

Holy Spirit Strengthens Underground Church in China Amid Persecution

Watch the latest video at [foxnews.com](https://www.foxnews.com)

A prominent house church pastor in China, Pastor Yang Xibo, is being targeted by the Chinese government, which has imposed substantial fines on him and his wife, Wang Xiaofei, for organizing religious activities.

The fines amount to 400,000 yuan, approximately \$55,100, and are regarded by watchdog group ChinaAid as an act of religious persecution.

Leading the Xunsiding Church, the largest house church in Xiamen, a port city on China's southeast coast, Pastor Yang and his wife have steadfastly refused to comply with the fines. Their defiance comes as the culmination of a battle that has been ongoing since 2021, during which the fine was reportedly doubled on June 28.

Xunsiding Church is part of the underground Christian movement in China, comprising congregations that have chosen not to register with the officially recognized Protestant or Roman Catholic churches. Such unregistered churches face increased scrutiny and restrictions from the Chinese authorities.

Pastor Yang, a fourth-generation minister, follows in the footsteps of his father and aunt, who were imprisoned for their refusal to join the state-sanctioned Three-Self Church.

The troubles for Xunsiding Church began in May 2019 when it was banned and fined 25,000 yuan.

ChinaAid reports that the Chinese government deployed police

to intimidate and harass the congregation for a month, leading them to frequently change locations. Church members have endured continuous surveillance, raids on their gatherings, destruction of private property and pressure to enroll their children in public schools.

The plight of Xunsiding Church is not an isolated incident but reflects a broader crackdown on unregistered churches in China. According to ChinaAid, only five religious groups are officially permitted to practice their faith under close state supervision.

The organization's report earlier this year revealed that Christian persecution in China has reached unprecedented levels at any time since the Cultural Revolution of Mao Zedong in the latter 1960s and early 1970s.

Chinese Christians face imprisonment, torture and manipulation of financial practices by the government.

Authorities exploit the traditional Christian practice of tithes and offerings to fabricate fraud charges, aiming to suffocate the house churches financially. Numerous pastors and elders from house churches have been imprisoned, and religious citizens in Henan province must register with the government's "Smart Religion" app to participate in worship services.

ChinaAid's president, Bob Fu, who himself fled from the Chinese Communist Party and sought refuge in the United States in the 1990s, warns that the tactics employed by Western governments are increasingly mirroring those of the Chinese Communist Party. He emphasizes the urgent need to address the worsening situation of Christian persecution in China.

In the face of adversity, the underground church in China draws strength from their faith and the belief that the Holy Spirit is guiding and protecting them. As 1 Peter 4:12-13 reassures them, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something

strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed."

The challenges faced by Pastor Yang Xibo and the Xunsiding Church reflect the resilience and steadfastness of the underground Christian community in China. As they continue to worship in secret and endure persecution, their unwavering faith in the face of adversity remains a powerful testimony.

James Lasher is Staff Writer for *Charisma Media*.

NBA Player Defends American Values Against WNBA Player Tirade

Enes Kanter Freedom, an outspoken advocate for freedom and human rights, responded to Natasha Cloud, a player in the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), after her recent criticisms of the United States following key Supreme Court rulings last week.

In a tweet on Friday, Cloud expressed her dissatisfaction with the country, stating that "our country is trash in so many ways" in response to the Supreme Court's rulings on affirmative action and the case involving artist Lorie Smith. Kanter Freedom, hailing from Turkey, chimed in, emphasizing that people often fail to recognize the privileges and opportunities they have in the United States.

"Just ask your colleague Brittney Griner how 'trash' America is," Kanter Freedom tweeted. "Calling America trash huh? Let

me know when your season is over, I'll buy your ticket and we can go together to countries like China, Russia, IRAN, North Korea, Venezuela, Cuba & Turkey.

"Forget about calling them trash, I would like to see if you can even criticize those regimes!! You and your family members would be thrown in jail, tortured to death and raped.

"People have NO idea how lucky and blessed they are to be in a country like America. I'm not saying America is perfect, but trust me, you don't wanna see the other side."

