

NEITHER SHALL THEY LEARN WAR ANY MORE

“And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” — Micah 4:3

The world is bracing for yet another Middle East conflict as they repeatedly hear inflammatory rhetoric between Iran and the United States. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has challenged the world with his increasing nuclear resources, and the world is not comfortable knowing that a radical Islamist will potentially have his finger on the trigger of a weapon of mass destruction. Both sides are talking tough, and historically this kind of saber rattling has provoked war. Considering mankind’s prideful and aggressive nature, will there ever be a time when *they shall learn war* no more?

WHY DO THE PEOPLE IMAGINE A VAIN THING?

“Why do the heathen [nations] rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves... against the LORD...” (Psalm 2:1,2) Throughout history, men have tried in *vain* to bring about order in the world by force. World War I was declared by the Nations to be *“the war to end all wars.”* But following it came the rise of communism, World War II, the Korean War, the Cold War with the Soviet Union, Viet Nam, Desert Storm, Afghanistan, and conflicts in Israel, Ireland, Central America, Bosnia, Angola, Somalia, Argentina, Pakistan, etc., etc., etc. And now, the war against worldwide terrorism rages on. Imbedded within these conflicts, each camp has held to the thought that theirs is the just cause, and their ideology worthy to be imposed upon their fellow man.

Changes in society by coercion will never bring about lasting peace. Consider communism in the Soviet Union and the many *holy wars* fought by numerous religious systems—all failing. The *vain thing* spoken of in Psalm 2 is that men believe they can establish universal peace without the *Prince of Peace* and his righteous principles ruling in their hearts.

The concept of a *holy war*, such as we see perpetrated by the Holy Jihad of Islam is nothing new. During the time of World War I, persecution, torture and oppression were also the

result of a self-proclaimed Christian society convinced that they were doing God’s work. While the First World War was raging, the following extracts were reported in many newspapers throughout the world* illustrating this misguided religious zeal.

“Pastor Zoebel, speaking in the great Lutheran church in Leipsic, Germany said: ‘...when our guns beat down the children of Satan, and when our marvelous submarines— instruments to execute the Divine vengeance—send to the bottom of the sea thousands of the non-elect... their sufferings should give us pleasure; their cries of despair should not move German hearts. There ought to be no compromise with hell, no mercy for the servants of Satan—in other words, no pity for the English, French, and Russians, nor indeed for any nation that has sold itself to the Devil...’”

“Pastor Fritz Philippi, of Berlin, from his Protestant pulpit said: ‘...It is really because we are pure that we have been chosen by the

Almighty as His instruments to punish the envious, to chastise the wicked, and to slay with the sword sinful nations.... Satan himself, who has come into the world in the form of a great Power [England], must be crushed. On Germany is laid the Divine command to bring about the destruction of those who are the personification of evil. When this work is finished... the kingdom of righteousness will be established on the earth; and the German Empire, which will have created it, will remain its protector.’” *(Evening Post, [Wellington, New Zealand] 8 March, 1916, vol. XCI, issue 66, p. 13)

Indeed, these men had imagined a *vain thing!* God must certainly have been repulsed by their *vain* claim that He is on their side! What a pity that He should in any sense of the word have been associated with such horror! And now, unfortunately, religious zeal coupled with ignorance is once again terrorizing innocent people on a worldwide scale. This is an example of what happens when there is a lack of knowledge as to the loving character and plans of one true God.



Sculpture: Gift from Soviet Union to United Nations Gardens, 1959

In this *present evil world*, powerful, oppressive leaders will continually arise, indoctrinating hatred. Without the *Prince of Peace*, there will always be another Hitler, another bin Laden or another Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. But, thank God, a stronger nation is about to put an end to the *vain* imaginations of these despotic rulers. In God's Holy Kingdom, Christ will *reign with a rod of iron* upon those who impose their unrighteous wills upon others. (Revelation 2:27; 20:1-4) There will be no more power-hungry dictators, for none shall "*hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.*" Isaiah 11:9

THE FIFTH UNIVERSAL EMPIRE

A powerful prophetic picture is found in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. It illustrates the transition from this *present evil world* into God's *holy mountain* kingdom. Because of Israel's unfaithfulness, God took away the kingdom from His people, and gave it over, for a time, to this mighty Gentile emperor. In a dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw a great image, the head of which was made of gold, the breast and the arms of silver, the belly and the thighs of brass, the legs of iron, and the feet of iron mingled with miry clay. Daniel 2:36-44; 7:14,17,27

The Prophet Daniel explained that this great image represented *four universal Gentile kingdoms* which would rule over Israel and the world. Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, Babylon, was represented by the head of gold: "*Thou art that head of Gold.*" Next came the Medo-Persian empire, represented by the breast and arms of silver; Greece was represented by the belly and thighs of brass; and finally came Rome, represented by the legs of iron. An outgrowth of that fourth universal empire was the Holy Roman Empire, represented by the feet and toes of iron mingled with miry clay. The ten toes of these feet represented the ten heads of Europe crowned by papacy.

