



# THE End-timeNews

THE WAKE-UP CALL

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## BAHRAIN TO NORMALIZE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL, THE DEAL BROKERED BY TRUMP

**TOP NEWS ►►►**

Bahrain will establish full diplomatic relations with Israel, President Donald Trump announced Friday, making it the second Arab Gulf nation within a month to normalize ties with the Jewish state.

A joint statement about the peace agreement that was released by Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, said: "Opening direct dialogue and ties between these two dynamic societies and advanced economies will continue the positive transformation of the Middle East and increase stability, security, and prosperity in the region." The statement said that every nation would continue to work toward achieving "a just, comprehensive and enduring resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict." The announcement of the deal coincided with the 19th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.

Johnnie Moore, a prominent religious freedom advocate and founder of the KAIROS Company, called the agreement as an "as-



►►► **FULL STORY ON - 07**

tonishing, diplomatic feat." "If this were any other President there would be wall-to-wall coverage heralding it as a once-in-generation achievement," Moore wrote on Twitter Friday.

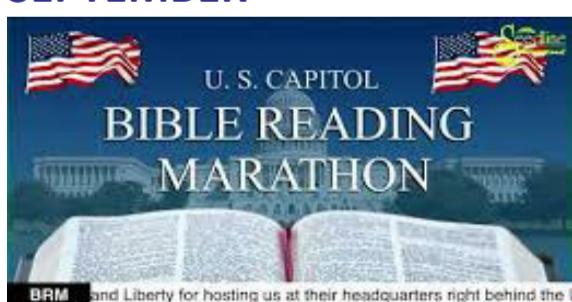
Bahrain is a small nation-state comprised of a small archipelago of 40 islands in the Persian Gulf with a population of approximately 1.5 million people comprised of mostly Arab Bahrainis and Asians. The country is situated



►►► **FULL STORY ON - 08**

JUDGE BANS INDOOR SERVICES AT JOHN MACARTHUR'S GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

### 90-HOUR CAPITOL BIBLE READING MARATHON KICKS OFF FROM SATURDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER



The 31st annual Bible Reading Marathon in the nation's capital will kick off Saturday as speakers begin reading from Genesis through Revelation in 90 hours just a block away from the U.S. Capitol. This year's Scripture reading marathon will kick off at 2 p.m. and will last through next Wednesday at 10 a.m. The

►►► **FULL STORY ON - 09**

### INDIA BANS 6 CHRISTIAN GROUPS FROM ACCEPTING FOREIGN FUNDS IN 'SHAKE-DOWN' BY HINDU NATIONALIST PARTY

Amid another crackdown on foreign aid, India has canceled six Christian organizations' licenses to receive donations from outside the country in a move some say is little more than a "shakedown" by the Hindu nationalist party.

According to a report from UCA News, New Life Fellowship Association, Evangelical



►►► **FULL STORY ON - 11**

Doubting is not a new thing, I assume! One way or other, we all have fallen victims of this peril. Feeling a doubt in a situation or with a person is so common these days. This happens especially when our expectation is not fulfilled, that too exactly in the same way we imagined. The case here is not just connected to the disappointment with people alone but also with God Himself! In this edition, let's consider what we should do when we have disappointments and doubts!

John and Jesus were relatives and they have known each other ever since their childhood. It's uncertain precisely when John first actually knew that Jesus was the Son of God, whose way he had come to prepare. The Apostle John quotes him as saying, "I myself did not know him" (John 1:31) around the time he baptized Jesus. However, it is extremely clear that while in the uterus of his mother Elizabeth, John had felt the presence of Jesus with the visit of Mary. This being true, the revelation of Jesus as the Lamb of God was great to him and he could not stop shouting "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) when Jesus came walking towards him to be baptized by him. That day was the end of his ministry and thereafter we see him redirecting everyone to Jesus including some of his early disciples who in turn became the disciples of Jesus.

"Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?", this was a sur-

prising question from John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ when he was imprisoned. According to biblical tradition, Herod ordered the arrest of John the Baptist following his outspoken criticism of Herod's marriage to his brother's wife, Herodias. His followers were able to visit him and keep him informed about Jesus' activities. Those followers also brought messages to Jesus. Scholars think he might have been in prison for about ten months. While in prison, the thought of being executed for the sake of righteousness and justice he could bear. But he could not bear the thought that he might have been wrong about Jesus. His one task was to prepare the way of the Lord. If he had gotten that wrong, his ministry, his life, was in vain. But even with his doubts, there re-



**Rev. Manuel Joseph Th.M.**  
*Sub-editor, End-Time News*

## NOT DOUBTING JESUS!!



►►► FULL STORY ON - 06

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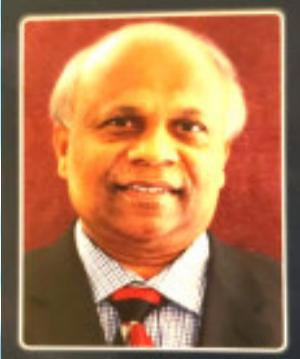
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JOSEPH KURIYAN  
HOUSTON

Someone once said, "Prayer is the greatest power from earth that moves the greatest power in Heaven" Prayer is much bigger and stronger than a hurricane or nuclear bomb. A major hurricane is by far the most powerful event on earth. A typical hurricane can provide all the electric power needed by United States for three to four years. A man of eloquence may touch multitudes but a man of prayer touches God. Although theological seminaries are important. I believe that a school that instructs believers of Christ how to pray successfully could do far more to promote true piety, worship and sound preaching.

Oswald Chambers commented about prayer, "Prayer is a duty as well as a privilege, a right and a responsibility. We use prayer as a last resort but Jesus wants it to be our first line of defense. We pray when there is nothing else we can do but Jesus wants us to pray first before we do anything else".

Prayer can achieve more peace than weapons of war. Prayer can heal any sickness when medicine fails. Prayer can bring joy when life is miserable and disappointing. Prayer is the answer for any problem and the solution for any challenges.

Prayer brings families together, saves souls, heals, solves our problems, answers our heart questions, and connects us to God.

Every faith has some system of prayer. Every religion has some practice of prayer. Whether Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Jew, Buddhist all have prayer as an integral part of their faith. Most everyone believes in a higher power. Man is able to achieve many



## WHAT IS PRAYER AND WHAT IS NOT PRAYER?

Accomplishments through technologies and other efforts, however, there are things every person faces daily which require prayer. Prayer becomes the only solution for problems such as health issues, financial hardship, family peace, joy, war, famine and natural calamities etc.

We pray for our physical, emotional and material needs. Wealth, fame and position will not solve every issue in life. God is the ultimate source and prayer is the only solution. The very word 'prayer' came from the Latin root 'precarius'. Prayer is universal. It is an expression of who we are and our dependence as a finite being to an infinite God.

***Prayer is the act of seeing reality from God's point of view. It is communicating with the creator of the universe. It is submitting ourselves to the will of God. It is agreeing with God. It is accepting our nothingness and God's greatness. It is pouring our needs, desires and wishes for God's approval and action. It is agreeing with God without doubt and questions.*** It is the highest expres-

sion of our need of God. It is worship and asking for understanding. It is approaching reverently and talking to our Heavenly Father openly, sincerely and faithfully. It is conversation, not just words. It is a necessity and an indispensable part of our walk with God. It means God uses to accomplish his will in our lives. Prayer is asking, knocking and seeking for God to open His door of blessing. Prayer takes us to God's awesome presence. Prayer gives us hope, faith and inner strength to move on despite any physical, emotional, material and spiritual challenges.

Prayer can overcome any challenges, defeat any enemies, face any adversities and surpass any difficult situations in life. Prayer will help us to go through any storms in life, pass any hurdles, climb any mountains, survive any problems and destroy any evil plans against a true child of God. Prayer will help us to accept things calmly, accept certain unforeseen events and failures and continue to depend upon God for His will and His way.

## JOHN F McALLSTER



If one were to ask, "Who is the first? or "Who is the last", the person being asked the probably would wonder, "The first and last what"

In the scriptures and we find the answer to all three questions. In Isaiah 14:4, it says:

Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD (Yahweh), the last; I am He.

Here the first is with the last, and together they are the I AM HE. How the first can be with last, and yet both be the I AM HE, is a great mystery. So in verse 10, He says, "Fear thou not; for I am with uthee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God..."

In Isaiah 44:6, it reads:

Thus saith the Lord (Yahweh) the King of Israel, and his (Israel's) redeemer the Lord (Yahweh) of hosts; I am the first and I am the Last; and beside ME there is no God.

The first is with the last, yet the first is also the last Beside HIM, there is no God. Therefore, He is the first God and with the last, is the ONLY GOD.

