



War against terrorism begins

Nigel Bernard

IT IS WRITTEN in the prophecy of Joel: "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). Whilst this gathering will culminate in the nations led by Gog gathering for the battle of Armageddon in Israel (v. 12), nevertheless the gathering of the "mighty men" of such countries as America into the region is a necessary precursor to Armageddon. It may well be that the current gathering of nations in the war against terrorism is an important development in this regard.

Tarshish and the young lions

In last month's Watchman article¹ the role of Britain as Tarshish, and America as a young lion of Tarshish, was highlighted. Their gathering in the region of the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea was seen as helping to develop the position required by Ezekiel when Tarshish, Sheba and Dedan will speak with one voice following the invasion of Gog (38:13). It would be wrong to conclude that the geographical proximity of American and British forces to the southern Arabian countries presumes that these countries are fully behind the military attacks on Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia in particular has been very wary of being seen to support the attacks for fear of a Muslim backlash in its own country. However, it is clear that the present deployment of Tarshish forces in the area is an important milestone for the circumstances to arise whereby Ezekiel 38:13 will ultimately be fulfilled.

There is, however, an apparent anomaly when considering Britain and America as Tarshish and a young lion respectively. We can see how historically America is the 'offspring' of Britain. But, given the might of America, how can Britain be seen any more as the father figure? Does calling America a "young lion" in comparison with Britain still fit reality? An answer to this question can be seen by considering the role of the British prime minister, Tony Blair, since 11 September.

Since that date the British prime minister has visited numerous countries to strengthen the international backing for the American-led action against terrorism. His speeches and efforts have been well received in America. The well-respected commentator Alistair Cooke said: "But it should be said that thanks to Prime Minister Blair, America's general trust in the United Kingdom and admiration for its actions has never been as high since the very dark days of the Battle of Britain".²

Britain has been taking the lead diplomatically. The prime minister, with his much greater experience in international affairs compared with President Bush, has been at the forefront of the war against terrorism. America may have the greater might, but this should not detract from the prominent role of Britain.

Other young lions with strong connections with Britain have also been playing their part. Australia has said it will provide 1,550 military personnel by mid-November. India, like Australia a member of the Commonwealth, has offered logistical aid and is willing to allow its facilities to be used as a staging post for military action.

Russia

Russia has ostensibly been backing the policy of America. It has allowed its airspace to be used for humanitarian flights, and has said it will provide weapons to the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance. When Gog invades, as the latter-day Assyrian, it will be "strong and many" (Isa. 8:7). We expect therefore to see Russia developing in power and influence. Perhaps in recent years its power has waned, but this is now changing. In an article entitled, "Putin tries to recreate Soviet Bloc", Will Stewart, writing in the British paper

1. [Oct. 2001, pp. 387-8.](#)
2. "Blair and Bush: The special relationship", Letter from America, BBC, 12 Oct. 2001.

the *Daily Express*, argued that the current crisis in Afghanistan was being exploited by Putin to regain former prestige:

“Russian leader Vladimir Putin is using the crisis in Afghanistan to try to revive the old Soviet Union. With deft diplomacy, he has succeeded in forging a united line on the crisis from most of the former Soviet states. This is in stark contrast to the squabbles that have marked their relations in recent years. The move seems aimed at boosting Putin’s power and influence on the world stage”.³

One European mind?

At the time of the end the European nations that constitute the European beast will be united: “These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast” (Rev. 17:13). At the European Summit held in Ghent, Belgium, on 19 October, differences of opinion could be detected below the surface, although a communiqué supporting the action of America was released, albeit stopping short of calling for the overthrow of the Taliban. The search for unity had not been helped by Britain, France and Germany holding their own additional unofficial meeting, seemingly sidelining the other nations. What also must be causing disquiet amongst other European countries is the strident way the British prime minister has single-handedly forged ahead in his support for America.

Perhaps what is of more significance in the long run is the intention shown in the speech that the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, made to the German Parliament prior to the summit. He said: “We are ready to make Europe into an international player with global influence”. He also said: “The diplomatic activities of the European Union and its member states must join together to form a conclusive foreign and security policy”. The BBC commentary on this speech stated that “The chancellor’s comments reinforce the vision of Europe he outlined in May which would give the EU a stronger role in world affairs and increase the powers of the EU’s central institutions”.⁴ The chancellor sees the threat of terrorism as reinforcing the need for greater European unity.

