the sky. A great star blazing like a torch will then be thrown into the sea. Finally, the skies shall be darkened over the earth. The remaining people on earth will reel, regroup, and try to recover as one third of all the life-sustaining plants, animals and water are destroyed.

On whom shall they turn for their life-giving water and daily bread? God or government? The Antichrist will answer he is one and the same. Many will follow Satan's son.

God's answer comes by opening the shaft of the Abyss, where Satan's long-imprisoned minions are unleashed upon the earth for five months. They will then mentally and physically torment those who will choose to worship the Beast and take his Mark, yet will not torture those who do not bow to the Beast.***

With these five supernatural judgments complete and man still in rebellion, God's angel will blast the sixth trumpet, and the largest army man has ever seen executes His judgment upon man. A third of mankind's eternal fates will be sealed in death by this evil army. The second death will await those who refused to repent and glorify God.

Unleashing of the Two Witnesses

In Revelation chapter eleven, God sends two great messengers of His Word, empowered with supernatural abilities for nearly three and half years. Fire will come from their mouths and devour their enemies. They will be empowered to cease the rain, turn the waters into blood, and unleash upon the earth every kind of plague as often as they want.

Some shall call these witnesses tools of evil. Others shall correctly attest that they are part of God's attempt to awaken remaining mankind on earth, to topple his arrogance and stubbornness.

Unleashing the Bowl Judgments

In Revelation chapter sixteen, God will complete the period of wrath by unleashing five bowls of judgment upon the remaining God-haters and inhabitants the earth. Angels will pour bowls causing supernatural judgments: ugly and painful sores break out upon those with the mark of the Beast and Beast worshipers. The seas, rivers and springs will turn to blood; the sun will painfully burn and scorch people. The world will plunge into utter darkness. Despite men gnawing their tongues in agony, they will curse God because of their pains and refuse to repent, fear and glorify God and acknowledge Him as their Creator.**

The Lamb of God, The Lion of Judah

The sixth angel will pour out his bowl, which prompts Satan's minions and hordes to gather in a place called Armageddon. Now is the time for one of the most magnificent passages of Scripture in the Bible:

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:11-16).

It Is Done!

And the seventh angel will pour out his bowl into the air; and there will come a great voice out of God's Heavenly throne, saying, “It is done!”

The intense time of great unleashing of God's long-awaited supernatural power onto a God-denying world will be completed. They demanded proof. They demanded a sign. The Lord God gave them sign, after sign, after sign; yet countless multitudes did not repent, and therefore shall spend their eternity in the lake of fire.

But also from this time, a great multitude, whom no man can number, out of every nation and tribe and people and tongue, shall stand before the throne and the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands; and they will cry out with a loud voice, saying “Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!”

Thanks be to you our Lord God Almighty! The One who is, who was and who is to come! Come for us, our Lord Jesus, come. Come and reign over us in victory, and in power, and in glory! We, your Bride, await you!

Giant, bee-eating hornets from Asia invade Washington State

By Ben Cost

A giant killer hornet from Asia that devours bees and dissolves human flesh with its sting has touched down in Washington State. This marks the first time the insect invader has been found in the region, according to a pest alert issued by the Washington State Department Of Agriculture last week.

The nearly 2-inch-long flying terror was spotted on Dec. 8 by a resident of Blaine, Washington, who says they saw the insect buzzing around a hummingbird-feeder, WSDA reports. Entomologists later found the Calico-colored specimen dead on the property, which they confirmed was an Asian Giant Hornet (*Vespa mandarinia*) — the largest of its kind.

It's an unusual find. Not only does the behemoth bug hail from Asia, but it usually remains inactive during the winter months. The hornet likely flew down from Canada, where the insects are a scourge, department spokesman Chris McGann told CNN.

The entomological interloper could decimate local beehives. Just one hornet can kill 40 bees in under a minute — a talent most famously showcased in a terrifying 2012 video of 30 hornets massacring 30,000 bees in Japan. And unlike native Japanese bee populations (which have an ingenious way of warding off hornet attacks), the US' European bees have no natural defenses against the hornets.

News of the creepy crawly's encroachment unsurprisingly set the internet abuzz, spawning a flurry of flamethrower memes and replies of "yikes" and "little hornets are bad enough." "If you live where you can shoot, a shotgun works for removing single individuals from the air," said one social media survivalist.

