

Is This the 4th Quarter?

I believe it is.

Something happened on Friday, May 14, 1948, that differentiates this era from any other in human history.

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On that day two men sat in a quiet corner of the F Street Club in Washington, D.C., and worked out the wording of a statement soon to be released by the White House. One of the men was Harry Truman. He became president of the United States when Franklin Roosevelt died early in his fourth term. The next few years led Truman into one of the most tumultuous chapters of American history. Under his leadership World War II came to an end, the United Nations was formed, the US military was desegregated and the Marshall Plan was born. He was president during the surrenders of Germany and Japan. He witnessed the fall of the Iron Curtain over Eastern Europe and the Bamboo Curtain over China and parts of Eastern Asia.

Yet, of all Truman's decisions, none more hearkened into the past or bore more implications for the eternal future than the one he and his special counsel Clark Clifford had met to discuss. At issue was the confirmation of a Jewish state. Though much of his administration, including his secretary of state, opposed such a step, Truman was resolved. Himself a Christian, he had sought the counsel of prominent pastor J. Frank Norris of Fort Worth, Texas.

Norris reminded the president of God's promise to Isaac: "Live here as a foreigner in this land, and I will be with you and bless you. I hereby confirm that I will give all these lands

to you and your descendants, just as I solemnly promised Abraham, your father," (Gen. 26:3, NLT).

Truman sent Pastor Norris a thank-you note. Shortly thereafter he made his decision.

Having hammered out the best wording for the statement: "Clifford put through a hurried call to Elihu Epstein, an official at the Jewish agency in Washington, to tell him that recognition would occur later that day. "The New Jewish state—the first Jewish state in nearly 2,000 years—was declared on schedule at midnight in Jerusalem, 6:00 p.m. in Washington. Eleven minutes later at the White House, Charlie Ross announced de facto recognition by the United States."

The president signed a two-paragraph proclamation that read: "This government has been informed that a Jewish state has been proclaimed in Palestine, and recognition has been requested by the provisional government thereof. The United States recognizes the provisional government as the de facto authority of the state of Israel."

The name "state of Israel" was handwritten because the name of the nation was not chosen until the last minute.

No Other Land But the Promised Land

What other nation has been promised land by God, been removed from the land, and then returned to it? The answer: none. Yet, this reinstatement was promised in Scripture.

From Ezekiel, 650 years before Christ: "For I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land," (Ezek. 36:24, NLT).

From Isaiah, 740 years before Christ: "He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth," (Isa. 11:12).

May 14, 1948, saw a page turn in the calendar of prophetic history. Circumstances changed when the Jews were given their land. Almost all the key events of the end times hinge upon the existence of Israel as a nation:

The book of Daniel prophesies a covenant between the Antichrist and Israel (Daniel 9:27). This can only happen if the nation of Israel exists.

Scripture prophesies a rebuilding of the temple (Isa. 2:1–4; 2 Thess. 2:4). Again, Israel must exist for this to happen.

Daniel and Jesus forecast an act of utter sacrilege in the temple (Dan. 12:11; Mark 13:14). No Israel, no temple.

The war of Armageddon only makes sense if Israel is occupying the land where that particular valley (called Megiddo) is found.

Prior to 1948 a Jewish repopulation of Israel as a state was unthinkable. Jews were dispersed to more than 70 countries for more than 20 centuries. Yet since 1948 we have seen them return. For the first time since A.D. 135, there are more Jews living in Israel than in any other place on earth.

Age of the SuperSigns

This resettlement is often referred to as a “super sign.” The Bible repeatedly presents the regathering of Jewish people as a watershed event that must occur before other end-times events take place (Jer. 30:1–5; Ezek. 34:11–24; Ezek. 37; Zech. 10:6–10).

It is akin to the flag wave at a NASCAR race signaling the final lap. Other signs take on heightened importance now that the super sign has occurred. We’ve always had wars, disasters and deceptions. But now that the milestone moment has happened and Israel is restored, the other signs progressively signal the impending end.

If history is a year, the leaves are autumn gold.

If history is a day, the sun has begun to set.

