

Close to the Climax



Teaching Letter
By Derek Prince

Forward: In view of the ongoing tension and conflict in the Middle East, these insights, spoken by Derek Prince in 1990, may provide excellent guidelines for prayer regarding the region. Once again, we are grateful that these excerpts from Derek's timeless sharing have amazing pertinence to present situations. Though Derek was speaking here in response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the observations he makes are very relevant to the current events across the Middle East. Some of Derek's comments have been edited to bring them up to date and we trust they will be helpful to you.

Looking back

This is personal Update number 60. I'm recording it herein our studio in our office in Fort Lauderdale. It's being recorded for November 1990. This Update will contain quite a number of different and exciting topics. We will give you an update on our view of what is happening in the Middle East.

To begin, then, with the Middle East. I suppose everybody will agree that the central focus of world news today is on the Middle East. This is very significant. It represents a total change that has taken place in the last 4, or 5, or 6 decades.

Growing up in Britain between the two World Wars, I remember that one could read the newspapers every day for a week and there would be no mention of any Middle East country, no mention of the names of countries named in the Bible. But today that has totally changed. And as I have said, the focus of world news and attention is on the Middle East.

This in itself is extremely significant. It agrees with the picture of the period at the close of this age given in the Scripture where the focus is again on the Middle East, on Europe, and on the Mediterranean area. So, this shift of world focus is one of the ways God is saying to us, "We're very close to the climax of the age."

A prophetic picture

It has a prophetic significance, too. In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar had a vision of a great image which he could not understand. He couldn't even remember it, but Daniel not only reminded him of his vision but also gave him the interpretation of it. In the vision, Nebuchadnezzar saw a large, impressive image with a head of gold, shoulders and

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chest of silver, belly and thighs of brass, and legs of iron. And at the bottom of the iron legs were feet that were partly iron and partly clay.

Daniel interpreted this for Nebuchadnezzar as a picture of certain world empires. The head of gold was Babylon; the shoulders and chest of silver were the Medo-Persian Empire; then the belly and the thighs of brass represented Alexander's conquest and the Greek Empire; and the legs of iron represented the Roman Empire. According to that prophecy, there was to be a division of that fourth stage, the Roman Empire, which did historically take place. The Roman Empire was divided with two capitals: the western capital in Rome and the eastern capital in Byzantium or Constantinople (Istanbul). So we have this picture of the two legs of the image—the western one centered in Rome and the eastern one centered in Byzantium or Constantinople.

Then, there were at the bottom of the image the feet with ten toes. Many interpreters of prophecy have correlated these ten toes with the ten kingdoms that were to be dominated by the Antichrist depicted in Revelation chapter 13. And, of course, people are now saying that the European Common Market (or whatever is emerging in Europe) [now known as the European Union] could be the ten toes. But I find that unconvincing, because all of those are on the side of the western leg; none of them are on the side of the eastern leg. Logically, if a person has ten toes, five will be on one leg and five on the other leg. So the indication is that whatever is emerging will ultimately include the territory both of the western Roman Empire and of the eastern Roman Empire, which is essentially a major part of what we call the Middle East. And I believe that is going to emerge, so that the European confederation (or whatever emerges there) is just a kind of first step in that direction. But it is not a fulfillment of it.

What kind of confederation?

It is often said, especially in Israel, that the Middle East is the home of the three great monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. I don't personally accept that evaluation, but it contains a significant truth that these three religions are primarily monotheistic. There have been various attempts to bring the representatives of those religions together without success. Actually there is one major barrier to the bringing together of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. That awkward barrier is the historical personage, Jesus of Nazareth. If Jesus were taken out of the way, it is perfectly conceivable that the three religions could somehow coalesce. In fact, there have been many different attempts by Christians, including the pope of Rome himself, to form some kind of confederation of world religions. But in a sense, the barrier, as I have said, is Jesus.

Now, the word antichrist has two meanings. Christ, of course, is the Greek form for "Messiah." The first meaning of the preposition "anti" is "against"; the second meaning of "anti "is "in place of." So, the full outworking of antichrist is first of all, against the true Messiah—to remove Him, to get Him out of the way. Secondly, once He has been removed, to replace Him with a false messiah.

So, you could envisage a confederation of ten nations in Europe, around the Mediterranean, down the east side of the Mediterranean on into North Africa. And you could imagine a world religion which is a combination of Judaism, Christianity without Christ, and Islam. That is a kind of potential scene of what could emerge out of this move of world attention back to the Middle East.

Understanding Islam

The dominant spiritual power in the area I just described is Islam, the Muslim religion. And we need to know certain facts about it. Unfortunately, the majority of Western Christians are very ignorant of the true nature of Islam. It is, without doubt, the unchanging enemy, both of Israel and of the true Church of Jesus. Its enmity is focused primarily on Israel at the moment because Israel has exacted a defeat upon it. It doesn't really take the Church seriously, because it thinks the Church is too easy. Islam would consider it very easy to overtake the Church. But Israel has proved a very difficult obstacle. However, the final stated purpose of Islam is to take over the whole world for their religion.

