

THE WORLD AT WAR

“...in that day... every man’s sword shall be against his brother.” — Ezekiel 38:21

The news media can hardly keep up with the many wars erupting throughout the world — Afghanistan, Ukraine, Gaza and numerous warring factions in Africa. Serious points of tension also exist in Russia, Pakistan, China and North Korea. And now, the U.S. is involved in yet another Middle East conflict as city after city in Syria and Iraq falls into the hands of one of the most vicious and rapidly growing insurgent Islamist groups to date — ISIS — the self proclaimed *Islamic State of Iraq and Syria*. This radical militant faction of Islam is so vicious that even Al-Qaeda has disavowed them as *“too extreme.”*



THE CRY OF JIHAD STRIKING FEAR!

Truly, the cry of *Jihad* — holy war against all infidels — is setting the world at high alert! The *Arab Spring* was originally viewed as an exciting shift in power from arrogant dictators to a more democratic system of government, but, in reality, it has become the opportunity that Jihadist radicals have been hoping for. Seeing a weakened and somewhat disorganized society, they enter in with unbridled force to take control. What will this mean for the world? At a minimum, it causes great distress among the nations, and, at worst, it could precipitate another rigorous military response, drawing many nations into battle against a vicious and illusive foe which lacks any respect for life.

Radical Islamic fundamentalism is a relatively new and ominous foe in the history of war. There is no behavior more irrational and brutal than that of religious fanaticism fueled by hatred and religious bigotry. Terrorism is the primary implement of war used by these religious fanatics. There are no *rules of engagement* as seen in previous wars and no effective way to stop the momentum of destruction, chaos and fear that spreads as a result.

Worldwide terrorism is one of the signs of *“the end of the age.”* Speaking prophetically of this *end time* phenomenon,

Joel expressed it well: *“let the weak say I am strong.”* (Joel 3:10) Jesus also spoke of this time: *“For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now — and never to be equaled again,”* and *“...men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world...”* Matthew 24:3, 21, NIV; Luke 21:26 NIV

Yes, terrorism is a most frightening and effective weapon in the hands of those who desire to coerce and

intimidate. It has become the poor man’s military strategy. Unlike guerrilla warfare against military targets, terrorism is aimed at civilians and is designed to instill fear in as many people as possible with the least amount of effort. An unparalleled case in point — three precisely timed acts of terror by a handful of individuals paralyzed this mighty nation for months following the 9/11 attacks. Although Israel has confronted the threat of terrorism every day for decades, a *worldwide war on terrorism* was not declared until it reached the soil of the United States. Since 9/11, billions have been invested to stop the terror. But, much to the amazement of allied world leaders, terrorism has not stopped — on the contrary, it has escalated like a spreading wildfire.

THE PROPHETIC SYMBOL OF FIRE

Fire, as used in Scripture, is a fitting symbol of anarchy — complete lawlessness. There is nothing more destructive to society than anarchy. The prophetic description of anarchy which is to be visited upon mankind in the *end time* is found in our theme text: *“every man’s sword against his brother.”* While this sad prophetic statement of worldwide anarchy yet looms on the horizon, brushfires of revolution as seen in the *Arab Spring*, and anarchy, such as we see in these lawless radical movements, have been flaring up around the world and getting worse. The bravado of the Nigerian Islamic militant group Boko Haram is a forceful example of the complete lack of respect for human dignity and even life

itself. The kidnapping of over 200 young girls from a school in Nigeria is a tragic case in point.

Even with international intervention, as is beginning in Iraq and Syria, the fire often rekindles with a vengeance. Once the people topple the powers that be, a worse fate often rushes in to fill the void. As a worse case scenario, one need only look at Somalia, a country which has not been under the control of a single national government for over twenty years. Over 600,000 people have fled the country, escaping desperate conditions. Those who remain must fend for themselves, often resorting to piracy and other crimes of desperation. Indeed, the fire of anarchy has consumed any semblance of society in Somalia.

TERRORISM'S HOTTEST TARGET

Israel, either directly or indirectly, is the central target of the majority of terrorist attacks; and anyone who supports Israel is drawn in to the target. Proportionate to its population, Israel has been the victim of more than the equivalent of fourteen 9/11 attacks. Since the beginning of the *Oslo Peace Process* in 1993, over 1,500 Israelis have died at the hand of Arab Palestinian terrorism, and there have been well over 8,500 Israeli casualties, not to mention the mental toll it has placed upon this peace-loving people. There is no question that terror has greatly burdened the daily lives of the Israelis.

