

# Is Islam Bringing the World to the Brink of Chaos?

As Western countries have opened their doors to refugees fleeing Muslim nations, Bible prophecy expert Eric Walker says this could be the linchpin for destabilizing the West and ushering in the "Psalm 83 War" in the Middle East.

Walker, the founder of the [Igniting a Nation](#) ministry and the former founding rabbi of the Messianic Jewish congregation Beth Hallel Birmingham, believes the Paris terrorist attacks that killed 130 people are "just the beginning of the chaos."

Although the terrorist attacks in Paris, Mali and elsewhere are in the headlines today, the roots of this conflict began in Genesis 15 when God gave the biblical mandate establishing the borders of ancient Israel followed by the account in Genesis 16 when the Angel of the Lord said Ishmael would be a "wild man" whose "hand shall be against every man."

"As we watch ISIS and fundamentalist Islam, we see that the stage is being set for a battle in the Middle East," Walker says. "When we examine the world around us, we begin to see that we have refugees amassing on the border of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria, and we begin to see the formation of the confederacy described in Psalm 83.

"Never before could we really anticipate Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Syria northern Saudi Arabia, northern Egypt, Gaza and the West Bank working in concert with one another. Now, we have these terrorist organizations amassing on the borders of Israel."

In his view, the stage is being set for a significant event in the Middle East, possibly the "Psalm 83 War"—an event some prophecy experts believe will precede the war described in Ezekiel 38-39 known as the "War of Gog and Magog," involving a

Russian-Iranian-led attack on Israel prior to the Tribulation period.

“There is no question that the ideology of Islam is focused squarely on the destruction of Israel,” Walker says. “We are fighting two significant battles in the world. The first battle is against an Islamic ideology advancing in the West, but a more significant battlefield is the spirit of the Antichrist that they bring with them.”

Walker, author of *The Codist*, has watched the influx of Muslims into Western countries for many years. He believes the arrival of Syrian refugees, added to the 100,000 Muslims entering America annually, will further compromise the nation’s ability to prevent terrorism.

The West is unwilling to acknowledge the threat posed by Islam. Instead, it continues to pretend this is a “religion of peace” with the exception of a few radicals who give the religion a bad name. This is naïve, an approach that is making free countries increasingly vulnerable to attack, he says.

“As the world looks at the events of the Paris attacks, we are reminded that France has reached the tipping point of 8 percent Muslim,” Walker says. “With the wide open borders of the EU, we have now seen how a small band of terrorists can mobilize and strike.”

Eventually, America will face its own destabilization, perhaps ignited by or resulting in economic collapse, Walker says.

“America’s borders are compromised, and what happened in Paris will happen here,” Walker says. “The dividing lines of the world are being drawn, and persecution of those labeled as infidels is on the rise.”

The “prophecy of Ishmael” has been unfolding since Genesis, but especially since the rise of Muhammad and Islam 1,400 years ago, Walker says.

“We’re in the midst of the most preeminent spiritual battle the world has ever known,” Walker says.

In terms of the prophetic timeline, Walker believes the next event will be the “Psalm 83 War”—the battle preceding the “War of Gog and Magog” described in Ezekiel 38 and 39. These chapters specify several conditions that must exist in Israel prior to that war, including an Israel with the borders outlined in Genesis 15, and that Israel will be at peace with its neighbors and possess immense wealth—perhaps a reference to recently discovered [oil reserves](#) in Israel.

For these conditions to be met, Walker says Israel will have to expand its borders to include all of Syria, Lebanon, most of Iraq, Jordan, northern Saudi Arabia and the Sinai.

“In my opinion, that can’t happen unless there is a war,” Walker says. “So I believe the war before the war that will accomplish these goals will be the 10-nation confederacy described in Psalm 83. The Bible says this 10-nation confederacy will come against Israel, and Israel will be victorious. The only way we can see Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia coming against Israel is if their terrorist organizations launch the attacks, not the governments themselves.”

