



# **SIGNS OF THE TIMES**

**News Articles for Episode 261**

# [Iran shipped ammunition through Caspian Sea to Russia - report - The Jerusalem Post \(jpost.com\)](#)

#bibleprophecy, #iran, #russia, #weapons

Apr 25, 2023

Russia and Iran have deepened their ties amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Iran shipped over 300,000 artillery shells and a million rounds of [ammunition to Russia](#) across the Caspian Sea in the past six months, according to a report by the *Wall Street Journal*.

Iran has mostly used cargo flights to ship weapons to Russia, which are nearly impossible for Western countries to stop, and blocking the shipment of weapons in the Caspian Sea would require the agreement of former Soviet republics in the area.

Officials in the Middle East told *The Wall Street Journal* that the most recent weapons shipment known to have crossed the Caspian Sea to Russia left Iran in early March on a Russian cargo ship, carrying 1,000 containers with 2,000 artillery shells.

## **Iran, Russia and the Caspian Sea connection**

On April 24, US CENTCOM commander Michael "Erik" Kurilla visited Turkmenistan, which also borders the Caspian Sea. While Kurilla was in Turkmenistan, Turkmenistan Foreign Minister Rasit Meredow was in Washington, DC meeting with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Last week, Israel opened its first-ever [embassy in Turkmenistan](#).

This also comes after Vice-Adm. Brad Cooper of the US Fifth Fleet made an unannounced visit to Turkmenistan earlier this month, according to *The Wall Street Journal*.

The US Fifth Fleet is based out of Bahrain and is active in the Persian Gulf, Red Sea and Arabian Sea. Among their many responsibilities is maritime security in the region, which includes combatting attempted Iranian smuggling efforts.

For instance, on December 1, the US Navy managed to intercept an Iranian ship that was smuggling several weapons over to Yemen, where they would have gone to the Iran-backed Houthis.

US-allied British forces in the region have also intercepted several Iranian weapons smuggling attempts over the past few months.

This all comes amid deepening ties between Moscow and Tehran.

This stronger relationship was forged amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine, with Iran [providing Russia with drones](#) and Russia providing Iran with cash and seized Western weapons.

Exactly how Iran manages to ship these drones to Russia is unclear, though a report in *The Guardian* in February indicated that many of them were [smuggled by way of Iranian ships on the Caspian Sea](#).

# [Biden administration is quietly planning for a future where you don't own money | Fox News](#)

#bibleprophecy, #currency, #america, #money

Apr 25, 2023

In Biden's future, you will not own CBDC money, and you'll have no privacy either

Under the leadership of [President Joe Biden](#), the White House and the Federal Reserve have started to lay the groundwork for a programmable, trackable, easily manipulated digital currency. It might sound like something from a dystopian science-fiction novel, but it's all too real, and it could soon change life in America forever.

In March 2022, the Biden administration released a sweeping executive order that directed numerous federal agencies to crack down on digital assets, including on popular cryptocurrencies, as well as to study the potential development of a central bank digital currency (CBDC).

A CBDC would *not* be a digital version of the existing paper-based dollar, but rather an entirely new currency that would exist exclusively in a *digital* (meaning an electronic, non-physical) form.

In September 2022, the White House announced the completion of the CBDC reports. Although the administration did not officially propose a CBDC following the release of the reports, it did announce that it had developed "policy objectives" for a U.S. CBDC system.

Biden also directed the leadership of the National Economic Council, National Security Council, Office of Science and Technology Policy and the Treasury Department to "meet regularly" with [the Federal Reserve](#) to further design a potential CBDC.

Since the flurry of action in September, the administration has worked tirelessly – and quietly – to advance the creation of a CBDC, through various working groups, speeches and coordinated efforts with non-government groups.

Under the various CBDC proposals floated by the Biden administration and Federal Reserve, a U.S. CBDC would be programmable, traceable and designed to promote various left-wing social goals, such as improving "financial inclusion" and "equity." It would also be designed to help with "transitioning to a net-zero emissions economy and improving environmental justice."

