

Billionaire Peter Thiel's Clash With Pope Leo Puts AI, China and Biblical Truth in the Spotlight

The first great technological project recorded in Scripture was never about bricks or towers. It was about mankind believing it could build a future without God (Gen. 11:1-9).

Thousands of years later, the Tower of Babel has unexpectedly found its way into one of today's biggest debates: artificial intelligence.

That reality came into sharper focus after [billionaire technology investor Peter Thiel](#) publicly criticized Pope Leo XIV over the Vatican's call for stronger international oversight of artificial intelligence. While the political controversy has generated headlines, it also points to a much deeper question for us: As AI rapidly reshapes our world, how do we ensure that innovation remains a servant rather than becoming a master?

According to one report from Breitbart, Thiel argued that Pope Leo's position on AI regulation could unintentionally benefit China by slowing innovation in the United States while doing little to restrain the Chinese Communist Party.

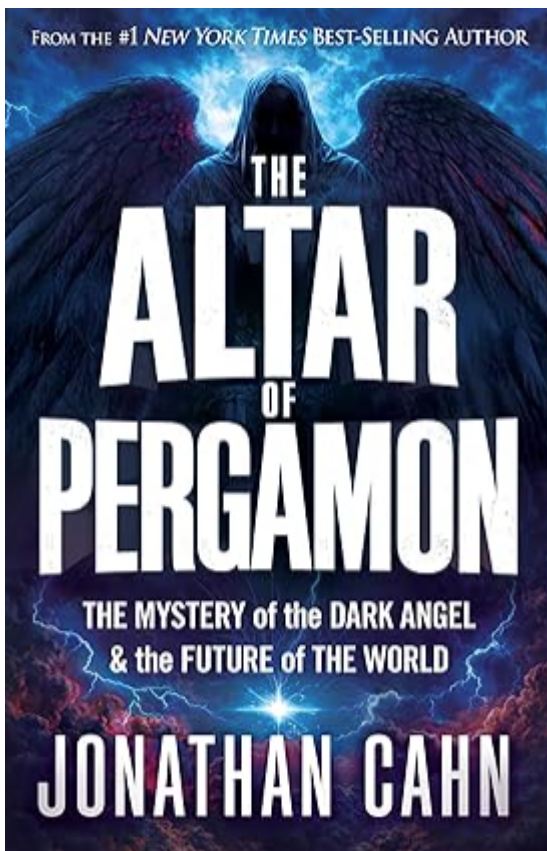
Speaking during a panel at the Aspen Ideas Festival, Thiel said that because the pope's message would influence Americans more than China, Leo was, "in his own view," "working for the Chinese Communists."

The Vatican did not respond to a request for comment, according to the report.

More than a debate about technology

The controversy centers on Pope Leo's first encyclical, Magnifica Humanitas ("Magnificent Humanity"), which calls for greater oversight of artificial intelligence while warning against placing too much confidence in technology.

The encyclical declares that artificial intelligence "must be disarmed" and urges greater international regulation of the rapidly developing technology.



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[At the heart of the pope's argument is a conviction](#) that every advance in technology must remain subject to God's design for humanity rather than redefining it. Machines may process information at astonishing speed, but they cannot bear God's image, love their neighbor or walk in obedience to their Creator (Gen. 1:26-27).

According to the encyclical, "while AI might become smarter

than any one of us, it will never be able to match the unexpected and delightful achievements of all of us – the unpredictable genius of magnificent humanity.”

Pope Leo reinforces that point by turning to one of Scripture’s clearest warnings about human pride.

The encyclical describes Babel as “an impressive feat” built with “a single language, a single technology, a single direction.”

Yet the project ultimately failed because “it was a project conceived without reference to God, supported by a uniformity that eliminated diversity and that chose homogenization over communion.”

That is why the Tower of Babel continues to speak so powerfully today. God’s judgment did not fall because people built something remarkable. It fell because they believed human achievement could replace dependence on Him. The danger was never the technology itself. It was the heart behind it (Gen. 11:4-9).

How should we respond?

Thiel’s criticism and Pope Leo’s encyclical arrive as artificial intelligence rapidly transforms nearly every area of society. Questions surrounding ethics, privacy, employment, warfare and even human identity are moving from theory into everyday life.

We may reach different conclusions about how governments should regulate AI. We may also disagree with aspects of either Thiel’s criticism or the Vatican’s proposals.

What should unite us is something far greater than politics. Every new technology presents us with the same question humanity has faced since Eden: Will we trust God’s wisdom, or will we trust our own ability to determine what is best? (Gen.

3:1-7).

That is why discernment matters. AI can become an extraordinary tool for good, but every tool reflects the heart of the one using it. Technology may amplify human potential, but it also amplifies human sin when it is detached from biblical truth (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:23).

As artificial intelligence continues to reshape the world around us, we are called to test every new development against Scripture rather than cultural enthusiasm or political ideology (1 Thess. 5:21; 1 John 4:1).

Our confidence has never rested in mankind's greatest inventions. It rests in Jesus Christ, whose wisdom, truth and kingdom will endure long after every human innovation has passed away (Heb. 13:8; Rev. 11:15).

