

Desolations Are Determined

On the possibility of peace for the Middle East.

"Even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined." Daniel 9:26b, NASB

Along with other Middle East terrorist groups like Hezbollah and the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas remains dedicated to Israel's extermination as a nation. Hamas, a reporter noted, has a "leadership unyielding, determined and increasingly confident of achieving their goal: the eradication of Israel as a Jewish state." [1] Terrorist groups want "no" negotiations with Israel and will not be satisfied until all Israeli settlements are dismantled and four million displaced Palestinians, living in surrounding nations like Jordan, are granted a full right of return. After that, says one Hamas leader, "Jews could remain, living 'in an Islamic state with Islamic law'." [2]

As much as many in the West might want to pretend it isn't happening, a Holy War is raging in the Middle East, a war that threatens the availability of oil and as a result, the stability of western economies which are dependent upon that oil. Fronted to be democratic revolutions of the people, Islamic extremists are using these political and military crises to enhance their influence in Syria, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, and to a lesser degree, Jordan. Maybe Saudi Arabia is next, and who knows where the current crisis in Syria will lead?

With the storming of US Embassies in Egypt and Libya, and the killing of our Ambassador to Libya and three other embassy workers a few days ago, we now know what the overthrow of governments in the name of "democracy" will bring to that region of the world. In every crisis exists an opportunity, and the political revolutions taking place are the bad fruit of an Islamofacist conspiracy which has viewed most Arab regimes to have been too western in their orientation and hence, too tolerant of Israel's existence as a nation. But our interest in the Middle East, along with that of our European allies, is motivated by the fear of how an interruption, or even cutoff, of the oil supply might impact western economies which are so dependent on it.

Geographically, the revolutions are surrounding Israel. One look at a map of the Middle East reveals that tiny Israel exists amidst a sea of hostility as two religions and cultures clash in conflict over a land (Palestine) and a city (Jerusalem) which the Lord claims belong to Him (Ezekiel 36:5; 2 Chronicles 7:12), and which He gave to the sons of Abraham descending through Isaac and Jacob in perpetuity (Genesis 12:1, 7; 13:15; Deuteronomy 34:4; Psalm 105:9-11; Acts 7:5). Because the right of ownership belongs to God, because the right of occupation belongs to Israel, and because there belongs to the radical pan-Arab alliance a fanatical desire to eradicate Israel and drive the nation into the Mediterranean Sea, there can be no peace in that part of the world. And unrest there makes for unrest here, as the volatile prices of gas at the pumps indicate.

Among many others, one verse in the prophecy of Daniel stands out as it bears upon the prospect for peace in the Middle East. In delivering a futuristic view of the Holy Land, the angel

Gabriel announced to Daniel that from his time "**even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined**" (Daniel 9:26b). The fulfillment of this prophecy is evidenced by the revolutions, wars and homicide bombings taking place in that region of the world. According to Gabriel's prediction, violence will plague the Holy City and her environs until "**the end.**" *Desolations are determined!*

Similar phrases appear in the Bible--phrases like "**the latter days**" (Ezekiel 38:16), "**the last days**" (2 Peter 3:3) and "**the day of the Lord**" (2 Thessalonians 2:2). Regardless of details surrounding these statements, they remain "time images" that "establish an important aspect of the Bible's view of history, namely, that it is moving in linear fashion to an appointed consummation." [3] In short, Gabriel predicted that war would infect the Middle East until the end of time, and especially so during the last days, and we are witnessing these days unravel before our very eyes. Gabriel's words point in one scholar's estimation to "the Christ event and the End we still await." [4]

In history's movement to its appointed conclusion, God's messenger to Daniel announced that "**desolations are determined.**" Until Messiah comes, *the Holy Land will remain an appalling spectacle of devastation.* That is the meaning of "*desolations.*" Both before and between the time spanning Messiah's two comings, people the world over will look upon the Holy Land and the Holy City and be astonished at the residual hatred of militant Muslims for Israel and the implacable violence that characterizes that region of the world. Need we be reminded of the horrifying violence perpetrated against the Jews by Romans in AD 70, or the vicious images that TV newscasts transport into our homes from that part of the world on a regular basis? Jerusalem has been and remains anything but a "city of peace," and Gabriel communicated that it will remain this way until the end of history. How do we know?

It has been "**determined.**" The historical process in that part of the world, a course that includes ongoing violence, is fixed. The word "**determined**" can mean *to maim*. Perhaps the visage of a civilian or a soldier horribly disfigured by an exploding bomb illustrates the meaning of the word. Scars of war deface that part of the world, and attempts at making peace are so much like failed plastic surgery. *Determined* refers to something that cannot be changed . . . the basic idea of 'cut' [being] . . . that that which is incised cannot be altered." [5] To put the matter plainly, war will scar the face of Israel's landscape and that region of the world until the current age has run its course--all attempts at making peace notwithstanding. Conflict between Abraham's children--the one nation descended from Ismael (the Arabs), born to Hagar an Egyptian handmaid, and the other descended from Isaac (the Jews), the son of promise, born to Sarah, Abraham's wife--has come down to us in the modern world (See Genesis 21:9 ff.; Galatians 4:29.). The conflict will continue. The outcome of attempts to reconcile the two middle eastern brothers has been fixed. "**Even to the end,**" Gabriel announced to Daniel, "**there will be war**" (Daniel 9:26, NASB) J. Dwight Pentecost observes that the angel's announcement indicates that Israel's "sufferings [would] span the entire period from the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 to Jerusalem's deliverance from Gentile dominion at the Second Advent of Christ." [6]

The visage of events in the Middle East--the bloodshed, the killing, the suicide bombers, the people who have lost all their family members due to the carnage of war--sickens our hearts. No

matter that people might sing "Give peace a chance," or demonstrate and attempt to negotiate to that end, peace has no chance in that part of the world until Messiah comes and institutes His reign of His peace on earth for the world from Jerusalem (Isaiah 9:6-7). In describing the signs of the course of the present age before His Second Coming, Jesus said, "**you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars**" (Matthew 24:6, NASB). Though desolations are determined, they do invite Christ's return. Even so, "**Come, Lord Jesus**" (Revelation 22:20).

ENDNOTES

[1] Joel Brinkley, "Suicide Bombings Working, Hamas Says," *The Indianapolis Star*, April 4, 2002, A5.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Leland Ryken, et. al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998): 231.

[4] John E. Goldingay, *Daniel* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989): 268.

[5] Leonard J. Coppes, "haras," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Volume I, R. Laird Harris, Editor (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980): 326.

[6] J. Dwight Pentecost, "Daniel," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, Editors (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985): 1364.