Isaiah 44:8 declares:

Fear ye not, neither be afraid:

have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? Ye are my witness. Is there a God beside ME? Yea, there is no God; I know not any.

Isaiah 45:5 says:

I AM the LORD (Yahweh) and there is none else, there is no God beside ME...

So, according to Isaiah,

the first and last is the only God and LORD (Yahweh).

►►► FULL STORY ON - 05

# The first and the Last

►►► **FULL STORY ON - 04**

He is the first and last God, the ONLY GOD.

With these scriptures in Isaiah, we now turn to the book of Revelation. Isaiah was written in the Hebrew Tongue, and Revelation was written in Greek in english, we find these words:

Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced HIM and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen. I AM Alpha and omega, the Beginning and the Ending, saith the Lord, which is and which was, and which is to come. The Almighty is the one who is Alpha, omega beginning and ending, as well as the one who is, which was, and is to come!

Revelation 1:11 repeats that I AM Alpha and Omega, the frist and the last.

We remember that Isaiah identified the frist and last with only God. John, here in Revelation , calls the same one, Alpha and Omega Beginning and Ending in vers 8, frist and last in verse 11. In case it is not clear yet to the reader, verse 8 calls this one, the Almighty Himself!

Let it be know that the frist is with the last in Isaiah 41:4 yet the last is the same one as the frist in all these other scriptures.

Does this not remind us of John 1:1?

In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the word was God. Jn 1:14 further states that the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt amongst us.

Revelation 1:17-18 says:

And when I (John) saw HIM, I fell at His feet

ad dead, and He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, fear not; I am the frist and last: I AM HE that LIVETH and was DEAD, and Behold, I am alive forever more, Amen; and have keys of hell (Hades) and of death.

Clearly, the Almighty, the frist God and last God, the only God. there is none else - He also become a man, and DIED, but rose again, being alive forever more. This identifies the frist and the last as both the Almighty God and a man who could DIE and rise again. He is the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

To the angel of the church in smyrna john said, These things saith the frist and

the last which was and is alive.

(Revelation 2:8)

We have Isaiah and john both testifying that the frist and last is none other than the one ONLY ALMIGHTY GOD and now this same one died and rose again to live forevermore.

Revelation 19:13 says:

He was clothed with a Vesture dipped in blood; and His Name is called, The Word of God.

Verse 16 also says:

...and He hath on his Vesture and on His thigh name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Revelation 21:6-7 declares:

And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give unto him that is a thirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

The Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the end, will be the God of the overcomer, and overcomer will HIS son.

In case the previous verses are not clear, the book of Revelation in chapter 22 declares the Alpha and Omega the Beginning and the end, the frist and last in verse 13 to be in verse 16:

I, JESUS, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the Bright and Morning Star.

In verse 20, " he that testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Who is the frist God?

Who is Last God?

The almighty God Who, as a man, Died and rose again

He is alive forever more, THE LORD JESUS!



Pastor Shibu Thomas  
Oklahoma, USA

**A**t times, we have stood helpless and baffled in front of the shut doors in our lives. In some places we had bitter experiences even though we had our hopes high. Many things happened against our liking. When things go wrong, like this, repeatedly, or when nothing takes place as we wish, we reach a conclusion. This is my fate! This door will never be opened. But dear child of God, you are mistaken! This is just the beginning of a new way! The one who has the key of David says, "when He opens, no one can shut". When one door is closed by the people or Satan himself, the Lord will open seven ways for you. When the hand of the Lord is with you, there is solution for all your problems.

►►► FULL STORY ON - 02

mained in John a unfathomable, steadfast trust in Jesus. Jesus would answer his query and send an answer with the disciples.

Jesus loved John and entertained his disciples and took them to places when He went out. He made them witness the miracles He did and sent them back to John saying, "Tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them." (Luke 7: 22). Jesus was very sure that John will understand the meaning of the text taken from Isaiah and reach a conclusion on his question.

In this time and age, to experiencing a darkness state is common for many. The doubts can arise from any circumstance and on any day. When doubts creep in, always ask God for an answer. He, indeed, will answer, just like Jesus did with John the Baptist.

## None Can Shut What He Opens!!

I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.  
Isaiah 22: 22

The people of Israel faced a dire situation when they came out of Egypt. The Red sea stopped their journey and was right in front of them. On either sides were high and

Rocky Mountains and at the back was the ferocious army of Pharaoh with his war horses and chariots. The people looked feared at the sight of the army of Pharaoh and Moses did not know what to do, excepting calling God for help. Then God said to Moses to ask the people to move forward. When the people of God walked according to the word of God, they passed through the dry grounds in the midst of the sea. An unexpected way was opened for them.