Unlike with decentralized cryptocurrencies, such as Bitcoin, every transaction made using a CBDC could be easily traced to individual users by financial institutions, government agents and/or the Federal Reserve (depending on the details of the final design).

Additionally, because a CBDC would be digital and programmable, rules could be imposed that limit spending on approved activities. So, if the federal government or Federal Reserve were to determine that Americans are buying too much gasoline, for example, it could stop people from using CBDCs at gas stations with a few clicks on a computer.

Perhaps most disturbing of all, however, is that under most of the CBDC designs discussed by the Biden administration and Federal Reserve, nearly all forms of ownership of CBDC money would also be strictly limited. Only large institutions such as banks, the federal government, and/or the Federal Reserve would actually have ownership of CBDCs. Everyone else would be prevented from having absolute control over their digital money.

That means in Biden's future, you will not own CBDC money, and you'll have no privacy either.

How, exactly, would the Biden administration prevent most forms of private ownership of digital money? To best understand the answer to that question, you first need to know important details about the existing banking system.

Currently, when you go to the [bank and deposit money](#) into a checking or savings account, you immediately cease to own the money. The cash becomes the property of the bank. In most situations, the bank is required to return the money you provided to it at your request, but the cash ultimately belongs to the bank until you remove the money from your deposit account.

Under the current system, there is a way to regain control of your money, by withdrawing cash from a deposit account, and [privacy laws](#) prevent banks in many situations from giving away details about your financial accounts to third parties, including the government.

But because CBDCs would only exist in digital form in a deposit account, and because they would be programmed to feed data to government, there would be no way for you to physically take CBDCs out of a depository account, store them privately, own them directly, or use them without being surveilled by a large institution.

The Biden administration has directly acknowledged that a future where you don't own CBDCs is exactly what it and the Federal Reserve are now considering. For example, in a 2022 report about CBDCs, the Treasury Department stated, "There are two general architectures for CBDC intermediation: (1) a single-tier (i.e., direct) CBDC with the central bank, and (2) a two-tier CBDC where intermediaries (potentially banks or nonbank financial intermediaries) would onboard and manage payments while the central bank records account balances."

In other words, there's no scenario in which you would be able to store your digital money in a local hard drive or private storage account. All of your money would be kept by a bank or the Federal Reserve directly, which means *they* would own *all* of your CBDC money.

Regardless of where your CBDCs are held, it's likely the federal government would have access to data about your purchases and other information – a design choice CBDC supporters say is necessary so that officials can limit criminal activity. The only significant privacy questions that remain in the minds of those who support CBDCs are about the extent of the data collection.

For example, Biden's under secretary for domestic finance, Nellie Liang, explained in a March 2022 speech about CBDCs that "one way of reconciling privacy with illicit finance concerns in a retail CBDC might be to have a tiered structure in which less data are collected for small dollar transactions or small volume accounts."

Note that Liang says "less data" "might" be collected for small dollar accounts. She doesn't say no data will be collected.

If a programmable CBDC is rolled out in the near future, you won't own money and you'll have very little privacy, if any at all. That's great news for those who advocate for bigger government and want more power for large financial institutions, but it could prove to be a catastrophic loss of freedom for the rest of us.

# [Antisemitic flyers found in Florida during Holocaust Memorial Day | 7 ערוץ](#) [\(israelnationalnews.com\)](#)

#bibleprophecy, #hate, #holocaust, #anti-semitism

Apr 19, 2023

Hate group behind nationwide antisemitic flyer campaign distributes propaganda in heavily Jewish Palm Beach.

A notorious white supremacist group distributed antisemitic flyers in the Palm Beach, Florida area shortly before the start of Holocaust Memorial Day on Tuesday.

The hate literature was discovered in Lake Park and Riviera Beach in Palm Beach County on Monday morning, according to *WPTV*.

The flyers were from the “Goyim Defense League,” the hate group responsible for numerous similar flyer drops across the United States, according to StopAntisemitism.