If history is an hour, the hands of the clock are nearing full circle.

We have entered the last days. So, let us be looking. Let us be declaring: the end is near. This was my job on the high school football team. I was one of the players who declared the onset of the fourth quarter. There were five of us, maybe six. We were the misfits on the varsity squad. Not bad enough to be cut. By no means good enough to play. In the football dog pound, we were the mongrels.

But we had our moment. And that moment came at the opening of the fourth quarter of each game. Our assignment, on the coach's signal, was to run up and down the sideline with four fingers in the air shouting, "Fourth quarter! Fourth quarter!" Teams tend to grow weary as the game wears on. The minutes take their toll. Players need a wake-up call. This is the last push before the end. Dig deep! Be alert! Someone needed to yell, "Fourth quarter!" So, we did.

Doesn't the same need to be declared today?

Christ could come at any moment. I believe that with all my heart—not just because of what I read in the Scriptures, but also because of what I read in the news. To be clear, "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father," (Matt. 24:36, Berean Standard Bible). The exact time remains hidden. While we cannot know the day or hour, we can know the signs. Wouldn't you agree that the signs of our day warrant our vigilance?

Are You Getting Ready Yet?

We have a choice. We can view the future through the eyes of fear or faith. The eyes of fear see little reason for hope and

ample reason for anxiety. The eyes of faith see history inching closer and closer to a new era, a heavenly destiny. God tells us what to expect not to scare us, but to prepare us. He is the pilot on the intercom telling the passengers about impending turbulence. A good pilot keeps his travelers informed. Our good Father does the same.

Between now and the end of this age we can expect some severe instability. But we will arrive safely. Maybe you are a bit leery about this discussion. End-times studies have left you confused, perhaps cynical. I understand. Prophecy is to the Bible what the Serengeti is to Africa—vast, expansive and intimidating. It's a world of numbers and symbols, bears and tigers. Most students prefer the domesticated, well-traveled streets of Scripture: the teachings of Jesus, the doctrines of Paul, the biographies of the Patriarchs. Prophecy intimidates many Bible students.

It infatuates others. If Bible prophecy is the Serengeti, some Christians are big-game hunters. They never leave the bush. They find prophecy on every page, symbolism in every story and clues in every verse. They can be a great source of help, but they can also be stubbornly opinionated. Prophetic experts tend to be very confident; they walk with a game-hunter swagger. They always seem to know (and enjoy knowing) what others don't.

Somewhere in between these two positions is a healthy posture. Believers who avoid utter ignorance on one hand and total arrogance on the other. Who seek what God intends: a deep-seated confidence that our tomorrow is in our Lord's hands. The purpose of prophecy is to empower the saint with a sense of God's sovereignty. As Paul wrote: "But one who prophesies strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them," (1 Cor. 14:3, NLT). Prophecy prepares us to face the future with faith.

Five hundred years ago sailors feared the horizon. Sail too

far and risk falling off the edge, they reasoned. The common wisdom of the ancients warned against the unseen. So did the monument at the Strait of Gibraltar, where Spaniards held dominion over both sides of the strait. At its narrowest margin, where Africa can see Europe, they erected the Pillar of Hercules, a huge marker that bore in its stone the three-word Latin slogan “Ne plus ultra.” “No More Beyond.”

But then came Columbus and the voyage of 1492. The discovery of the new world swung open the western doors of Spain. They took the Latin phrase “No More Beyond,” removed the first word and impressed this slogan onto their coins: “More Beyond.”

Remove the “no” from your future. Open your heart and open your life to the great assurances. You were made to explore what happens next. It’s all about hope. It’s all about Him.

Let’s make sure we are good to go.

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*Since entering the ministry in 1978, **Max Lucado** has served churches in Miami, Florida; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and San Antonio, Texas. He currently serves as Teaching Minister of Oak Hills Church in San Antonio. He is the recipient of the 2021 ECPA Pinnacle Award for his outstanding contribution to the publishing industry and society at large. He is America’s bestselling inspirational author with over 145 million products in print. His latest book is What Happens Next: A Traveler’s Guide Through the End of This Age. Visit .*