God will bring before you many of those unfulfilled expectations of yours through the news ways He would open for you. Some of those hurdles in life will become miracles. God alone is great and He is forever the same. His miracles will continue to take place for those who wait upon Him. He will open a way for you, believe it. No one will close it!

Prayer – Lord, I know that you care for me! Please open a new way for me! Amen!



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►►► **FULL STORY ON - 01**

between the Qatari peninsula and the north-eastern Saudi Arabian coast and is home to the U.S. Navy's regional headquarters.

Friday's announcement comes on the heels of Serbia and Kosovo — a partially-recognized Muslim-majority nation in Eastern Europe — normalizing economic relations last week. As part of that deal, agreements in principle were made for Kosovo to recognize Israel and for Serbia to relocate its embassy to Jerusalem as the United States did in late 2017.

In August, the United Arab Emirates agreed to establish full relations with Israel. In response to the deal with the UAE, a Norwegian politician nominated Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize.

The conventional thinking about Middle East affairs has been that a peace agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians in their long-running conflict is a necessary predicate for re-establishing diplomatic ties between Israel and other Arab nations.

The Trump administration appears to be doing it the other way around, ironing out peace accords with Arab nations in view of ongoing efforts with Israelis and the Palestinians. That two peace deals happened so quickly has some believing that normalized relations might be broadened with other nations throughout the region.

The Palestinians called the deal with Bahrain "a betrayal," according to The Associated Press. "This is another stab in the back of the Palestinian cause, the Palestinian people and their rights," said Wasel Abu Yousef, a senior Palestinian official. "It is a betrayal of Jerusalem and the Palestinians. ... We see absolutely no justification for this free normalization with Israel."

In the UAE agreement, Israel agreed to the freezing of its decision to annex Palestinian territories, a condition the Arab nation saw as essential. Yet a senior Israeli official has said Netanyahu's annexation was only "temporarily suspended" to permit the signing of the deal with the Emirates.

The geopolitical shift in the region highlights easing tensions between Israel and some Arab states and the increased disdain mostly Sunni Muslim nations in the Persian Gulf have toward Iran, whose Shi'ite government

is openly hostile toward Israel and funds proxies throughout the Middle East, such as the terrorist group Hezbollah. Bahrain has blamed Iran for arming militants in the island nation.

Netanyahu indicated that other deals were in the works in a separate statement Friday, noting that it took 26 years between the second peace agreement with an Arab country and the third, a reference to a 1994 treaty with Jordan and the August deal with the UAE. "But only 29 days between the third and the fourth, and there will be more," he said.



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## JUDGE BANS INDOOR SERVICES AT JOHN MACARTHUR'S GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

A California court has issued a preliminary injunction against Pastor John MacArthur and Grace Community Church, banning them from conducting, participating in or attending any indoor worship services until the case is resolved.

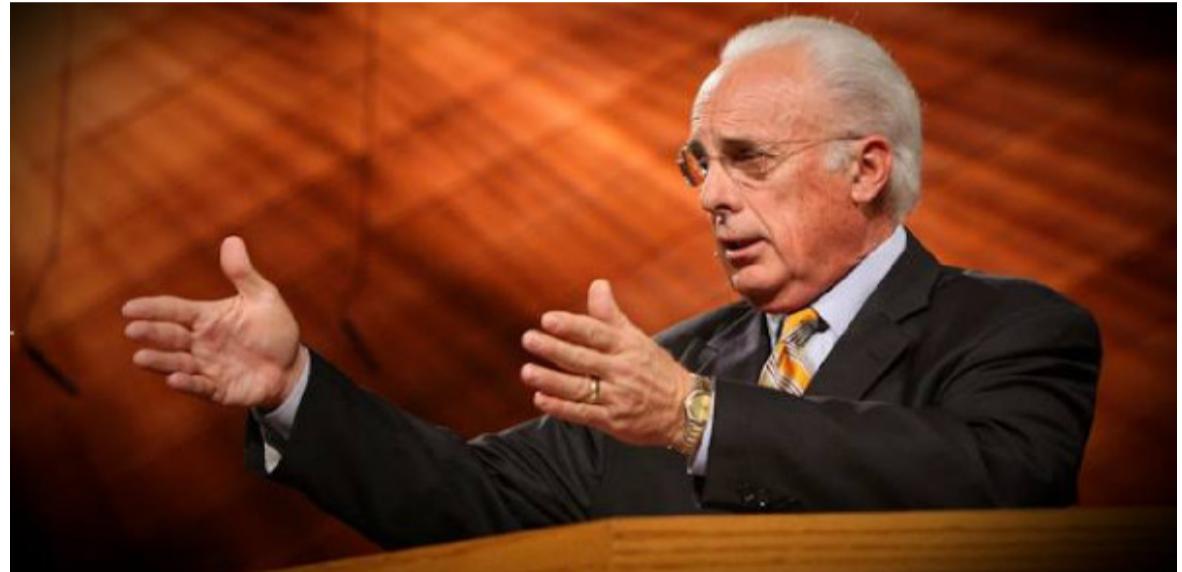
In what lawyers for the Sun Valley-based megachurch described as a "setback," a Los Angeles County Superior Court judge on Sept. 10 granted the county's request for an injunction prohibiting Grace Community from holding indoor services in violation of county health orders. Judge Mitchell L. Beckloff ruled that the church must not conduct any outdoor worship services unless it fully complies with the county's mandates relating to physical distancing and face coverings, according to the nonprofit law firm Thomas More Society.