The “Psalm 83 War” theory has generated controversy in recent years among prophecy experts. The theory began with the publication of a book, *Israelestine*, by prophecy expert Bill Salus.

“Bill Salus theorized that the Israelis would win this war overwhelmingly, resulting in peace for their nation, but the peace would be short-lived because the Arab world would turn to Russia,” wrote David R. Reagan, founder and director of Lamb & Lion Ministries, in an [article](#) on the topic.

“The Russians would come down against Israel with certain specified Muslim allies in what the Bible calls the War of Gog

& Magog, described in detail in Ezekiel 38 and 39. Russia's Muslim allies will be made up of an outer ring of nations with no common border with Israel today. The Psalm 83 War, on the other hand, would be one between Israel and the inner ring of nations that surround it."

When this war occurs, Walker believes America won't come to Israel's aid.

"I think America falls into the Zechariah 12 prophecy that says when all the nations of the world turn against Jerusalem then God will restore her former glory," Walker says. "We fall into that category of 'all.' We are actually seeing that fulfilled with our current president."

This is why Walker is launching an initiative called [Christian Lives Matter](#). For America to reclaim its blessings, Christians need to speak out and take a stand for what they believe in.

"In response to this, I'm launching a grass-roots movement under the banner of Christian Lives Matter to bring an army of believers together, understanding that the bigger the army, the louder the voice," he says.

Walker would like to create chapters across the nation to vet candidates for office and create report cards to allow voters to hold their representatives accountable to restore traditional values in America.

Walker believes the U.S. can return to its biblical roots and blessings if the church and the nation repent and turn back to God.

"Since the last Bush administration, America has had troubling times, but we are still the most blessed nation in the world," Walker says. "But the headship of America is turning against Israel. That's why in my mind, the most pressing issue among the presidential candidates must be on where they stand with Israel."

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# Jonathan Pollard: A Modern-Day Joseph

Some years ago, I had the opportunity to visit Rome and, while there, we organized a private tour of the Vatican. Little did I know that other than entering the epicenter of Catholicism and all the history (and art) that goes with it, I'd be taking a step back nearly 2,000 years in Jewish history.

While on our tour, we were taken into a room that's off the beaten path, containing an exhibit of ancient stone tablets. At first, I thought, "seen one ancient stone tablet, seen them all."

But these stones took me back 2,000 years to when Jewish slaves were being brought to Rome from Judea (Israel), and made me witness to a biblical tradition in practice then and still relevant today. These tablets were contracts of sale of Jewish slaves to other Jewish residents/citizens of Rome. It was explained this was the proactive effort of Jews in Rome to redeem these captured slaves, to buy their freedom.

Throughout Jewish history, going back to Genesis 14:14-16, it has been a biblical imperative to redeem captives. This doesn't refer to an average criminal held for his crime, but to one held unjustly. This makes it a religious duty to bring about the release of a fellow Jew captured by slave dealers or robbers, or imprisoned unjustly by the authorities.

Before my eyes, these ancient contracts bore witness to that obligation and our history.

I had my own personal experience redeeming captives in my day as well. In the 1980s, I was deeply involved in the struggle

to free Jews in the Soviet Union, a modern enslavement of my people with historical and biblical precedent. You can see more by clicking [here](#).

Like many things in Jewish life, there's a debate over how and when to exercise this obligation. There's the story of Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg who was taken captive and held for ransom, but who famously instructed his community not to pay the ransom because to do so would put other Jewish lives at risk in the future.

There's a modern debate over releasing Arab terrorists in exchange for Israeli prisoners, something that happens too often and opens vast wounds of the survivors and families of victims of the terrorists being released. There's also the notion that by releasing Arab terrorists, one makes the taking of other Jewish captives in the future more profitable.

I was reminded of this recently when Jonathan Pollard, a former U.S. Navy analyst, was released on parole after 30 years in prison. He is not completely free yet, and many limitations are being placed on his life including reportedly the prevention from travel, strict curfew and prohibition to use the Internet. But this is the beginning of the righting of a huge injustice and should be celebrated.