According to this vision, the period of time during which these four universal empires controlled the world is termed the *times of the Gentiles*. (Luke 21:24) This was to be the period of time during which Israel was to be overturned and made subject to Gentile powers. (Ezekiel 21:25-27) Recent history has proven that this prophecy is in process of fulfillment. Indeed, an indication that the *fifth and final universal kingdom* is about to take full control is seen in the fact that Jerusalem is no longer "*trodden down of the Gentiles.*" Truly, the Nation of Israel is a miracle of history! Although it is one of the world's smallest nations, it has taken its place as a mighty nation among nations, never to be "*pulled up out of their land*" again! Amos 9:15

The best and the worst of earth's nations are but "*kingdoms of this world,*" whose lease of power from God has now

expired. These shall soon give place to their ordained successor, the kingdom of Messiah—the *fifth universal empire* of earth. But the last Gentile kingdoms will not give up without a fight, and hence, we see *spasms* of trouble in the earth, spoken of by the prophet Isaiah as *birth pangs*: "*The day of the LORD is at hand... and they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth...*" (Isaiah 13:6-8) The nations most in harmony with God's principles will have less of a struggle accepting the new arrangement than the more tyrannical, oppressive nations. But, mankind must learn that all governments, even the most democratic, fall far short of the perfect righteousness to be achieved in Christ's peaceable kingdom.

SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES, SPEARS INTO PRUNINGHOOKS

Before lasting peace and safety shall be established throughout the earth, prophecies tell us that wars will increase until men's hearts are humbled enough to admit that they, with imperfect judgment and selfish hearts, will never be successful in their own strength to bring about peace. Indeed, the Bible foretells that these conflicts will build to a climactic clash between good and evil which shall change this selfish, evil world forever. Daniel prophesied that "*There shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation.*" Jesus confirmed this prophecy and added the words, "*No, nor ever shall be.*" Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21

This final conflict is that great *Battle of Armageddon* foretold in Revelation. "*And he gathered them together into a place called...Armageddon.*" (Revelation 16:16-17) As terrible as this trouble is

expected to be, it is comforting to know its lessons will be so severe as to make no repetition of them necessary. It will truly be *the war to end all wars!*

THE FIRST ARMAGEDDON BATTLE AN ILLUSTRATION

The lesson of Armageddon was first illustrated in the battle fought in the Valley of Megiddo. This valley is noted for its many ancient battles, and therefore made the basis of the Divine Revelation to the Apostle John. (Judges 4 & 5) Armageddon will be the last great global conflict between good and evil where God's truth and righteousness will prevail against the forces of evil.

At the time of the original battle, the Israelites had nearly lost their knowledge and love of the one true God. To bring them back into harmony again with him, God chastened Israel by permitting their enemies to vanquish them. The Canaanite General, Sisera, having humbled the Israelites of Northern Israel for years, started southward with a mighty army containing nine hundred iron chariots. By the time he had gotten as far south as the Valley of Megiddo, messengers informed him that Barak, a leader among the Israelites, was also leading an army of ten



thousand men southward. Sisera, mocking the poorly armed Israelites, advanced with his army on both sides of the River Kishon toward Mount Tabor. The word of the Lord then came to General Barak, directing him to advance against the Canaanite army. At the same time, a great storm swelled the river, making quagmires of the lower valleys, rendering useless the nine hundred chariots and horses of Sisera. His soldiers, fleeing for their lives, were cut down by the Israelites while thousands of others were swept away by flood waters.