In an 18-page ruling, Beckloff wrote that the county demonstrated "a likelihood of success on the merits of its claims" and found that the "balance of harms tips in its favor."

"[T]he Court finds the balance of harms tips in favor of the County," the judge contends. "The potential consequences of community spread of COVID-19 and concomitant risk of death to members of the community — associated and unassociated with the Church — outweighs the harm that flows from the restriction on indoor worship caused by the County Health Order."

MacArthur called the ruling "inexplicable." "[The] judge said the 'scale tipped in favor of the county.' 1/100th of 1% of Californians with a virus apparently wins over the U.S. Constitution and religious freedom for all?" the pastor asked. "That is not what our founders said. Nor is that what God says, who gave us our rights that our government — including the judicial branch — is supposed to protect. The scale should always tip in favor of liberty, especially for churches."

County officials have repeatedly tried to get a court order to shutter Grace Community Church, which has been holding in-person worship services since last month in violation of orders from Gov. Gavin Newsom. The governor has mandated that churches in some counties refrain from indoor services amid the COVID-19 pandemic.



Previously, officials sent a cease and desist letter to the church and threatened MacArthur with fines and even possible arrest if his church doesn't comply with state orders.

In August, Los Angeles County terminated a lease agreement for a parking lot the church has used for over 40 years. Last week, the county fined Grace Community \$1,000 for violating a COVID-19 sign ordinance due to the placement of the sign.

In a statement, Thomas More Society Special Counsel Jenna Ellis called the latest ruling a "temporary setback." She said attorneys will "continue to fight for Pastor MacArthur and Grace Community Church's constitutionally protected right to hold church." "While the judge did go out of his way to repeatedly state that he is not ruling on the merits, only a ruling at this very preliminary stage, Pastor MacArthur is still harmed because he has every right to hold church," Ellis explained. "Church is essential, and no government agent has the runaway, unlimited power to force churches to close indefinitely," the lawyer added. "The County's argument was basically 'because we can,' which is the very definition of tyranny.

Without limiting government's power in favor of freedom and protected rights, we have no liberty. We will fight for religious freedom, as our founders did when they wrote the First Amendment."

MacArthur recently told his congregation that "there is no pandemic," referring to a recent report released by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "I don't want to offer myself as any kind of an expert, but a rather telling report came out this week and for the first time, we heard the truth," he argued. "The CDC ... said that in truth, 6% of the deaths that have occurred can be directly attributable to COVID, 94% cannot. Of the 160,000 people that have died, 9,210 actually died from COVID."

In an earlier declaration, the theologian who hosts a syndicated radio program argued that the county is attempting to impede on his and his congregation's "free exercise of religion by criminalizing activity directly required by our faith." "As a church, we have a moral and religious obligation to continue allowing our congregants to gather in our sanctuary to worship the Lord," MacArthur said, adding that the church is the "core of life for thousands from nursery to seniors."

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▶▶▶ FULL STORY ON - 12

annual reading marathon, which was first held in 1990, normally takes place on the West Terrace of the U.S. Capitol in the spring-time every year.