James Lasher, a seasoned writer and editor at Charisma Media, combines faith and storytelling with a journalism background from Otterbein University and ministry experience in Guatemala and at the LA Dream Center. A Marine Corps and Air Force veteran, he is the author of [The Revelation of Jesus: A Common Man's Commentary](#) and a contributor to Charisma magazine. For interviews and media inquiries, please contact media@charismamedia.com.

Pastor Ezra Jin Freed After Months in Chinese Detention

Following President Donald Trump's Intervention

After months of imprisonment for his Christian faith, [Pastor Ezra Jin is finally free.](#)

The founder of Beijing's influential Zion Church arrived safely in Los Angeles on July 4 after being released directly from detention in China, ending an ordeal that prompted an international outcry and months of fervent prayer from believers around the world. The release marks a significant victory for religious freedom advocates, even as other members of Jin's church remain behind bars.

ChinaAid announced the pastor's release Saturday, saying it welcomed the news "with profound gratitude" after learning Jin had safely reached the United States.

According to the ministry, "Pastor Jin had spent months in detention because of his Christian faith and ministry. His unexpected freedom is an answer to countless prayers offered by Christians around the world and demonstrates once again that sustained international advocacy can save lives and restore freedom."

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Rev. Dr. Bob Fu, founder and president of ChinaAid, [celebrated the pastor's release](#) while giving thanks to God and those who worked to secure his freedom.

"We rejoice with Pastor Ezra Jin, his family, and the global Body of Christ on this remarkable Independence Day miracle," Fu said. "We thank Almighty God for hearing the prayers of His people. We are deeply grateful to President Donald Trump, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and all U.S. officials who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to secure Pastor Jin's freedom. Their unwavering commitment demonstrates that principled leadership and persistent diplomacy can make a life-saving difference."

Jin's release comes after one of the largest crackdowns on a single house church in modern Chinese history. Chinese authorities detained Jin and numerous Zion Church leaders

during coordinated raids in October 2025. Eighteen church leaders were ultimately arrested as Beijing intensified its campaign against independent Christian congregations operating outside state control.

Although Christians are celebrating Jin's freedom, Fu emphasized that the work is far from over.

"While we celebrate Pastor Jin's freedom, our hearts remain with the countless pastors including 8 other jailed pastors and coworkers from Zion Church, priests, bishops, house church Christians, Uyghur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, Falun Gong practitioners, and other prisoners of conscience who remain unjustly imprisoned by the Chinese Communist Party. We respectfully call on President Trump and his Administration to continue making religious freedom and the release of all prisoners of faith a top priority in every engagement with Beijing. True progress in U.S.-China relations must include freedom for those imprisoned simply because they choose to believe."

ChinaAid also thanked members of Congress, international religious freedom advocates, churches and countless Christians whose prayers and advocacy kept Jin's case before senior U.S. officials throughout his imprisonment. The organization pledged to continue pressing for the release of every believer imprisoned because of his or her faith.

Fu concluded with a reminder that Jin's release is only one step toward a larger goal.

"Freedom for Pastor Jin is a tremendous victory. But our work is not finished until every prisoner of faith is free."

The circumstances surrounding Jin's release make the story even more remarkable.

According to ChinaAid, trusted sources said Chinese officials

informed Jin that his freedom came as a result of discussions between President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping and was presented as a goodwill gesture ahead of America's Independence Day.

Reuters, the Associated Press and other news organizations separately reported that Trump personally raised Jin's case during his May visit to Beijing, where Xi reportedly agreed to give the request serious consideration. Less than two months later, Jin was released from detention and reunited with his family in the United States.

Even so, eight members of Zion Church remain imprisoned in China, showing the world that the fight for religious freedom is far from over. Please lift them in prayer for strength and endurance during this time of persecution.

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Ancient Christian City Hidden Beneath Egypt's Desert for 1,600 Years Offers Powerful

Window Into Early Church

A remarkable archaeological discovery beneath Egypt's Western Desert is shedding new light on the enduring presence of Christianity in one of the ancient world's most important regions.

Archaeologists recently [uncovered a remarkably well-preserved Byzantine-era city at the Dakhla Oasis](#), revealing a thriving Christian community that flourished approximately 1,600 years ago.

According to a Daily Mail report, at the heart of the settlement stands a striking reminder of the city's faith.

At its centre stands a basilica church overlooking one of the city's main streets.

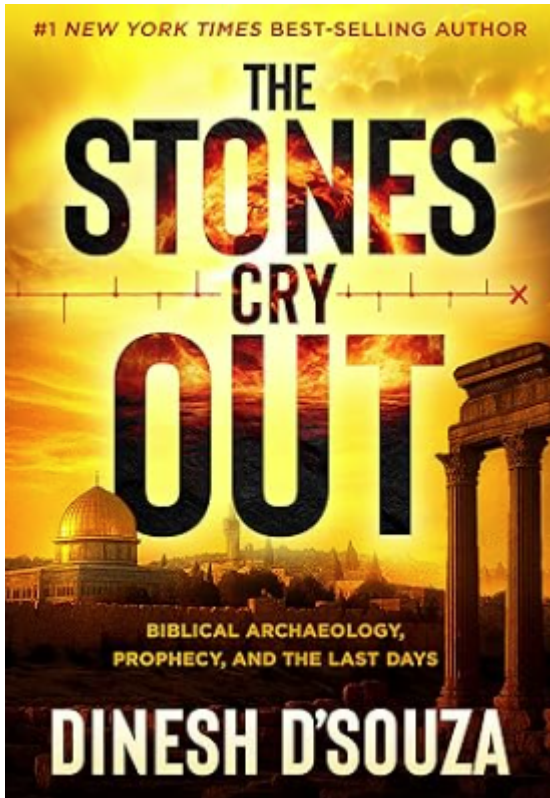
The discovery highlights the spread of Christianity across Egypt during the Byzantine era, when believers established churches and communities far beyond the country's better-known cities along the Nile.

