

6. Turmoils in the Middle East

August 17, 2014

Ever since mankind has existed on this earth, there have been wars. The idea of “Can’t-we-just-get-along?” obviously does not work. Someone will say, “Yes, it works as long as others do everything my way.”

Did you know that since 2006 over 150,000 people were killed in Mexico due to Mexican Drug Cartel Wars? I am sure that ATF’s gunwalking scandal “Fast and Furious” added more death to that numbers. Syrian president Bashar al-Assad started the Syrian Civil War against his own people since 2011 so that he can stay in power and caused over 251,000 people’s death.

From the early point of human history, the Middle East has been the place where many wars that effected the entire world occurred, because it is the bridging area that connected Asia, Africa, and Europe. Since the nation Israel came back to life in 1948, it became the flashpoint of the turmoils in the Middle East and the rest of the world. But this is nothing new.

We are going to scan through from chapter 13 to 23 of the Book of Isaiah, because we covered many of these historical facts from the Book of 1 and 2 Kings as well as 1 and 2 Chronicles. This portion of the Book of Isaiah shows what was behind the scene, so please read them so that you can connect this with those historical Books in the Bible.

We will see the judgment of the Lord against the kingdoms that surrounded Judah and Israel because they came against them even though the Lord used them to punish Judah and Israel. Some would say, “That’s not nice of God to use them, then punish them later.” First of all, God is God and He can do whatever He chooses to do since everything belongs to Him. Secondly, these kingdoms were against God by their own choices to serve satan, so it is right for the Lord to punish them.

Here is a quick outline of the chapters:

Chapter 13-14:23 – Judgment against Babylon

Chapter 14:24-27 – Judgment against Assyria

Chapter 15-16 – Judgment against Moab

Chapter 17 – Judgment against Syria and Israel, the Northern Kingdom

Chapter 18 – Judgment against Ethiopia (modern day Sudan)

Chapter 19-20 – Judgment against Egypt

Chapter 21:11-12 – Judgment against Edom

Chapter 22:1-14 – Judgment against Judah

Chapter 22:15-25 – Judgment against Shebna

Chapter 23 – Judgment against Tyre and Sidon

However, we are going to spend some time in chapters 14 and 19. Additionally, we are going to take a look at what is going on in the Middle East in recent days from the biblical point view.

A. THE FALL OF LUCIFER

Isaiah 14:12-15 “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! 13 For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my

*throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation
On the farthest sides of the north; 14 I will ascend above the heights of the
clouds, I will be like the Most High.' 15 Yet you shall be brought down to
Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.*

Here we see the origin of satan who was known as Lucifer in the beginning. Those who do not know the Word of God would ask, "How could a God of love create someone as horrible as the devil? We just can't understand why God would make such a creature."

You see, God did not create someone as horrible as the devil. The devil became this way because of his pride as we read in v13. He made a deliberate choice to rebel against the Lord that turned him into what he is today: an intelligent, wicked, spiritual being who is bent on the destruction of humanity.

In fact, I find it interesting to read in the first chapter of Genesis that God saw everything He had made and it was good. So apparently at that point, all the angels were still under God's direction without rebellion.

But then in Genesis 3, we see the serpent, or satan, tempting Eve. Something drastic happened between Genesis 1 and Genesis 3. This once high-ranking, beautiful angel known as 'Lucifer' rebelled against God. Lucifer was not satisfied with worshipping God. He himself wanted to be worshiped. So he lost his former, exalted position in heaven.

The name "Lucifer" means "morning star" or "son of morning" indicates that satan tries to imitate Jesus Christ, who is "the Bright and Morning Star" as it is mentioned in Revelation 22. But satan means "accuser," which he is. So Lucifer became satan when he fell.

He lived with God in heaven, but because of his bad choice, his destination is a bottomless pit and a lake of fire and brimstone forever. Whether God is dealing with kings, or angels, or individual believers, what Proverbs 16 says is still true:

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

Satan who is the lord of this fallen world controls the unbelieving leaders of nations around the world. He has done it before and still does.

2 Corinthians 4:4 Satan, the god of this evil world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe, so they are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News that is shining upon them.

B. THE CURRENT TURMOILS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

With that in mind, let's take a look at the current turmoils in the Middle East.

What is happening in the Middle East now is not even fathomable about a year ago. But as what it is happening in that region unfolds itself before our very eyes, we cannot stop saying, "Wow, the biblical prophecies are coming true."

There are two struggles happening behind the scene in the Middle East which drags the entire world into their struggles:

- 1) Inner-Islamic power struggle between Sunni and Shiite
- 2) Global Islamic power struggle against the world, especially Israel

Let's take a look at them more closely:

1) Inner-Islamic power struggle between Sunni and Shiite

From a glance at these two struggles, they look like two separate struggles, but they are ultimately connected. Let me explain:

What is happening in Syria and Iraq currently are masterminded by Saudi Arabia, mother of Sunni Islam and Iran, mother of Shiite Islam. Please don't think, "Well, it is not my business what they do to each other. Let them fight." Eventually, their struggle will spill over to our land.

Some of you might wonder about the reason for the struggle between Sunni and Shiite. It goes all the way back to the time after Muhammad died in 632. Shiites decided that the next successor should come from the blood line of Muhammad which was theirs. But Sunni group argued that whoever the most qualified should take the position of Muhammad. From that moment, the fight began.

