

Today's News in Light of the Bible

PROPHETIC Newsletter

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DR. ED HINDSON

My friend, if there was ever a time to expand the reach of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a searching world, **IT IS NOW!**

We must prepare for the coming Kingdom Age! Through television and the Internet, God is using World Prophetic Ministry and The King is Coming telecast to reach more souls for Christ than ever before.

However, many still need to hear the Gospel and to believe!

Please continue to pray for our ministry and know that we are praying for YOU!

Thank you for being someone we can count on during these troubling times. As a hurting world cries out, **I KNOW** God is Lord and He still reigns.

We cannot stop, we will not stop sharing the hope of eternal life!

Until He returns,

Ed Hindson



Apostasy on the Rise: Are We Nearing the Rapture?

One of the signs of the end times and return of Christ, mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, is a falling away or a great apostasy (Greek, *apostasia*). Many have wondered when this type of falling away from the faith would occur and it is possible that we may be seeing the beginning of this event. The major areas that are contributing to this quick decline in belief in the Western world are the decline of faith in Europe, the decline of faith in the United States and the impact of the coronavirus.

First, Christianity is on major life support in Europe. Once a dominant Christian stronghold that sent missionaries all around the globe, Europe no longer has any strong Christian presence. For example, a recent *Guardian* report

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Chinese Pastors Face New Preaching Requirements or Risk Closure

China's state-approved churches that were forced to close due to COVID-19 are only permitted to reopen if they praise the Chinese Communist Party in sermons and extol President Xi Jinping, according to a new report. Religious liberty magazine *Bitter Winter* reports that the Religious Affairs Bureau of Zhengzhou, the capital of the province of Henan, released in mid-June a list of 42 prerequisites for churches that sought to reopen.



Among the requirements, churches were ordered to “intensify patriotic education” and “study China’s religious policies,” *Bitter Winter* reported.

Additionally, churches were ordered to promote the “four requirements,” a nationwide campaign launched in 2018 to promote the “sinicization” of religion. The campaign requires religious communities to ritually raise the national flag; promote the Chinese Constitution and laws, core socialist values, and “China’s excellent traditional culture.” Churches that refused to comply with the CCP’s demands were not permitted to reopen. In Henan, one church was not allowed to reopen because officials didn’t approve the pastor’s sermons.

“None of the 11 places of worship in our area were approved for reopening,” a deacon in the church told *Bitter Winter*. “We were busy preparing to meet the requirements for reopening, but the government made things difficult for us in every respect.”

Also in June, the government of Yucheng,

a county in the prefecture-level city of Shangqiu in Henan, demanded the preachers of state-run churches praise President Xi for “the right way to lead people in defeating the epidemic” and praise China for its single-party rule. They were also ordered to slander the United States and other countries.

“The government said that churches must preach about national affairs if they want to reopen,” a church member in Henan told *Bitter Winter*. “With Xi Jinping’s speeches as the main content, it’s better for churches not to reopen.”

An elderly believer from Henan said that the Religious Affairs Bureau would ban anyone from preaching if they refuse to cooperate with the new requirements. “Those preachers who agree to preach politics just want their churches to be reopened as soon as possible,” the believer explained. “But they are secularized instead. They have no way to retreat and become politicized.”

The CCP’s efforts to sinicize Christianity, or bring it under its absolute control are well-documented. It was previously reported that Communist authorities converted a number of state-approved Three-Self churches into cultural centers promoting Xi’s socialist values. Amid the coronavirus outbreak, poor Christian villagers in several provinces were ordered to renounce their faith and replace displays of Jesus with portraits of Chairman Mao and Xi or risk losing their welfare benefits.

In recent years, hundreds of Christians

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Iran Threatens United Arab Emirates over Peace Deal with Israel

Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard vowed there would be dangerous consequences for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) after it announced a historic deal with Israel to open up diplomatic relations. The UAE is the first Gulf Arab state to do so and only the third Arab nation to establish normalized relations with Israel,

Iran's regional archenemy. As part of the U.S.-brokered deal, Israel agreed to temporarily put off the annexation of occupied land sought by the Palestinians for their future state.

The Iranian Guard called the deal a "shameful" agreement and an "evil action" that was underwritten by the U.S., according to the group's statement on a website it runs, *Sepah News*. They warned that the deal with Israel will

set back American influence in the Middle East and bring a "dangerous future" for the Emirati



g o v e r n m e n t . Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has also condemned the Emirati move. In a televised speech, he warned that the UAE has made a "huge mistake" in reaching a deal toward normalizing ties with Israel.