According to the report, the city featured "broad north-south streets intersected by east-west roads to create public squares," along with homes, watchtowers and public buildings, painting the picture of a well-organized Christian settlement.

Mahmoud Massoud, director general of Dakhla Antiquities and head of the excavation mission, said the settlement "contained all the architectural components of a fully functioning community."

Among the most significant discoveries were nearly 200 inscribed pottery fragments, known as ostraca, preserving the

voices of the people who once lived there.



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Diaa Zahran, head of the Islamic, Coptic and Jewish Antiquities Sector, said, "One of the excavation's most significant discoveries is a collection of nearly 200 inscribed ostraca (pottery fragments used as writing material) bearing texts in both Coptic and Greek."

According to Zahran, the inscriptions "record commercial transactions, correspondence and other details of daily life, offering an exceptional documentary record of the city's inhabitants."

The discovery also reinforces Christianity's deep historical roots in Egypt. During the Byzantine period, "Christianity became the dominant religion, towns expanded across the country, and Egypt served as one of the empire's richest provinces."

Today, the unearthed basilica [stands as a testimony to](#)

[generations of believers](#) who faithfully gathered to worship Christ centuries before many of the world's modern nations even existed. As archaeologists continue uncovering the city, each discovery provides another glimpse into the lives of early Christians whose faith helped shape the history of the Church.

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Scientists Offer New Theory on Near-Death Experiences—What Does the Bible Say?

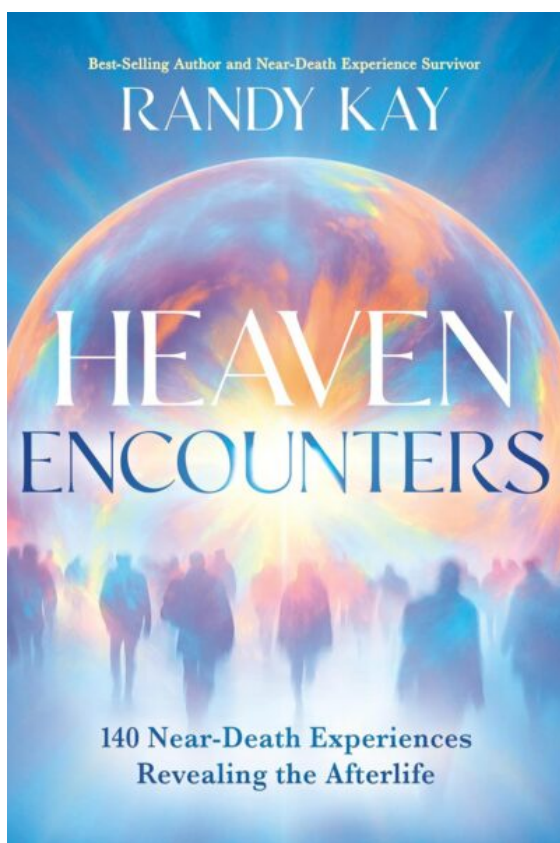
Millions of people around the world have reported near-death experiences, describing remarkably similar encounters that have fascinated doctors, researchers and us for decades.

A new psychological theory attempts to explain those experiences as the product of a dying brain. While the research offers insight into what may be happening physically during humanity's final moments, we also know from Scripture that death is both a physical and a spiritual event.

According to a report from Vice, [about 10% of people across 35 countries](#) say they have experienced a near-death experience, citing research published in PeerJ. Common accounts include leaving the body, moving toward a brilliant light, encountering deceased loved ones, experiencing overwhelming peace and returning to life.

Researchers continue finding that the brain remains active as death approaches.

“Dying, from a neurological standpoint, isn’t like flipping a light switch,” the article states. Studies have found “the brain producing a sudden surge in gamma waves—its highest-frequency output, associated with peak conscious processing and perception.”



[Order Randy Kay's New Book, "Heaven Encounters" on Amazon.com!](#)

The emotional side of these experiences is equally striking.

“The emotional picture that emerges from NDE accounts is mostly positive,” the article says. While about 14% of

reported experiences include distressing elements, most describe profound peace, love and understanding.

A paper published in *Frontiers in Psychology* proposes what researcher Kayış calls the “dying-moment dream hypothesis.”

According to the theory, as oxygen deprivation limits outside sensory input, “the brain stops receiving input from the outside world; it turns inward, flooding consciousness with memories and emotions drawn from the person’s own life.”

The hypothesis also suggests that the emotional tone of an experience is shaped by a person’s life history and that cultural background may influence how people interpret what they see.

Researchers acknowledge that those ideas remain speculative.

A Call for Biblical Discernment

We should, of course, approach near-death experiences with both humility and discernment.

Author Randy Kay, [who was clinically dead for more than 30 minutes before encountering Jesus](#), has spent years studying near-death experiences through the lens of Scripture. He encourages us to neither dismiss every account nor accept every testimony without testing it against God’s Word.

