

CLOSING IN ON ISRAEL
Tom's Perspectives
by Thomas Ice

As one follows the events surrounding Israel today, it appears that the noose is increasingly being tightened around her neck. The Obama administration's bungling of the Iranian nuclear situation and John Kerry's forceful approach toward the so-called "peace process" is leaving Israel without many true friends in this world. I recall the statement over a decade ago from my Muslim neighbor who loved to point out that it was just a matter of time until the Jews in Israel will be wiped out of the land of Israel and pushed into the Sea. I agree that if one looks at the contemporary situation relating to Israel, without the aid of the Bible, it appears hopeless for God's covenant nation. However, true reality takes into account the will and plan of God, which means that Israel will not be destroyed as a nation no matter how desperate their situation becomes.

AMERICAN POWER DECLINES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Conservative Jewish columnist for the *Jerusalem Post* Caroline Glick argues that the United States under the Obama administration has basically withdrawn from the Middle East and there is now a struggle by powers like China, Russia, Iran, and others to fill the vacuum. She speaks of "the leadership vacuum that the Obama administration has created by stepping away from the US's responsibilities as the leader of the free world."¹ Glick also notes: "Under Obama, America's regional policies are so counterproductive that the US has come to be seen as the foreign policy equivalent of a drunk driver."² American military presence in the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf are at its lowest levels in decades at a time when many believe they are needed the most. Historically when a strong power vacates its influence in a region it has always lead to destabilization as those nations at the next level compete for hegemony in the region. That is what is now taking place.

I recently heard a Middle East analyst say, what is really going on in the Middle East is a struggle between Shiite and Sunni Muslims to see who will be able to reinstitute the Caliphate over Islam. Whoever gains the upper hand will, Muslims believe, will take a giant step to conquering the world for Allah. The Shiite center of Islam is Iran and the center of Sunni Islam is Saudi Arabia. Muslims believe that the world of Islam should not be divided into nations (that is thought to be Western influence), but should form a single empire under a single leader. This is thought to be necessary in order to fulfill the goal of Islam. Currently Iran, even though Shiites are at best a third of all Islam, has been the more aggressive and has the upper hand against the Sunnis. Saudi Arabia has in the past relied upon protection by the United States, but with the arrival of the Obama Administration the Saudis realize that the American cannot be trusted to keep their promises. The fact that Iran is on the threshold of going nuclear will give them a great advantage in their fight against Sunni Islam and they believe the ability to destroy Israel and keep the US at bay.

PROPHECY PREPARATION

An outcome of the Obama Administration policy in the Middle East has lead to a destabilization of Arab nations allowing Iran to gain an upper hand. This in turn has enabled Iran to strengthen their proxies against Israel with Hamas in the South and Hezbollah in the North. Iran has been able to keep the Shiite Alawite Bashar al-Assad

in control of Syria and Iran is positioned to eventually take over Iraq all during the Obama administered foreign policy of the US. Russia has renewed their military and established relationships with Iran, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Even China is becoming a player in the Middle East as it makes great gains in their development of military technology. The US under Obama seems unconcerned with these developments; in fact they all too often seem to favor these trends. Meanwhile the European Union is exerting increasing pressure upon Israel by threatening economic boycotts and reduced trade in some areas with Israel.

The bottom line is that increasingly the world is moving toward the configuration the Bible pictures will be in place during the seven-year tribulation. What better issue could the Muslim leaders come up with to bring some degree of unity within Islam than to actually attempt an attack on the land of Israel? The fact that Russia and Iran are in league with on another in many areas for the first time in history is an apparent indicator that God is moving another piece into place on His global chessboard. Also, we see Turkey moving away from the West toward an increasing militant Islam.

Turkey and Israel used to be close allies until a few years ago, but not any longer. Turkey will join Russia and Iran in the attack of Gog and Magog on Israel after the rapture but just before the beginning of the seven-year tribulation (Ezek. 38 & 39). I believe the Gog and Magog attack is related closely to the tribulation because the Lord says after the battle of Gog and Magog Israel will know the Lord and the nations will see His glory (Ezek. 39:21–22). The prophet concludes: “Then they will know that I am the LORD their God because I made them go into exile among the nations, and then gathered them again to their own land; and I will leave none of them there any longer. And I will not hide My face from them any longer, for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,” declares the Lord GOD” (Ezek. 39:28–29).

We are witnessing in our day the steep decline of American power, which will allow the Revived Roman Empire as predicted in Daniel 2 and 7 to arise and dominate the world during the seven-year tribulation. It used to be true that one of the most frequently asked questions I received during questions and answers time at prophecy conference was as follows: “Since America is the world’s only superpower, if we are living near the time of the events of the tribulation, how can the Revived Roman Empire dominate the world during the tribulation?” That question is fading away because America is fading away as a global influence. We are not there yet but we are well on our way and there is at least another three years of the Obama administration to endure.

THE RISE OF THE BEAST

Daniel’s prophecy of the seventy-weeks of years speaks of the rise of the antichrist or beast as he is called in Daniel and Revelation. The final verse in the prophecy says, “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, on that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate” (Dan. 9:27). The first use of “he” refers to “the prince who is to come” in the previous verse and is a reference to the antichrist. “The prince who is to come” arises from the same entity that destroyed “the city and the sanctuary” in verse 26. This refers to the Roman Empire that destroyed Jerusalem and the Jewish Temple in A.D. 70. Thus the beast will come from a revival of the Roman Empire of which the European Union appears to be a forerunner preparing the way for actual fulfillment during the tribulation. Verse 27 refers to “a

firm covenant” between “he” (the antichrist) and “the many,” which always refers to the Jewish people in the book of Daniel (Dan. 11:33, 39; 12:3). Leon Wood says, “Literally, ‘shall cause a covenant to be strong.’ A covenant is made strong by being made *firm, sure*.”³ So there will be some kind of treaty or covenant between Israel and the antichrist that starts the seven-year countdown of the tribulation resulting in the Return of Christ. The prophet Isaiah calls this time “a covenant with death” (28:15, 18).

With the US in decline as the most significant power in the Middle East, especially in relation to Israel, and the imminent failure of Obama’s Secretary of State John Kerry to negotiate a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, it will pave the way for the European Union to become the dominate influence dealing with Israel. As Israel becomes increasingly isolated as we move toward the tribulation during which time she will be totally abandoned by the nations as Jeremiah declares, “Because they have called you an outcast, saying: ‘It is Zion; no one cares for her’” (Jer. 30:17b). The antichrist will arise to and offer protection to Israel for seven years. Another possibility for the implication of the phrase “strong covenant” (Dan. 9:27) is that the covenant may not be negotiated, instead, it may be “imposed.” In fact, the Obama administration and the European Union have both suggested just such a “solution” to the Israel problem in our day.

CONCLUSION

No matter how dark it may look for Israel God will keep His promises to the only nation on planet earth that He has made an everlasting covenant with. No matter what happens to the modern nation of Israel in our day, we know that she will not be destroyed or pushed into the sea. The Lord God of Israel is in charge of history and He will keep His promise of salvation to His elect nation as they come to realize during the tribulation that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the stone which the builders rejected. The Jewish people will come to realize that it is only through their Messiah, Jesus, that their sins will be removed and they will be restored to a right relationship with God. Maranatha!

ENDNOTES

¹ Caroline Glick, “Canada takes it place at the table,” January 23, 2014, www.jpost.com.

² Caroline Glick, “The truth hurts,” January 16, 2014, www.jpost.com.

³ Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), p. 258.