He also warned the Gulf state against allowing Israel to have a "foothold in the region."

Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, called the agreement a painful betrayal of Arab and other countries in the region, during a trip to Lebanon.

The UAE presented its decision as a way

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have faced arrests, detentions, imprisonments, and church attacks. In Yugan county, authorities shut down at least 48 Three-Self churches and meeting venues between April 18-30, according to *Bitter Winter*. The magazine reported that "countless number of churches" were also ordered to remove their crosses in Jiujiang, Fuzhou, Fengcheng, Shangrao, and a few other cities in the province in April.

Scholars estimate that about half of Chinese

Christians attend unregistered "house" churches rather than their state-sanctioned counterparts. Ultimately, the philosophy of communism has no place for people of faith and it destroys any religious beliefs that contradict its viewpoint.

This should serve as a warning to American Christians: If communist ideals are continuing to be pushed in America and eventually take power, religious persecution will not be far behind.— PNL

PRAY: Pray for our Chinese brothers and sisters as they suffer persecution for their faith and pray for our own nation, that these types of ideologies will be rejected.

showed that 59 percent of young people aged 18-29 never attend religious services and 70 percent identify as non-religious. Secularism has destroyed Christianity throughout most of Europe and entire generations are now being raised in completely secular environments. The bastion of Christendom for so many centuries is now devoid of Christ.

Second, the United States, while not as secular as Europe, is quickly following in its footsteps. Secularism is on the rise and Christianity is suffering greatly. Even basic Christian beliefs are being thrown aside by the culture at large and even many who claim the Christian faith. In a recent State of Theology survey produced by Lifeway, 52 percent of Americans believe that Jesus was simply a great teacher, but not God. Even more troubling, 30 percent of self-identified Evangelicals also agreed that Jesus was a great teacher but not God. This is not a highly contested or debated theological concept but is a foundational theological belief in order to consider oneself a Christian. These types of surveys show that American Christianity is rapidly on a similar trajectory to that of Europe.

Finally, the coronavirus may also help to contribute to this rise in apostasy. Many church attenders have not been able to attend church for many months. Some have been able to

watch digitally but many do not have access to the technology that allows for easy streaming. Churches are also struggling to survive during this pandemic. A recent Barna study showed that twenty percent of churches in America could be in danger of closing within the next 18 months, both because of financial struggles and because many churchgoers who attended prior to the coronavirus have not returned

when the churches have been able to reopen. It is possible a decline in the coronavirus could help with these numbers, but it is still a significant blow to churches in a time when churches are needed to stem the tide in secularism. These trends could change and a great apostasy away from Christianity can be avoided.

Perhaps while Europe and America decline, other regions of the world will drive Christianity forward. However, it is also very possible that the stage is being set for the return of Christ and this rapid turn away from Christianity is another step in this direction. We need to be in prayer for our nation, for our churches, for our pastors and we need to be prepared to reach a world that is no longer accepting of basic Christian beliefs and morality. While we anxiously anticipate the return of Christ with an eye to the sky, we also need to work as diligently as possible to reach as many as we can with the Gospel of Jesus. — PNL

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;”

2 Thessalonians 2:3

PRAY: Pray our nation will experience a great revival and turn away from the roots of secularism that have taken hold in so many through our nation and the world.

Tensions Continue to Arise Between Turkey and the United States

The United States said it strongly objected to Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan's recent hosting of two leaders of Hamas in Istanbul. The State Department said the officials were Specially Designated Global Terrorists and the United States was seeking information about one for his involvement in multiple terrorist attacks, hijackings and kidnappings.

A Turkish government statement said Erdogan received Ismail Haniyeh, head of the Hamas Political Bureau, and an accompanying delegation. Turkey's foreign ministry said Ankara "fully rejects" the U.S. criticism and called on Washington to use its influence for a "balanced policy" that will help solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, instead of "serving Israel's interests."

According to a State Department release, the meeting was the second time this year that Erdogan had welcomed leaders of the armed Islamist group that has controlled Gaza for over a decade. "President Erdogan's continued outreach to this terrorist organization only serves to isolate Turkey from the international community, harms the interests of the Palestinian people, and undercuts global efforts to prevent terrorist attacks launched from Gaza. We continue to raise our concerns about the Turkish government's relationship with Hamas at the highest levels."

