

4 A study such as this illustrates the marvelous way in which all the books of the Bible are knit together into a unity by common themes and expressions. The more we study the Word of God and observe these intricate

connections between the different parts of the Scriptures, the greater our faith in the promises of God and the greater our resistance to the attractions of this world.

(Concluded)

Ukraine awakes

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In this article a speech by the President of Ukraine is considered. His claims that his country has awoken and is strong are shown to link with Joel 3. The phrase "peace and security" is also highlighted.

WHEN WRITING of the time of the end, Joel says: "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up" (3:9); and: "Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about" (v. 12). The command to "wake up" relates to the way nations are being prepared for Armageddon. It is fascinating to see that, in recent times, not only are nations being awakened, but they themselves describe it as an awakening.

An example of this was seen with President Bush when, soon after the terrorist attacks on 11 September, 2001, he stated to a Joint Session of Congress: "Tonight we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom".¹ Recently there has been another example, provided by the new leader of Ukraine, President Yushchenko. In this article we will examine a speech of his where this language was used. We will also note other aspects of the speech that relate to Bible prophecy.

Sleeping elephant

In January 2005 a meeting of the World Economic Forum was held in Davos, Switzerland. At this meeting a speech was made by President Yushchenko, who has recently been elected as President of Ukraine following a controversial rerun election. During his speech he stated:

"I represent one of the biggest countries in Europe. Europe's geographic center is located in Ukraine. Ukrainians are one of the world's best-educated nations. We have everything it

takes to be on a par with the leaders of the modern globalized world. My country has long been a wise and powerful, but sleeping elephant. Today it is awakening".²

The language of awakening matches the use of language in Joel 3. The irony is that the reason why countries are being awakened is not that they might be exalted but that they might play their part in the gathering of nations which will take place when Christ returns. Ukraine covers some of the territory occupied by the ancient Scythians, the Magog of Ezekiel 38. Together with Russia, this country will play a key role in the invasion of Israel as prophesied in Ezekiel 38. As it emerges bleary eyed onto the world stage of awakened nations, little does it realise what its future will bring.

Mighty man?

Joel writes of "the mighty men" being awakened. The phrase "mighty men" translates one Hebrew word. It first occurs in Genesis 6: "There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became *mighty men* which were of old, men of renown" (v. 4). As "men of renown" these were men who set out to make a name for themselves. In 1 Samuel 17:51 the Hebrew word is translated "champion" and applied to Goliath. Is Ukraine one of the "mighty men"? Is it a champion like Goliath?

In his speech Yushchenko was candid about the weaknesses of his country. For example, he said that "About 55 per cent of the national economy is in the black sector". As a result of

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1. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.
 2. <http://www.president.gov.ua/eng/activity/zayavinterv/321495396.html>.

this, and the corruption in the country, foreign investors have been discouraged from investing in Ukraine, so that currently, "The amount of direct foreign investment in Ukraine is much lower than in our neighbors". On the other hand, he was also keen to portray his country as being strong.

He began his speech with a quotation from a Ukrainian prophet called Taras Shevchenko who, writing in the nineteenth century, said, "Fight and win, the God will help you, the truth, strength and the holy will is with you". Yushchenko then said, "We fought and won". He claimed that the "strength" of God was with them. This is not a true claim. Ukraine does not have the strength of God.

Despite his country's weaknesses, Yushchenko is not hesitant to make the claim that his country is strong. Consider some of the words we have already quoted:

- "I represent one of the biggest countries in Europe"
- "Europe's geographic center is located in Ukraine"
- "Ukrainians are one of the world's best-educated nations"
- "We have everything it takes to be on a par with the leaders of the modern globalized world"
- "My country has long been . . . wise and powerful".

The very fact that, despite the weakness of Ukraine, he is *claiming* that his country has "strength", links with Joel 3, which in verse 10 says, "let the weak say, I am strong". The word "strong" here is the same Hebrew word as is translated "mighty man". Ukraine is claiming it is a strong one among the nations. In making the boastful statements listed above, surely Mr Yushchenko is saying, "I am strong".

Peace and security

The speech of Yushchenko shows that the economy of Ukraine needs modernising and improving. Nevertheless he plans to spend more money on defence. He stated: "we are proposing our help to maintain peace and security, especially in the regions that are our common neighbors



The thick line shows the division between Russia and the rest of Europe towards the end of the nineteenth century.

. . . Ukraine is ready to take part in the implementation of European security and defense goals even more actively". So he has an economy in need of growth and development but he plans to spend more on military power. As Joel says: "beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears" (v. 10).

Also of interest in this part of the speech is the phrase "peace and security". The use of this phrase reminds us of the words of Paul: "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" (1 Thess. 5:3). In fact Yushchenko used this phrase twice in his speech. The other occurrence was in the context of relations with Russia:

"Ukraine wants to strengthen mutually beneficial partnership with all its neighbors, both in the east and in the west. We are ready to widely develop Ukrainian-Russian partnership, with a view to realizing our economic interests and maintaining *peace and security* in Europe. I am convinced that this approach of ours was received with understanding during my visit to Moscow".

The phrase "peace and security" is a common phrase that occurs time and again in the words of politicians. However, its common use should

not make us complacent. Each new use of this phrase is a further indication that the return of Christ is near.

Europe

The above quotation from the speech encapsulates the double strategy of Yushchenko. He would like Ukraine to enter the European Union but he is also mindful of the need to keep Russia on his side. He was not Russia's preferred candidate to win the election, but the promptness of his visit to Russia after his election victory demonstrates his desire to keep their support.

The political landscape of Ukraine is an illustration of Yushchenko's problem. The western half has close historical ties with Europe. The more industrialised east has closer ties with Russia and includes Crimea where the Russian Black Sea fleet is based (see [map](#) opposite). This split is also a religious divide, with the Greek Catholic Church being more popular in the west whilst the Russian Orthodox Church is predominant in the east. Ukraine is a focal point where the

European beast and Eastern dragon meet (Rev. 16:13).

Frogs

In Revelation 16:13 the "unclean spirits like frogs" are shown going forth. These represent socialist and democratic forces, which, like the frogs in Egypt, smite borders and affect both leaders and common people alike (Ex. 8:2-4). Yushchenko's speech made clear the role that such a spirit had recently played in his country. He said that his people had been "united by their desire to have freedom", that he spoke "on behalf of a free Ukraine", and that he has become president "by the will of its people, who chose democracy".

Conclusion

How events in Ukraine will develop remains to be seen. Of particular interest is the way it is torn between the beast in the West and dragon of the East. At the moment it is too early to tell what will happen. After all, the country has only just woken up.