Just ask your colleague Brittney Griner how "trash" America is.

Calling America trash huh?

Let me know when your season is over, I'll buy your ticket and we can go together to countries like China, Russia, IRAN, North Korea, Venezuela, Cuba, & Turkey.

Forget about calling them... <https://t.co/A3Kfojx9j0>

– Enes FREEDOM (@EnesFreedom) [July 3, 2023](#)

Having faced backlash in his home country due to his opposition to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and support of exiled Fethullah Gulen, Kanter Freedom understands the value of freedom and democracy. In 2019, Turkey even sought an international arrest warrant for him, falsely accusing him of being associated with a terrorist organization.

Earlier this year, Kanter Freedom revealed that there was a \$500,000 bounty on his head, making him one of Turkey's most-wanted individuals. He has been a vocal critic of the Biden administration for its collaboration with Turkey's government while failing to address the country's human rights abuses.

Cloud, undeterred by the criticism she received, spoke out again on Saturday, challenging her detractors to offer more

substantial arguments than simply suggesting she should “move to Russia or China.”

As reported by Fox News, Cloud went on a tirade against any and all of her critics, diving headlong into the morass of intersectionality and critical race theories that have deceived millions across the country:

“Y’all tired of me saying your racist. IM TIRED OF YALL BEING RACIST.

“You don’t know me or my heart. But you still hate me immediately for the color of my skin, being gay, and being a woman.”

Cloud then had a message for “my religion weaponizers,” adding, “y’all the people that killed Jesus.”

The Supreme Court’s rulings last week included the rejection of race as a factor in college admissions, citing it as a violation of the 14th Amendment’s equal protection clause.

James Lasher is Staff Writer for Charisma Media.

Holy Spirit’s Fire Igniting Hearts at SoCal Harvest Crusade

The SoCal Harvest Crusade, a highly anticipated annual event held at the Honda Center in Anaheim, California, witnessed an extraordinary outpouring of faith as thousands of individuals responded to the call of Jesus Christ.

Over the course of two nights, the crusade drew a crowd of 16,000 attendees within the packed arena, while an additional 47,000 people participated in the event through online streaming.

Organized by Pastor Greg Laurie of Harvest Christian Fellowship, this soul-winning gathering has become a significant spiritual milestone, having been conducted for 34 consecutive years. With an astounding track record of 121 Crusade events conducted worldwide, Pastor Laurie expressed gratitude for the immense reach of over 6 million people and the incredible number of over 600,000 professions of faith resulting from these outreaches.

The central message of the SoCal Harvest Crusade was the immeasurable love of God and the ultimate sacrifice made by Jesus Christ. Pastor Laurie passionately declared that it was not the nails that held Christ to the cross, but rather, it was love—love for every individual present, including those joining the event online. He emphasized the profound truth that Jesus would have willingly gone to the cross and suffered for the sake of any single person on Earth, demonstrating an unparalleled depth of love that defies comprehension.

“Nails did not hold Jesus Christ to the cross 2000 year ago—Love did!” Here’s a little clip from my message last night at the Harvest Crusade at the Honda Center. We are there tonight as well. The title of tonight’s message is “Good News In A Bad World”. It starts at 6:00PM. Get... pic.twitter.com/2DvFXyLRlr

– Greg Laurie (@greglaurie) [July 2, 2023](#)

Pastor Laurie aptly concluded the crusade with an empowering message titled “Good News In A Bad World,” shedding light on the importance of hope and positivity in a world filled with negativity.

The worship experience during the SoCal Harvest Crusade was enriched by stirring performances by renowned Christian music artists, including Michael W. Smith, Chris Tomlin, Phil Wickham and Taya Gaukrodger. Their heartfelt melodies and lyrics created an atmosphere for encountering the presence of God, further enhancing the spiritual impact of the event.

Worshipping with [@christomlin](#) and 16,000 people.

A taste of Heaven! pic.twitter.com/FQwXuqNzJ6

– Greg Laurie (@greglaurie) [July 3, 2023](#)

Looking ahead, Harvest Christian Fellowship is preparing for an eagerly anticipated “Jesus Revolution” church-wide baptism scheduled at Pirates Cove in Corona Del Mar, CA.