In 1989 Hamas, a violent Islamic fundamentalist party, began to wage an unprecedented war of terror upon Israel. They are demanding a Palestinian State in *all* of the land of Israel. (*Hamas Covenant*: Articles 6, 15 & 28) Since the death of Yasser Arafat, Hamas has been growing in popularity among Palestinians. As seen in the current conflict, Hamas has gained control of Gaza and is using it as a base for terrorist activities against Israel.

Constant random bombing sent by Hamas from Gaza keeps Israeli families in a heightened state of anxiety every minute of every day. Israel's restraint in agreeing to several cease-fires has proven unsuccessful, as Hamas continues to fire more rockets randomly into Israel. Indeed, Israel's generous withdrawal from her land in previous peace initiatives has never brought peace with the Arab terrorists who live within and near her borders — instead there is only a louder cry of *Jihad*, more hatred, and a renewed fervor to declare their desire for *all of Israel*.

Israel's right to defend itself has brought about hundreds of casualties within Gaza, weakening support from the West for Israel's military, which has been labeled as "*bullies*" and "*thugs*." As a result, Hamas seems to be winning world support in their quest for a Palestinian State in Gaza — but will they achieve their goal to eliminate the Jews from Israel? Prophecy indicates the contrary. "...*those who hate Thee have exalted themselves. They make shrewd plans against Thy people, and*

conspire together against Thy treasured ones. They have said, 'Come, and let us wipe them out as a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more... Let us possess for ourselves the pastures of God.' O my God, make them like the whirling dust... Fill their faces with dishonor, that they may seek Thy name, O LORD..." Psalms 83:1-18 NAS

A DRIVING FORCE BEHIND THE TERROR

What is it that drives these radical factions to such brutality — inflicting as many civilian casualties as possible, and not just any casualties, but in particular, Jewish? On the surface, religious fanaticism is an obvious root cause, but hidden from view there are *spiritual forces of evil* which aim to destroy God's people — *the seed of promise* — by fanning the flames of hatred. Ephesians 6:12

Yes, Satan and his demon host are desperately seeking to thwart the plan of God, for they know that His plan to bless all the people of the earth through Israel will mean the final destruction of evil spirits and all evil doers. (Malachi 4:1) And so, their goal

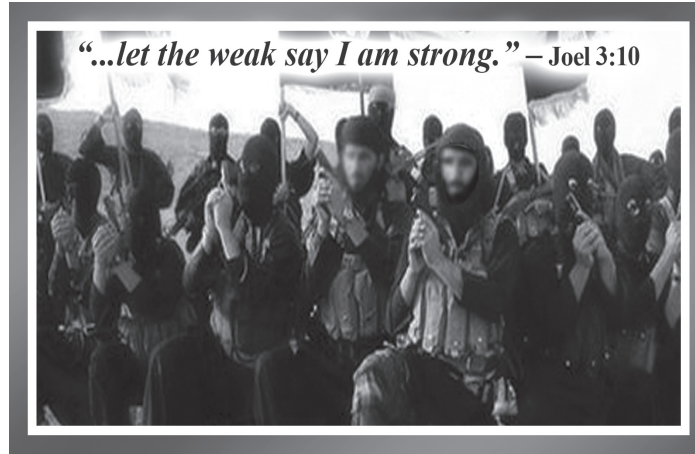
is to prevent the *oath-bound covenant* promised to Abraham from coming to pass: "*I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven [spiritual Israel], and as the sand which is upon the sea shore [natural Israel] ...and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed...*" Genesis 22:16-18; Galatians 3:29

Thus, the unseen *powers of darkness* are throwing fuel on the terrorist flame of hatred. Religious fanatics who manipulate the truth and perpetrate evil upon their enemies are playing into Satan's hand—pawns in carrying out his malevolent designs.

Thankfully, there is also an unseen battle going on in the heavens to preserve the *spiritual and earthly seed of promise*, and thereby to bring about God's benevolent design for all mankind. He declares that those who trouble themselves with Israel will themselves be troubled. (Zechariah 2:8-12; 14:3) Just as God brought plagues upon Egypt, saying, "*Let My people go,*" so He will bring plagues upon the modern pharaohs of this world — now under the influence of Satan — until Israel is freed from the bondage of terror. God's Word is sure — He will prevail in this battle against evil. Israel *shall* be a blessing in all the earth.

THE GATHERING OF ALL NATIONS

God told Israel through the prophet Zephaniah: "*Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy...*" (Zephaniah 3:8) Throughout history, there have been pockets of conflict, revolution and anarchy among men ever since Cain's hand was against his brother Abel. So why have the past one hundred



"...let the weak say I am strong." — Joel 3:10

years been any more remarkable to indicate that we are now at the time period of Zephaniah's prophecy? It is the *gathering of nations* that makes this prophetic statement quite unique to our time.