Sunni is about 85% of the Muslims around the world and Shiite 15%. Each side wants either to convert the other side to theirs or to kill if they don't. Did someone say that Islam is a peaceful religion? Sure. That is what we see in TV news every night lately – ISIS, a part of Sunni, going after Shiites in Iraq. And Iran which is mainly Shiites controls Syria and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Here is a kicker. According to the article from the Jerusalem Post in November 20, 2013, they reported, "Sunni-Shiite battles may be diverting Islamic rage from Israel." As a matter of fact, ISIS declared that they are not interested in fighting Israel. Their main goal is cleansing all the Shiites from Iraq and Syria for Sunni. By the way, ISIS stands for "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria".

All of sudden Iran which thought that they were doing well in spreading Shiites all over the world with their terrorist activities, was blindsided by ISIS. Some of you may remember that Saddam Hussein was a Sunni Muslim when he was in control of Iraq. After his disposal, the Shiite people took over the Iraqi administration which was very good for Iran.

Iran needed a new strategy of diversion: Persuading the Sunni Muslims to fight Israel, not Iran. The U.S. and the western world's sanctions, a rejection from the UN, and the ISIS movement are all against Iran. They need a diversion fast. So, they started to supply weapons to Hamas in Gaza which is Sunni so that they could fight Israel.

One thing bothers me terribly is that the death of 4,486 U.S. soldiers in Iraq between 2003 and 2012 seems to be in vain because of the shallow and spineless foreign policy by Obama and his administration which had no idea about ISIS that practically took over Iraq in such a short time and became a next worldwide terrorist group.

2) Global Islamic power struggle against the world, especially Israel

The terrorists around the world are watching what is going on in the Middle East and learning how to deal with each different nation's leadership. They know that if they mess with Israel, they will get pummeled. At the same time, they also know that what the UN warns means very little. And, of course, they know that they can completely ignore what President Obama says against them since he backed down from his own red line against Syrian President several times.

Iran was mentioned in the Bible as "Persia" in the Book of Ezekiel, especially 38-39 as the allied force with Russia. Historically, Persia and Russia did not get along well at all. As a matter of fact, they were enemies. Persia had some axes to grind with Russia for a long time. Nobody ever thought that they would join the force together except the Bible. Now Russia and Iran are practically bosom buddies since 2003 when Iran decided that they wanted to have nuclear weapons to wipe Israel off the map. I wouldn't be one bit surprised if Russia and Iran develop a full-blown military alliance in the not-too-distant future.

As we just learned the biblical Ethiopia is the modern-day Sudan. Since January, 2009 Israel attacked Sudan which is 1200 miles away to destroy their terrorist weapon stock piles four times, because they were preparing terrorist invasions against Israel. Sudan has been receiving these weapons from Syria.

Turkey used to be one of the strongest allies of Israel, but ever since their prime minister Erdogan was elected, they turned against Israel and started to provide strongholds for the terrorists and routes to resupply weapons.

To add more flavor to the current events, Russia came into the picture. When Russia smell someone's weakness, they immediately spring into action. By the poor leadership and gutless movement of Obama, the U.S. pretty much gave up its leadership role of the world. While the creditability of the Obama administration in the world is ever so low, Russian president Putin stepped right into the lime light by protecting their own interest of Crimea and the eastern part of Ukraine.

Even Russian deputy prime minister mocks Obama by tweeting his 'unmanly' image to compare with their president.

C. BLESSINGS TO EGYPT, ASSYRIA, AND ISRAEL

Isaiah 19:18-25 In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear by the Lord of hosts; one will be called the City of Destruction. 19 In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Lord at its border. 20 And it will be for a sign and for a witness to the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to the Lord because of the oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Mighty One, and He will deliver them. 21 Then the Lord will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day, and will make sacrifice and offering; yes, they will make a vow to the Lord and perform it. 22 And the Lord will strike Egypt, He will strike and heal it; they will return to the Lord, and He will be entreated by them and heal them. 23 In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians. 24 In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria--a blessing in the midst of the land, 25 whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, "Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance."

A great theologian late Dr. Wilbur Smith said, "Isaiah 19 contains the most important prophetic utterance concerning Egypt in all of the Old Testament." What we just read in chapter 19 is a remarkable prophecy, because Isaiah declares that the three enemies – Egypt, Israel, and Assyria (modern Iraq) – will one day be united in worshiping the Lord and sharing His blessing.

You are already seeing this in the current Egypt. They do not like Hamas, even though they are Sunni, nor do they care for Muslim Brotherhood which is another terrorist organization.

It is a common thought that Egypt represents the carnal world in the O T of the Bible. It is true. But in the End Times, Egyptians will turn their hearts to the Savior Jesus Christ and receive blessings from Him and will become blessings to others. Don't ever think that nothing good can come out of Egypt. Come to think of it, one of Jesus' disciples, Nathanael had the same kind of mindset and proved to be wrong:

John 1:46 And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

Remember, with men many things are impossible, but with God all things are possible.

D. APPLICATION

The world event is moving very fast and crazy in our eyes. But everything is falling into its exact place according to the Lord's exact time.

Luke 21:28 Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.