Turkey's foreign ministry responded: "Declaring the legitimate representative of Hamas, who came to power after winning democratic elections in Gaza and is an

important reality of the region, as a terrorist will not be of any contribution to efforts for peace and stability in the region."

U.S. ties with NATO ally Turkey have been strained over a variety of issues including Ankara's purchase of Russian S-400 defense systems, which prompted Washington to suspend Turkish involvement in its F-35 jet program and threaten sanctions.

In a somewhat related story, the FBI is reportedly investigating an assassination plot to murder Pastor Andrew Brunson. Brunson was imprisoned in Turkey for two years on false terrorism charges. He was freed and allowed to return to the U.S. in October 2018 after Turkey came under intense diplomatic pressure from the Trump administration. At the time of his arrest, Brunson was pastor of Izmir Resurrection Church.

Mob boss Serkan Kurtuluş has claimed he was asked by the Turkish government to murder Brunson. Kurtuluş made the astonishing claim a month after his arrest in Argentina in June, reports International Christian Concern (ICC). He claimed members of Izmir AKP approached him to assassinate Brunson with the aim of blaming the Gulen movement. The Gulen is an Islamic community in Turkey at odds with the AKP — the party of President Erdogan.

Brunson was accused by Turkey of having links to the Gulen movement, named after its leader the U.S.-based cleric, Fethullah Gulen. Turkey is attempting to have Kurtuluş



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of encouraging peace efforts and taking Israel's planned annexation of parts of the occupied West Bank off the table. But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu swiftly pushed back insisting the pause in annexation was "temporary."

President Trump has presented the U.S.-brokered agreement as a major diplomatic achievement and said he expects more Arab and Muslim countries to follow suit. Israel has quietly cultivated ties with the UAE and other Gulf countries for several years as they confronted a shared enemy in Iran.

The deal has been praised by politicians on both sides in America, including both President Trump and Democratic nominee Joe Biden. Biden stated, "Today, Israel and the United Arab Emirates have taken a historic step to bridge the deep divides of the Middle East. The UAE's offer to publicly recognize the State of Israel is a welcome, brave, and badly-needed act of statesmanship. And it is a critical recognition that Israel is a vibrant, integral part of the Middle East that is here to stay."

There are still those attacking the peace

proposal. Both Iran and Turkey have condemned the deal. Rep. Rashida Tlaib, D-Mich. argued on Twitter that she will not celebrate "Netanyahu for not stealing land he already controls in exchange for a sweetheart business deal. The heart of the issue has never been planned, formal annexation, but ongoing, devastating apartheid. This Trump/Netanyahu deal will not alleviate Palestinian suffering, it will further normalize it."

This deal could play some significance in the realm of Bible prophecy. In Ezekiel 38-39, Israel is invaded by numerous Middle Eastern enemies back by Russia. In Ezekiel 38:13, Dedan, which represents part of the Arabian peninsula where modern day UAE is located, objects to the invasion and does not take part in it. This is in spite of most of the other nations surrounding Israel, such as Iran and Turkey, attempting to invade. It seems to be no mere coincidence that Iran and Turkey object to this peace proposal. Perhaps we are seeing the foundation of prophecy being laid down in our own time that will explain the actions of nations during the future battle of Gog and Magog.— *PNL*

PRAY: Pray for continued peace talks in the region and that more nations will follow the example set forth by the UAE in allowing Israel to exist as a nation.

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extradited from Argentina to stand trial for allegedly supplying illegal firearms in Syria and the death of a Russian pilot in 2015. Kurtuluş has claimed asylum in Argentina. However, the FBI has asked that country to question him over his claims regarding Brunson. ICC said Argentina has not yet responded to the request.

Commenting on Kurtuluş' claims, ICC said: "Many regard Brunson's imprisonment

as an attempt by Turkey to force the US to extradite Gulen. His imprisonment shows how Christians in Turkey are often used for political maneuvering by the authorities, who have no regard for religious freedom."

These stories show an escalation in tension between the US and Turkey as Turkey continues to move away from NATO and align itself with Iran and other Middle Eastern allies.— *PNL*

PRAY: Pray that the tensions will lessen in the Middle East and that the innocents in the region will be protected.