



A prime minister's message in the light of Scripture

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IN THIS ARTICLE we consider the words of the British prime minister, Tony Blair, in his New Year message for 2003.¹ It touched on several themes which can be related to Bible prophecy, and provides evidence that we are indeed living in the last days.

Range of problems

In Luke 21 the well-known words of the Lord Jesus tell us what the world will be like prior to his return: "men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (v. 26). Is this the kind of world we are living in today? We might respond in the affirmative, but do we tend to exaggerate the world's problems in order to try to prove that we really are living in days as bad as those predicted by Christ? Mr Blair's perspective is that the world is indeed approaching the scenario predicted by Christ. He stated:

"I cannot recall a time when Britain was confronted, simultaneously, by such a range of difficult and, in some cases, dangerous problems.

"Iraq, and the prospect of committing UK troops to action if Saddam Hussein continues to flout international law and fails properly to disarm; the mass of intelligence flowing across my desk that points to a continuing threat of attack by al Qaeda; the lack of progress on the Middle East Peace Process which has the potential to wreak havoc well beyond that region; and more recently the disturbing developments over North Korea's nuclear programme".

Mr Blair highlights both the range of problems and also the fact that they are happening simultaneously. The variety and timing of events are combining to create a situation unique in his

generation's living memory. It would not seem unreasonable, therefore, to apply the prophecy of Luke 21:26 to our days, given, of course, the other prophecies that are being fulfilled at the same time.

In particular, he highlights the Middle East as a source of problems that could cause "havoc well beyond that region". That the Middle East is seen as having this potential is another sign of providence at work. It is the Middle East, and Israel with its capital Jerusalem in particular, which is the focus of God's purpose. The great crisis that the Lord Jesus spoke of in Luke 21:26 will be centred on Jerusalem. As we read in Zechariah: "And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it" (12:3). The nations are being gathered as though in a whirlpool towards Israel. At the time of writing Iraq is the centre of attention, but this is just a stepping stone in God's purpose towards the greater gathering which will take place against Jerusalem.

Peace and safety

In 1 Thessalonians 5 Paul says: "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (vv. 2,3). This is one of a small group of prophecies which actually predicts what people will be saying at the time of the end. The phrase "Peace and safety" or "Peace and security" is not an uncommon phrase in the days in which we live. In his

1. <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/page6904.asp>.

message Mr Blair too finds cause to use this phrase: "The world economy will be intimately affected by world events on peace and security, for good or ill".

The desire to find peace and security is a common theme of international politics. The United Nations website, for example, has a page with "Peace and Security" as a heading.² Mr Blair's use of the phrase is the continuation of a trend which matches the words of Paul. *They* are saying "Peace and safety", we should be encouraged that the return of the Lord is near.

Globalisation

The nations are being gathered together through "unclean spirits like frogs", which "are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Rev. 16:13,14). These are humanistic and socialist teachings emanating from Europe, the papacy and Russia. They originated in the French Revolution. In this revolution barriers were broken down and the people became more equal and unified. As the historian Mignet wrote, the French Revolution "delivered men from the distinctions of classes, the land from the barriers of provinces . . . and brought everything to the condition of one state, one system of law, one people".³ The effects of this revolution are still being felt today. This can be seen in two ways in Mr Blair's message.

Firstly, the French Revolution laid the seeds for globalisation. What happened between different groups in France was a microcosm of what is happening now between countries on an international scale. Mr Blair writes:

"In the era of globalisation the world is more interdependent than ever. Whilst that has brought many benefits, particularly economic and cultural, it has brought risks too. Alongside security concerns, there are economic concerns arising from lack of confidence in key parts of the world economy".

The interdependency of the world is a consequence of nations becoming less insular and having fewer barriers between them. The French Revolution caused France to become "one state", but laid the foundation for the nations becoming

one world, a global village. One of the ways this unity has been enhanced has been by improved knowledge and communications. This was spoken of by God to Daniel: "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (12:4). As Mr Blair indicates, globalisation comes with a price, for it means that not only benefits but also problems can spread more quickly.

The second way in which the historic effects of the French Revolution can be detected in Mr Blair's message is in some of the ideals that he espouses. He writes of "a vision of a more equal and fair society, and a more equal and fair world". Equality was one of the battle cries of the French Revolution. It would have been inconceivable for leaders of nations to talk in this way prior to that great historic event. But today the notion of an "equal and fair world" is not only spoken of but seen as a possibility.

The breaking down of barriers between peoples and the way in which they are therefore able to come together is seen in the way in which the people came together at Babel: "And the LORD [Yahweh] said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do" (Gen. 11:6). God is now bringing nations back together in the way in which they came together at Babel. Mr Blair's vision of an equal world matches the way in which the people were "one" at Babel.

Conclusion

The foregoing has analysed the message of a world leader in the light of Scripture. As we have seen, it was not difficult to identify the way in which his words link with prophetic themes. The ease with which these themes could be identified is an indication that the prophecies speak of things that are coming more and more to the forefront in the world. Truly the angels are at work in the kingdoms of men.

2. <http://www.un.org/peace/>.

3. Mignet, F. A. M. (1919), *History of the French Revolution*, London, Bell, p. 1.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.

Psalms 46:1-3