

Today's News in Light of the Bible

PROPHETIC Newsletter

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My dear friends,

I am so thankful to enter a new year of service to the Lord! If we only focus on the political, social, and spiritual divide facing our world today and not on Christ, the future is so bleak.

However, even during the most difficult of times in which we see a rise in apostasy, we can be assured God is still at work, drawing people to Him!

It is your continued support that enables us to use all our resources to clearly present the Gospel to those who are searching for answers.

Like Jabez in the Old Testament, I believe God will further “expand our territory” of ministry influence and outreach in 2022 if we diligently speak up for TRUTH!

Until He returns,

RISE IN APOSTASY?

Many Say Faith in God Not Required to Enter Heaven



More than three years after Pope Francis sparked a firestorm of religious debate by telling a young boy that his deceased atheist father might still end up in Heaven, a new study from the Pew Research Center shows a majority of Catholic and mainline Christians also believe people who don't believe in God will go to Heaven. Data for the study, conducted Sept. 20-26, was collected from a nationally representative sample of 6,485 U.S. adults.

Pew researchers decided for the first time to tackle deep philosophical questions like the meaning of life, the purpose of suffering and why bad things happen to

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Turkey Growing Closer to Russia

In early October, Turkey sent the US State Department a letter of request for the purchase of 40 US-made F-16 fighter jets and 80 modernization kits for some of its older aircraft. The request came after the US kicked Turkey out of the F-35 program over Ankara's purchase of Russia's S-400 air-defense system, reflecting Turkey's warming to Moscow and estrangement from its NATO allies. Congress bristled at the request.

A bipartisan group of 41 representatives, led by the chairs of the Congressional Hellenic Caucus, sent a letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken opposing the sale, calling Turkey's "illegal and unfettered actions" indicative of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's "transformation of Turkey to a rogue state led by a leader with a nationalistic philosophy, Neo-Ottoman ambitions, and a complete disregard for following international law." Sen. Bob Menendez, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, also expressed strong opposition to the request, describing Turkey as "not the type of NATO ally that is behaving in a way that we should be able to go ahead and give it some of the most sophisticated fighting equipment."

Both Menendez and the representatives directed their criticism at Erdogan rather than Turkey as whole. "At the end of the day, he needs to change course," Menendez said. But Erdogan's government shows no sign of changing course. Turkey's defense minister said that if the US rejects the F-16 request, Ankara will seek alternatives — including from Russia. Turkey has been a NATO member for almost as long as the alliance has existed, but in recent years its relationship with its

allies, especially the US, has deteriorated. The defense agreement recently signed by the US and Greece and Turkey's poor human-rights record are also points of contention between Washington and Ankara.

US officials believe operating alongside the Russian-made high-tech surface-to-air-missile system could compromise their military hardware, allowing Russia to access closely guarded information about Western weapons. This led the US to expel Turkey from the F-35 program and to sanction Turkey's government, including its main defense procurement agency, under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act. It was the first time a US ally had been penalized under CAATSA. Turkish firms were to make important components for F-35s, and Ankara had made a \$1.4 billion down payment on 100 F-35 jets. That money was not returned, further angering Turkey. Erdogan now wants that money to finance an F-16 purchase.

The White House understands Turkey's geostrategic importance. It overlooks the Levant, the Middle East, and the Caucasus. It also commands the southern shore of the Black Sea, where it is the largest NATO military. Turkey has been an important base for military operations, hosting three US and coalition installations, including Incirlik Air Base, where nearly 50 B-61 nuclear bombs are stored.

President Joe Biden met with Erdogan during the G20 summit in October, hoping to thaw the relationship. Among the topics they discussed was Turkey's desire to purchase F-16s. "While I saw Mr. Biden's positive approach on this matter, another aspect



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Israel Envoy Claims UN Trying to “Erase Jewish History”

Israel protested the United Nations marking the 74th anniversary of the historic vote on the partition plan, which called for a Jewish state alongside an Arab one in the British Mandate of Palestine, by holding a Palestinian solidarity event. Israeli Ambassador to the UN Gilad Erdan called the decision to hold an event in the General Assembly aimed at strengthening the Palestinian “right of return” on this day “outrageous.”

On November 29, 1947, the UN General Assembly voted to recognize the establishment of a Jewish state in parts of the Mandate. Jews jubilantly accepted the plan, while the Palestinians and neighboring Arab states rejected it and launched what would become Israel’s War of Independence. “On November 29th, exactly 74 years ago, the UN recognized the Jewish people’s right to a state. The Jews



and Israel accepted this partition plan and the Palestinians and the Arab countries rejected it and tried to destroy us,” said Erdan.