Pollard was arrested as a spy for Israel. He admitted to this and passing along U.S. intelligence to Israeli sources particularly about the threat then of Iraq's nuclear program. He entered a plea bargain with U.S. authorities, which the government violated after then Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger provided the court a document that remains secret allegedly attesting to the damage Pollard did to U.S. security. That his lawyers with the highest security clearance have not had the right to see these secret charges submitted after the plea bargain makes the process all the more suspect and unjust.

Despite his plea agreement, Pollard was sentenced to life, an unprecedented term for any spy even from a hostile country, and all the more so from an ally. One might say allies should not spy on one another—but let's be real, this happens all the time. Nevertheless, Pollard's case was one of a man being arrested as a spy, but being held to a different standard, his rights repeatedly violated, and sentenced as a Jew.

He's been a political pawn ever since, with successive U.S. presidents holding out clemency or a pardon as a carrot on a stick to coax Israel into a peace negotiation under U.S. terms.

Many people have rallied around Pollard, fighting for his freedom for decades. Many American Jews have shunned Pollard because of the discomfort of being accused of dual loyalty.

At the time he was arrested, I was finishing college, and the CIA and NSA somehow tapped me to consider a career at these important federal agencies. But Pollard's case weighed heavily on me at the time.

After several collective interviews I decided these were not jobs for a nice Jewish boy, that I didn't want to be put in a situation of conflict of interest, and I didn't want to be in a case of being a federal employee looked at with suspicion as a Jew and under a separate microscope. So one day, I just didn't show up for the next interview or aptitude test, and my unborn career in a U.S. intelligence agency ended.

Though my personal activism relating to freeing Jonathan Pollard was virtually nothing compared to that of Soviet Jews, fortunately a dedicated group of others worked relentlessly and never gave up. In recent years a growing number of former U.S. military, diplomatic, and intelligence officials came to Pollard's aid by declaring that his sentence was unjust and it was long overdue that he be released.

Fortunately, this week, Jonathan Pollard was able to spend his

first Shabbat and his first weekend outside prison in three decades.

When I lived in the U.S., I was with friends and sat in synagogue next to one of the people who will go down in my history book at epitomizing the imperative of redeeming captives. He is one of Pollard's attorneys who has spent years working on his behalf to make this milestone possible. Also noteworthy, he worked pro bono. He never took a dime. Over the years, we spoke about Pollard and his case often. I sympathized and admired his perseverance.

After I helped get my adopted family free from the Soviet Union, my rabbi's wife was elated and asked what blessing we make on fulfilling this biblical mandate. Jewish tradition is that we make a blessing after an action related to most such commandments and even acts of nature, to remind us that nothing happens without God's fingerprint.

So we seek to affirm this and glorify Him through such acknowledgement. Neither of us knew what blessing I should make. So she checked into it. It turns out, when it comes to redeeming captives, there is no blessing because we are not to derive personal benefit from others' tragedies.

Such is the case of my friend and the many others who worked tirelessly on behalf of Jonathan Pollard, not for personal recognition, not for profit, but just for good. Today, they can hang their hats on having helped redeem one captive, a person held in prison for decades because he is a Jew and was used as a political pawn.

God knows they did it, and that's good enough. But as I wrote my friend before Pollard's release, he should pour himself an extra full glass of wine and toast himself because he embodies a Jewish tradition going back thousands of years, literally etched in stone in a side room in the Vatican. {eoa}

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## **After a Yearlong Battle, This Christian Group Gets Back on Campus**

After over a year of being kept off campus for its Christian beliefs, the student group Chi Alpha has finally been reinstated at the California State University Stanislaus campus. Chi Alpha, a Christian organization for college students, [was kicked off campus](#) at Stanislaus and ordered to change its policies at three other California State campuses after the California State University system adopted a new policy banning students in religious clubs from requiring their leaders to share their faith. As of Thursday, all four Chi Alpha chapters are back on campus.