Important Update! Due to the overwhelming response to our upcoming Jesus Revolution baptism at Pirate’s Cove Beach, we have moved the baptism to Saturday, July 8, at 8:00 AM.

The immense response from individuals desiring to be baptized is genuinely remarkable! pic.twitter.com/hNUcE4Ahd5

– Greg Laurie (@greglaurie) [June 14, 2023](#)

This momentous event reflects the overwhelming response from individuals desiring to be baptized, serving as a tangible manifestation of the revival taking place within their hearts and minds. The chosen location holds a special significance, as it witnessed the transformative baptisms of numerous believers during the Jesus Revolution, making it the perfect setting for this church-wide baptism event.

The SoCal Harvest Crusade continues to serve as a catalyst for revival and spiritual renewal, leaving an indelible mark on the lives of Christians throughout Southern California and beyond. As individuals encounter the person of Jesus Christ,

their lives are forever changed, igniting a passion to spread the Good News and participate in the ongoing revival that has the potential to impact countless lives around the world.

James Lasher is Staff Writer for Charisma Media.

Revival Fires Expected to Ignite at Parousia Event in Virginia

A sense of anticipation fills the air as nearly 2,000 individuals have already registered for the Parousia Encounter Conference in Virginia.

This two-day event, scheduled for July 21-22, 2023, promises to be a life-transforming experience filled with prayer, worship and the expectation of miraculous healings.

The Parousia Encounter Conference, hosted by Apostle Demontae Edmonds, the founder of Destiny for the Nations, and Pastor Nina Anderson of The Wells Ministries, seeks to ignite a greater passion for serving Jesus among attendees.

Edmonds, known as “The Miracle Man,” has witnessed the Holy Spirit moving powerfully during his international meetings.

He has recounted stories of limbs growing back and the blind receiving their sight in India. These creative miracles, Edmonds believes, are evidence of Jesus’ living and real existence. The Virginia Parousia event is expected to witness similar supernatural occurrences, drawing attendees into an encounter with God’s tangible presence.

Joseph Stallings, a dedicated worship leader collaborating with Edmonds' ministry, expressed his desire to see individuals reconnecting with the Lord and experiencing His presence. Stallings emphasized the significance of unity through a deep connection with God and invited everyone to participate in ushering His glory during the Virginia Parousia.

"My desire is to see people have an encounter with the Lord and reconnect any severed ties they may have with Him. It's important to have a connection because it brings unity. I pray all join in as we usher in his presence together. Let his glory fall at the Virginia Parousia!" says Stallings.

Beyond the anticipated miracles and worship, the Parousia Encounter Conference highlights the vital role of media in today's culture.

[In a past interview with Charisma magazine,](#) Edmonds stressed the need for believers to strategically occupy media platforms and present an image of Christ that brings transformation to people's lives. By doing so, they can shield others from false doctrines, distractions and ungodly influences.

Edmonds strongly believes that there is a spiritual battle in the realm of media. He explained how Satan, the prince of the power of the air, seeks to negatively influence individuals through various media streams, hindering their faith, prayer life and relationship with God. By intentionally and strategically engaging with media, believers can counter these influences and bring the message of Christ to wider audiences.

Reflecting on his own journey as a vessel of God's Word, Edmonds recounted the powerful experience of prophesying to high-ranking officials in the Pentagon. Overcoming initial reservations, he witnessed the impact of God's word, accurately delivered to receptive hearts. Edmonds encouraged believers to step out of their comfort zones, embracing

untraditional places as avenues for bringing God's presence and message.

Here are three Bible verses that prepare the way of the Lord in preparation for revival:

1. Psalm 34:8 – “O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him.”
2. Isaiah 43:19 – “Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”
3. Matthew 19:26 – “But Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’”

As the Parousia Encounter Conference approaches, participants eagerly anticipate encountering the tangible presence of God, witnessing miraculous healings and experiencing personal transformation. The event holds the potential for lives to be forever changed and for the glory of God to resound throughout Virginia.

