

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

Wildfires Have Rendered Our World Unrecognizable

Dystopian images of destruction have come from all over the globe as flames rage.

September 14, 2020, 3:00 AM CDT



Extreme heat has fueled some of the worst fires on record in many parts of the globe. Unprecedented bushfires that started last December in Australia burned through 17 million hectares (42 million acres), an area the size of the state of Washington, and killed at least 33 people. California’s fire season has already broken records, with 3.1 million acres burned and 3,900 structures destroyed as of Sept. 10. Elsewhere, wildfires have destroyed native forests, forced the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of people, worsened air pollution.

France

Violent fires fueled by strong winds forced the evacuation of 2,700 people around the city of Marseille in August.

South Africa

A fire propelled by gale-force winds burned cars on Signal Hill, a popular lookout point in Cape Town.





San Francisco

Huge blazes darkened skies in the Bay Area and forced evacuations in much of the state.

Greece

In the Peloponnese, 57 fires broke out over less than 24 hours in July, forcing authorities to evacuate five residential areas. A firefighter died while fighting to save Castelo Branco, which had been devastated by another fire 17 years before.

The Amazon had its worst start to the fire season in at least a decade, with more than 10,136 fires spotted in the first 10 days of August.



Peace, Peace When There is no Peace

By Daymond Duck

9.20.20

One, the “Treaty of Peace” between Israel and the UAE is scheduled to be signed at the White House on Sept. 15, 2020.

This is not the “covenant with many” that will begin the Tribulation Period (Dan. 9:27), but it is not hard to find good Bible prophecy teachers that believe it will trigger progress toward that end.

This historic “Treaty of Peace” has happened much faster than many people thought, and the “covenant with many” could happen much faster than many people think, especially because the Rapture will have taken place and the world will be in more turmoil than it is in now.

Two, on Sept. 9, 2020, the Arab League held an emergency virtual meeting to consider a PA resolution to reject the UAE’s “Treaty of Peace” with Israel, but the Arab League voted down the PA resolution.

One PA official called the Arab League's refusal to reject the "Treaty of Peace" a stab in the back for the Palestinian cause and expressed the opinion that it will open the door for other Arab nations to sign "Treaties of Peace" with Israel.

Three, Pres. Trump has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to bring peace to the Middle East.

The winner will be announced in Oct. 2021.

Four, on Sept. 11, 2020, Pres. Trump announced that Bahrain will sign a "Treaty of Peace" with Israel at the White House on Sept. 15, 2020.

Bahrain will be the fourth Arab country to sign a peace treaty with Israel (the other three are Jordan, Egypt and the UAE (note: The Rapture hasn't happened, the Church is still here, and these aren't 7-year peace treaties; but the fact that these treaties came into being so fast should remind us that a 7-year covenant with many could come into being very fast. Also, be aware that Russia, Iran, Turkey, the PA, Hezbollah and Hamas don't like these treaties, and their hostility could trigger some of the prophesied wars in the Middle East. The Houthis and others are, in fact, already threatening to strike Israel over these peace treaties.).

Five, Pres. Trump received an unprecedented second nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to bring peace to the Middle East.

Six, on Sept. 9, 2020, Jared Kushner (Pres. Trump's son-in-law and advisor) said Trump's peace plan is an effort to save the Two-State Solution.

Kushner said if things kept going the way they were going, "ultimately, Israel would have eaten up all the land in the West Bank."

The problem with the Two-State Solution is that God gave all of the Promised Land to Israel, and warned the world not to divide it, but the Two-State Solution will divide the Promised Land and bring on the wrath of God.

Instead of "peace and safety," the end result will be the Battle of Armageddon.

Seven, on Sept. 14, 2020, it was reported that up until the peace treaties with the UAE and Bahrain, only Muslims could worship at the Al-Aqsa Mosque (the PA claims the Al-Aqsa Mosque includes the entire Temple Mount), but a clause in the peace treaties says, "all Muslims who come in peace may visit and pray at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and Jerusalem's other holy sites should remain open for peaceful worshippers of all faiths."

According to Israel and the U.S., the Al-Aqsa Mosque is just the building itself, and the "other holy sites" is the remainder of the Temple Mount.

This means the EAU and Bahrain are agreeing that everything on the Temple Mount except the building called the Al-Aqsa Mosque should be open to people of all faiths, including Jews, and it could open the door for a rebuilt Temple.

The Temple will be rebuilt, the Antichrist will break the covenant with many and defile the Temple at the middle of the Tribulation Period, and the Jews in Judea will have to flee for their lives; and now the door may be opening for all of this.

For whatever it is worth, some Jewish rabbis have said Trump is another Cyrus that God has put in office to open the door for a rebuilt Temple.

Eight, concerning deceit or wickedness, on Sept. 8, 2020, it was reported that about 1,000 people voted twice in Georgia's June election and they may be prosecuted.