Kay has warned that many modern near-death accounts promote ideas that contradict Scripture. Instead, he says genuine encounters should glorify Jesus Christ and point people to the Gospel.

“It is not a collection of feel-good stories about tunnels and white light,” Kay wrote of his research, explaining that the accounts were examined for biblical consistency and supported by evidence.

Kay argues authentic experiences should:

- Glorify Jesus Christ.
- Agree with Scripture.
- Call people to repentance.
- Strengthen faith in the Gospel rather than curiosity about the supernatural.

The Physical and the Spiritual

Scientific research can help explain what the brain is doing as the body dies. Scripture reveals what happens beyond physical death.

Paul wrote, “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8).

Hebrews 9:27 declares, “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.”

There is no reason for us to fear legitimate scientific research. Every discovery about the human brain reveals more of the incredible design God built into His creation. At the same time, we should never confuse a physical explanation with a complete explanation.

Science can tell us what may be happening in the brain as life comes to an end. It cannot determine the eternal destiny of the soul.

Near-death experiences remain one of the most fascinating intersections of medicine, consciousness and faith. As we continue to learn more about the physical and mental processes surrounding death, let us also remain anchored in God’s Word, which gives us confidence that because Jesus Christ conquered death through His resurrection, all who place their faith in

Him have the sure hope of everlasting life.

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'God Had Other Plans': Arizona Toddler Found Alive After Being Declared Dead Remains a Miracle as Parents Face Potential Charges

An Arizona toddler whose extraordinary survival stunned the nation continues to recover after being mistakenly declared dead and later found alive inside a hospital morgue. While authorities are now seeking felony child abuse charges against his parents, [this remains a powerful reminder that God is still working miracles.](#)

According to Fox News, Gilbert police have recommended felony child abuse charges against the parents of 18-month-old Vincent Fiordilino after investigators concluded the boy nearly drowned during a Super Bowl party.

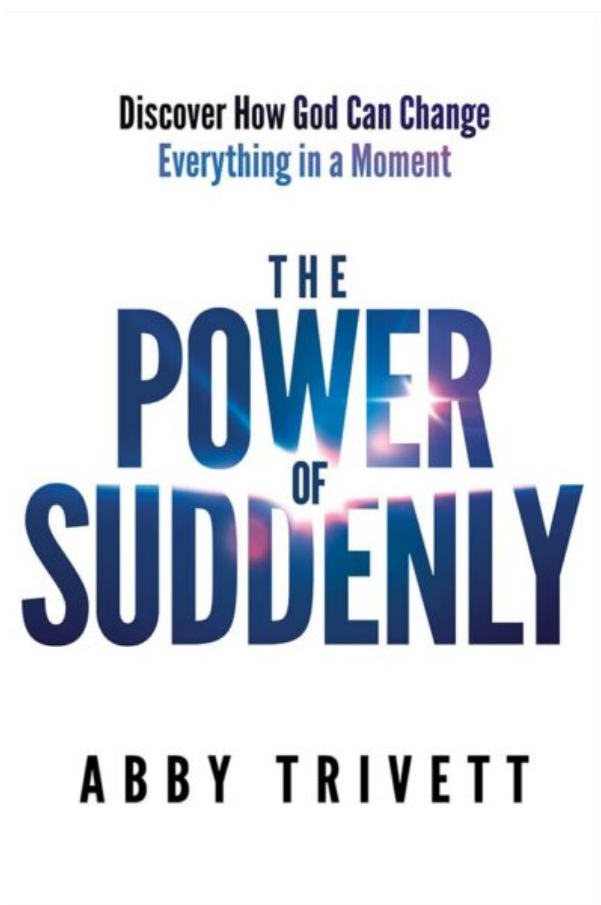
The Maricopa County Attorney's Office is reviewing the

recommendation, and no charges have been filed.

Investigators allege Vincent wandered out of his parents' sight before guests found him floating face down in a backyard swimming pool. Police say both parents later admitted to smoking marijuana during the gathering and allege their impairment contributed to the lapse in supervision.

After first responders rushed Vincent to Mercy Gilbert Medical Center, a physician pronounced him dead.

Then came the moment that captured national attention.



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Hours after Vincent had been transferred to the hospital morgue, medical personnel discovered he was still alive and breathing. He was immediately airlifted to Phoenix Children's Hospital.

According to the police report, Vincent's parents and responding officers questioned whether the toddler had actually died, believing he was still showing signs of life. Detectives also allege a nurse later detected a pulse after he had been pronounced dead. Police did not recommend criminal charges against the physician involved.

Following the incident, Dignity Health said it conducted a thorough review.

"This is a heartbreaking situation. We immediately conducted a thorough review of all aspects of the care that was provided to learn what happened and to make meaningful changes to strengthen our care," a hospital spokesperson said.

The family's GoFundMe page [calls Vincent a "miracle baby"](#) and recounts the unimaginable phone call his parents received after returning home, believing their son had died.

"Vincent was declared deceased," the fundraiser states. "His devastated parents were sent home in unimaginable grief. But God had other plans. A little after 11:30 p.m., the family received a call no one expected: the medical examiner had detected a faint heartbeat."

The fundraiser says Vincent's kidneys, lungs and liver initially began shutting down, and early scans suggested possible brain damage. Later testing reportedly found no brain damage. He continues to undergo extensive therapy and medical treatment as he recovers.