With thousands expected to attend, the event is poised to be a monumental gathering where the power of prayer, worship and miracles will be on display. As believers gather to seek God's presence, they anticipate a revival that will impact their lives and the surrounding community.

James Lasher is Staff Writer for Charisma Media.

Pastor Steven Furtick's

Elevation Megachurch Severs Ties with SBC

In a recent blow to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), Elevation Church, one of its prominent congregations, has made the decision to withdraw its affiliation with the denomination. This development comes less than a month after the expulsion of Saddleback Church for having women pastors.

Elevation Church, known for its multiple campuses and influential role in contemporary Christian worship music, formally notified the SBC of its withdrawal on June 26.

The church's correspondence did not explicitly state the reason behind the decision. Notably, Elevation Pastor Steven Furtick's wife, Holly Furtick, delivers sermons to both men and women at the church and shares links to her messages on her website.

Letter from [@ElevationChurch](#) withdrawing from SBC references Credentials Committee. Has a complaint been filed on them?

"Should your Credentials Committee decide to make this decision by Elevation public, we will only respond with a copy of this letter in anyone inquiring..."
pic.twitter.com/agfYFCINak

– SBC Platform (@TheSBCPlatform) [June 30, 2023](#)

According to the denomination's statement of faith, the Baptist Faith and Message, the position of a pastor is reserved for qualified men. Prominent leaders within the Southern Baptist community have emphasized the inseparable connection between preaching and the role of a pastor.

[During the SBC's annual meeting earlier in June,](#)

representatives overwhelmingly affirmed the expulsion of Saddleback Church, founded by Rick Warren, and Fern Creek Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky. These churches, along with three others, had appealed their removal by the SBC's Executive Committee due to their inclusion of women pastors.

The Executive Committee received the Elevation Church's withdrawal notice, which was made public by the SBC's official news service, Baptist Press. The church asserted that its beliefs are closely aligned with those of Southern Baptists and that there are no plans to alter this stance. [Elevation Church's decision](#) to sever ties with the convention is effective immediately.

In addition to the withdrawal, SBC representatives conducted a preliminary vote during the annual meeting to amend the SBC constitution. The proposed amendment would require participating churches to have exclusively qualified men serving as pastors or elders.

Established in 2006, Elevation Church, headquartered in Matthews, North Carolina, boasts multiple campuses throughout the Charlotte area, as well as in neighboring states and Canada. According to the Outreach 100 survey conducted by Outreach magazine, the church averaged 26,000 weekly worshippers in 2022, ranking as the seventh-largest Protestant church in terms of attendance.

Internal records of the SBC indicate that in 2021, the church had an average attendance of 10,185. Discrepancies between the church's attendance figures and those of the denomination may be attributed to variations in counting online worshippers in the post-pandemic era.

Elevation Church has also gained recognition for its extensive repertoire of worship music, which has significantly influenced the contemporary Christian music landscape. The church's affiliated music ministry, Elevation Worship, has

been honored with six Dove Awards, including the coveted “Song of the Year” for their uplifting anthem, “The Blessing,” which went viral during the 2020 pandemic lockdown.

Scott Thumma, a seasoned researcher focusing on megachurches, suggests that Elevation Church’s decision aligns with the SBC’s firm stance against Rick Warren’s appeal. Warren had expressed the belief that Baptists should be able to hold differing opinions on matters such as women in ministry while still collaborating on missions and evangelism.

Thumma speculates that Elevation’s departure might serve as a catalyst for other churches to follow suit, rather than waiting for the SBC to initiate their removal.

The Southern Baptist Convention has experienced a steady decline in membership over the past two decades, although it remains the largest Protestant denomination in the United States. Lifeway Research statistics released earlier this year reveal a membership decrease to 13.2 million in 2022, the lowest level since the late 1970s, with long-term declines in baptism rates as well.

James Lasher is Staff Writer for Charisma Media.

