

Top of the Week: Mark of the Beast, Equality Act, Idolatry, Oh My!

Here are the top stories from Charisma News this week:

How a Current Economic Trend Reveals the Mark of the Beast

Revelation 13:15-18 remains one of the most annoying challenges of interpretation within all of the Holy Bible.

“Then the statue of the beast commanded that anyone refusing to worship it must die. He required everyone ... to be given a mark on the right hand or the forehead. And no one could buy or sell anything without that mark, which was either the name of the beast or the number representing his name. His number is 666” [or 616 in some manuscripts].

A beast rises from the sea and survives what seems a death-dealing injury, and is then “miraculously” healed. But it takes a second beast coming from the sea to create an image of the first beast, which can then move about and issue commands. At our elementary level of understanding, we must ask why all the machinations? Can’t the first beast simply take control? If not, why not? How come the image rather than the real thing is required to get things done?

Bride’s Shocking Experience Will Become Common Under ‘Equality Act’

A young bride-to-be, referred to herein as “Ann” to protect her privacy, recently experienced the reality of what would be commonplace with the “Equality Act.”

Ann contacted Liberty Counsel for legal assistance after she went with her mother and sister to a bridal store to try on wedding gowns. She called and booked an appointment with a salesperson. When Ann arrived, the salesperson was wearing a COVID mask, dress, tights and heels. The salesperson proceeded to help Ann in the dressing room, touching private areas of her body while helping her in and out of wedding dresses. Then

Ann's sister and mother pulled her aside and notified her that the salesperson was a man. Ann had never undressed in front of a man and felt violated and deceived by the bridal store. Ann's fiancé later went to the store and confronted the owner who defended the employee and said she was required by law to treat the man as if he were a woman.

This Is What Idolatry Looks Like

I write these words on Sunday afternoon, Feb. 28. This is just hours before former President Trump is scheduled to address CPAC, where he will likely receive a hero's welcome and be recognized as the de facto face of the Republican Party.

Earlier in the week, attendees were stunned to see a 200-pound, golden Trump statue wheeled into the CPAC convention, sparking a flurry of stories and headlines, including this one, today, from *The New York Times*: "At CPAC, a Golden Image, a Magic Wand and Reverence for Trump."

Many others were quick to compare the golden statue of Trump with the golden calf that the Israelites worshiped. (Ironically, in synagogues around the world this week, religious Jews will read that very account of Israel worshiping the golden calf.)

Longtime Assemblies of God Pastors Bill and Esther Ilnisky 'Walked Together Into Heaven'

Longtime Assemblies of God pastors and ministry leaders Bill and Esther Ilnisky died March 1 from complications of COVID-19. Bill was 88, and Esther was 92; they died 15 minutes apart in the same hospital room. Together, they pastored the Lighthouse Christian Center (formerly Calvary Temple Assembly of God) in West Palm Beach, Florida, for many years. A 2003 *Charisma* magazine article featured the story of how Bill led his church to minister to African children orphaned by the AIDS epidemic, a ministry that began with the Holy Spirit using a *Newsweek* article to birth in him a burden for these orphans.

State Governors Drop Mask Mandates, Including Texas

Gov. Greg Abbott has lifted all mask mandates and business restrictions for the state of Texas. He is one of several

governors who have made such announcements in the new year.

His executive order, the details of which he announced in a Lubbock restaurant, contained a word of caution for Texans:

“Make no mistake, COVID-19 has not disappeared, but it is clear from the recoveries, vaccinations, reduced hospitalizations, and safe practices that Texans are using that state mandates are no longer needed. Today’s announcement does not abandon safe practices that Texans have mastered over the past year,” Abbott said.

He also encouraged Texans to remember their duties to care for one another saying “each person has a role to play in their own personal safety and the safety of others.”

He continued, “With this executive order, we are ensuring that all businesses and families in Texas have the freedom to determine their own destiny.” {eo}

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