We thank God for preserving Vincent's life through an ordeal that seemed impossible to survive. His recovery is not yet complete, and he still needs our prayers. Please join us in praying for Vincent's continued healing, for wisdom for his medical team, and for God's grace to surround his family in the days ahead.

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Man Arrested in Church Parking Lot With Flamethrowers, Crossbows and More Than 500 Rounds of Ammunition

An innocent group of Christians gathered for Sunday morning worship at a North Carolina church never knew how close they may have come to danger.

Instead, they experienced something else: [God's protection working through alert citizens](#), prepared security and law enforcement officers who responded within minutes.

William S. Milliken III, 44, of Thomasville, was arrested Sunday morning outside Wesley Memorial Church in High Point after police received a 911 call at about 10:15 a.m. reporting an armed man sitting in a truck in the church parking lot during worship services.

According to the High Point Police Department, an off-duty officer working at the church immediately responded, while

additional officers arrived within minutes.

“The officers disarmed the man and took him into custody without incident,” police said.

No one inside the church was injured.

Police said Milliken was wearing a plate carrier, a type of body armor, when he was arrested.

After searching his truck, officers recovered what authorities described as a significant cache of weapons and equipment, including a CO2-powered launcher designed to resemble a handgun, two flamethrowers, two crossbows, more than 500 rounds of ammunition, rolls of black duct tape, three knives and oxycodone pills.

Milliken was charged with possession of a weapon of mass destruction, impersonation of a law enforcement officer and possession of a Schedule II controlled substance. He is being held in the Guilford County Jail.

High Point Police Chief Curtis Cheeks III [praised the officers who responded before the situation could escalate.](#)

“Thanks to the quick action of our officers, a man armed with weapons was taken into custody before anyone was hurt,” Cheeks said. “The officers prevented a potentially dangerous situation from escalating and helped ensure everyone attending church services could return home safely.”

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Cheeks also commended the person who made the initial emergency call.

"We also want to thank the community members who recognized a potential danger and had the courage to speak up," he said. "As we work to keep High Point safe, it is crucial that we continue to look out for each other."

Wesley Memorial Church likewise expressed gratitude to those who helped protect the congregation.

"We are grateful for the quick response of the High Point Police Department and our security team," the church said in a statement. "We remain committed to providing a safe environment for worship and ministry."

According to The Christian Post, court documents also indicate investigators found a notebook containing addresses of other churches and schools.

Stories like this remind us that faith and wisdom have always gone hand in hand.

When rebuilding Jerusalem's walls amid constant threats, Nehemiah did not tell God's people to ignore danger. Scripture says they prayed for God's protection while also posting guards: "Nevertheless, we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night" (Neh. 4:9, MEV).

Jesus taught the same balance when He instructed His followers, "Listen, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Matt. 10:16).

Likewise, Proverbs reminds us, "A prudent man foresees the evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished" (Prov. 27:12).

Churches should never live in fear, but neither should they ignore wisdom.

On Sunday morning in High Point, an observant citizen made a phone call; an off-duty officer responded immediately; law enforcement acted quickly; and worshippers returned home safely.

That outcome is worth celebrating.

As we continue gathering to worship despite the enemy's best efforts, let us pray for our pastors, church security teams, law enforcement officers and congregations across the nation. May God continue to grant His people discernment, courage and peace as we faithfully proclaim the Gospel in every generation.

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L.A. Marzulli: 1 Bible Passage Unlocks Nearly Every End-Times Mystery

What if one overlooked verse in Genesis explains some of the Bible's most difficult passages—and even the spiritual battles unfolding in our world today?

[That's the case L.A. Marzulli makes.](#) Speaking with Taylor Welch on The Deep End, the veteran author and researcher revealed that Genesis 3:15 is the prophetic key that unlocks the Bible's overarching story, from the Garden of Eden to the return of Jesus Christ.

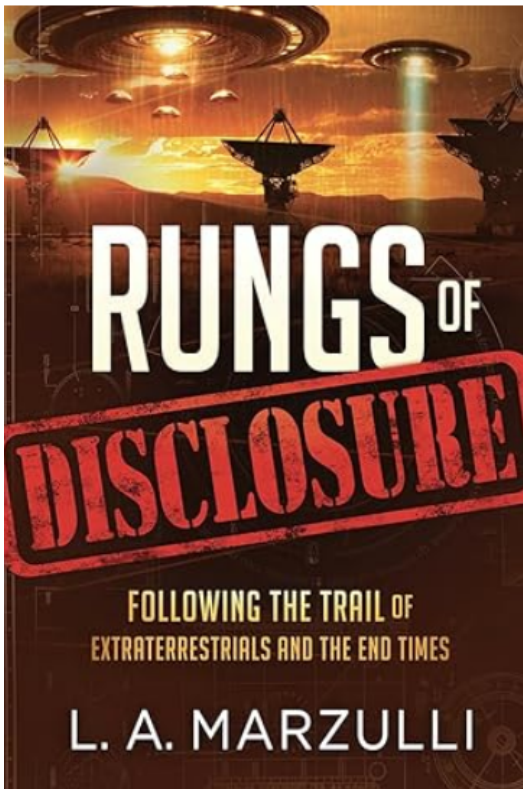
“The seed war. Genesis 3:15, the offspring, the seed of the dragon, will be at war with the offspring of the woman,” Marzulli said. “The one coming from the woman, the protoevangelium, will crush the dragon's head. The dragon will bruise His heel. That's the whole Bible.”

