

Could Peace in the Middle East Lead to the Antichrist's Emergence?

A joint delegation flew to Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in August for normalization talks between Israel and the UAE. On this first, direct-commercial Israeli-plane to fly directly to an Arab Gulf State were the words "Shalom, Saalam, Peace."

Stepping off this hopeful and historic flight, Jared Kushner, President Trump's 39-year-son-in-law and point person for pursuing peace in the Middle East urged others in the region to "Join us, expand peace ..."

Kushner thanked the Saudi government for allowing the historic flight to cross Arabian airspace. "Mohammed bin Zayed is truly leading the new Middle East," he said. "The Middle East is filled with brilliant, industrious, tolerant and innovative people, and the future belongs to them," Kushner added. "I ask everyone today to join us in celebrating this peace, and to help us expand it throughout the region and the entire world."

A New Future for the Middle East?

Rather than nursing old wounds, with regard to Israel's birth, victories and prosperity, the Jewish-American Kushner suggested the younger Arab leaders should rise now above those old issues and join together with Israel and other Arab nations to create a new and prosperous future for the Middle East.

Within weeks the Gulf nation of Bahrain had opted for this new future and joined the procession for peace and prosperity.

President Trump said the subsequent "Abraham Accords" (Peace Agreements), signed at the White House on Sept. 15 between the

UAE, Bahrain and Israel, will “increase stability, security and prosperity” in the region. He invites and expects more Arab countries to join in the peace and prosperity pursuits.

It seems the modern leaders of these historic Arab states have come to recognize that the 72-year-old nation of Israel (many years older than most signing the peace agreements) is not their enemy and could be their friend. The expansionist roles of Iran and Turkey have caused them to be viewed by many as the villains of the region and not tiny Israel.

In part, this is because the sectarian nature of modern Islamism has made Shite-strong Iran and Iraq the religious enemies of Sunni-based Arab states. Added to that, the historic and cultural backgrounds of Iran and Turkey predate even Mohammedanism. Iran is really ancient Persia, and Turkey longs to become again the controlling power of an Islamic caliphate of Mediterranean states. The tribal instincts of these authoritarian leaders still long for that historic recognition and power for them and their people.

Pestilences, Pandemics and Peace

While the world is struggling to overcome the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, on the one hand, this refreshing wind of peace and prosperity is blowing on the other hand. The birth pangs and sorrows of pestilences, persecution and pandemics (Matt. 24:7-13) are beginning to be glimpsed in some areas and arenas as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. But, simultaneously, peace and prosperity are also prophesied for some in these last days.

The prophet Daniel was told (Dan. 8:23-25, NASB) that a mighty king would arise in the end times, through skilled intrigue, shrewdness and deceit, “but not by his own power: (v. 24b). This insolent and proud one will destroy “to an extraordinary degree,” (v. 24c), while at the same time peace and prosperity will be enjoyed by many. He will be able to do

pretty much as he pleases, while the peoples he controls are “at ease.”

Some believe this “lawless one” will be European (from the old Roman Empire). Others see him as a deceiving Islamist or even a persuasive, secular Jew. Oddly, he will show his ultimate disdain for the Jews and their God by sitting “as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2:4b, MEV).

Understanding the 70 Weeks

The angel Gabriel informed Daniel that the time of Jewish captivity in Babylon was part of a time frame of “seventy weeks” [or “seventy sevens”—understood as weeks of years].

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem until the Prince Messiah shall be seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks. It shall be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of trouble. After the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the troops of the prince who shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall come with a flood. And until the end of the war, desolations are determined. And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week. But in the middle of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and the offering to cease. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed destruction is poured out on the desolator (Dan. 9:25-27).

These weeks of years (490) are 360-day “prophetic years,” as established by comparing Dan. 7:25 with Rev. 11:2-3, 12:6, 14 and 13:5. They are divided chronologically, measuring first the 49 years (“seven weeks”) it took to rebuild the second temple after captivity in Babylon and then the 434 years (“sixty- two weeks”) from the temple’s rededication until the crucifixion of the Jewish Messiah and our Lord, when He was

“cut off” (Dan. 9:25-26).

When Will the Son of Man Come?

At some future point, a “prince who is to come,” shall confirm a covenant (peace agreement or defense pact) with many for one week (seven years—completing the prophesied 70 weeks of years). But in the middle of that final week (after 3.5 years) that prince shall bring an end to sacrifice and offerings on the “wing of abominations.” Additionally, see Dan. 11:31-39, 12:1-3 and Rev. 17:10-14; 19:11-21.

Jesus referred to this sequence and personality in Matthew 24:15: “So when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)” He went on to describe the “signs” and “coming” of the “Son of Man” and the “gathering” of His chosen ones—“immediately after the tribulation of those days” (vv. 21-31).

When will the “Son of Man” come? Jesus taught His coming will be “immediately after the tribulation of those days” (Matt. 24:29a).

Will you commit *now* to faithfully “endure to the end” (24:12-13), by showing courage under unjust suffering and persecution, steadfastly keeping the commandments of God and the faith and testimony of Jesus Christ (Rev. 12:17, 13:10, 14:12)?

What Happens Before the Day of Christ’s Judgments?

Finally, the apostle Paul taught the Thessalonian believers that certain indicators will happen before the day of Christ (2 Thess. 2:1-10), when we are gathered together to Him (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:23-26, 51-58). A great apostasy or falling away will occur first and “the man of sin” will emerge or be revealed. Some translations call him “the lawless one” and then include “the son of perdition.” This wicked one is

described as the Antichrist in the letters of John.

Jewish history acknowledges an anti-type of this Antichrist in one named Antiochus Epiphanes (about 167 B.C.). He was a fiercely, ungodly monarch from a northern Syrian kingdom who captured Jerusalem and desecrated the temple there, sacrificing hogs on the holy altar and seeking to be worshiped as divine.

This intertestamental historical account points to this culminating action of the final man of sin, when he invades a modern, restored temple in Jerusalem, mid-way through the future final-seven-year “week,” when Daniel’s vision (Dan. 9:27), Jesus’ prediction (Matt. 24:15) and Paul’s prophecy (2 Thess. 2:4) are all fulfilled.

At that time, Messiah will literally come with all His power and glory to defeat the Antichrist and his armies (-21) and Satan will be bound for 1000 years! Then he will be “cast into a lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10)!

Meanwhile, we whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life will begin to enjoy a “new heaven and a new earth” (Rev. 21:1) and “God will wipe away every tear ... there will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain” (v.4). Hallelujah!

Filled with this happy hope, let us—together with the apostle John in Rev. 20:20—say “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

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