

Israel Sends Message With Strike; Tensions Not Likely to Escalate

BYLINE: Michael L. Brown

Is the conflict between Israel and Iran about to explode? Are we on the edge of World War III, if not Armageddon? The answer to all these questions is the same: not likely. But in saying this I do not claim supernatural prophetic insight. Rather, my remarks are based on a general understanding of Scripture, a broad view of where we stand on the prophetic calendar and pragmatic observations about the situation in the Middle East. I will first unpack my threefold reasoning and then address what has happened in recent days between Israel and Iran.

First, as to my general understanding of Scripture, I do not see any specific texts in the Bible indicating that the final conflict, the last great war, is at hand. Others who have also studied the Scriptures for decades may have different views, which I respect. But from my perspective, there's nothing I could point to in terms of recent developments that shouts to me, "The end is very near!"

Second, as to the larger prophetic calendar, there are at least 2 billion people on the planet who have never heard the gospel in any shape, size or form. We still have a way to go before we see "the fullness of the Gentiles" come in (Rom. 11:25c, BSB), let alone see "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language" come to faith in Jesus (Rev. 7:9b, NIV).

As for "all Israel" coming to faith (as per), while I recognize that things could change on a dime, right now, much work remains to be done before that sacred day comes.

As for the unified church for which Jesus prayed in John 17, that dream, too, seems far-fetched at the present time, leading to the obvious question: Is *this* the version of the bride for which He is returning, or will He continue to change us and purify us until He comes back?

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In short, while the pace of God's working in the earth will continue to accelerate in the years ahead, there is no indication that we are in the last sentence of the last chapter of the story.

Third, as to my pragmatic observations about the situation in the Middle East, as unhinged as some of the worst elements of the Netanyahu government might be, and as deluded as some of the Islamic leadership of Iran certainly is, I don't believe either party wants to fight an all-out, potentially apocalyptic, war right now. That's why both Iran's drone and missile attack on Israel Saturday night, April 13, along with Israel's attack on an Iranian nuclear facility on Thursday night, April 18, were limited in scope and nature.

To be sure, Israel's April 1 killing of the Iranian general allegedly behind the Oct. 7 massacre was overt, direct and bold. But this was not a new escalation. This was part of Israel saying, "We will get to those responsible for the massacre, and they will pay with their lives."

As for Iran's April 13 response, even if its leadership was surprised by the 99% success rate of Israel's defense (with the help of the United States, Britain, France, Jordan and Saudi Arabia), Iran's actions seemed more symbolic than anything.

Israel's April 18 response is also best seen as limited, with internal Israeli sources indicating that, more than anything, the nation was sending a message to Iran. As noted by Joel

Pollak on Breitbart, "Israel downplayed reported airstrikes against Iran that appeared to hit targets near that country's suspected nuclear program on Friday, seeming to cast the operation as proof Israel could reach the sites, rather than a full-scale attack."

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Confirmation for this comes from Marwan Bishara, Al Jazeera's senior political analyst. He wrote:

Iranian officials say they don't have a plan to retaliate—and that's not surprising.

I think it was very clear from the very beginning that this was going to be a limited exchange, just as we've seen between Israel and Hezbollah.

So there's a certain that there is hostility, that there is an exchange of hostilities, but that it will always be somehow contained.

Iran is not interested in a direct confrontation with Israel because conventional war between Iran and Israel—backed by the US and other Western power—is not to Iran's advantage.

Iran has preferred for the past 40-plus years to engage in asymmetrical, indirect, proxy wars with Israel rather than direct conflicts.

What is clear is that Israel hit, but it was not the kind of hit that is meant to cause civilian damage or to humiliate Iran but to satisfy Israeli military ambition without angering the US.

The fact that the pro-Israel, right-wing Breitbart and anti-Israel, pro-Islamic Al Jazeera see this the same way says a

lot, confirming to me that it is in no one's interest now to force an incredibly costly, even catastrophic World War III—or Armageddon.

I do believe that day will come, as the end of the age will be marked by parallel extremes of light and darkness, of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. And it is possible that, in a short period of time, what would normally take decades or even centuries will unfold in a few short years. I simply don't believe we have reached that point yet.

As for how we should live and posture ourselves, that remains the same: We should live with a sense of holy urgency, knowing that every day people are dying without God and that we have only one life with which to do the Savior's work in this world. At the same time, we should live with a multigenerational mentality, knowing that, until this moment, everyone who has predicted the return of Jesus in their lifetime has been wrong.

So let's keep running our race so as to win (1 Cor. 9:24-27), remembering that it is a marathon and not a sprint.

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