Keith Davidson, the founder of Seedline International, an Indiana-based ministry that has facilitated the event since 2019, said that the coronavirus pandemic upended the spring plans and forced organizers to reschedule for later in the summer. In an interview Davidson explained that because "they're getting ready for the inauguration," the West Terrace is not available for the marathon this year. This year, the Bible will be read from the Faith & Liberty building located on Second Street in the city's Capitol Hill neighborhood across the street to the U.S. Supreme Court building. "We are on Capitol Hill basically, we're just not on [U.S. Capitol] property. ... Actually, the Supreme Court [building] is right in front of us," Davidson explained.

Seedline International has "a team of 20 or so" that will be present for the marathon. "They'll rotate off and on and then other folks come in and rotate off and on," the group's director said. "They have times that they sign up for."

In addition to the team from Seedline International, other prominent figures in the faith community have been invited to participate in the Bible Reading Marathon. Last year, Rep. Louie Gohmert, R-Texas, was one of the readers. This year, Davidson said that he sent an invitation to U.S. Senate Chaplain Rev. Barry Black to participate this year. "Last year, we had almost 500 readers," Davidson recalled. "This year, it's probably going to be around 300 because of COVID."

In addition to offering people the opportunity to read the word of God in Washington D.C., the organizers of the reading marathon are giving people who cannot make it to the capital city the opportunity to participate as well. "Something that we're doing new this year because of COVID, we're ... offering the option for virtual reading from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m."

He said that among those who plan to read virtually are a missionary from Mexico as well as a missionary and his family in South Korea. Davidson predicts that "25% of the readers are going to be virtual this year." "We didn't want to exclude anybody because of COVID," he stressed.

As the nation grapples with the coronavirus pandemic and racial unrest, Davidson believes that it is more important than ever to turn to the Bible. "This read, especially this year, is needed across our country. I think our nation's hope lies in the word of God," he proclaimed. "I think the Bible is our foundation and can give us that duration and give us hope to get back to where ... America once was."

## Sparkling Wisdom!

❖.. "Don't be dependent on man, because they change like the wind. Depend on the Lord, and know that He is faithful to keep His Word." – **Matthew Hagee**

❖. "We may speak about a place where there are no tears, no death, no fear, no night; but those are just the benefits of heaven. The beauty of heaven is seeing God." – **Max Lucado**

❖. "Relying on God has to start all over every day, as if nothing has yet been done." – **C.S. Lewis**

❖. "God is looking for those with whom He can do the impossible — what a pity that we plan only the things that we can do by ourselves." – **AW Tozer**

❖. "If you believe in a God who controls the big things, you have to believe in a God who controls the little things. It is we, of course, to whom things look 'little' or 'big'." – **Elisabeth Elliot**

❖. "My deepest awareness of myself is that I am deeply loved by Jesus Christ and I have done nothing to earn it or deserve it." – **Brennan Manning**

❖. "The spirit of complaint is born out of an unwillingness to trust God with today. ... spending your time looking back toward Egypt or wishing for the future all the while missing what God is doing right now." – **Priscilla Shirer**

❖. "Do not have your concert first, and then tune your instrument afterwards. Begin the day with the Word of God and prayer, and get first of all into harmony with Him." – **James Hudson Taylor**

❖. "Your potential is the sum of all the possibilities God has for your life." – **Charles Stanley**

❖. "Radical obedience to Christ is not easy... It's not comfort, not health, not wealth, and not prosperity in this world. Radical obedience to Christ risks losing all these things. But in the end, such risk finds its reward in Christ. And he is more than enough for us." – **David Platt**



**Abigail Thyvilyal John**

## EXPLOSIVE GROWTH OF CHRISTIAN FAITH IN IRAN: NUMBER OF BELIEVERS TO ONE MILLION



Missiologists have long spoken of the explosive growth of the church in Iran. Now they have data to back up their claims—from secular research. According to a new survey of 50,000 Iranians—90 percent residing in Iran—by GAMAAN, a Netherlands-based research group, 1.5 percent identified as Christian.

Extrapolating over Iran's population of approximately 50 million literate adults (the sample surveyed) yields at least 750,000 believers. According to GAMAAN, the number of Christians in Iran is “without doubt in the order of magnitude of several hundreds of thousands and growing beyond a million.” The traditional Armenian and Assyrian Christians in Iran number 117,700, according to the latest government statistics.