The organization noted that the Goyim Defense League’s leader, Jon Minadeo II, has encouraged an increase in the distribution of antisemitic flyers in the state in response to the Florida legislature advancing Bill HB269, whose purpose is to curb the increase in antisemitic incidents in the state, strengthening the punishment for religious-based harassment to a third-degree felony.

Palm Beach has the second largest Jewish community in Florida.

The incident follows previous distributions of similar antisemitic flyers across Florida, including recently in West Palm Beach, Palm Beach, Boca Raton.

The flyers found in Palm Beach included a call to stop HB269, referring to it as the “Don’t Say Jew” bill and alleging that it will “end the First Amendment in order to make it a felony to criticize Jews or the State of Israel” and also claiming that “Jews are allowed to defame whites but whites aren’t allowed to even so much as tell the truth about Jews.”

Local activist Linda Posner, who co-organized a “Standing up to Anti-Semitism in South Florida and Beyond,” event in her area this week, told the news outlet that the hate flyers targeting the Jewish community underline the urgency of passing Bill269.

“And that’s the reason that House Bill 269 is so important, because it will make hate crimes a felony offense something that can be punishable,” Posner said. “The whole idea is for us to live together with peace and respect.”

# [SatanCon, poking at religion and government, opens this weekend in Boston \(nbcnews.com\)](#)

#bibleprophecy. #satan, #convention, #religion

Apr 25, 2023

The Satanic Temple is celebrating 10 years of existence with its SatanCon convention in Boston this weekend, but it's not what you probably think.

The organization is as much a theater of American satire as it is a place for believers.

The temple, not to be confused with the Satanic Church, does not formally deify Satan as the personification of evil, but rather it sees him as a literary character, a necessary rebel, while mocking traditional religion and calling out government's embrace of institutions like the Catholic Church, co-founder Malcolm Jarry said.

"They believe in a literary representation of Satan," Jarry said of the temple's estimated 700,000 members around the world. "It's a heroic figure who fights against tyrannical authority and for humanity, even if it's a losing battle."

Still, the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston seems shaken by the prospect of Satanic Temple members in red bodysuits and costume-shop devil's horns amassing near the Copley Place shopping center.

The archdiocese is counterprogramming with a weekend of solemn events.

"We are approaching it through a response balanced and focused on prayer," Terrence Donilon, a spokesperson for the archdiocese, told the [Catholic News Agency](#) last week. "We are finalizing a list of places throughout our whole archdiocese where we will gather."

The weekend convention at the Boston Marriott Copley Place is sold out, temple organizers say, boasting that it will be the largest satanic gathering in history.

The convention, which is scheduled to include the temple's rituals, a marketplace and a wedding chapel, also caps a successful 10 years for the organization, symbolically based in a Victorian house in Salem, Massachusetts, Jarry said.

It was established after Jarry met Lucien Greaves when they were studying at Harvard. The two agreed to launch a group with a mission of maintaining inclusive religious freedom while keeping alive the separation of church and state.

He described the typical temple member as "anyone who is nonconforming" and those who are "marginalized people."



These satanists support women's shelters, highway cleanup and addiction recovery centers, he said. A big issue for the temple is abortion rights. It recently launched a telehealth clinic in New Mexico that it says provides abortion medication via mail.

It's a legitimate church, according to the U.S. government.

In 2019, the temple persuaded the IRS to [recognize it](#) not only as a tax-exempt religion but as a proper church.

"To be recognized as a church by both the IRS and the legal system is a whole world of difference," said Jarry, who did not want to divulge personal details like his age.

The temple and the Catholic Church have clashed before. In 2014 the temple promoted a Black Mass at Harvard University that prompted the archdiocese to call on the institution to dissociate from the temple.

In 2016, the temple also unsuccessfully challenged the city of Boston to allow it equal time to deliver an invocation before a City Council meeting, as other churches had done.