“The Palestinians and the Arab countries not only attacked Israel, the Jewish state, they also persecuted, massacred, and ultimately expelled the Jewish communities in their own countries,” he added, accusing the international community of ignoring those events and only focusing on the Palestinians. “Instead, the UN has the audacity to hold a solidarity event for the Palestinians on the anniversary of the Palestinians’ own decision to choose violence. And on the day that the Palestinians chose violence, the UN also dares to advance... the outrageous, the false ‘demand of return,’ a

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of the issue is the House of Representatives and Senate,” Erdogan said afterward. Biden, however, did not invite Turkey to the US’s democracy summit in December. Turkey isn’t making it easy for Biden. It has repeatedly said it plans to keep its S-400s and recently announced plans to buy more of them from Russia.

Biden faces a tough balancing act. Repairing the relationship and persuading Congress to accept Turkey’s F-16 request will be difficult if Turkey

doesn’t change course. Rebuffing Turkey’s request may well push Turkey closer to Russia, and a closer Turkish-Russian relationship could create a spoiler within NATO, undermining the alliance’s principle of collective defense. Those considerations may not sway US lawmakers. “I am not deterred that they may go somewhere else. If they do so ... the interoperability gets diminished dramatically at NATO, and further erode their position,” Menendez said. — *PNL*

PRAY: Pray for relationships between the United States, Turkey and Russia and for our global leaders to keep communicating with each other.

people. The national study was released amid a backdrop of major life-changing events for many, most notably the coronavirus pandemic which has claimed millions of lives globally.

In discussing American views on the afterlife, the study showed a majority of U.S. adults believe in both Heaven and Hell, but significantly more believe in Heaven. Some 73% reported belief in Heaven, while 62% reported belief in Hell. When it comes to Christians as a group, the study showed that the overwhelming majority supported belief in Heaven. Protestants from historically black and evangelical churches were more likely than mainline Protestant Christians or Catholics to express belief in Hell. And while 39% of all American adults, in general, believe people who don't believe in God can still go to Heaven, 68% of Catholics and 56% of mainline Protestant Christians were found to hold this belief compared to 21% of evangelicals and 31% of Christians from historically black churches.

When it comes to suffering in the world, few respondents in the study blamed God. In general, most agreed suffering is due primarily to the actions of people. For majorities of black and evangelical Christians, though, Satan is believed to have a hand in human suffering, too, the study shows. Some 86% of American adults say suffering is at least due in part to random chance. Overall, 44% of respondents said the phrase "sometimes bad things just happen" captured their perspective very well. Another 42% said the statement reflected their views somewhat well.

Despite this widely held view on the reason for suffering, however, most people didn't also see suffering as something negative. Some 68% believed "everything in life happens for a reason" and suffering exists "to provide an opportunity for people to come out stronger."

For many respondents in the study, the way they view suffering was also connected to their ideas about God. The study found that 91% of Americans believe in God or a higher power, and 80% of this group say that most of the suffering in the world comes from people rather than from God. Some 70% of this group also believe that humans are free to go against God's plans or that of a higher power.

While just 44% of all U.S. adults polled for the study said Satan is responsible for most of the suffering in the world, this view had much stronger support among black and evangelical Protestants. Some 69% of respondents in the study who attend historically black churches blamed Satan for most of the human suffering in the world, while 73% of evangelicals were found to believe the same. Less than half of mainline Protestant Christians and Catholics blamed Satan for suffering in the world.

A move away from the traditional Christian belief that one must believe in God in order to be saved and go to Heaven should not surprise us. In fact, Paul warned that people would "not endure sound doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:3) and that there would be a "falling away" from the faith (2 Thess. 2:3). With large sections of "Christendom" no longer holding onto basic and fundamental doctrine, we may be on our way to this great rise in apostasy.—PNL

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;"

2 Timothy 4:3

PRAY: Pray for Christian churches to rise up and boldly preach the truth of God's Word.

Israel Could Take Unilateral Action Against Iran if Sanctions Lifted

Lifting sanctions on Iran could lead to military action by Israel, officials in Jerusalem warned world powers. Israel claims that if the US lifts sanctions – along with international sanctions soon to be lifted under the terms of the 2015 nuclear deal – Iran could reach the nuclear threshold within six months. At that point, Israel could find it necessary to take unilateral action.