‘The Office’ Star Rainn Wilson Exposes Hollywood’s ‘Anti-Christian Bias’

Rainn Wilson, widely known for his iconic portrayal of Dwight Schrute in the popular NBC sitcom *The Office*, has raised concerns about what he perceives as a prevailing ‘anti-

Christian bias' in Hollywood.

During a recent episode of the podcast No Small Endeavor, hosted by theologian Lee C. Camp, Wilson expressed his belief that discussions about faith make individuals in Tinseltown uneasy. He boldly stated, "Frankly, I think it unsettles people. Talking about God is perhaps the least fashionable thing one can do, particularly among comedians in Hollywood."

This is not the first time the 57-year-old actor has spoken out on this issue. In a tweet shared in mid-March, Wilson acknowledged the negative perception of Christianity in much of Hollywood:

I do think there is an anti-Christian bias in Hollywood. As soon as the David character in "The Last of Us" started reading from the Bible I knew that he was going to be a horrific villain. Could there be a Bible-reading preacher on a show who is actually loving and kind?

– RainnWilson (@rainnwilson) [March 11, 2023](#)

"I do believe there is an underlying bias against Christianity in Hollywood," he declared. "The moment the character David in 'The Last of Us' began reading passages from the Bible, I knew he would be portrayed as a horrific villain. Could there be a Bible-reading preacher on a show who is actually loving and kind?"

Wilson raised a pertinent question, pondering whether it would be possible for a television show to feature a Bible-reading preacher who embodies love and kindness. It is worth noting, however, that despite his comments about Christianity, Wilson himself does not identify as a Christian but rather follows the Baha'i faith, a monotheistic religion originating from 19th-century Iran.

Support for Wilson's concerns regarding the perception of the

Gospel in Hollywood comes from Australian actor Nathaniel Buzolic, who proudly identifies as a Christian. Buzolic recently shared a thought-provoking message on Instagram, shedding light on why some find the Gospel offensive.

Accompanied by a graphic, Buzolic's post read, "The Gospel is not about inclusivity; it is about extending an invitation to all." In the caption, the "Vampire Diaries" star added, "The Gospel challenges those who resist living under God's authority. Many are called, but few are chosen."

These statements from both Wilson and Buzolic shed light on the perceived hurdles faced by Christians in Hollywood. They emphasize the need for greater acceptance and understanding of diverse religious perspectives within the entertainment industry. As discussions surrounding faith continue to provoke discomfort in certain circles, it remains crucial to foster an environment that encourages open dialogue and respect for all beliefs.

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Marcus Rogers: 5 Key Spiritual Lessons for Independence Day

As Americans celebrate Independence Day on July 4th, it is essential to reflect not only on the historical significance of this day but also on the spiritual aspects that underpin the freedoms and values cherished in the nation.

In a recent interview, Charisma News sat down with Pastor

Marcus Rogers, a military veteran and influential YouTube minister as well as pastor of Firehouse Church in Chicago, Illinois, several key takeaways emerged, reminding us of the importance of gratitude, unity and our dependence on God in the pursuit of true independence.

Here are five essential lessons from the conversation:

Service is a Privilege: Rogers hails from a military family background and emphasizes the pride and honor associated with serving one's country. Just as the Founding Fathers fought for independence, military service embodies the selflessness and dedication required to uphold the freedoms and values established by America's forefathers.

"In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thess. 5:18). Rogers reminds believers in America to appreciate the privilege of living in a country where service is seen as an honor.

Unity is Beautiful: Rogers shares his experience of serving alongside fellow soldiers from various backgrounds, representing every corner of America. He highlights the profound beauty of coming together as one, overcoming differences and working as a united group to protect the nation and its freedoms.

"Be eager to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). Rogers underscores the importance of unity, reminding Americans of the strength that lies in embracing teamwork and working toward a common goal.

Gratitude for Freedom: Serving in war-torn regions like Iraq and Afghanistan allowed Rogers to witness firsthand the stark contrast between the privileges enjoyed in America and the lack of freedom experienced by those in oppressed countries. His return to American soil brought an overwhelming sense of appreciation for the freedoms often taken for granted.