The weekend event is dedicated to Boston Mayor Michelle Wu, who was on the City Council at the time. The temple has accused her of denying it equal access to public events and spaces. But not this time.

Wu's office did not respond to a request for comment.

"Public forums need to be open," Jarry said. "And they need to accept people of all faiths."

# [264 United Methodist churches leave Holston Conference | WATE 6 On Your Side](#)

#bibleprophecy, #methodist, #churches, #lgbtq

Apr 22, 2023

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (WJHL) — More than 100 Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia churches are among 264 that have officially split with the United Methodist Church (UMC) Saturday at a called special session of the Holston Conference.

## [‘In God We Trust’ bill passes Tennessee General Assembly](#)

The number represents 31% of churches in the conference, which stretches from the Chattanooga metro area to the Blacksburg, Va. area in the northeast. The Holston Conference now has 578 churches after starting Saturday with 842.

The departures are the culmination of a years-long rift between more traditional congregations and those that are more moderate or progressive, particularly around issues of human sexuality. A conference media release said 945 members and guests attended the session at Knoxville’s Central United Methodist.

Each church that followed a 90-day spiritual discernment process, voted at least two-thirds to “disaffiliate” and met certain financial obligations had its disaffiliation request approved Saturday. Prior to Saturday’s meeting, more than 2,000 churches nationwide had left the UMC within the last several years — most within the last nine months at special conference sessions — with numerous conferences still to hold their special sessions.

“It is a poignant day as our disaffiliating churches and withdrawing pastors have played an important role in the lives of those of us continuing in The United Methodist Church,” Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett, resident bishop, said in the news release. “Our conference vote today ratifying disaffiliations will not change the impact these pastors and churches have had on us.”

Saturday’s meeting, which was announced late last fall, started with a worship service — the last many of those present would attend as members of what has been the U.S.’s second-largest protestant denomination. Many of the departing churches are joining the recently established and more theologically conservative Global Methodist Church.

## [Painful road to parting: UMC church leaders say differences over LGBTQ issues have frayed relations](#)

Jake Herron is from East Stone Gap UMC in East Stone Gap, Va., which is leaving the denomination. He told News Channel 11 after the meeting the conference’s leadership was helpful throughout the process.

“We worked through everything and the whole time we were led by the spirit, just to move into this new expression of Methodism,” Herron said.

A time-limited disaffiliation process was added to the denomination’s governing documents at the end of a contentious 2019 national conference that was called to wrestle with the issue of same-sex marriage and the ordination of openly LGBTQ clergy.

Both of those remained prohibited by the UMC at that meeting, though the vote to maintain the traditional approach was very close.

The worship service, led by Wallace-Padgett, was followed by a business meeting with just one agenda item. Voting delegates considered all the requests in a single vote, which passed.

The Three Rivers, Clinch Mountain and Appalachian districts, which lie entirely within the News Channel 11 viewing area, had a total of 97 churches leave the denomination. The Mountain View District is partly within the viewing area and had 56 churches disaffiliate.

While Herron said East Stone Gap’s decision was led by the Holy Spirit and will allow a new expression of Methodism, a church leader who is remaining UMC told News Channel 11 the churches that are staying can be part of a better Methodism.

“We have always been real people who are about social justice, we’ve just not always lived it,” said Sharon Bowers, director of churches at Emory and Henry College. “So this gives us the opportunity, one of the first opportunities I believe in the history of United Methodism, to be what we say we are, to be the church.”

The pastor of Mount Zion UMC in Afton, north of Greeneville, said she believes those who stayed and those who are leaving share a bottom-line mission.

“Now I feel like both sides can move forward to do what we’re called to do and that is to make disciples of Jesus Christ,” Grimm said.

The news release said just two of the conference’s 25 churches with more than 1,000 members disaffiliated and that about two-thirds of those leaving have fewer than 100 members. Overall, the membership shrunk from 148,580 to 117,378 Saturday, a drop of 21%.