They voted the first time by absentee ballot and then voted in person a second time on election day.

If it happened once, it can happen again, and the people that are left behind after the Rapture will eventually wind up with the most corrupt leader the world has ever had.

Nine, activists (with the approval of many Democrats) have announced plans to "lay siege to the White House" until election day.

They intend to do everything they can (including weeks of violent demonstrations in the Democrat-run city of Washington, DC) to stop the re-election of Trump.

Note: In the two days following the shooting of two Los Angeles Sheriff's officers, the blocking of emergency entrances to the hospital, and chants of "we hope you die," California Senator, former Attorney Gen. of California, and candidate for Vice-Pres. of the U.S., Kamala Harris has not voiced one word of criticism of these events or any desire for the wounded police officers to survive.

Elected officials are a major part of the rioting and looting problem in the U.S., and they are not worthy to hold any political position in the U.S. regardless of Party.

Ten, concerning natural disasters like birth pains, the second week of Sept. 2020 had the worst wildfires in California history (about 4,844 square miles this year), the evacuation of more than 500,000 people in Oregon (more than 10% of the population of the state and more than 1,400 square miles in the state), and about 937 square miles in Washington.

The numbers are changing almost daily, but on Sept. 12, 2020, Fox News reported that at least 24 people had been killed, dozens were missing, more than 6,000 homes and businesses had been destroyed, and thousands more were in danger.

Incidentally, I have read that in addition to setting fires and burning buildings, vehicles, etc., in major Democrat-run cities and states, there is evidence that Black Lives Matter has set some of the forest fires out west (burned buildings, vehicles, etc., and the Democrat Governor blames it on Global Warming).

As I write this, a slow-moving hurricane named Sally is threatening the Gulf Coast with high winds (perhaps up to 110 mph), a dangerous storm surge (perhaps more than 10 feet), torrential rains (perhaps 18-24 inches in places), and severe flooding.

Several tropical storms that could develop into hurricanes are behind Sally.

The nation of Israel is going on a 21-day Coronavirus lockdown.

Perhaps, Pres. Trump and Prime Min. Netanyahu should abandon the Two-State Solution.

God loves you, and if you have not done so, sincerely admit that you are a sinner; believe that Jesus is the virgin born, sinless Son of God who died for the sins of the world, was buried and raised from the dead; ask Him to forgive your sins, cleanse you, come into your heart and be your Saviour; then tell someone that you have done this.

New Survey Shows Widespread Confusion On Basic Theology Among US Evangelicals

Ligonier Ministries, along with LifeWay Research, has released its biennial State of Theology survey, which aims to "take the theological temperature of the United States to help Christians better understand today's culture and equip the church for discipleship".

The survey explores the religious and cultural beliefs of U.S. adults regarding the nature of God, authority of the Bible, salvation, or Christian political engagement, among many others.

They conducted the study every two years since 2014, and for this year edition they surveyed a representative sample of 3,002 US adults, from March 10 to 18, 2020.

Among those surveyed, 630 declared themselves professing evangelicals. According to the survey, although they "tend to express great concern for the gospel, trends in our findings reveal that many evangelicals also express erroneous views that mirror the broader U.S. population".

God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit

When asked about the doctrine of God, evangelical respondents were nearly unanimous in affirming that God is a perfect being (97%); that God is a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (96%); and that God cares about our day-to-day decisions (87%).

However, when it comes to whether God accepts worship from all religions, evangelicals are more divided, with 42% agreeing with it and 49% answering "no".

Regarding Jesus, two-thirds of evangelicals (65%) affirmed the statement that "Jesus is the first and greatest being created by God", while 30% do not believe that Jesus is God but instead think he is simply a "great teacher", which is "very concerning" for the authors of the survey.

For the questions about the Holy Spirit, 46% of evangelicals pointed out that "the Holy Spirit is a force but is not a personal being", while 78% do not think the Spirit can instruct someone to do something that goes against Scripture.

94% evangelicals agreed that the Bible has authority

When it comes to the Bible, 98% of evangelicals believed that the biblical accounts of Jesus' resurrection are "completely accurate", and 91% affirmed that the Bible is "100% accurate in all that it teaches".

Although 94% agreed that the Bible has authority to instruct in us in what to do, 18% of evangelical respondents also believe the Bible "contains helpful accounts of ancient myths but is not literally true".

The doctrine of salvation

According to the survey, "only a minority of U.S. Evangelicals (38%) agree with the biblical doctrine that God chose the people he would save before he created the world, showing that the influence of Arminian theology remains strong in American evangelical churches".

Furthermore, it "shows a decline in the number of professing evangelicals who have an accurate understanding of the Holy Spirit's work in salvation, with only 57% affirming that the Holy Spirit gives a spiritual new birth or new life before a person has faith in Jesus Christ".