In a meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron, Foreign Minister Yair Lapid called for the world to ramp up the threat to Iran in order to deter it from developing a nuclear weapon. Lapid emphasized that Israel views the talks as an attempt by Tehran to stall as it advances its nuclear program, and the world must have a plan B. “Sanctions must not be lifted from Iran,” Lapid said. “Sanctions must be tightened. A real military threat must be put before Iran because that is the only way to stop its race to become a nuclear power.” The meeting with Macron came a day after Lapid relayed a similar message in a meeting with UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Israel opposes the JCPOA because it insufficiently limited Iran’s uranium enrichment, and, in fact, legitimizes further enrichment after the agreement expires, which paves the way for an eventual nuclear bomb. In addition, the JCPOA did not address Iran’s other malign actions in the region. But worse than the JCPOA, Israeli officials say, would be an interim deal that would barely restrict Iran’s nuclear program. Jerusalem has grown increasingly concerned that the US is

considering such an agreement, which some diplomats have called “less for less,” to have the US lift some sanctions in exchange for Iran freezing – not rolling back – its nuclear program, which has advanced far beyond the JCPOA’s restrictions. Foreign Ministry Director-General Alon Ushpiz said in an interview with KAN that this should be called “more for less,” as Iran would be getting a cash influx while conceding almost nothing.

Israel’s diplomatic efforts are overwhelmingly focused on the US, in order to convince Washington not to lift sanctions. France, Germany and the UK have been sympathetic to Israel’s messages, a senior Israeli diplomatic source said, and Russia has been attentive. While there has been communication between China and Israel about the Iranian nuclear threat, Beijing has been less receptive. Diplomats from the E3 – France, Britain and Germany – in the Vienna talks told Reuters that there will be a problem if Iran does not show that it is taking the negotiations seriously. Reaching an agreement is urgent, the diplomats said, but they did not want to impose an artificial deadline.

Iranian officials continued to maintain that the talks are about lifting US sanctions, as opposed to their country’s nuclear program, even though the Joint Comprehensive Plan of action, as the 2015 deal was called, limited uranium enrichment in addition to gradually

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demand that would lead to the total obliteration of the Jewish state,” he said.

A “right of return” is one of the key core issues of dispute in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Palestinians claim that five million people — tens of thousands of original refugees from what is today’s Israel, and their millions of descendants — have a right to return to their ancestral lands. Israel rejects the demand, saying it represents a bid by the Palestinians to destroy Israel by weight of numbers. Israel’s population is almost nine million, some three-quarters of whom are Jewish. An influx of millions would mean Israel could no longer be a Jewish-majority state. Because Israel is a democratically-led nation, the Jews understand that losing this majority would be catastrophic. If the Palestinians were to gain a numerical superiority, they could take over the government and establish their own system in place of the mainly Jewish government.

To highlight the issues, Israel’s mission to the UN launched a campaign with the World Jewish Congress that will see trucks driving around New York with the message “Don’t erase Jewish history.” Erdan particularly wants to highlight the plight of the hundreds of thousands of Jews who were expelled from Arab lands and their properties confiscated after the establishment of the State of Israel. “By advancing and amplifying on the one side the false and dangerous narrative of the Palestinians and by silencing... the true... tragic stories of the Jewish refugees who were expelled from the Arab countries and from Iran, the UN is erasing Jewish history and distorting the truth and we will never allow this to happen,” Erdan said.

This is yet another example of the United Nations continual assault on the Israeli people. The UN continues to place a favorable bias in favor of the Palestinians and attacks Israel every change that it can get. — *PNL*

PRAY: Pray the United Nations will stop attacking Israel and will treat them in a fair manner.

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lifting sanctions. Russia’s Ambassador to International Institutions in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov said that the US reaffirmed that it was willing to lift all post-JCPOA sanctions if Iran returns to full compliance with the agreement. In addition, Iran demands a “guarantee by America not to impose new sanctions...The talks are about the return of the US to the deal and they have to lift all sanctions and this should be in practice and verifiable,” Bagheri said. Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said they will “not accept anything less than

sanctions removal and we will not commit to anything more than what is in the JCPOA.”

Another indicator of the regime’s expectations from the talks, Iran expert Omer Carmi pointed out on Twitter, is its state budget proposal. The budget, with a fiscal year beginning in March, is based on an assumption that Iran would sell 1.2 million barrels of oil per day (BPD), while the Majlis, Iran’s parliament, said in September that it seeks sanctions removal to allow for a minimum of 2.5 million BPD. — *PNL*

PRAY: Pray that Iran will be stopped from becoming a nuclear power.