

3 End-Time Wars: The War in the Middle East

The Bible tells us that believers will be able to discern world events to help identify the general time period (not the specific hour or day) of Jesus' promised return to earth. Specifically, in Matthew 24, Luke 21 and Revelation 6 we are told there will be:

- Significant wars.
- Devastating famines.
- Rampant pestilence.
- Merciless deaths.

These future eschatological events of the last days appear to include at least three major wars, which are different and distinct from anything the world has witnessed previously. Each war gets progressively intense, massive and destructive, killing more people and destroying entire nations.

In this first installation of this series, we will look at what I understand to be the first of these three wars.

War in the Middle East

What seems to be the first of these wars, again, forces tiny Israel to defend itself from the collection of Islamic-Arab nations, immediately surrounding it in the Middle East.

The first of these incredible wars is described in various passages by Old Testament prophets, but the context and sequences of these battles are somewhat vague and confusing at times. The descriptions indicate the involved nations are descendants of Esau, twin brother of Jacob, one of Israel's patriarchs. These "cousin" nations immediately border Israel

and have historic hatred—going back thousands of years—for the children of Israel (Ezek. 35:5-6).

The modern names for these nations include Jordan, Syria and Egypt—along with Lebanon, Iraq and perhaps a small part of Saudi Arabia, given the context of their ancient names. Syria and Assyria controlled the “fertile crescent” area from Mesopotamia to northern Israel, while ancient Egypt controlled the Negev desert area, southwest of the Dead Sea. All of these bordering entities harassed and oppressed God’s people throughout their shared histories. The combined populations of these modern Islamic territories would be about 120 million versus less than seven million Jews in Israel.

It seems likely the hostility toward Israel by the current Palestinian Arabs (who inhabit much of modern Israel’s historic areas of Judah and Samaria and approximately 60% of modern Jordan) could erupt into this regional, Middle Eastern conflict overnight. The religious-based effort to destroy God’s covenant nation would destabilize the region and the world economy, as these nations’ future demise, during the Day of the Lord, appear to be by weapons of mass destruction: nuclear, chemical or biological weapons (Obad. 1:15, 18-29).

Also, the region’s ecology and the economy would be seriously affected by this future conflict, as the area will continuously burn—so intensely no one will be able to pass through it:

“Its streams shall be turned into pitch, and its dust into brimstone, and its land shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night or day; its smoke shall go up forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; no one shall pass through it forever and ever” (Isa. 34:9-10).

The previous verse calls this the “day of the Lord’s vengeance and ... recompenses for the controversy of Zion” (Is. 34:8). This conflict will be part of the coming “day of the Lord” and

is an eventual consequence for what these historic peoples had done to the people of Zion.

The specific Old Testament prophecies found in Ezekiel 35 and Isaiah 34 identify the ancient geography of three entities and enemies of Israel: Amman, Moab and Edom. The first two were found east of the Jordan River, and Edom was southeast of the Dead Sea. Ezekiel uses an alternate name for Moab, Mount Seir, when quoting God as warning that He would “make you most desolate; I shall lay your cities waste, and you shall be ... perpetually desolate, and your cities shall be uninhabited” (see Ezek. 35:1-15).

Oddly, today, Jordan and Egypt both have signed peace treaties with modern Israel, and Syria is a weakened ally of Russia, Iraq and Iran. Syria has a Mediterranean seaport which Russia wants for the terminus for an oil pipeline. But history has shown treaties are often made to be broken.

Also, this regional war appears to involve the destruction of modern Iraq, whose geography was home to ancient Babylon. Isaiah indicates the whole world, at that time, perceives Babylon to be a “burden” and the “Lord of hosts” mustered an “army for battle,” from an unnamed nation from a “far country, from the end of heaven” to “destroy the whole land” (Isa. 13:1, 4-5). Some suggest that the United States may fit this role as God’s agent, being a faraway land with instruments of wrathful indignation (Isa. 13:5, 6).

Like Sodom and Gomorrah, this historic geographic Babylon—now Iraq—will become uninhabitable, never to be lived in again (Isa. 13:19-20). It seems the whole land may be poisoned by nuclear weaponry.

The Day of the Lord

The prophet states that this total destruction of Iraq/Babylon takes place just before the “day of the Lord” (Isa. 13:6-7, 9, 11), a fearful period of time when God judges the world with

His indignation for rejecting Him and His covenant people, the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The prophet Obadiah also ties the nations of this first war to the coming “day of the Lord.” A terrible conflict erupts between the “House of Jacob,” the Jews, and the “House of Esau,” probably the Palestinian Arabs. Obadiah 1:18-19 indicates the Palestinians will be totally driven from the land promised to the “House of Jacob.” Israel will finally possess the Plain of the Philistines (Gaza), Ephraim (an alternate name for Israel), and Samaria (the West Bank), along with Gilead (the East Bank of the Jordan River—currently part of Jordan).

Isaiah 17 speaks of Israel and her longtime worst enemy, Syria. This ancient nemesis borders Israel at its Golan Heights, above Galilee, to the north. It also continues to fight Israel through its control and support of Lebanon, with its proxy terrorist organization Hezbollah.

According to Isaiah, Syria’s capital city, Damascus, will be totally decimated during this first future conflict. It “will cease from being a city and it will be a ruinous heap” (Isa. 17:1).

These nations are destroyed “in the latter days,” as they attempt to invade the covenant land of Israel—not before. God’s judgment has waited since these ancient times, but their destruction is certain.

But “in that day it shall come to pass, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean” (Isa. 7:1, 3-4). God’s covenant nation Israel is weakened or “becomes thin,” indicating a loss of population and military power. This makes them vulnerable for future attacks by other nations in at least two more terrible wars; and again, God will use Israel as a trap, and Jerusalem will be the bait for the unrighteous nations.

This is the first article in a three-part series. Check again soon to read the second. {eo}

Gary Curtis served in full-time ministry for 50 years, the last 27 years of which he was part of the pastoral staff of The Church on The Way, the Van Nuys' California Foursquare church. Now retired, Gary continues to write a weekly blog and frequent articles for digital and print platforms.

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.