Christian experts surveyed by CT expressed little surprise. But it may make a significant difference for the Iranian church. “With the lack of proper data, most international advocacy groups expressed a degree of doubt on how widespread the conversion phenomenon is in Iran,” said Mansour Borji, research and advocacy director for Article 18, a UK-based organization dedicated to the protection and promotion of religious freedom in Iran. “It is pleasing to see—for the first time—a secular organization adding its weight to these claims.” The research, which asked 23 questions about an individuals’ “attitude toward religion” and demographics, was run by professors

associated with the respected Dutch universities of Tilburg and Utrecht. The general presumption of doubt risked influencing asylum applications by Iranians seeking resettlement in Europe or elsewhere. “We do not regard it as remotely plausible that there are as many as 1 million people secretly practicing Christianity in Iran today,” wrote a UK judge in a March ruling establishing best practice guidelines, following a case that ultimately denied asylum to an Iranian convert. “The huge numbers of converts claimed by various evangelical missions



must be viewed in light of the fact that ... the more converts they can claim, the greater the incentive for co-religionists to donate.” Yet despite the widespread skepticism, research conducted by Christian advocacy organizations has begun to produce results.

In 2005, the United Nations created the Geneva-based Universal Periodic Review to evaluate the human rights status of every nation every 4.5 years. During its review session in February, for the first time recommendations for Iran included its treatment of “Christian converts,” issued by Norway and the Netherlands. “We try to build relations with diplomats as much as they allow,” said Wissam al-Saliby, advocacy director for the World Evangelical Alliance. “Without such reporting, news of Christian persecution will not filter into Geneva circles, and nations will not feel any pressure.” It is important for Iran to hear the distinction between its traditional Christian communities, and its converts to the Christian faith.”

But according to the GAMAAN survey, there is another distinction Iran must make. “The real news is not the number of Christians,” said Johannes de Jong, director of the Sallux (“Salt-Light” in Latin) think tank, affiliated with the European Christian Political Movement. “It is the massive secularization of Iranian society as a whole.” Only 32 percent of those surveyed identified themselves as Shi'ite Muslim. Officially, Iran puts their number at 95 percent.

And according to a 2019 survey by GAMAAN, 79 percent of the population would vote against an Islamic republic. While this might seem a fertile field for Christian witness, David Yeghnazar of Elam Ministries warns against the “clay feet” of secularism. For example, almost 4 in 10 Iranians (37%) drink alcohol—which is forbidden in Islam. “Iranians are attracted to Christianity because they think it is part and parcel of the free, secular, and democratic West,” he said. “It is important for Christian agencies to pry Christianity away from that mold.”

►►► FULL STORY ON - 01

Churches Association of Manipur, Ecreosoculis North Western Gossner Evangelical, and Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church have all had their licenses canceled under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act.

John Prabhudoss, chairman of the Federation of Indian American Christian Organizations of North America, told The Christian Post that two additional Christian charities — Rajnandgaon Leprosy Hospital (A member of the Christian Medical Association of India) and the DonBosco Tribal Development Society — also lost their licenses to accept foreign funds.

Without these licenses, the Christian organizations will be unable to legally receive donations from outside India, hindering their ability to carry out their evangelistic ministries.

"From time to time, relevant matters concerning FCRA norms are reviewed, and government actions are taken," an official from the Home Ministry told UCAN without citing a specific reason why the Christian organizations' licenses were canceled.

Prabhudoss told a news agency that curtailing the flow of foreign money to Christian organizations is "blackmail" on the part of the governing Bharatiya Janata Party, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, "in expectations of a payday." "A government action like the one taken against these Christian insti-

tutions is taken against those who receive substantial amounts of donations/investments from overseas," he explained.

"Then intermediaries get involved offering to resolve the issue with the government. Those intermediaries will name their price. Once the amount is paid, they will clear the institution of all wrongdoing. Then officially they will restore the ability of these institutions to receive funds from overseas. These 'donations' are paid to the party funds or affiliates of the BJP party."

Since Modi took office in 2014, more than 11,000 nongovernmental organizations have lost their licenses to accept foreign funds, according to The New York Times.

In 2017, Compassion International, a U.S.-based Christian organization that sponsored more than 100,000 impoverished children in India, was forced to stop its operations after its FCRA license was canceled "on suspicion of engaging in religious conversion."