Marzulli said he didn't always understand that connection.

As a new Christian reading through the Old Testament for the first time, he found himself wrestling with some of Scripture's most difficult accounts. The Flood, the Tower of Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah and the conquest of Canaan all left

him asking the same question.

“I get to Noah, and I have a real problem with that,” he recalled. “I’m kind of going, ‘Wait, why is this God of the Old Testament destroying everybody on the planet except for eight people? Who is this guy? He can’t be like Jesus.’”



[Order L.A. Marzulli's Book, "Rungs of Disclosure" on Amazon.com!](#)

His questions only multiplied as he continued reading.

“Then you get to the Tower of Babel, and you kind of go, ‘Wait, wait, wait. Why is He doing this? Why confuse? What did these people do that was so bad?’ Then you get to Sodom and Gomorrah, and it’s like, ‘Who is this?’ And finally, the conquest of Canaan.”

Marzulli said his frustration reached a breaking point.

“Literally, I have the Bible, and I’m looking at the wall. I’m ready to throw the Bible against the wall and walk out of the room. Jesus, I get [it] because I’m born again, Spirit-filled.

Jesus, I get. This other stuff... who is this guy?"

Years later, everything changed.

"Finally, someone explained Genesis 6 and Genesis 3:15. The seed war."

That moment, [Marzulli said, unlocked the rest of Scripture.](#)

"The rest of the Bible unfolds. Then Genesis 6 makes sense with the Flood. Then the Tower of Babel makes sense. Then Abraham... the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Oh, I get it. Because, you know, they want to have sex with the angels that go in. Why is that? They want the power... And then finally, the conquest of Canaan."

According to Marzulli, Genesis 3:15 is the gateway to understanding the Bible's grand narrative, yet it remains largely absent from many churches.

"That's the gateway, in my opinion," he said. "Most people in church have no idea what it is. None. It's not taught."

Marzulli believes that recovering this biblical framework changes how Christians read some of the Bible's most controversial passages, particularly Genesis 6.

"If a person holds the Sethite view, with all due respect to all you Sethites out there... the sons of God are the bene ha'Elohim, the fallen angels creating a hybrid being known as the Nephilim."

He also believes the same conflict introduced in Eden continues throughout Scripture.

"The conquest of Canaan is the culmination of the seed war on some level because the dragon knows that someone is going to crush his head," Marzulli said. "The dragon knows, 'Aha, it's going to be from that seed,' but he doesn't know what tribe yet."

The Bible is not a collection of disconnected stories but one continuous account of God's redemptive plan through Jesus Christ and the battle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness.

"The seed war... that's the whole Bible," Marzulli said. "It's not taught."

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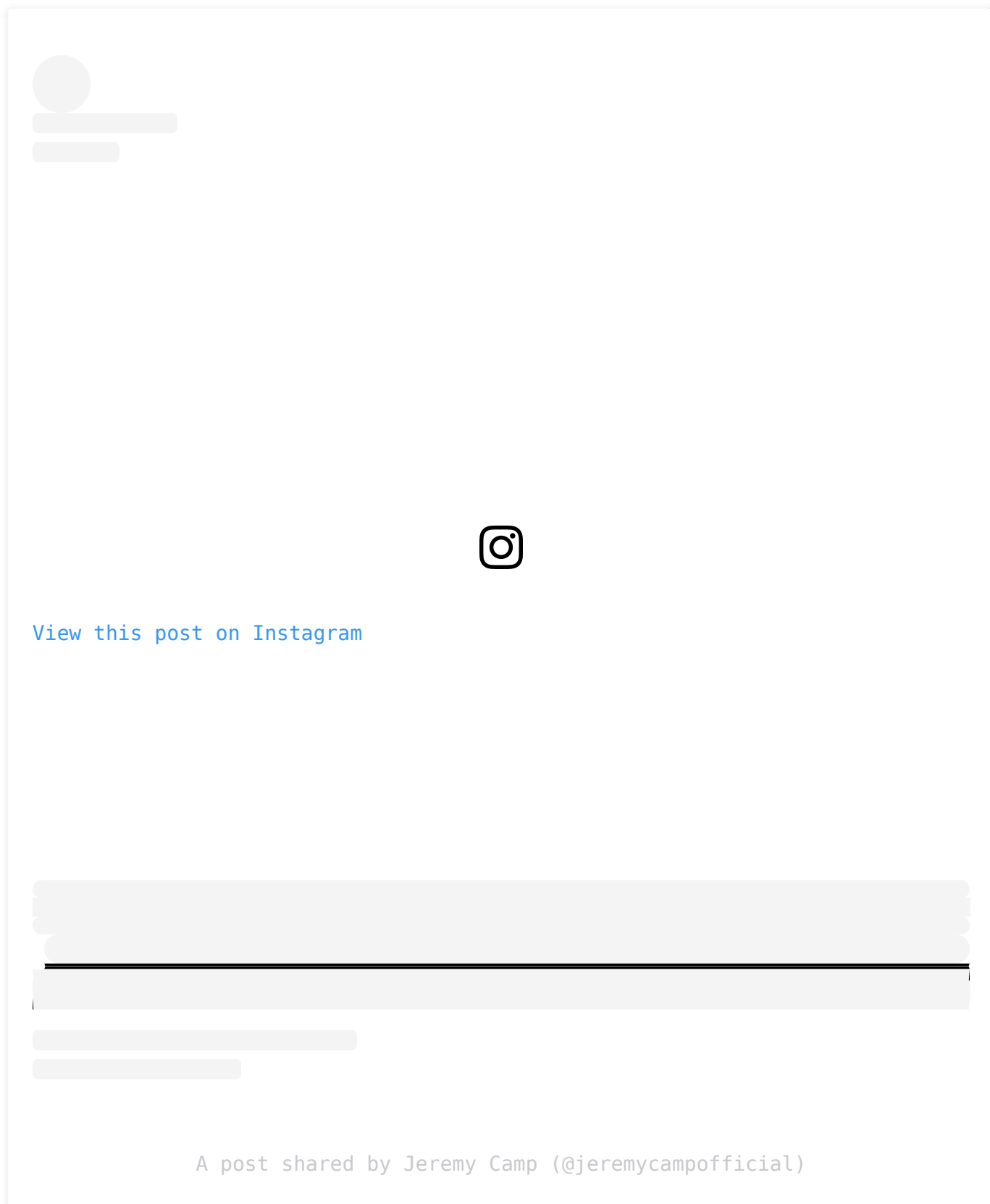
Jeremy Camp Points Christians Back to the True Heart of Revival