“For religious students, groups like Chi Alpha are a place of refuge. It’s just common sense—and basic liberty—for religious groups to be led by students who share their faith,” said Adèle Auxier Keim, legal counsel of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty.

Chi Alpha was founded in 1953 as a place where college students could gather to worship God, study Scripture and pray together. Its members give back to the community through programs like feedONE, which provides food for over 140,000

hungry children worldwide.

Chi Alpha has been serving Cal State Stanislaus for almost 40 years. Chi Alpha's students have always asked their leaders to believe and live what Chi Alpha teaches. But in August 2014, the Chancellor of the Cal State University system banned policies like Chi Alpha's. Under California State's new policy, fraternities and sororities can require their leaders to be men or women, the environmental club can require its leaders to believe in climate change, but religious groups can't require their leaders to believe what they teach.

In September 2014, Cal State Stanislaus administrators derecognized the Chi Alpha chapter and locked Chi Alpha's students out of the meeting space they had reserved for their fall kickoff meeting.

In 2015, after months of negotiations, the Cal State Chancellor's Office agreed that while religious student groups couldn't require all leadership candidates to share their faith, students were free to select leaders whose lives and beliefs reflected their group's message. As of last Thursday all four Chi Alpha chapters—at Cal State Stanislaus, Cal State Sacramento, San Diego State and Cal State Fresno—are back on campus as recognized student groups.

Chi Alpha still has fewer rights than fraternities and faces an unfair burden on its ministry, but its students can once again take their place as a recognized part of campus.

"Cal State has adopted a halfway solution that still gives fraternities more rights than campus religious groups. But they've acknowledged that students can vote for a candidate who shares their beliefs, and that's a step in the right direction," said Keim.

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# Teen Arrested in Pastor's Wife's Slaying

Indianapolis police said on Monday they have arrested an 18-year-old man suspected of fatally shooting the pregnant wife of a pastor during an apparent home burglary.

Larry Taylor of Indianapolis was arrested on a preliminary murder charge in the death of 28-year-old Amanda Blackburn, who was shot and killed while she was at home with her 1-year-old son on Nov. 10, according to Indianapolis police.

"All victims of criminal homicides deserve closure, and as a community we must send a collective message that violence is not an option," Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department Chief Rick Hite said in a statement.

WXIN 59, the Fox TV affiliate in Indianapolis, reported that in fact three suspects had been detained in connection with the rape and murder of Blackburn. The TV network said Jalen Watson, 21, and Diano Gordan, 24, were being held on parole violations.

Police and the Marion County Prosecutor's office could not be reached for further comment.

Detectives believe the men entered Blackburn's home, which was unlocked and two left with her ATM card to retrieve money, while Taylor allegedly raped and shot her, WXIN reported. ATM receipts were in a vehicle stolen previously, and the detectives also gathered evidence linking the suspects to the use of Blackburn's credit card, WXIN said.

At least one of the suspects is cooperating with police, WXIN

said. Authorities said the men referred to themselves as “The Kill Gang,” according to WXIN.

Blackburn’s husband, Davey, came home from the gym to discover his wife had been shot. She was rushed to the hospital and later died.

Earlier in the month, police said they suspected the killer may have also broken into a nearby house hours earlier.

Officials said the burglary of a television and computers from a home two doors away from the Blackburn house occurred at about 5:30 a.m. and Davey left for the gym shortly after 6 a.m.

Neighbors reported hearing shots fired at about 6:45 a.m., but there were no signs of forced entry.

The Blackburns moved to Indianapolis from South Carolina in 2012 to start the independent Resonate Church.

Davey Blackburn could not be reached for comment, but in a statement to local media he said, “Though it does not undo the pain we are feeling, I was extremely relieved to get the news of the arrest made last night of Amanda’s killer. The investigators have assured me they have a solidly built case to ensure justice is levied and the process is expedited.”  
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## Why Pastor Saeed Abedini’s

# Wife Kept His Abuse Secret Until Now

The wife of Saeed Abedini, the Iranian-American pastor imprisoned in Iran since September 2012, has had a difficult month.

