

## What About The Middle East?

***“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins”*** (Romans 11:25-27).

In view of the crisis in the Middle East, we have decided to make some comments here that may be helpful in assessing the situation. Of course, what we want to know is what we can surely know. What is certain? There is a very great amount of speculation going on now and, of course, has been going on for a great many years as people have assumed that we were coming close to the end of the age.

There is one pivotal statement that puts the entire matter into focus—*“All Israel shall be saved.”* Whatever else may be known by us—and so much is obscure—the one thing we can depend on is that sometime in the future, God will bring complete recovery to His people. This message is constantly reiterated through the Scripture from the promise to Abraham, down through the book of Revelation. The promise to Abraham has never yet been fulfilled. Never in its history has Israel, for example, been more innumerable than the sands of the seashore or the stars of the heavens. The conditions of restoration found in the prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, as well as the minor prophets, go far beyond anything that as yet has occurred in the history of Israel. In Isaiah 35 we are told that *“the desert will blossom as the rose.”* Is it possible that this includes the entire Arabian Desert, more than just the Negev? The reason for such a possibility is the vastness of the kingdom, which one day will take place. According to Ezekiel 47 that kingdom would stretch from the Nile Valley of Egypt clear up to the Mesopotamian Valley.

In Acts 1, the disciples asked Jesus if He would at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? No doubt they had in mind something of this nature, possibly remembering the kingdom of David and Solomon which was quite extensive. At any rate, there is abundant evidence in the prophets that there is going to be a restoration of the earthly kingdom of Israel at some time. In addition to this earthly kingdom, there is going to be, of course, a great spiritual restoration of Israel, beyond what has taken place during the present Church Age.

All of these prophecies are obviously for a much later date. There are several conditions which seem to require fulfillment before this restoration takes place. One of these, as our Text indicates, is the fulfillment of the “times of the Gentiles.” What is obviously in view here is that after Israel’s apostasy, God turned His attention to the Gentiles. Hosea is very specific in his prophecy that those who were “not the people of God,” would become His people, and those who were “the people of God,” would lose that position. Paul is very clear in his statement that the Gentiles who were not seeking after God did, in fact, come to Him, whereas the people of God who sought Him by their own righteousness, lost out with Him. In section 9-11 of the Romans Epistle, there is a very precise

prophecy regarding the restoration of Israel after the “times of the Gentiles” when God will once again turn His face toward His people.

Meanwhile, according to Jesus, He had “other sheep which were not of this fold,” whom He must bring with Him. It seems obvious that He is referring to the Gentiles and to a period that we call the Church Age. In Psalms 68, as well as in Revelation 21, we are told that the time is coming when Gentile nations will bring their offerings and their honor to the “new Jerusalem” (see the author’s book—David, The Man Of The Heart). How and when all of these things come together is not that clear. Jesus told the disciples that it was not for them to know the time or seasons. Whenever one gets too specific about this, there is some question as to the validity of the teaching. So far, most of the teachings from the so-called “prophets” have missed the mark, including the whole issue of Russia. Russia’s future is in considerable doubt at the present time (the author has questioned their role in the final days, for 20 years. The reference to a northern power in Ezekiel 38, which most teachers have ascribed to Russia, does not need to be further north than the Caucasus Mountains. In Ezekiel 26, the King of Babylon is “the King of the north.” Without identifying who that is, it is at least certain that all of the prophecies relative to the reestablishment of Israel involve Middle Eastern powers. The author has been saying for over 20 years that the Moslems constitute the great threat, rather than Russia.

Furthermore, a careful reading of Ezekiel 38 coupled with Revelation 20, indicates that the great battle involving Gog and Magog, which some identify as Armageddon, will take place after a period of peace that has been so extensive that the “beloved City” or Jerusalem will have put away all of its defenses and will be “an unwallled City.” This could be the Millennial period of time when Satan has been bound for a thousand years. Afterward he is loosed for a season and goes to gather up all of his old “comrades-in-arms” and goes up against Jerusalem. At this point he is wiped out with all of his hosts in a very short and massive extermination by God. Once again, the timetable on all these matters is much in question. It does not appear however that the present situation meets the conditions for the cataclysmic circumstances of Revelation. It would seem that much must happen in terms of alignments and realignments before the final phases begin of God’s devastations and restorations of His people. Certainly, what we are witnessing is neither Armageddon nor a prelude to Armageddon as such. But there are other conflicts that Israel must face long before that time.

What will ultimately herald the age of recovery will be the turning of Israel to a false Messiah who will claim to deliver them from all of their difficulties. This figure is known generally as the “anti-Christ,” but is mistakenly identified as one who is fundamentally “against Christ.” The reverse is true. The Greek word *αντι* (*anti*), means rather “in place of,” than “against.” He will come to them as the great deliverer, but a deliverer from earthly problems. Jesus was rejected because He did not offer to free Israel from Rome. His deliverance was spiritual and not physical. Now they will turn to a messiah who will promise them physical deliverance, but who will be “the great deceiver” (possibly, he will be a Jew who converted to Islam and now disguises himself as a Jew). When he is granted the power that he seeks, then he will show his true colors and turn against the people of God. At this time, Jesus appears on the Mount of Olives (see Zechariah 14) together with His great hosts, to deliver Israel from the false

Messiah. After this, the Millennial Kingdom is established and Satan is bound for a thousand years. Armageddon comes, according to Ezekiel 38 and Revelation 20, when Satan is finally loosed and seeks again to destroy the people of God.

In many respects, this scenario is also somewhat speculative, since none of us knows for certain. The more absolute one is in his statements regarding these matters, the more suspect is the teaching.

What is not speculative is that *“All Israel shall be saved.”* That does not mean that every Israelite will be saved, but that the people of God as a whole will be saved. The nation will once again become “God’s people.” It is obvious, however, that when the false Messiah takes over, there will be many who will allow his mark on their forehead, thus sealing their doom with him. But when the nation is finally restored, it will belong to God.

And what of the Gentiles? They too will belong to God, as a people who were not of Israel. Those who “bring their glory and honor” unto the new Jerusalem, will obviously be those who are left from among those who have risen up against God’s people in a final stroke of rebellion.

And what of the present conflict? No one knows for sure—not even the military experts. So what should our attitude be? It should be what Jesus recommended in His instructions on prayer—*“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”* More than that we cannot do. We can pray for victory—that is certainly understandable—but in the end, whatever it is that God has in mind in this conflict, will come to pass. Maybe Hussein must be punished as were Nebuchadnezzar and his other forebearers. He seems to want to identify himself with them. So be it.

In the end, God will be the Victor. In the end, Satan will be defeated. In the end there will be a large ingathering both of Jews and Gentiles and God will have fulfilled His purpose in His creation.

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