Christian singer Jeremy Camp is encouraging believers to look beyond packed stadiums and exciting events and remember where genuine revival truly begins.

According to Movieguide®, Camp recently shared a message on Instagram [challenging the idea that revival should be measured by attendance alone.](#)

"The other day I was actually kind of scrolling through Instagram and seeing all these posts that were saying stadiums are packed out all over America – 'Revival is happening,'"

Camp said. "It kind of didn't sit with me great for a couple reasons."



He explained that while large gatherings can be encouraging, they are not the true measure of spiritual renewal.

“One is to judge revival off mass numbers is not what it really means,” Camp said. “Revival actually begins in your heart, so it’s saying, ‘Hey God, I want to start with me on my face, going here I am broken before you, realizing that your love and forgiveness are so great.’”

Camp pointed believers back to repentance and a daily dependence on Christ.

“It is recognizing our desperate need for Jesus constantly. His revival begins with a personal conviction – repentance. And from there I do believe, yes, there can be mass numbers that happen, but just numbers doesn’t mean revival.”



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He said [lasting transformation—not crowd size—is the evidence of God at work.](#)

“Revival starts with a true, changed heart and lasting fruit of your family, your community, and if it spreads out, that’s what we love. It starts with you,” Camp said.

The message echoes the biblical call to humility and repentance found throughout Scripture. It is also the heartbeat behind Camp's recently released song, "Revival."

"My prayer is that God would start with me, that He would bring repentance, forgiveness, humility and transformation to my life," Camp said. "And when that happens, it spills into our families, communities, schools and churches. May we never confuse numbers with fruit. True revival is seen in changed lives that look more and more like Jesus."

Camp's reminder offers an encouraging challenge for all of us: before we pray for revival in our nation, we should first invite God to revive our own hearts.

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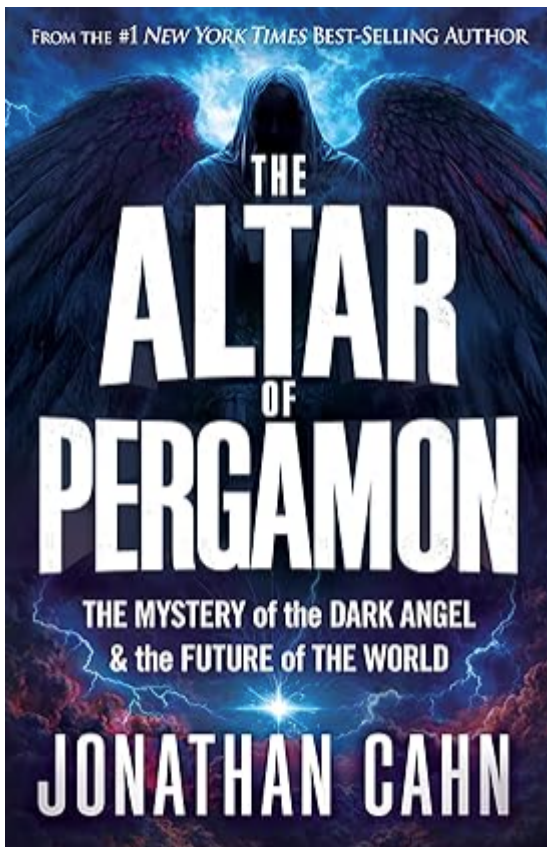
Vatican Excommunicates Traditionalist Catholic Leaders, Declares SSPX in Schism

The Vatican has formally [declared the Society of St. Pius X \(SSPX\)](#), a traditionalist Catholic organization, to be in

schism after it consecrated four bishops without the approval of Pope Leo XIV.

According to the Associated Press, the Vatican's doctrine office issued a decree Thursday declaring the society in schism and announcing the excommunication of its bishops and priests after the consecrations took place during a Mass in Switzerland despite the pope's request that they be postponed in the interest of church unity.