Kim Goddard, superintendent of the New River District and former pastor of Mafair UMC in Kingsport, addressed a visioning session after the business meeting and said despite the pain of the day’s events, the remaining churches had a “calling to set a new course.”

“Now we have this hour, this moment, and I believe in this time we have the potential and possibility to write a new chapter, to give us a fresh new start, to set us on a renewed and revived path of faithfulness,” Goddard told the group, according to the release.

# [Fewer born-again Christians believe Jesus lived sinless life | Church & Ministries News \(christianpost.com\)](#)

#bibleprophecy, #jesus, #sinless, #christians

Apr 23, 2023

Millions of Christians no longer attending church since pandemic

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020, fewer born-again Christians now say that Jesus lived a sinless life during his time on Earth, and church attendance has dropped by some 15 million people weekly, a new study from the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University shows.

The findings came from [The American Worldview Inventory 2023](#), an annual tracking study of the worldview of U.S. adults involving 2,000 people from across the country and conducted under the supervision of George Barna, director of research at the Cultural Research Center.

While born-again Christians make up about one-third of all U.S. adults and are considered “the backbone of local church activity because of their higher level of commitment to the Christian faith,” the study shows that between 2020 and 2023, the share of those who say they believe Jesus did not commit sins during his lifetime on Earth fell from 58% to 44%.

Jesus being sinless is central to the hope Christians have in Him as Savior explains the apologetics website [Got Questions](#) because, “If Jesus were not sinless, there would be no sacrifice for sin.”

“The apostle Peter stated it clearly: ‘He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth.’ ([1 Peter 2:22](#)) Indeed, as [Jesus Christ is God](#), He has no capacity to sin,” the Christian website explains.

This shift in belief among born-again Christians was among six that showed a significant decline in the past three years that Barna characterized as “indefensible.”

Fewer than half of born-again Christians also now believe they have a unique, God-given calling or purpose. The share of those who held that belief fell from 88% to a staggering 46% during the pandemic.

A downward trend was also observed among those who say the Bible is unambiguous in its teaching about abortion. That belief fell from 58% to 44%. Those who say human life is sacred fell from 60% to 48%, and the number of born-again Christians who say God is the basis of all truth fell from 69% to 63% over the period.

The share of born-again believers who say they are deeply committed to practicing their religious faith fell from 85% to 50%, while the share of those who say they read or study the Bible at least once a week fell from 60% to 55%.

When it comes to the general population of U.S. adults, Barna said the share of the population that claims to hold a biblical worldview fell from 6% to 4% in the last three years, while less than half now claim to be “deeply committed to practicing” their religious faith. That measure fell from 60% to 48%.

Barna also found that only 33% of adults now say they attend church service during a typical week which shows “a decline representing the loss of about 15 million churchgoing adults each week.”

The veteran researcher said the findings on the drastic shift in Christian belief over such a short period of time are “highly unusual” because “religious beliefs and behaviors have typically been a hallmark of consistency.”

“Most religious beliefs change over the course of generations, not a few years,” Barna said. “However, we know that major life crises have the capacity to introduce substantial change quickly in the foundations of people’s faith.”

And the impact of COVID-19 has been significant.

“The pandemic was certainly a life crisis for our nation, so even though this magnitude of spiritual shift was not expected, it is feasible given the physical and psychological effects of COVID along with the economic, relational, and lifestyle effects of the government’s drastic policies,” Barna explained.

As he [warned in the 2022 Worldview Inventory](#), Barna noted that a significant driver behind the decline in Christians holding on to a biblical worldview is syncretism, an ideology described as “the worldview that merges otherwise incompatible philosophies of life into a made-to-order worldview that incorporates enough biblical elements to be minimally Christian in nature.”

“Although some of the belief and behavior shifts seem to conflict with each other, this is precisely what happens when the prevailing worldview of the nation is Syncretism,” Barna said.