“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Col. 3:17). Rogers encourages believers to express gratitude for the blessings of living in a country that values individual liberties and affords opportunities for growth and prosperity.

Importance of Free Speech: Rogers addresses the increasing challenges and restrictions faced by those with differing viewpoints, urging believers to exercise their right to free speech while it is still available. He emphasizes the need for alternative avenues to express beliefs and ideas.

“Let no unwholesome word proceed out of your mouth, but only that which is good for building up, that it may give grace to the listeners” (Eph. 4:29). This verse highlights the responsibility to use free speech wisely, adhering to biblical principles of building up and encouraging others.

Dependence on God: Rogers addressed the importance of recognizing our dependence on God, reminding believers that true independence lies in embracing our reliance on the Creator.

“‘For in Him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are His offspring.’” (Acts 17:28). Rogers encourages individuals to seek God’s guidance and acknowledge His sovereignty, understanding that true independence comes from surrendering to His will.

These key takeaways serve as a reminder of the cherished freedoms and values upon which the nation was founded. They inspire a spirit of gratitude, unity and reliance on God, encouraging citizens to honor the past, embrace the present and shape a brighter future that glorifies the Lord in all we say and do.

James Lasher is Staff Writer for *Charisma Media*.

Minister's Heretical 'Sparkle Creed' Sparks Controversy and Criticism

A Lutheran minister has sparked controversy and captured public attention with a recitation of a heretical "Sparkle Creed" during a recent church service.

Anna Helgen, co-pastor at Edina Community Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, led the congregation in the recitation, which has drawn criticism for its departure from biblical teachings.

In this creed, Helgen proclaimed her belief in a nonbinary God, assigning plural pronouns to the divine. Such a portrayal deviates from the biblical understanding of God's nature and character. The Scriptures clearly refer to God in masculine terms and emphasize the unity and oneness of the divine being (John 1:18, 1 Cor. 8:6).

Helgen's creed also depicts Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as having two fathers and donning a fabulous tunic.

These assertions deviate from the orthodox Christian understanding of Jesus as the only begotten Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. Scripture affirms Jesus' unique relationship with God the Father, not a shared fatherhood with two individuals (Matt. 26:39, John 1:14). Furthermore, there is no biblical basis for the assertion of a fabulous tunic worn by Jesus; this notion appears to be a product of personal imagination rather than scriptural truth.

Full video here: <https://t.co/dEFwDlDco8pic.twitter.com/sPUvAzNdRh>

– Matt Lamb (@MattLamb22) [June 29, 2023](#)

The Sparkle Creed also includes a reference to the rainbow spirit, which is presented as shattering the image of one white light and refracting it into a diverse rainbow.

While diversity is a characteristic of creation, this creed overlooks the biblical significance of the rainbow as a sign of God's covenant with Noah and all humankind. It is concerning that this creed seems to suggest that diversity alone should supersede the importance of God's covenantal promises.

The creed continues with a portrayal of the church as a congregation of everyday saints, rooted in mud and captivated by wonder. While it is true that believers are called to be holy and set apart for God's purposes, the use of language in this creed seems to downplay the unique role of Christ as the Savior and mediator between God and humanity.

The emphasis on creativity and resilience must not overshadow the centrality of Jesus Christ and His redemptive work.

The creed continues with the mantra "love is love is love is love," which reduces the biblical concept of love to a mere repetition of words. The Bible teaches that love is a multifaceted concept, encompassing sacrificial love, selflessness and obedience to God's commandments. It is important to understand and adhere to the biblical principles of love, rather than reducing it to a simplistic slogan (1 John 4:16).

Following Helgen's prayer for various causes, another pastor named Jeff Sartain offered a prayer that further departed from biblical teachings.

But wait, there's more. <https://t.co/8o6QGZ9CtV>
[pic.twitter.com/QBc8VIKysc](https://t.co/8o6QGZ9CtV)

– Matt Lamb (@MattLamb22) [June 29, 2023](#)

Sartain's prayer portrayed Jesus as living among marginalized groups, specifically mentioning Black trans women and babies born into the care of lesbian women. While it is essential to show compassion and care for all individuals, this portrayal seems to equate personal experiences and identities with the divine presence of Christ.