First Naghmeh Abedini [canceled](#) all public appearances after telling supporters by email that her husband had abused her physically, emotionally and sexually. Twelve days later, she released a statement saying she regretted her previous emails. "I was under great psychological and emotional distress," she said.

Iran sentenced Saeed Abedini, a former Muslim who converted to evangelical Christianity, to eight years in prison for his alleged involvement with Iran's burgeoning house-church movement. In Shia-majority Iran, Sunni Muslims, Baha'is, Christians, and other minorities face harassment, arrest, and imprisonment, according to the U.S. State Department.

Since her husband's detention in 2012, Naghmeh Abedini has been publicly advocating for his freedom, winning the support of top evangelical leaders and meeting privately with President Obama, which is why her accusations of spousal abuse came as shock. But those accusations also raise the question: Why do evangelical women wait so long before reporting abuse?

"Many who suffer domestic abuse feel lots of shame, are blamed by others, and do not tell anyone," said Justin Holcomb, a Florida Episcopal priest and seminary professor who co-authored with his wife Lindsey "Is It My Fault? Hope and Healing for Those Suffering Domestic Violence."

"Christian women, in particular, stay far longer in abusive situations and in more severe abuse than their non-Christian counterparts," he added.

So far, social media posts on Facebook, Twitter, and elsewhere show that supporters of the Abedini family were not backing away from Naghmeh after the abuse allegations became public.

“God guide and protect you and especially Saeed at this time when he will not be having visitors that he feels God in a special way during this time. May the angels protect him with a hedge of safety,” one supporter posted on Naghmeh Abedini’s Facebook page.

Naghmeh Abedini shared few additional details in her initial email alleging abuse, besides saying her husband, 35, was addicted to porn and that the abuse was ongoing even though their contact is limited to Skype and phone calls.

An American citizen and the mother of two children, Naghmeh Abedini said the abuse began in 2002. The two were married in 2004.

Research shows that domestic abuse survivors in general are less likely to receive extensive public support through their local church. According to a 2014 poll from LifeWay Research, about two-thirds of Protestant pastors address domestic abuse from the pulpit once a year or less. Additional research from LifeWay found that only 25 percent of surveyed pastors consider abuse or sexual violence an issue within their congregation.

“Many churches appropriately stress the importance of marriage and family, but some churches wrongly teach that a wife’s primary role in life is to protect their husband’s or family’s reputation,” said Holcomb, the Episcopal priest. “Because of this emphasis, those experiencing abuse in their relationship may feel ashamed because they believe they failed in their relationship,” Holcomb said.

He said domestic abuse is much more prevalent than many people realize: He cites research that indicates one in four women will experience abuse in an “intimate partner relationship.”

Holcomb advises pastors to talk more openly about domestic abuse, be accessible to abuse survivors, and collaborate with social agencies and law enforcement.

Abuse is one of the most under-reported crimes, he said. "It is extremely unusual for someone to lie about these kinds of claims."

According to Lenore Walker, a professor at Nova Southeastern University and founder of the Domestic Violence Institute, "Women with strong religious backgrounds often are less likely to believe that violence against them is wrong."

The campaign for release of Abedini continues to have a very high public profile. In January, shortly after delivering the State of the Union address, Obama met with Naghmeh and her two children briefly and pledged to make release of Saeed a top priority.

In a mid-November statement, the American Center for Law and Justice, which is representing the family, said, "What we are focused on is this: bringing home an American pastor who has been wrongly imprisoned in Iran because of his faith."

Beginning about 15 years ago, Abedini reportedly joined local efforts to start up house churches. But about 10 years ago, Iran began an aggressive crackdown on these churches. Abedini, who moved to the U.S. with his family in 2005, shifted his attention from starting house churches to care for Iranian orphans.

In the 2014 book "Too Many To Jail," author-researcher Mark Bradley documents the rapid growth of house church Christians from 1979 to the present day. He describes Iran as having "the fastest growing church in the world" and projects that there may be 1 million Christians in Iran by 2020.