Related to the doctrine of salvation, the survey revealed that "84% of evangelicals surveyed believed that God counts a person as righteous not because of one's works but only because of one's faith in Jesus Christ and 46% affirmed that everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature".

Evangelicals in politics

This is a presidential election year in the US, and "evangelicals express strong support for the freedom of Christians to join the debate", the authors of the study underlined.

Only 16% of evangelicals said that "Christians should be silent on issues of politics". This is down from 39 percent in 2016, ahead of Trump's election.

"Widespread confusion about the Bible and the reality of who God is"

According to Chris Larson, president and CEO of Ligonier Ministries, "the 2020 State of Theology survey uncovers widespread confusion in the United States about the Bible's teaching and the reality of who God is".

"Many have observed the drift among Americans toward relativism, and this survey helps to quantify how this nation is abandoning objective truth altogether", he added.

Larson warned that "sadly, just when the church needs to be clear and bold about our triune God, the Scriptures, sin, and salvation, many evangelicals are evidently being influenced more by this cultural drift than by the Word of God".

However, "Christians have an opportunity to bring light and comfort to our troubled times by pointing to Jesus Christ and the authority and sufficiency of the Bible".

"These survey results reveal that there is much work to do. Let us pray for an awakening to our holy God and to what He has revealed about Himself and how we are to live in this world", he concluded.

No one can refuse China's digital currency, says central bank exec

("Renminbi" is the official name of China's currency. "Yuan" is a unit of renminbi.)

China's central bank digital currency (CBDC) known as the digital yuan should be regulated in line with cash-related laws, according to a senior exec at the country's central bank.

In an opinion article on Sept. 14, Fan Yifei, a deputy governor of the People's Bank of China (PBoC), outlined the major regulatory principles for the operation of the digital yuan, the digital representation of the official currency of the People's Republic of China.

According to Fan, the digital renminbi is legally compensatory to the traditional fiat currency. In the article, the deputy governor outlined that the digital RMB is "mainly positioned" as M0, which means that the digital currency is part of the supply of paper notes and coins. As such, the digital RMB "needs to comply with laws and regulations related to cash management", Fan said.

The deputy governor went on to say that according to the renminbi's indemnity provisions, the digital renminbi could be used to pay "all public and private debts within the territory of our country." Fan emphasized that the digital currency should be accepted everywhere in the country, and "no unit or individual may refuse to accept it if the conditions are met."

Fan also said that the digital renminbi must comply with laws and regulations on cash management, Anti-Money Laundering and combatting terrorist financing.

The digital yuan is reportedly being piloted in a number of regions in China including Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, as well as the Hong Kong Greater Bay area. In late August, Reuters reported that the PBoC is planning to use the digital currency at the 2022 Winter Olympic Games.

Dangerous Days

by Hal Lindsey

On Facebook or other social media, are you reluctant to say what you really think? Is the possibility of backlash too disheartening? Is it easier to just post pictures of your dog? Does mentioning your faith at work put you at risk of losing your job? Does walking down a street that once felt like home now make you feel queasy? Have family get-togethers become minefields? Have Thanksgiving and Christmas become exercises in staying away from the mines' many triggers?

I hope none of those things are true for you, but for millions they have become facts of life. As a culture, we have lost the grace to allow one another to make mistakes, or have opinions different from our own. Fuses are short and the landmines are being loaded with more and more explosives. It's getting dangerous out there — dangerous to speak your mind, to wear certain clothing items such as uniforms, or to say what you thought were harmless things. When people assume you're talking in code, anything you say can and will be used against you.

The rage engulfing America has been building for a while. A Time Magazine cover story in 2016 promised to explain, "Why we're losing the Internet to the culture of hate." The article focused on internet "trolls." But it was really about the loss of common decency.

The Time article lamented that if you say on the internet that you're struggling with depression, someone "will try to goad you into killing yourself.... And it's seeping from our smartphones into every aspect of our lives." Covered by the web's anonymity, people who would defend a kitten's right to happiness seem blithely willing to shame young women for being skinny, fat, tall, short, or even smart. They often recommend suicide as a remedy.

The shamers and haters latch onto anything different about a person and try to humiliate them with it. They mock the deaths of the recently deceased. They find and publish private information about random people. They send rape threats to women with whom they disagree.

Look at the world of athletics. We used to treasure something called sportsmanship. Today it's seen as a sign of weakness. I don't think we can calculate sportsmanship's value to society, or what the loss of it means in the long term.

2 Timothy 3:1 famously says, "In the last days perilous times will come." The verses that follow tell us why the last days will be full of peril. Those verses do not say the last days will be perilous because of earthquakes, famine, or pestilence. They assign the greatest last days peril to human moral failings.

The first five verses of that chapter say, "In the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power."

What makes the last days perilous? Primarily, the sudden and dramatic loss of moral character. Need an example? Look around.