The Bible affirms that Jesus is present with believers through the Holy Spirit, but it does not endorse the idea that Jesus manifests Himself exclusively in specific social contexts or identities.

The Sparkle Creed and the prayers offered at the ECLC service are reflective of the church's liberal stance, which prioritizes progressive values over adherence to biblical teachings. The church's self-proclaimed mission to make a difference in the world should not come at the expense of compromising the fundamental truths of the Christian faith.

For faithful believers, it is vital to critically examine teachings and practices that deviate from biblical teachings. The apostle Paul admonishes the church in Galatia to "Examine all things. Firmly hold onto what is good" (1 Thess. 5:21). When confronted with teachings that contradict the Word of God, it is a Christian's responsibility to lovingly correct and guide those who have been led astray, following the example set by the apostles in the early church.

James Lasher is staff writer for *Charisma Media*.

The Coming World Religion

Karl Marx was right when he called religion the opiate of the masses. He discovered the truth that man is incurably driven to worship something, somewhere. If humans do not bow before the holy and true God, then they will devise their own method, their own system, their own god, and they will worship their own creation.

While the coming world religious system in some ways resembles Christianity, John calls it "Babylon the Great"—a monstrous, ecumenical combination of everything that people consider "spiritual." And the world will buy into it—hook, line and sinker.

Mostly sinker.

Whenever God's people turned from the true and living God, or when any group of people worshiped anything other than God, the Bible consistently labeled it as harlotry.

For example, at one point in Israel's history, God asked Jeremiah, "Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot" (Jer. 3:6). The wayward people of Israel made it a habit to visit groves of false worship, where out of tree trunks they would carve statues to worship. And so God said, just a few verses later, "So it came to pass, through her casual harlotry, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees" (v. 9).

The entire book of Hosea is built upon this metaphor of an unfaithful wife who plays the harlot. Just as Hosea repeatedly tried to reach his wayward wife, so God tried again and again to draw His people back to Himself; and yet Israel was

consistently unfaithful to Him. She played the harlot by following after other gods.

I find it interesting that Jesus would choose to use the metaphor of a woman for His church. As the British novelist Mary Elizabeth Braddon asked in the late 1800s, "How are our churches beautified, our sick tended, our poor fed, our children taught and cared for and civilized?"

"Women are the church's strong rock. As they were the last at the foot of the cross, so they have become first at the altar."

So here in the book of Revelation 17, we have a deeply unfaithful woman whom an angel calls "the great harlot." She represents a religious system that claims to be joined to God but, like a prostitute, is unfaithful to God. Her sin is spiritual fornication, the sin of turning from God and refusing to remain spiritually faithful to Him.

In Genesis 10, a man by the name of Nimrod is mentioned (vv. 8-9). He is four generations removed from Noah; his grandfather was Ham, the wicked son of Noah. After the Flood, God told Noah's family to multiply and cover the face of the earth. But some of Noah's descendants, including Nimrod, thought they had a better plan. When they came to a plain in the land of Shinar, they said to one another, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 11:4). Notice their rebellion: Whereas God had told them to "fill the earth" (Gen. 9:1), they decided to stick together in their city, "lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." They acted in direct disobedience to a clear, divine command.

These people, led by Nimrod, conceived their city in open rebellion against God. Their whole philosophy was built on the

idea of exalting themselves and degrading God. We could say it was the first human city built on the philosophy of secular humanism. They called it Babel, which later became Babylon.

And they didn't stop with philosophy. They also decided to create a new religious system. They said, "Let us build...a tower whose top is in the heavens." They recognized their spiritual need, but they sought to fill it with do-it-yourself religion. The tower they decided to build probably took the form of a ziggurat, a stepped platform with a shrine at the very top. Normally a priest officiated at the shrine, using the signs of the zodiac to try to predict the future for his people.

