

A Dry And Weary Land

Drought

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Some of you are aware that members of God's church in the Western Cape of South Africa are facing what may be a catastrophic crisis, which has already begun to jeopardize their lives. A church member in the Cape Town area of South Africa send me a 31st of January, 2018, article from the Thomson Reuters Foundation, and they are the charitable arm of Thomson Reuters. The article was written by Umberto Bacchi titled, "From Cape Town to Kabul: Taps Run Dry in Crisis Cities." Mr. Bacchi writes,

Drought-stricken Cape Town could run out of water as soon as April, but South Africa is not alone in its struggle as ever more world cities battle acute water shortages.

Water scarcity already affects more than 40 percent of the world's population and is expected to rise . . . with one in four people projected to face chronic or recurring shortages by 2050, according to the United Nations.

Already hosting more than half the world's people, cities are at the forefront of the problem, as population growth increases pressure on reserves, which are already stretched by too little rain and too much waste.

Here some of the crisis cities that he mentions in his article:

São Paulo: The reservoir supplying Sao Paulo, Brazil's largest city and a metropolitan region of 20 million people, nearly dried up in 2015, as the country faced its worst drought in 80 years, depriving many residents of water for 12 hours a day. The city was criticized by U.N. experts for losing 31 percent of its treated water to leaks and theft, compared to an average of 16 percent in the United States.

Lima: Rain in the Peruvian capital is almost non-existent, with average annual precipitation of 7 millimeters [about one quarter of an inch]. Water is expected to become scarcer still as global warming thaws Andean glaciers, reducing flows as the ice disappears. The city has been working to improve watersheds in the Andes mountains, while residents in hillside shantytowns overlooking the city have been using nets to condense thick fog from the

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Pacific Ocean into drainage pipes. [That's desperate.]

Mexico City: Despite the heavy downpours that come each rainy season, Mexico City, a mega-city of 21.3 million people, depends on depleting aquifers and has long struggled with providing enough water to its inhabitants. Built on what was once a lake, it is also prone to flooding. They have over pumped local supply so much that the land is actually sinking.

Melbourne: The Australian city suffered the so-called 'Millennium drought' between 1997 and 2009. It was one of the worst dry spells on record, affecting other major cities such as Perth, Adelaide and Sydney. Melbourne has since slashed per capita water use by half.

Kabul: Originally planned to support about 1 million people, the Afghan capital is now home to more than 4.6 million, according to U.S. government estimates. Several unseasonably dry winters, along with the sprawling population, have strained supplies and caused a falling water table.

The list goes on and on of the cities that are suffering from too little water.

Now we get back to Cape Town. On the 18th of January 2018, the BBC reported,

The South African city of Cape Town will slash residents' water allowance to fifty liters per day [that's about thirteen gallons a day] from next month amid fears that it could become the world's first major city to run out of water. "The city has reached a point of no return," the mayor Patricia Daylily said.

Here are some excerpts from emails I have received within the last two weeks from another church member in the Cape Town area, and he describes their dire situation in this way:

We're staring down a dark tunnel with no solutions. You should see the shelves in the stores, and the mindset of the people. I regret I did not react as soon as I should have when I looked at it in hindsight. Now it's critical, as reports even come out of people stealing neighbor's water and taps having to be locked. These are isolated cases, but then we are at the start of the last two months' supply left, so it will escalate badly, I feel.

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We are trying to buy up water, but they have stopped us buying more than a couple bottles now, and the new restrictions start today as well. Prices rocketing and people on edge and looking gloom. I had to spend a good few hours filling up wellpoint water into many five liter bottles [that's equal to about one and one-third gallons] and a few hundred liters in a tank for the family from wellpoint. This is for flushing and cleaning only, but we have started using it washing clothes as well, as it is not possible water. It has metal and probably bacteria, so I'm going to chlorinate it tomorrow a bit as well.

We are so under stress. I spent today and yesterday trying to get water bottles and some water. Nothing to be found. If you are not at the right place at the right time, the stuff is sold as it arrives. Reports of people trying to unload trucks as they arrive to buy as much as possible. No longer able to buy in bulk.

Four million people being rationed water is no joke. People do not have containers. Most would never be able to get to a well point anyhow. I tell you, the attitudes coming out of the man on the street are already frightening. A great amount of anger and frustration. People watching each other, reporting anyone they feel may be wasting, etc. One gets the feeling that this can escalate into a Nazi Germany situation, in some ways.

It's taking its toll on me, too, with so much to deal with. I am trying to get a spare wellpoint pump as well, and encountered that many of the adapters and other parts are in very short supply. I went around everywhere. Many places have taken their phones off the hook—do not answer, do not return messages, etc. Chaos is coming soon.

Cape Town is currently battling what is said to be the worst drought in one hundred years, with day zero looming. Day zero is the day when the city will be switching off the water supply and Cape Townians we will have to get their daily twenty five liters [that's about six gallons] water ration from designated collection points. They expect day zero to hit sometime between the middle of April and early May. So, please pray for the members in South Africa, and in the Cape Town area especially. They very much need God's intervention and they have already begun facing this very severe trial, which will become more life-threatening with every passing week.

We had rain here today. We are having it—that's wonderful; we can appreciate

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that—and they had some last night, but it was just a little. They were able to fill up some jugs and things like that. But whether they will get any more is a big question. If not, it's going to go the route that I just read from the emails.

Drought is an image of suffering in the Bible. It is above all an image of natural terror. It is a dangerous reality because it precipitates famine and makes a land uninhabitable. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all forced to relocate because of drought-related famine, so it does happen to God's people as well. Jeremiah equates a land of drought with a land where no one travels and no one lives. In Jeremiah 2:6-7, the prophet indicts the people for their rejection of God. There he writes and says to the people,

Neither did they say, 'Where is the LORD, Who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, Who led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and pits, through a land of drought and the shadow of death, through a land that no one crossed and where no one dwelt?' I brought you into a bountiful country, to eat its fruit and its goodness. But when you entered, you defiled My land and made My heritage an abomination.

Dropping down to Jeremiah 2:13:

For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Israel forsook the true God for false gods, which was like abandoning a spring of fresh flowing water for a cracked muddy cistern that could not hold water. Finally, Jeremiah 2:17 says,

Have you not brought this on yourself, In that you have forsaken the LORD your God when He led you in the way?

When related to disobedience to God, the experience of a drought was meant to be more than physical and financial. It is evidence of God's displeasure and a call to repentance. Drought is not just a curse. It is also a sign of God's grace in that it helps drive people back to God

Although members of God's church sometimes have to suffer drought because of the

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sins of society, we can receive encouragement in knowing that if we have God's spirit dwelling in us, we have living water flowing out of her heart, which is everlasting. You can find that in Isaiah 44:3; John 4:13-14; John 7:38-39.

May God intervene on behalf of brethren in these crisis-stricken areas. And do not forget to pray for them, and also to thank God for the rain that we have. God will answer our prayers because we are His people.