Muslims have a phrase which they use, which is: "The home of peace and the home of war." Or, in the Arabic dialect, "Dares Salaam; dar el harb." The "home of peace" is those are as which are under Islam; the "home of war" is those are as which are not yet under Islam. Here is the implication: War must continue against the latter areas until the whole world is under the domination of Islam. That is the Islamic programme. It is clearly stated in their religious texts.

We need to understand the basic values that have been generated by the Islamic religion, especially amongst the Arab people. They have really three major concepts: power, honour and revenge. They respect power. With our background in the Christian West, even though we are not all Christians, we have a kind of respect for concepts like mercy and forgiveness. Muslims don't have those concepts. The aspects that impress them are power. And they use power to attain honour. And if, by any chance, they fail and

honour is taken from them (as they failed in their attempts to destroy Israel), then the third concept is revenge. They will work unceasingly for no matter how long, until they obtain their revenge.

Those are the kinds of forces and the kinds of persons we are dealing with in the Middle East. They are motivated by a quest for honour, for power, and for revenge. It is ridiculous for the West to talk about democracy in that context. There is no such thing as a democracy in the Middle East. There couldn't be such a thing. The material, the human material, the culture, the way of thinking, just is not there. Arab rulers will use democratic language to impress the people in the West when they want to get their way. But they don't mean it in the same way that we do.

How the Arab mind works

My first wife, Lydia, as is widely known, spent twenty years in Palestine living amongst Arabs. She got to know them very, very well. Lydia used to make comments about them which at first I thought were rather cynical. But the longer I lived, the more clearly I saw how true they were.

One of the things she said was, "When a Muslim talks to you, he's not thinking in terms of what is the truth. Truth is not important. What he is saying to himself is, 'Now, if I say this, what will the other person say?' Or, 'If I say that, what will that other person say?'" In other words, language is used by them to produce a response—the kind of response they want from the people that they're talking to. Lydia made it clear that the concept of being truthful in the way that we understand it is not valid amongst them. It just isn't part of their thinking. It's not part of their background.

Now, Saddam Hussein was a particularly brazen individual, but he was characteristic of Arab rulers. They are out to dominate, to suppress, to parade their ego, to show how important they are and how much honour is due to them, and they will certainly and mercilessly revenge any kind of opposition to them. The behavior of Saddam Hussein in Kuwait was, in a very vivid yet shameless way, a kind of portrait of Arab rulers. As I have said, democracy, mercy and forgiveness, are concepts that have no real meaning for them. And if we try to relate to them on that basis, as a lot of Western governments are doing, there is a failure to connect with reality. I believe that Saddam Hussein, in many ways, was like Adolph Hitler. Hitler announced in advance what he was going to do, he put it in print, and nobody thought he could be that wicked. So they kind of behaved as if, "Well, he doesn't really mean it. And if we treat him nicely, he'll treat us nicely." History has proved how wrong that point of view was. I believe that the outlook for Saddam Hussein was essentially the same. He was brutal. He was ruthless. He intended to gain power and use it for his own ends. And he would do anything whatever that was necessary to fulfil those ends.

The spiritual power of Islam

We need to understand one very interesting and important fact about the dominating spiritual influence of Islam in the Middle East at this time. Why? Because there is a tremendous lesson that we need to learn as Christians. I want to say it very simply, without inferring that it is simplistic. The basis of the spiritual power of Islam in the Middle East and in North Africa is summed up in one word: *proclamation*.

The Arabs, whether consciously or unconsciously, have understood the tremendous spiritual power of persistent proclamation. You probably know that every mosque proclaims five times a day certain statements about god and about Mohammed. I don't want to quote them exactly because I don't like saying them. But we need to bear in mind that those proclamations from the mosques of the Middle East and North Africa have been going out five times a day for more than 1,300 years. And if you have the same mathematics as I have, that's 2,372,500 times that proclamation has gone out from each mosque in the Middle East.

If you multiply that number by the number of mosques, which is probably at least a million, you're into the billions. I believe that this is the real basis of the tremendous dominating spiritual power of Islam. It is this persistent, ceaseless proclamation of the spiritual force they want to establish.

As Christians, that really confronts us with a challenge, because I believe the answer to proclamation is counter proclamation. I believe that we in the Christian church have sadly failed to appreciate the power and the value of proclamation, and especially chanted proclamation. You see, the proclamation from the mosque goes out in a form of chanting, and if you analyze most of the major world religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism) all of them employ chanting of proclamations in one degree or another as a way of affirming their faith.