The SSPX is known for celebrating the traditional Latin Mass and rejecting many of the reforms adopted by the Roman Catholic Church following the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s.



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The Vatican said Catholics who "formally adhere" to the group could also face the church's most severe canonical penalties.

The dispute traces back decades. The society was founded by

Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre in opposition to Vatican II reforms and was previously at the center of a similar conflict in 1988 when bishops were consecrated without papal approval. Although previous popes sought reconciliation through various concessions, the latest consecrations prompted the Vatican to declare a formal schism.

According to Catholic canon law, consecrating bishops without papal approval carries automatic excommunication. The Vatican's latest decree also reverses concessions made under Pope Francis that had recognized certain ministries performed by SSPX priests.

The development marks [one of the most significant internal divisions within the Roman Catholic Church](#) in recent years and underscores continuing tensions between the Vatican and some traditionalist Catholic groups over church authority and doctrine.

James Lasher, a seasoned writer and editor at Charisma Media, combines faith and storytelling with a journalism background from Otterbein University and ministry experience in Guatemala and at the LA Dream Center. A Marine Corps and Air Force veteran, he is the author of [The Revelation of Jesus: A Common Man's Commentary](#) and a contributor to Charisma magazine. For interviews and media inquiries, please contact media@charismamedia.com.

Kentucky Pastor Fires Back at Online Outrage Over Viral

Vacation Bible School Skit

There was a time when the world understood symbolism.

We watched Carmen walk into a saloon full of demons, draw his six-shooters and send the forces of darkness running. We didn't leave thinking Christians should start gunfights. We understood the message. The battle wasn't against people. [It was against evil.](#)

And we loved it.

That is exactly what the internet seems to have forgotten.

A short video clip from Vacation Bible School at Mt. Olivet Baptist Church in Lexington, Kentucky, exploded across social media after showing a group of "Commandos for Christ" pretending to eliminate a figure dressed in black representing the Devil. Children could be heard cheering as the skit concluded, yelling "Take him out, blow him up!" prompting critics to accuse the church of promoting violence.

The outrage spread far faster than the truth.

Pastor Dewayne Walker responded by explaining what anyone willing to look beyond a few seconds of video would have quickly discovered.

"It's a character called the devil," Walker said.

That should have ended the conversation.

Instead, critics began claiming the church was encouraging children to kill people who disagree with Christianity. Walker responded with understandable disbelief.

"They're saying this is killing people that don't believe like

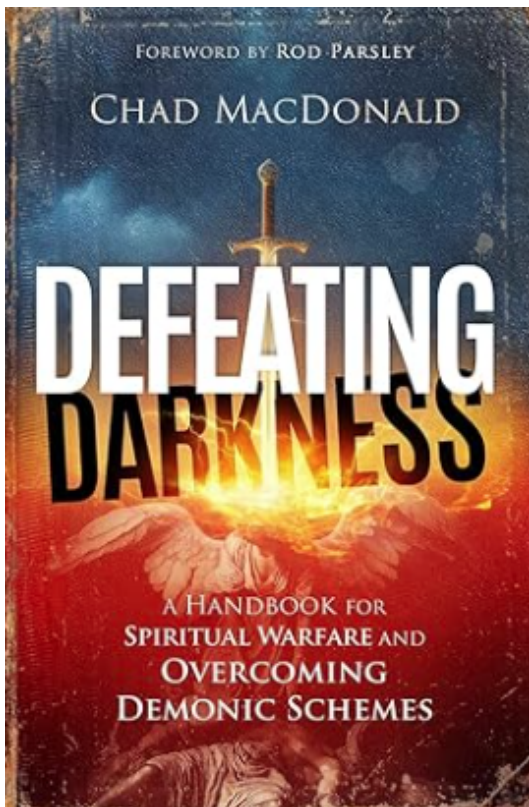
us. All I can say is, 'What?'"

Exactly.

Walker explained the viral clip represented only a tiny portion of a Vacation Bible School program the church has presented for more than three decades.

"That little snippet is not even close to what we're about," he said.

He also made the church's position unmistakably clear: "If you ever hear that Mount Olivet Baptist Church has a Vacation Bible School that's for killing people, you heard it wrong or something's badly wrong."



[Order Chad MacDonald's New Book, "Defeating Darkness" on Amazon.com!](#)

Could the presentation have been dramatic? Certainly.

Walker even admitted as much.

"You may think we went over the top. You may think it was a

little bit extreme, and maybe you're right."

That honesty deserves credit, not condemnation.

What deserves condemnation is a culture that refuses to distinguish between symbolic spiritual warfare and actual violence. The apostle Paul wrote, "For our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." (Eph. 6:12, MEV).

Christians are not at war with people. [We are at war with sin, darkness and the Devil himself.](#)

Walker echoed that biblical truth when he said, "I hate sin because of what it does to the sinner. I will not hate sinners. I'm a sinner saved by God's grace."

That is the heart of the Gospel.

The real danger is not a church using creative storytelling to teach children that Satan has already been defeated through Jesus Christ. The real danger is a society so conditioned to manufacture outrage that it can no longer recognize the difference between fantasy and faith, between symbolism and reality.

Christ has already won the victory. Our job is to stand firm, put on the whole armor of God and remind the next generation that the enemy has been defeated.

As Carmen declared years ago, "Satan, bite the dust."

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