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# Pastor Kong Hee Sentenced to Eight Years in Jail

Following a three-year trial, Singapore's City Harvest Church Founding Pastor Kong Hee was sentenced to eight years in prison for diverting funds to bolster his wife's musical career, *The Straits Times* [reports](#).

At the sentencing on Friday, the judge gave five other church leaders—former CHC fund manager Chew Eng Han; deputy senior pastor Tan Ye Peng; ex-finance manager Serina Wee; former finance committee member John Lam; and former finance manager Sharon Tan—prison terms ranging from 21 months to five years.

Kong and the others were found guilty in October of using a management company, Xtron, to financially support his wife, singer and CHC pastor Sun Ho, as she planned the release of an album in the United States. The church leaders were found guilty of misusing about \$50 million in church funds, including \$24 million to bolster Sun's career.

The judge agreed to delay the sentencing until Jan. 11 following Christmas.

Kong and the others told the court they are considering appealing their convictions and sentences, CHC Pastors Aries Zulkarnain, Bobby Chaw and Sun said in a prepared statement.

“We want to thank each and every one of you, our church members, for demonstrating such strength and unity throughout all these years, and particularly in these last few extremely difficult months,” the pastors said in a [statement](#). “We ask you to remember and hold close to your heart the call of God upon City Harvest Church.

“We have learned lately what it means to have faith, trust and rest in God—let us put what we have learned to practice. Let’s band together to fulfill the heavenly calling for us through CHC 2.0. Let us continue to pray for the six and their families as they prepare for this next step in the legal process. May God grant them grace and the peace that surpasses understanding.”

The defense attorneys for Kong and the others have argued that the church suffered no financial losses and that Kong and the others did not profit.

In a [statement](#), the judge wrote he had no doubt that Kong and the others “had no wish to do any harm” and “believed that they were using church funds for an evangelistic purpose that was not just permitted but positively mandated by the vision and mission of CHC, and which was supported by the vast majority if not the entirety of the congregation.”

“But saying that they believed they were using ‘church funds for church purposes’ is not an answer to the charges; so long as they intended to use CHC’s funds in such a manner that amounted to a wrong use in the knowledge that they were not legally entitled to do so, the element of dishonesty would be made out,” the judge wrote.

Following the sentencing, Kong declined to comment.

Attorney N. Screenivasan, who represents Tag Ye Peng, [told](#) *The Straits Times*: “This has been a very trying case. He needs to pray, reflect and discern, before deciding what to do.”

Serina Wee’s husband, Kenny Low, [said](#): “We are thankful that we are able to have some time to go back and settle our family and to (think) about what’s ahead.”

Paul Seah, Sharon Tan’s attorney, said he would talk with his client before deciding on the next step.

John Lam said he would speak to his lawyer before deciding whether to appeal.

“I’m just glad we have cleared this stage, at least the sentence has been passed and we know what we are in for,” he [said](#). “It’s obviously a very difficult time and we want to get the family ready. We have to prepare ahead.”

Chew Eng Han told *The Straits Times*: “No comment, you already know I want to appeal.”

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## **Promise Keepers Founder James Ryle Enters Gates of Heaven**

TruthWorks President James Ryle died Saturday from congestive heart failure.

“It is with an unbelievably heavy heart that we inform you that our brother, James Ryle, went yesterday to be with His Jesus. As we are saddened here on earth, we know that James is in the place that he dreamed of going,” reads a Facebook post.

According to a [biography](#) on his TruthWorks website, Ryle was the founder and president of TruthWorks, as well as one of the founding members of Promise Keepers.

He was involved public speaking since 1972, serving as pastor of two churches, chaplain for the University of Colorado football team, and ministering as an evangelist, Bible teacher and popular conference speaker throughout the nation and abroad. He is a best-selling author, and a contributor to both the NKJV Spirit Filled Life Bible, and the NIV Worship

Leader's Bible.