The Bible says in 2 Timothy 3:

> "In the last days evil men and enchanters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."

Most translations render that “evil men and impostors.” But the correct translation is “enchanters.” What the translators of the Bible probably have failed to recognize is that chanting or incantation is a major spiritual power for evil or for good. I believe that if we want to see God’s will done in the Middle East, we as Christians must learn to make the appropriate proclamations in faith.

The power of proclamation

You might respond, “Well, it’ll take us a long while to do it two billion times.” However, I don’t think that is the correct way to look at it, because I believe that truth is far more powerful than error. It doesn’t take the same number of proclamations of truth to defeat error. We have the truth, and it’s up to us to make intercession for the Middle East. Specifically, we need to be making proclamations of the victory of Jesus, of the power of His name, of the power of His blood, of what has been accomplished by His death on the cross, of His exaltation in glory as the supreme ruler of the universe, and also of the important fact that He is coming back again in power and glory to establish His kingdom on this earth. As you contemplate the situation in the Middle East, I want to exhort you and encourage you, as a Christian, not to sit by passively, as a spectator, not knowing what to do. I want to encourage you that it is appropriate to respond with proclamations—in prayer, in intercession, in singing—whatever way may be appropriate. And I want to offer you three themes for this prayer and proclamation.

The Israel proclamation

First of all, we proclaim for Israel. We proclaim that Israel will be preserved from all her enemies around about by the supernatural grace and power of God, that Israel may be turned back to God. In Jeremiah 31, we have a little example of what I have been talking about which is addressed to us as believers. Jeremiah 31:7 says:

For thus says the LORD:

> “Sing with gladness for Jacob, And shout among the chief of the nations; Proclaim, give praise, and say, ‘O LORD, save Your people, The remnant of Israel!’”

Notice the word proclaim. What should be our response to what is happening in Israel? We should pray, but we should also praise and we should proclaim. Then, in verse 10 of that chapter it says:

> “Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, And declare it in the isles [or the coastlands] afar off, and say,‘ He who scattered Israel will gather him, And keep him as a shepherd does his flock.’”

That is God’s message to the nations. But I think, in a sense, it is our responsibility to proclaim it. To proclaim it to our nation. To proclaim it to the nations of the world. What we are to proclaim is very simple: “He who scattered Israel will gather him and will keep him as a shepherd does his flock. ”It was God who scattered Israel 19 centuries ago. And it is God who is gathering the same people, Israel, today.

God says not merely that He will gather Israel, but He also says He will keep Israel. He will preserve Israel. That is a proclamation that we need to make regularly. The same God who scattered Israel is now gathering him. (Notice how the gathering is taking place from the Soviet Union at this time.)

The God who has gathered Israel will keep him, will watch over him, will preserve him. In a sense, God has guaranteed the security and the future of Israel—not without threats, not without danger, not without crises. But ultimately, God says, “I will keep them.” We need to proclaim that into the spiritual atmosphere ceaselessly.

The Islam proclamation

Next, with regard to Islam, I believe we need to pray along the line following. We need to pray that the present crisis in the Middle East and the lining up of the Arab nations against one another will open the way (in some way that we perhaps cannot yet see), for the iron fortress of Islam to be broken open so that its captives may be delivered and so that the truth may penetrate.

In Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union, God’s people prayed and agonized for many years and apparently nothing much was happening. But then there came a moment when their prayers and their proclamations became effective. And in one short year, the total situation in the communist nations was completely changed and reversed. Most of us would never have believed in advance if anybody had told us what would happen, or that it could happen so dramatically and so quickly. I believe that should encourage us as Christians and believers that the apparently impregnable fortress of Islam will also yield to our prayers and our proclamations.

Let me just say that I am not against the Muslims. I have a deep concern for them. I have lived in Muslim nations myself. I know to some little degree the awful darkness, misery, and slavery which Islam imposes on men and women, and I would add especially on women. My heart's desire and cry and prayer to God is that He will so intervene that the fortress of Islam that holds people captive will be broken open and a way will be made for their release.

In Luke 11, Jesus said, "When a strong man armed keep[s] his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he [comes] upon him... he take[s] from him all his armour wherein he trusted" and he delivers his prisoners and spoils his goods. I believe that, in a sense, we can invoke the One who is stronger than Islam—that is, Jesus—to move into that situation, open up the fortress, deliver the captives, and enable us to take the spoil. That is the way my own prayers go. And I want to emphasize that I pray them out of a deep concern and compassion for the Muslim people.

Proclamation for the military

Next, our third theme for intercession and proclamation is for the troops. There are tens of thousands of troops gathered in the Middle East from the West. Nobody could have imagined that such a number of people from a Christian background (many of them strong Christians), would find themselves there in the Middle East—in what was essentially a kind of fortress that would not admit much of the influence of the West. It is a significant fact that many Middle Eastern nations do not permit Bibles to be sent through the mail to the troops. If they already had Bibles with them, they were allowed to keep them. However, the intention is to keep out any representation of any other religion but Islam from those nations. But you see, God has intervened and overruled and made it possible for those people from the West to be there.

