

The world after the Iraq War

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NOW THAT THE Iraq war has come to an end, there are several interesting things developing in the world which can be linked with Bible prophecy. In this article we will briefly consider some of the key developments.

Iraq

It remains to be seen how Iraq will develop in the coming months. The northern part of the country in particular relates to the territory of ancient Assyria. The remains of Nineveh, the capital of this empire, are located near the northern town of Mosul. During the war, Iraqi forces were driven from this town by US-backed Kurdish forces.

In Bible prophecy the ancient empire of Assyria is sometimes used to symbolise the Gogian power at the time of the end, just as Babylon is used to symbolise Rome. In prophecies such as Isaiah 19, however, Assyria is mentioned in a context which seems to imply the specific geographical location of the original nation: "In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians" (v. 23). It may be that divisions within the country will emerge which will match more closely the geography of the nations in Old Testament times.

Tarshish

The presence of British forces in the Gulf region continues to provide evidence that the configuration in Ezekiel 38 is developing, whereby Tarshish (Britain) is linked in some way with the Arabian powers to the southeast of Israel: "Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof" (v. 13). United States forces are being withdrawn from Saudi Arabia, but their presence in the region is still significant. The functions of the command post near Riyadh, for example, have simply been transferred to the al-Udeid base in Qatar. However, it is Britain that is the main Tarshish power, and it will be interesting to see how Britain's role in the area progresses.

Turkey

Turkey is symbolised by the Euphrates in Revelation, and its destiny is clearly stated: "And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared" (16:12). The Turkish power will dry up as Russia moves south.

In the weeks leading up to the invasion of Iraq the US desperately tried to persuade Turkey to allow it to deploy 60,000 troops in order to invade Iraq from the north. Turkey refused, despite the economic aid which the United States had promised would be given if it complied. Was it providential that the US should have been stopped from having such a strong force in an area which we know will be dominated by the dragon power of Russia? Perhaps the earthquake which took place in eastern Turkey shortly after the end of the war is a foretaste of political earthquakes to come.

The 'roadmap'

The United Nations, the European Union, the United States and Russia have published a document which sets out a so-called 'roadmap' to peace in the Middle East.¹ It is based on a two-state solution to the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians. There are two features in this document which particularly stand out from a Biblical perspective.

Firstly, there is the recurrent use of the phrase 'peace and security'. It occurs five times in as many pages. For example, it speaks of a "viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours". Again, it calls for "acceptance of Israel as a neighbour living in peace and security". These, and the other three occurrences of the phrase, obviously remind us of 1 Thessalonians: "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

1. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/2989783.stm.

with child; and they shall not escape" (5:2,3). The word translated "safety" has the sense of security. In Acts 5 it is used to describe the security of a prison: "The prison truly found we shut with all *safety*, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within" (v. 23). *Strong's Concordance* gives 'security' as an alternative rendering. The recurrent use of the phrase 'peace and security' in the document mirrors its common use amongst politicians, diplomats and commentators. It is a sure sign that the sudden destruction of Armageddon is near.

The second feature relates to Jerusalem. It is the final stage in the roadmap, the ultimate destination. It is at the end for an obvious reason: it is the most difficult problem to be solved. Zechariah says of Jerusalem: "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 burdensome nature of Jerusalem was apparent to those who wrote the 'roadmap'.

However, the authors of the roadmap also indicate, by the use of the word 'worldwide', the full extent of the importance of Jerusalem. They write of the parties reaching "a negotiated resolution on the status of Jerusalem that takes into account the political and religious concerns of both sides, and protects the religious interests of Jews, Christians, and Muslims *worldwide*". The use of this word betrays the recognition that ultimately the peace of Jerusalem involves not just the Palestinians and the Israelis but also "all the people of the earth".

Europe

Although not all European nations were against the war on Iraq, the opposition of France and Germany to the war has led to a deepening rift between them and countries such as Britain. However, perhaps even more significant was the announcement by France and Germany, together with Belgium and Luxembourg, on 29 April 2003, of "a new defence arm that will enable the EU to carry out military operations independent of Nato".² The plan agreed by the four countries includes: the further development of rapid reaction capability; a "European command for strategic air transport" by June 2004; a Joint European "protection capability" to guard against nuclear, biological and chemical weapons; EU-Fast (European Union First Aid and Support) to provide aid following disasters; European tactical training centres; improved crisis-management; and, finally, a "Multinational deployable force headquarters" to enhance current command and control capabilities.

These proposed developments provide more evidence that the unity and warlike capability of the beast is being developed as required by prophecy: "These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Rev. 17:13,14).

2. Watson, R. and Bennett, R. (2003), "France and Germany in EU defence breakaway", *The Times*, 30 April, p. 4.

Isaac Newton website

Readers may be interested in the following website on which various items written by Brother Stephen Snobelen about Isaac Newton's theological and prophetic views are posted: <http://members.aol.com/stevesnobelen/>. The following are some items which may be of interest:

- **Isaac Newton, heretic.** This essay, published in the *British Journal for the History of Science* in 1999, details Newton's dissenting theology and his attempts to preach his antitrinitarian faith in secret.
- **Isaac Newton on the return of the Jews.** This essay, published in 2001, outlines Newton's prophetic belief in the return of the Jews to Israel, along with other aspects of his eschatology.
- **Science and Religion Encyclopaedia entry.** This short entry, forthcoming in 2003, stresses that there were many links between Newton's religious faith and his study of nature.