Many in the Christian community are mourning the loss of Ryle, including prophetic voice James Goll.

"Another great prophetic champion and Master Communicator has departed way too soon," Goll posted on [Instagram](#). "James had suffered from congestive heart failure in recent years and is survived by his wife, Belinda. James was the clear voice behind the birthing of the Promise Keepers Movement. We will all miss you James. You lived life so well. Heaven is fuller once again. My heart rejoices in salvation thru Jesus and is yet heavy at the same time."

Many are sharing their sentiments on Ryle's Facebook post.

"He will be missed, but he leaves an amazing legacy. My husband and Son met him many years ago in Hamilton NZ, he was a very down to earth speaker, my son was encouraged by him... Blessings to His family..." writes one person.

Another posted: "We treasure every moment we spent with James. Years ago, we connected with James while my husband was helping him with his website. We shared sweet memories yesterday of times spent with him where he absolutely made our kids feel like part of the conversation – he engaged them every time, told the joke with his hand where he raised up that shortened finger like a dog's head (our son thought that was the best!), and kept them entertained the night that the news was filled with stories of a potential war with Iraq (spring of 2002 maybe?) so they wouldn't be scared at all the junk on the tv at the restaurant where we were eating. I could regale you with the stories of what he taught about Jesus, and how he wrote and shared such amazing poetry, did amazing art, etc., but what blessed me more was how we was with people individually. What a treasure! Our loss is Heaven's gain. Farewell, James! See you again soon."

The post on Ryle's Facebook timeline says memorial service

details will be coming soon, but it will be held after Thanksgiving.

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## **New Orleans Playground Gunfight Injures 16**

A gunfight between two groups erupted on Sunday in a New Orleans park where hundreds of people were gathered for a block party and the filming of a music video, leaving 16 people wounded, police said.

Circumstances surrounding the shooting in the city's Upper Ninth Ward, and details of what precipitated the violence, were not immediately clear, but New Orleans Police Department spokesman Tyler Gamble told Reuters no fatalities were reported.

Asked whether gang activity was thought to be involved, Gamble said it "was still too soon to say."

"We know, by speaking with some of the victims, that there were two groups of people shooting at each other," Gamble said.

Witnesses told police that both groups involved in the gun battle fled the park on foot immediately after the shooting, police said in a statement. No arrests were immediately reported.

According to the statement, 10 gunshot victims were taken to area hospitals by ambulance, and six more arrived at emergency rooms "via private conveyance."

Gamble said each of the 16 victims suffered either a "direct

gunshot wound” or a “graze wound” and all were listed in stable condition, though the full extent of their injuries was still to be ascertained. Police said they did not have the age or genders of the victims.

The incident unfolded at about 6:15 p.m. Central Time at the Bunny Friendplayground, following a community “second line” parade that ended a few blocks away earlier in the day, police said.

Several hundred people were gathered in the park at the time for an unpermitted block party and the impromptu filming of a music video, according to police.

New Orleans police Commander Chris Goodley, speaking in a video clip posted by the New Orleans Times-Picayune website, said the crowd at the park remained “orderly” after the shooting. “But we were trying to preserve the crime scene as best as we could and tend to the victims,” he added.

New Orleans Police Superintendent Michael Harrison also was quoted by the Times-Picayune as saying, “no one has died at this time.”

Three witnesses told the newspaper they saw a man with a silver-colored machine gun, and also heard more gunshots coming from within the crowd as he ran away. Several people were lying on the sidewalk after the shooting, it said.

WVUE-TV said police believed the shooting stemmed from a fight. {eoa}

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# Hundreds Missing After Landslide Buries Settlement

Hopes faded on Monday that any of 100 people still missing would be found alive two days after a landslide near a jade mine in northern Myanmar smashed into a makeshift settlement, burying mine workers as they slept.

Rescue workers had recovered 104 bodies when the search was suspended on Sunday night, state newspaper the *Global New Light of Myanmar* reported on Monday.