During World War II, I spent three years in the deserts of the Middle East, so I have a little idea of what it's like to live in a desert. The desert where I served was not so intense as others, but bear in mind those troops are not allowed alcohol. They have very few kinds of entertainment, and they have suddenly been cut off from pursuits that they thought made life exciting and worthwhile. I believe that is an opportunity for the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to move into that vacuum and turn many of them to God.

I believe, on the basis of my own experience, that this is a time when the Holy Spirit can visit that great assembly of troops in the Middle East. And if any kind of revival breaks out there, it is going to affect the whole spiritual atmosphere of the Middle East.

It's like the story of the Trojan horse. You remember that when the Greeks wanted to capture Troy, they left a huge wooden horse outside the city. The Trojan people came and took it into the city. But they didn't know there were armed Greek soldiers inside the horse. During the night, the Greek soldiers came out of the horse, opened up the gates and let the Greek army in so that Troy was taken. In a sense, I would say, the presence of the Western troops in the Middle East is a little bit like that Trojan horse. Inside it is something that can split the whole of that kingdom spiritually wide open.

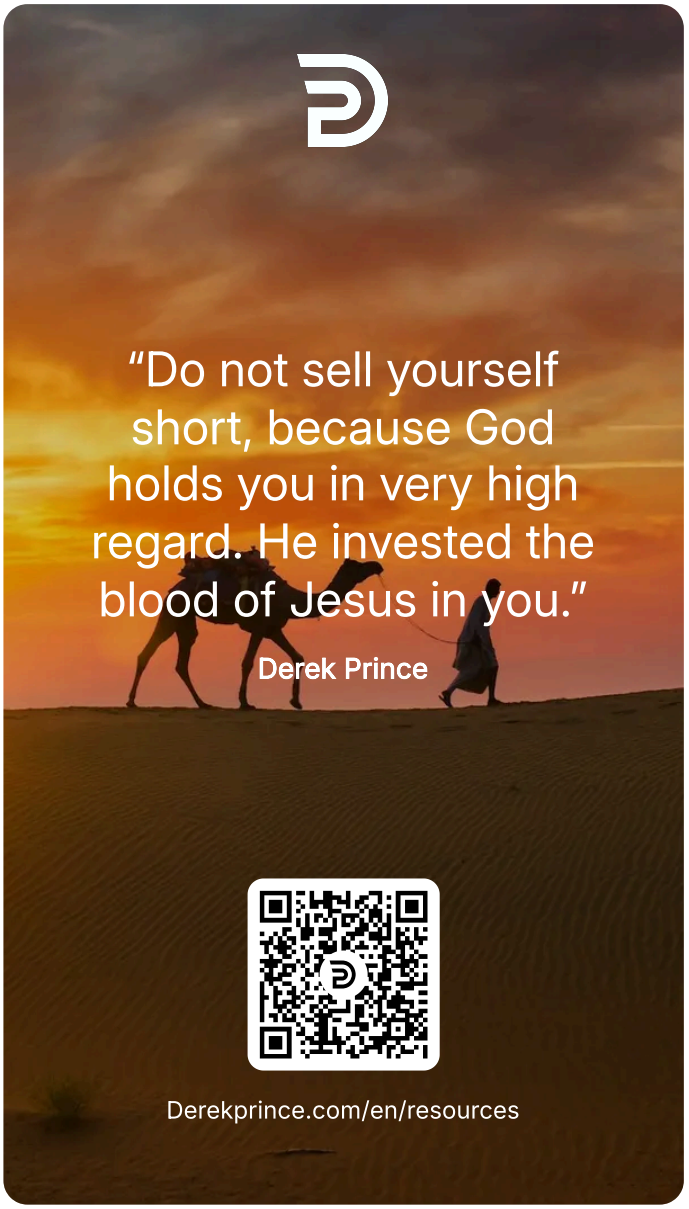
A very exciting little addendum is that our radio programme in Arabic has been aired directly into various parts of the Middle East. The Arab people there have had the opportunity of hearing the plain, clear truth of the Word of God in their own language, which most of them have never had. Never have they had an opportunity to hear that.

Time to pray

So, what is happening in the Middle East is exciting, it's dramatic, and it's critical. In regard to what is taking place there, I want to urge you, as I have said already, not to be passive. Don't just sit back and watch the news and say, "Well, there's nothing much I can do." Or, "Let's hope things work out." If you are a committed Christian and you know how to pray and you know the power of the Word of God and the authority of the name of Jesus, you can play a very decisive role in the events that are now unfolding in the Middle East.

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