

"Prepare War"

"Proclaim this among the Gentiles, Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up"

The Iraqi conquest of Kuwait touched off worldwide troubles. The current crisis in the Middle East and its international implications provide the alert Christian with fertile ground for thought. Thank God that we can turn to His unerring word to guide us in the dark times. Truly "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience (perseverance) and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Romans 15:4 We are confident in our Heavenly Father's "sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." 2 Peter 1:19

The "dark place" the Apostle Peter speaks of is this present world. Under the leadership of the prince of darkness (2 Cor. 4:4) humanity finds itself shipwrecked on the reefs of tragedy. The Christian can rejoice regardless of this world's tragedies because of "the hope that is within us." We have a hope of glory. We have a hope in Christ's kingdom. We have a hope in the eventual blessing of all mankind. Our hope, as Brothers Paul and Peter testified, is taught by the Old Testament prophets. In them we find that our great God was fully aware of what the conditions would be in our troubled times. In them we see that our Heavenly Father is in complete control of world events - shaping them to their grand culmination in the peaceable kingdom on earth.

How is the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait a fulfillment of Bible prophecy? Consider Joel the third chapter concerning The Day of the LORD:

"Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up:

"Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong.

"Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye nations, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD.

"Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the nations round about.

"Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great.

"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision." (Joel 3:9-14)

The conditions of Joel's prophecy are our headlines today. War preparations are supported with hundreds of billions of dollars that the community of nations devote to them. Especially interesting is the nature of war preparation. Joel 3:10 turns a very familiar text around and, in so doing, gives us greater insight regarding the Lord's word. "They shall beat their swords into plowshares", but in Joel plowshares are made into swords and pruning hooks into spears.

The lesson is that sinful man will take the very tools that could make for peace and turn them into devices of destruction. Ample testimony of this fact is given in the use of nearly every "high-tech" development for military purposes. Nuclear energy provides for power to run cities and medical treatment to heal diseases. It is also fashioned into bombs that can vaporize a city and its inhabitants in one efficient flash of light.

Chemists bring forth from their test tubes miracle drugs that save lives, nutrients that induce fabulous agricultural production and, as well, poison gases that kill without conscience. Truly, our modern times are witnessing a profound fulfillment of Joel 3:10.

Why do men prepare so furiously for war? Why learn war at all? Invariably wars may be traced to one underlying cause. One group of people realize that another has more than they do and hence decide to "get their fair-share" by force. Whether that "fair-share" is money, food, oil, land or commerce, the problem comes down to one word - greed. Lust for wealth in some form or other has seduced many nations into war. Saddam Hussein lusted after Kuwaiti money and oil and therefore took it. That's why he's there now. President Bush saw the need to "protect the American life style." That is why American troops are awaiting war in the Middle East. Many other nations are represented there - each for self-interest.

The gathering together of the nations in the Persian Gulf is representative of a greater gathering on a much grander scale. That greater gathering together is spoken of in Joel 3:11,12,14. The nations of our time are being gathered together economically. No longer do economic leaders think in terms of national economy or even international economy. The current terminology is global economy.

Nations are scrambling for advantageous position in a global economy. Formerly communistic countries are shifting gears and converting to market economies. Why? To survive in global commerce. This drawing together of all nations has brought about a further fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. In Joel 3:10 the weak say "I am strong." Nations which in time past were mere nobodies on the international scene are now able to affect even superpowers. Iraq's military exploits have resulted in severe economic tensions of a worldwide scope. Western nations slide into recession and stock markets plunge as a result of a weak one, Iraq, saying "I am strong." We, as Christians, feel much sympathy for the whole world and the problems that mankind faces. However, we rejoice that the process of establishing God's Kingdom on earth goes grandly and surely onward. As a result of all nations being gathered together, the fulfillment of God's word is occurring in our lifetime.

Besides allowing the weak to be strong, the LORD is accomplishing another purpose in the gathering together of the nations. Zephaniah 3 reveals that purpose to Bible students. "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. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD to serve him with one consent." (vs. 8,9) After the fire of God's jealousy has done its work of destroying all the sinful and enslaving institutions of man, the people will learn a pure language. That language of love will enable all those who had not known or served the LORD to do so - after the fire is over.

Revelation 16 parallels Zephaniah 3 and explains further what the fire of God's jealousy is. As does Zephaniah, so also Revelation shows us that God is gathering the nations (Rev. 16:14,16) to a great battle. God pours out "all my fierce anger" in Zephaniah and in Revelation he pours out the seven last plagues "for in them is the wrath of God completed" (Rev. 15:1) The seventh plague results in the battle of the great day of God Almighty - the great earthquake of Revelation 16:18.

In scripture, an earthquake symbolizes revolution. On the basis of the earthquake which toppled a tenth part of the city (Rev. 11:13), students of scripture predicted the French Revolution (and many of its effects) 150 years before it occurred. The lessons of prophecy fulfilled give us a firm basis for interpreting prophecy yet to come. The great revolution of Revelation 16 will open the door to the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth.

"Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." (Heb. 12:26,27) Once more will God shake the earth (society) and heaven (ecclesiastical rulers) and no more after that because it will not be necessary.

"And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come." Haggai 2:7 The true desire of all nations is peace, health, prosperity. That desire surely shall come because God has promised it. In Satan's kingdom men have beaten plowshares into swords and pruning hooks into spears (Joel 3:10), but the kingdom that the Lord Jesus Christ will reign over is quite different. Micah, the fourth chapter,

describes the good King's reign. In it all nations will walk in his paths and learn of his ways. Then shall they beat their weapons into the instruments of peace.

Peace will be possible then. Greed and the necessity for it will be abolished. We have an insight as to the economic nature of God's kingdom in Micah 4:4. "They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid." Apparently, each person in that kingdom will be economically independent. Never again will they need to fear for their next meal, their wages or land. None shall make them afraid and for this reason "neither shall they learn war any more." Micah 4:3

That time will be beautiful. God's kingdom will be a blessing to all. In the meantime while we groan and travail with war and its suffering, there is a paradoxical blessing in it. Of God's kingdom, the Psalmist says "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." Psa. 46:9,10 God will cause wars to cease unto the ends of the earth. Therefore we, as Christians, can rejoice. We rejoice because as long as there is war in this world, that is a testimony to us that this world, AS IT NOW IS, is not God's kingdom. His reign of peace and righteousness and beauty and justice is coming soon. Then shall the world be still and know that he is God.

Bible prophecy is vital to us. It provides us a sure sense of direction. It gives us great hope. It gives us great comfort. The 656 page book "The Battle of Armageddon" presents 14 topical studies. These incisively examine the scriptures relating to that great battle which will both destroy Satan's kingdom and establish Christ's Kingdom. If you already have a copy of "The Battle of Armageddon", look up the preceding scriptures in the index and read the studied commentary on them. May the Lord bless you and comfort you as he is also doing with us.

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