This intervention of God on behalf of His people is an illustration of the coming Armageddon battle which will cause *all wars to cease*. Just as God provided a miracle to deliver His people, so too, the cloudburst of truth and the rising waters of knowledge will bring to pass this apocalyptic battle. Shortly thereafter shall come the blessed deliverance of the world, when *“He maketh the storm a calm.”* (Psalm 107:29) Soon, the entire present global arrangement will be replaced by a new government under Christ’s benevolent control—far superior and more advantageous and desirable for all. 2 Peter 3:12-14

“FOLLOW PEACE WITH ALL MEN”

Whereas the Jews were told to slay their enemies, Christians are told to love them and to leave the affairs of the world to the world. *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...”* (Matthew 5:43, 44 NAS) Yes, God has been dealing with the Christian church differently than He did the Nation of Israel. Israel was under the Law given to Moses, in contrast to the church, which is under the Law of Love exemplified in Christ—the *Prince of Peace*.

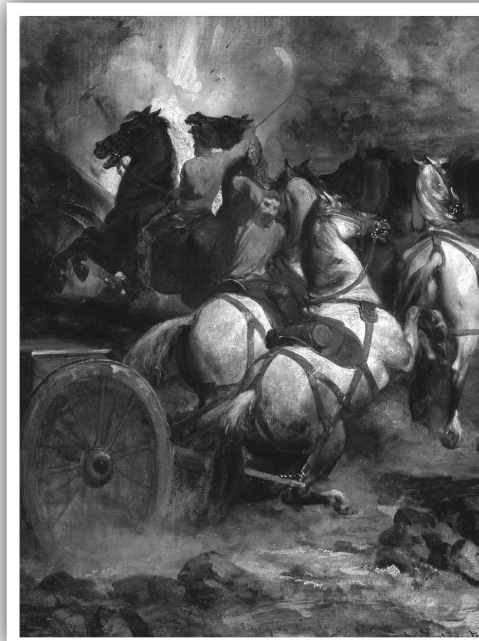
Jesus said *“My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight...”* (John 18:36) Jesus invited his followers to be peacemakers, living peaceably with all men, and helping others to see the events which are taking place in the light of the *Prince of Peace*. *“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”* (Matthew 5:9) *“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”* Hebrews 12:14

Did Jesus advocate that his followers should go to war? He did advocate warfare against our own fleshly weaknesses and to *“fight the good fight of faith,”* but when Peter *“...smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear... Jesus... touched his ear, and healed him.”* (Luke 22:49-51) *“Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.”* (Matthew 26:52) The only sword which the Lord’s people are admonished to use is the sword of the Spirit—the Word of God. (Ephesians 6:17) *“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of*

strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

Note the spirit of our Master when James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven. The Lord forbade them saying *“Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.”* (Luke 9:51-56) This attitude of Christ should be developed in all of his disciples. Those whose hearts will learn to be so full of pity for their fellow man find that they would rather die than kill one single innocent person or even their enemies.

Thus, while those in political positions in this country enter into saber rattling debates with one another and with their enemies, we, as Christians should resist the temptation to join into the fray. Certainly, we should hate injustice and be out of sympathy with those who oppress the weak and helpless, but to kill the oppressors would bring vengeance into our own hands. *“Recompense to no man evil for evil... avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink... Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”* (Romans 12:17-21) The Apostle Paul’s instruction, therefore, was to conquer an enemy with Christian kindness.



WARS SHALL CEASE WORLDWIDE

Armageddon will not mean the end of the physical world, but the end of evil and selfishness now contaminating this world. (Galatians 1:4) It will serve to soften men’s hearts so that they will desire to live in harmony with righteousness. All one need do is look at the outpouring of love and cooperation which took place in the hearts of the world after the tragedy of 9/11. Selfishness, rivalry and jealousy gave place to compassion, sympathy and brotherly love.

The shaking process of the *time of trouble* will continue until Messiah’s unshakable kingdom shall assert itself and take control of the world’s affairs. The Armageddon battle will demonstrate to the human mind the fact that nothing man can do will be able to bring order out of the chaos. The Lord assures us of the blessed result of His intervention on behalf of the world: *“I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come.”* Haggai 2:7

By the end of this terrible shaking, mankind’s only desire will be to live in peace and harmony with their neighbors. Then the nations will *“...beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, either shall they learn war any more.”* (Isaiah 2:4) And the God of Heaven *“...shall make war to cease unto the ends of the earth.”* Psalm 46:9,10



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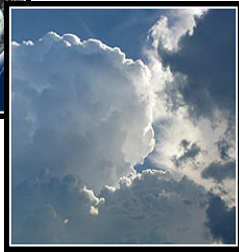
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