Prabhudoss told that he's "not surprised" by India's latest crackdown on foreign aid, adding that such actions wouldn't have happened "if the Trump administration took Compassion International's case seriously" three years ago. "President Trump shied away from taking any action," he said. "I was informed that the president did not show any interest when he was briefed by a friend of his at the White House. That kind of inaction or lack of reaction in a case involving Compassion International has greatly strength-

ened the confidence of the Hindu nationalist party headed by Mr. Modi."

India is ranked at No. 10 on Open Doors USA's World Watch List of countries where it's most difficult to be a Christian. The organization says that Christians in the country face "horrorific" levels of violence from extremists, with thousands of attacks taking place every year.

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## PAKISTAN SENTENCES CHRISTIAN MAN TO DEATH OVER ALLEGATION HE SENT BLASPHEMOUS TEXTS

A trial court in Pakistan sentenced a Christian man to death earlier this week after he was accused of sending blasphemous text messages to his former boss, fueling more criticism against the country's blasphemy laws that are frequently used to target religious minorities.

Asif Pervaiz, 37, who has been in custody since 2013 when he was alleged to have sent the blasphemous message to a former work supervisor, was sentenced to death by a ruling of a court in the Punjab capital of Lahore on Tuesday. "The evidence on record was clearly not enough to sentence Asif Pervaiz to death. As usual, trial judges have so far never acquitted anyone accused of blasphemy," Pervaiz's attorney Saif-ul-Malook told Christian Solidarity Worldwide. "I hope he will be freed by the High Court where we have filed an appeal. Sadly, Asif will continue to be incarcerated until his appeal is heard."

Malook previously represented Asia Bibi, a Pakistani Christian mother who was acquitted by Pakistan's Supreme Court in 2018 who spent nearly a decade on death row after she was accused of insulting Islam. Her case garnered international attention and scrutiny toward the country's blasphemy laws. "From my experience in the Asia Bibi case, judges in appeal courts hesitate to hear and decide blasphemy cases," Malook added.

"Cases involving murder are usually decided within three years, but blasphemy charges can take up to over seven years."

An example is the case of Christian couple Shagufta Kausar and her husband, Shafqat Emmanuel, whose death row appeal was delayed this summer after spending six years in prison for blasphemy. They were accused by a local imam of sending a text message insulting the Islamic prophet Muhammad. "We are very concerned by the trial court's decision to sentence Mr. Pervaiz



to death," stated Mervyn Thomas, the chief executive of CSW, a London-based human rights watchdog organization that monitors instances of persecution in over 20 countries. "Pakistan's harsh blasphemy laws have proven to be a source of suffering for many, and are regularly abused. Mr. Pervaiz now has to endure further, indefinite imprisonment, given the nature of blasphemy charges

and the social interests surrounding it."

The complainant in Pervaiz's case is Saeed Ahmed Khokhar, his former supervisor at the garment



factory he worked at. Khokhar accused Pervaiz of sending several blasphemous messages to his phone. Under Section 295 of Pakistan's legal code, blasphemy is punishable by life in prison or even death.

In denying the accusation, Pervaiz maintains that he was accused of the crime after refusing Khokhar's pressure that he convert to Islam. In Pakistan, more than nine out of every 10 people are Muslim. Pervaiz said during an earlier court hearing that he was confronted by Khokhar after he quit working at the factory.

Khokhar's lawyer, Ghulam Mustafa Chaudhry, said in an interview with Al Jazeera that his client denies pressuring Parvaiz to convert and argued that there were other Christian employees of the factory but none of them were accused of proselytizing. "He has taken this defense after the fact because he had no other clear defense," Chaudhry was quoted as saying. "That's why he accused him of trying to convert him."

The National Christian Party of Karachi held a one-day hunger strike on Wednesday to show solidarity with Pervaiz and other Christians accused of blasphemy in Pakistan. "These cases and false accusations are totally based on discrimination," NCP President Shabbir Shafqat told Asia News. "I am very afraid for the future of minorities in Pakistan. These cases are driving many minority members to leave the country. We must pray for our nation, for the police in Pakistan and for the judicial system."

In December 2019, just over a year after Asia Bibi's acquittal, university lecturer Junaid Hafeez was sentenced to death after he was accused of blasphemy following an Islamic student group taking issue with his liberal teaching. He has been in prison since 2013.

According to USCIRF, Pakistan's blasphemy laws create a culture of impunity for violent attacks against religious minorities following accusations. Pakistan is ranked as the fifth-worst country in the world when it comes to Christian persecution on Open Doors USA's 2020 World Watch List.



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