The world is interconnected — *gathered* — as never before in history. Today, what happens on a street in Syria can be flashed in seconds around the world via cell phones to millions of outraged onlookers. The recent beheading of the two young reporters (one an Israeli) covering the Syrian civil war was shocking to even think about, but even worse, ISIS posted videos of these horrific events on *YouTube* for the world to witness. Yes, global communication over the worldwide web is contributing further to the instability of the social and financial fabric of all nations large and small. The world's economies are now lined up like so many tottering dominoes — any one of which could bring the others down.

In this *present evil world*, powerful, oppressive leaders will continually arise, indoctrinating hatred. Without the *Prince of Peace* there will always be another Hitler, another bin Laden or another Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. But, thank God, a stronger nation is about to put an end to the *vain imaginations* of these despotic rulers. In God's Holy Kingdom, Christ will *reign with a rod of iron* upon those who impose their unrighteous wills upon others. (Revelation 2:27; 20:1-4) The Apostle Peter states that the "*heavens shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt...*" (2 Peter 3:7-13) These "*heavens*" and "*elements*" are not people — they are the oppressive systems that the selfish and power-hungry have created. After these corrupting elements — political, financial, social and religious systems — are removed, mankind will see clearly the valuable lessons of the consequences of sin and selfishness. There will never again be cruel and power-hungry dictators, for none shall "*hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.*" Isaiah 11:9

HOPE OF LASTING PEACE RESIDES IN ISRAEL

Respect for Israel and God's sure promises to her is what the Christian must learn from Bible prophecy. God chose Israel out of all other nations to be a channel of His blessings to the world. God calls Israel *the apple of His eye, His Firstborn, His Inheritance.* Zechariah 2:8; Exodus 4:22; Isaiah 19:25

God has not abandoned His oath-bound covenant to Israel through their father Abraham. "*...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 Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for*

your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes [Israel's patriarchs] . . ." Romans 11:25-28

Israel *is* fulfilling Bible prophecy! Her regathering as a nation was one of the signs of Christ's return to establish his everlasting Kingdom. (Matthew 24:32) "*...I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David... that the residue of men might seek after the Lord...*" (Acts 15:14-18) God's Kingdom, with Christ as His honored agent, will be one of righteousness, unselfishness and peace beginning in Jerusalem and then spreading to the entire world.



Though Israel is now the center of trouble and terrorism in the world today, God's peace plan will make her a *praise in all the earth.* (Isaiah 62:7) Jerusalem will become the capital of the world and the center for lasting world peace, not only for the Jews, but for all who humble themselves and learn to love the righteous Laws of God. "*Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem... In those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold*

of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you." Zechariah 8:22, 23

GOD ONLY WOUNDS TO HEAL

Yes, God will "*gather the nations*" to pour out the "*fire of His wrath.*" And while that sounds painful — there is *hope beyond the trouble.* As a surgeon who must remove a cancerous tumor, God only wounds to heal. Out of the midst of the turmoil surrounding the globe at this time, God has a plan which will most certainly bring *healing and everlasting joy!* Isaiah 35:10

Continuing in Zephaniah's prophecy, after the fire of that day, God will then "*turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.*" (verse 9) The "*pure language*" is *truth.* Once the chastening hand of justice quenches the fires of anarchy, God turns this "*pure language*" to the people — which indicates they did not have it before. "*The people*" referred to will be the untold billions of mankind who have never heard this "*pure language.*" And, because of the troubles they have experienced, they will now be ready to listen to God's pure truth — untainted by the erroneous and evil doctrines of men. Mankind will learn to freely serve God with "*one consent.*" *The New American Standard* puts this "*one consent*" as "*shoulder to shoulder.*" Instead of brother fighting against brother, mankind will learn to cooperate in building a peaceful society. The desire of every young soldier on the field of battle will be realized: "*They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation neither shall they learn war anymore.*" Micah 4:3

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The End Times Bible Report Quarterly
is a Free Publication of

The Associated Bible Students of Central Ohio

P.O. Box 813, Westerville, Ohio 43086-0813

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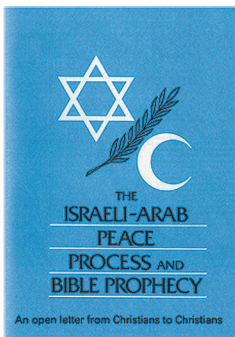
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