The hornets aren't typically aggressive toward humans, according to the WSDA advisory. Nonetheless, the Asian hornet's sting can damage human tissue and feels "like a hot nail being driven into my leg," one Tokyo entomologist told Smithsonian Magazine. And in 2013, swarms of giant hornets killed 19 people in three months in China.

If stung, the pest report advises washing the site with soap and water, applying ice and using antihistamine cream. However, victims should dial 911 if experiencing multiple stings or a severe allergic reaction. Residents can also reduce the chances of getting stung by refraining from swatting at the giant hornets and properly disposing of food waste.

WSDA urges Washington residents to report hornet sightings to its Pest Program, preferably with photos attached.

Medical Surveillance State: France Calls on Apple and Google to Ditch Privacy Protections During Pandemic

France has become the first country in the world to openly call on Silicon Valley tech giants to remove privacy protections during the Chinese coronavirus pandemic, in order to introduce a "sovereign European health solution" that would track the movements of citizens.

The French government is aiming to unveil a contact tracing app by May 11th, when the country is expected to ease national lockdown measures that were introduced in March.

France and the European Union as a whole have come out in favour of a centralised approach to the tracking of citizens, in which data would be stored in government servers and monitored by state health

services.

Currently, Apple's operating system would prevent such an approach, as its Bluetooth function prohibits constant background tracking if the data is to be moved off the device. France claims that this privacy protection would prevent the government from developing its contact tracing app.

"We're asking Apple to lift the technical hurdle to allow us to develop a sovereign European health solution that will be tied our health system," France's digital minister, Cédric O, told Bloomberg News.

The system being developed by Google and Apple, which is set to be made available worldwide next month, will take a decentralised approach to tracking, with the data remaining on a user's phone rather than being collected in a central server.

The European Union has maintained that contact tracing apps should be voluntary, protect individual privacy, and be taken apart after the pandemic restrictions are lifted. However, a group of nearly 300 privacy experts warn that the apps could be used to introduce a surveillance state.

"We are concerned that some 'solutions' to the crisis may, via mission creep, result in systems which would allow unprecedented surveillance of society at large," the group wrote in an open letter.

"Some of the Bluetooth-based proposals respect the individual's right to privacy, whilst others would enable a form of government or private sector surveillance that would catastrophically hamper trust in and acceptance of such an application by society at large," the group added.

"We urge all countries to rely only on systems that are subject to public scrutiny and that are privacy-preserving by design (instead of there being an expectation that they will be managed by a trustworthy party), as a means to ensure that the citizen's data protection rights are upheld," the group concluded.

Islamic Waqf carries out Temple Mount digs, despite coronavirus lockdown

Jerusalem Islamic Waqf uploads pictures of ongoing unauthorized work at the site to its official Facebook page, sparking outrage.

"Despite the closure of the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Haram esh-Sharif [the Temple Mount] due to coronavirus, the staff, workers and guards of the Al-Aqsa Mosque are continuing their hard work," wrote the Jordanian-backed Waqf, which administers the Temple Mount.

The Arab Desk of the Zionist watchdog Im Tirtzu, which first reported the unauthorized dig, accused the Waqf of taking advantage of the nationwide lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic to carry out illegal work at the site aimed at "destroying Jewish artifacts and history."

Due to the highly sensitive nature of the Temple Mount, all digs must be approved by both the Waqf and the Israel Antiquities Authority. Despite this, the Waqf has a long history of conducting illegal digs, most notably in 1999 when it disposed of more than 9,000 tons of dirt mixed with invaluable archaeological artifacts, that are now being salvaged by the Temple Mount Sifting Project.

Students for the Temple Mount, a student-based organization promoting religious equality and freedom on the Temple Mount, also blasted the digs.

"The fact that the Waqf had the gall to publicly publish pictures of this illegal digging just emphasizes

Israel's lack of sovereignty on the Temple Mount," said the organization.

Tom Nisani, head of Im Tirtzu's Arab Desk, said: "What is even more disturbing are the things that the Waqf doesn't make public. The time has come for Israel to once and for all assert its sovereignty over the Temple Mount. It's absurd that the Temple Mount—Judaism's holiest site—is the only place in the Western world where Jews can't pray."

Nisani added: "The longer the Temple Mount stays closed, the greater the chances are that the Waqf will destroy more Jewish history."