History tells us that Nimrod had a wife named Semiramis. Before her marriage, she had a son named Tammuz, whom she claimed was not fathered by a man, but rather was conceived when a sunbeam from heaven shone on her belly. And so, she said, she conceived Tammuz, whom she and others declared to be the savior of the world—a virgin-born savior who would overturn the curse of Genesis 3.

There's an ancient story that says one day, Tammuz was gored by a wild boar while playing in a field. He died. For 40 days, Semiramis wept over her son's death. Then he suddenly rose from the dead. So we see that, even way back in the early days of Genesis, Satan was busily creating a false religion. He cleverly concocted a counterfeit faith about a virgin-born savior of the world who died and rose again. As people scattered over the face of the earth (after God put an end to their experiment at Babel), Semiramis and Tammuz began to be worshiped as mother and child. In fact, she later came to be known as "the queen of heaven."

Many ancient cultures worshiped this mother-son pair. In Nineveh, she was called Ishtar. In Phoenicia, they called her Ashtoreth and her son, Baal. In Egypt, she carried the name Isis, while her son was known as Osiris. Later, in Greece, she

was called Aphrodite, while he was called Aras. In Rome, her name became Venus, and her son, Cupid. The cult finally ended in Rome, according to Alexander Haslett in his classic work *The Two Babylons*. The cult died out with the empire; but remember, that empire will be revived during the Tribulation.

Why is Mystery Babylon called the mother of harlots? John gives it this name because it has spawned a host of other false religious systems throughout history. That system will reach its peak during the Tribulation. No doubt the final version will incorporate some elements of the church-Christianity in a perverted and apostate form. Paul the apostle wrote, "The Spirit expressly says in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1).

At the time of the end, this religious harlot will have established a worldwide reign. In Revelation 17:1, the phrase "who sits on many waters" refers to all the people of the earth. This meaning becomes especially clear in verse 15, when an angel tells John, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues."

We live in an age when the lines of truth are becoming increasingly blurred. It's become fashionable to refuse to take a dogmatic stand about anything, especially Jesus Christ. And so, people everywhere are drifting from the truth.

I want to exhort you to cling to the truth at all costs.

The world is fast coming to a point of abandoning the truth. Don't go along with the crowd—stand up for the truth! It might cost you everything. But one day, if you stand fast, you're going to hear some beautiful words from Jesus' own lips: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

[This article](#) originally appeared on [ALL ISRAEL NEWS](#), and is reposted [with permission](#).

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Conservative Commentator Todd Starnes Permanently Banned from YouTube

Conservative commentator and radio talk show host Todd Starnes says YouTube has permanently shut down his account.

In a recent blog post, Starnes explains that he had posted a video of a recent gay pride parade in Seattle. He criticized the event because it featured naked male cyclists “exposing themselves in front of children”.

“Within minutes – my entire YouTube account was terminated. It was the last straw,” he wrote. “YouTube accused me of severe and repeated violations of their community guidelines.”

Starnes provided a message from the media platform that stated: “It’s our job to make sure that YouTube is a safe place for all. If we think a channel severely violates our policies, we take it down to protect other users on the platform – but if you believe we’ve made the wrong call, you can appeal this decision.”

He says he appealed the decision but was denied without explanation.

“YouTube has made a business decision – which is their right,” he explained.

Starnes believes it wasn't the LGBT parade post that was the biggest problem. He contends YouTube considers his most flagrant violation to be a video he posted of former President Donald Trump. He says the media platform labeled Trump's remarks misinformation.

And it reportedly wasn't the first time YouTube had pulled Starnes' content.

In April, the platform banned a video of Trump reacting to a decision to indict him over the alleged falsification of business records.

"Clearly, they no longer want conservatives to be a part of their community. Or Trump supporters. Or anyone who believes it's wrong for men to parade around naked in public. Or anyone who holds a view that might offend the progressive fascists who run YouTube these days," Starnes wrote.

"Honestly, maybe it's best I got removed from YouTube. I have no interest in being a part of such an intolerant and perverted community," he added.

CBN News reached out to YouTube for an explanation on why Starnes was canceled, but we did not receive a reply at the time of publication.

To read the full article, [visit our content partners at CBN News.](#)

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