“Syncretism does not rely upon logic or consistency. Over time, many people struggle with the conflicts inherent in their syncretistic belief system, and the strange jumble of behaviors that emerge from those beliefs,” he added. “But for the foreseeable future, it is likely most people will ignore their incompatible philosophies and make do the best they can. They are seeking comfort and security more than spiritual and intellectual consistency.”

# Texas mandates 'In God We Trust', Ten Commandments, and prayer in public schools - Israel365 News

#bibleprophecy, #texas, #schools, #tencommandments

Apr 23, 2023

[Texas](#) is passing several bills that will require religious texts to be displayed in classrooms. While the legislation has garnered opposition from the left wing, it also serves to underscore the differences between religions and how they interpret the Bible.

On Thursday, the Texas Senate passed [Bill 1515](#) which will now head to the state House for consideration. The bill requires displaying the Ten Commandments in every classroom starting next school year. The Biblical verses must be displayed on a 16×20-inch poster or framed copy. The legislation requires the text:

- The Ten Commandments:
- I AM the LORD the God.
- Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
- Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven images.
- Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.
- Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
- Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.
- Thou shalt not kill.
- Thou shalt not commit adultery.
- Thou shalt not steal.
- Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
- Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house.
- Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his cattle, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

The Ten Commandments appear twice in the Torah: [Exodus 20:1-14](#) and Deuteronomy [5:6-18](#). Different religions divide the commandments up differently though all agree that the sum total is ten. Some traditions combine the first three into a single commandment based on their shared interest in worship.



The Texas version more closely resembles the Protestant enumeration as it includes the prohibition against graven images which is excluded from the Catholic version of the Ten Commandments.

While there are minor differences between the two versions, the legislation seems to be an abbreviated version that more closely adheres to the version recorded in Exodus which mandates “remembering the sabbath” as opposed to Deuteronomy which mandates “observing the sabbath”.

“[The bill] will remind students all across Texas of the importance of the fundamental foundation of America,” Texas Republican Sen. Phil King said during the hearing, according to the [Texas Tribune](#). The Senate also gave final passage to [Senate Bill 1396](#), which would allow public and charter schools to adopt a policy that would set aside time for students and employees to pray and read religious texts like the Bible at school.

These legislations are in addition to Senate Bill 797 passed in August [requiring](#) schools to display posters with the motto. “In God We Trust” in a “conspicuous place” as long as they were “donated” or “purchased by private donations”

The Senate also passed [Bill 1556](#), which would codify the Supreme Court’s ruling in October 2022 Supreme Court in favor of high school football coach Joe Kennedy who was fired for leading prayers on the field after games. The new law will protect the right of school employees to engage in religious speech or prayer “while on duty.” School districts are allowed to require campuses to provide a “period of prayer and reading of the Bible or other religious text on each school day.”

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick praised the new laws.

“I will never stop fighting for religious liberty in Texas. Allowing the Ten Commandments and prayer back into our public schools is one step we can take to make sure that all Texans have the right to freely express their sincerely held religious beliefs,” he said in a [statement](#).

“I believe that you cannot change the culture of the country until you change the culture of mankind. Bringing the Ten Commandments and prayer back to our public schools will enable our students to become better Texans.”

Texas schools had the Ten Commandments in the classroom in the 70s, before a court ruling removed them nationwide in 1980.

David Nekrutman, the Executive Director of The Isaiah Projects and an Orthodox Jewish theologian, has been building bridges between Christians and Israel for over two decades. He was supportive of the legislation.

“As we approach the holiday of Shavout, a holiday that includes the giving of the Torah at Sinai, it is refreshing that the State of Texas is willing to bring back the fundamentals to a nation under God; the 10 Commandments,” Nekrtuman told Israel365 News. “As

Jews, we should be celebrating the passing of this law, which demonstrates that the Voice that spoke at Sinai nearly 3,300 years can still be seen in the classroom to provide a form of structure in a society in which the youth of today are constantly being bombarded with secular fleeting values that focus on the self.”

“True freedom is not about doing whatever you want,” Nekrutman added. “Inherent in the biblical value of freedom is the notion of responsibility.”