It is unclear what caused a mountain of mining debris to give way early on Saturday in Hpakant, a mountainous area in northern Kachin State that produces some of the world's highest-quality jade.

The mines and soil dump sites are hazardous and deaths among workers picking through the slag piles for jade are common.

An estimated 100 people are still missing, according to officials in the region, and the death toll was expected to rise as the search resumed on Monday, said Tin Swe Myint, head of the Hpakant Township Administration Department.

"We just don't know how many people exactly were buried since we don't have any data on people living there," he told *Reuters* by telephone on Sunday. "It was just a slum with these ... workers living in makeshift tents."

Workers, many of them migrants from elsewhere in Myanmar, toil long hours in dangerous conditions searching for the precious stones.

Ko Sai, a miner who was at a nearby camp, said the landslide hit around 3 a.m., when many miners were sleeping.

"We just heard a loud noise sounding like thunder and saw that

the huge mountain collapsed and a huge wave of rubble was moving and sprawling on a wide area," Ko Sai said.

"It was just like a nightmare," he said.

Several companies had dumped mining debris at the 200-acre dump site, said Tin Swe Myint. The dump was near a mine controlled by the Triple One Jade Mining Company, he said.

Much of the jade that is mined in Hpakant is believed to be smuggled to neighboring China, where the stone is highly valued.

The value of jade production in Myanmar is estimated to have been around \$31 billion in 2014, according to researchers from environmental advocacy group Global Witness, which published a report on the opaque sector earlier this year. {eoa}

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## **Why 1 Denomination Is Up in Arms About 'The Lord's Prayer' Ad**

Movie theaters in Britain—a nation that has practiced Christianity for more than 1,800 years—won't show [a one-minute advertisement](#) in which students, weightlifters and a police officer each recite a line from the Lord's Prayer.

"The Lord's Prayer is prayed by billions of people across the globe every day and in this country has been part of everyday life for centuries," a [statement](#) from the Rev. Arun Arora, director of communications for the Church of England, said.

“Prayer permeates every aspect of our culture from pop songs and requiems to daily assemblies and national commemorations. For millions of people in the United Kingdom, prayer is a constant part of their lives whether as part thanksgiving and praise, or as a companion through their darkest hours.”

The video, which opens with footage of the Most Reverend and Right Honorable Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, continues with people from different walks of life reciting the prayer found in [Matthew 6:9-13](#), which Christians believe was the prayer Jesus taught His disciples, hence the name the “Lord’s Prayer.”

The Church of England is sponsoring a prayer campaign called [justpray.uk](#), which seeks to boost awareness of, and participation in prayer.

That seemingly innocuous goal wasn’t satisfactory for the Digital Cinema Media (DCM) agency, which as “the market leader in U.K. cinema advertising, providing some 2,929 screens at 455 sites for advertisers. DCM sells 80 (percent) of the cinema advertising market through exhibitors including Cineworld, ODEON, Picturehouse, Vue and many independent cinemas.”

In a statement [provided to the BBC](#), Digital Cinema Media said “some advertisements—unintentionally or otherwise—could cause offence to those of differing political persuasions, as well as to those of differing faiths and indeed of no faith,” and therefore would ban the advertisement from cinemas.

The same BBC report quoted the Church of England’s chief legal adviser, Stephen Slack, as saying the ban could “give rise to the possibility of legal proceedings” under Britain’s [Equality Act](#), a 2010 measure passed by Parliament outlawing discrimination by commercial businesses on the basis of religion.

The controversy generated over the advertisement has doubtless

drawn thousands, if not millions, of viewers given the global media coverage. And Rev. Arora said he would want people to view the spot and judge for themselves.

Arora's view has some support from Britain's most noted atheist, Richard Dawkins, who told Britain's [Guardian newspaper](#) that even if the cinemas have a right to a commercial decision about which advertising to accept, an exception should be made in this case. "I still strongly object to suppressing the ads on the grounds that they might 'offend' people. If anybody is 'offended' by something so trivial as a prayer, they deserve to be offended," Dawkins said.