Anthrax fear

“Men’s hearts failing them for fear” (Lk. 21:26) accurately described the effect of the terrorist attacks on 11 September. Since then the emergence of the use of anthrax as a biological weapon

has added to this fear. Indeed, the actual incidence of disease caused by this weapon is low. Its main effect is to cause fear. Simon Wessely, a professor of Psychological Medicine, wrote, together with two other researchers: “The now routine journalistic association between chemical and biological weapons and the word terror confirms that the purpose of these weapons is to wreak destruction via psychological means by inducing fear, confusion, and uncertainty in everyday life”.⁵

He also highlights what he calls “mass socio-genic illness”, which can be caused by the threat of such weapons. He cites the case of a school in Washington State, which sent sixteen students and a teacher to hospital in response to what turned out to be paint fumes. In Manila, Philippines, over 1,000 students from schools in the city reported to clinics describing various symptoms reminiscent of flu after rumours had spread that an act of bioterrorism had taken place. It is thus not stretching the point to apply the language of Luke 21:26 to current events.

Israel

In Israel the pressure by America and Britain on both Israelis and Palestinians to bring about some sort of cessation of violence has, after the initial optimism mentioned in last month’s article, so far had little effect. At the time of writing (20 October) the reverberations of the assassination of the Israeli minister Rehavam Zeevi are still at their early stages. We know from Ezekiel 38 that a period of rest will come prior to the invasion of Gog. Whether this rest will be the consequence of the peace process—whose roots after all go back over twenty years to the extraordinary visit of the then Egyptian President, Anwar el-Sadat, to the Knesset in 1977—or whether it will follow significant military action, remains to be seen.

Conclusion

In conclusion it is helpful to reflect on how we have reacted to the events of the magnitude of the past few weeks. It is easy to become caught up in the immediate emotional aftermath of a disaster, whatever its nature. It is also tempting

3. 29 Sept. 2001, p. 10.

4. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/europe/newsid_1606000/1606438.stm.

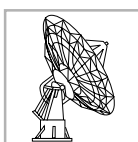
5. S. Wessely *et al.*, “Psychological implications of chemical and biological weapons”, *British Medical Journal*, 2001, 20 Oct., pp. 878-9.

to make quick judgments on motives and trends which lie behind such events, leading to little more than speculative commentary. In many ways we are in new territory. "There is no new thing under the sun" (Eccl. 1:9), and Scriptural examples abound that can be applied to things we see in the earth. However, with regard to our experience, we are living in a world where, so the world claims, 'everything has changed'.

In Joshua 3 we have an example of how to walk through new territory. The people were to follow the ark, but at a distance: "Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore" (Josh. 3:4). By keeping a distance the people would

have plenty of warning when the ark turned in a new direction. This should warn us from reacting too quickly to world events. We should maintain an overall view and look at things as it were from a distance.

One way to achieve this overall view is to reserve comment until historical perspective can be seen. However, we also have "a more sure word of prophecy" (2 Pet. 1:19). This enables us to "see afar off" (v. 9). We can therefore, with the eye of faith, project ourselves forward, thinking about "things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17). Our God is able to declare "the end from the beginning" (Isa. 46:10). By taking heed to His Word we can therefore know the end. And, if we can see where the ark is going, we can know the way.



Science

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Science and the Creator

The world's loudest insect

David Burges

MOST OF US are familiar with the noise produced by insects such as grasshoppers and crickets. They are characteristic of warm summer days, although sadly the widespread use of pesticides in the developed world means that such sounds are far less common there than they once were. There is a group of insects, however, which far exceed the powers of grasshoppers to make their presence known. These are small insects known as cicadas (pronounced *si-ka-das*), which inhabit the warmer areas of the world. In the early dusk of late spring the males emerge from underground and fill the air with their piercing song. And one particular species of Australian cicada (*Cyclochila australasiae*) has been found to have the loudest call so far measured. The volume and intensity resemble that of a personal alarm going off, and when tens or hundreds of cicadas are singing together the effect can be deafening.

A surprisingly complex instrument

Cicadas are plant-sucking bugs, and their eggs are laid in the stems of plants or in trees. When the larvae hatch they drop to the ground and burrow in search of plant roots to tap. They then remain underground for many years before emerging to moult into winged adults, and then mating. It is then that the males' remarkable sound system comes into use.

Scientists at the Universities of Oxford and Melbourne have been studying, with the aid of tiny probe microphones, the organs which these small creatures, some sixty millimetres (2.3 inches) long, use to produce such a loud sound.¹ Unlike grasshopper species, which rub special structures on the hind legs against their wings to

1. "How cicadas make their noise", Henry C. Bennet-Clark, *Scientific American*, May 1998, pp. 36-9.