

WATCH THE MIDDLE EAST

The agonizing possibility of another Middle East war frightens world leaders. Are Mideast events leading swiftly to the long-prophesied "Armageddon"? What will happen to Egypt, Syria, Israel and other countries in the area? And how will the Mideast affect Europe? Can we know what is about to happen in the very near future?

by Raymond F. McNair

THE NATIONS of the world will literally be dumbfounded when they see what will really happen in the explosive Middle East. Few realize what the outcome will be of the long-protracted and intense struggle between Israelis and Arabs.

Why do world leaders repeatedly say that the Mideast is the most explosive spot on this earth? Why are famous diplomats continually negotiating with heads of government in this unsettled area? It must, they claim, be watched very carefully if it is not to ignite World War III.

Since the dawn of history, man has fought thousands of wars. But until quite recently, mankind had not invented weapons of mass destruction which could erase all life from this planet.

Then, in 1945, thousands of lives were vaporized in the instantaneous destruction of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The world was jolted into the realization that science had ushered mankind into an age of potential human annihilation.

Since 1945 the nations have been working feverishly to develop more devastating weapons—weapons which can erase vast populations in a matter of seconds. The word "overkill" has earned its place in our modern vocabulary. The nations have already spent many millions developing brands of super laser weapons. Besides the United States and Russia—France, Britain, China and India (and who knows

how many other nations?) also have nuclear weapons in their arsenals.

Nearly two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ foretold this terrible era of potential mass destruction—this end time when man would possess the capability to annihilate all life on this planet: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. *And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved [alive]. . .*" (Matt. 24:21-22).

Who Can Know the Future? There is a Creator God who knows the past and can fathom the future. He has given us in His Word, the Holy Bible, many hundreds of prophecies which foretell the future events.

The Creator says: ". . . For I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa. 46:9-10).

It is God who knows the end from the beginning. His Word, if diligently studied and rightly understood, reveals to mankind many of the major events about to occur in the Mideast.

Amazing Future Prophecy. The Prophet Daniel prophesied that four great world-ruling empires would arise one after the other (see Daniel 2 and 7). These empires would dominate this earth up until the end time when the "stone" (the Messiah or Christ—see Daniel 2:45 and Eph-

esians 2:20) would demolish and supplant all human governments.

The longest prophecy of the Bible, the eleventh chapter of Daniel, specifically concerns the Middle East. Most of this lengthy prophecy has already been fulfilled. The first four verses of this chapter prophesied that "a mighty king" (Alexander the Great) would rise up and defeat the Persians. He would die without "posterity" to rule on his throne. His kingdom would be "divided toward the four winds" (by his four generals).

Then we come to the very detailed prophecy concerning a prolonged struggle between the Seleucid kings of "the north" in Syria and the Ptolemaic kings of "the south" in Egypt.

History shows how accurately the detailed prophecies of verses 5-39 were fulfilled. (For a description of the historical fulfillment of these verses, write for our free article entitled "The Middle East in Prophecy.") But verses 40-45 are yet to be fulfilled. They reveal that startling events are yet to take place in the Mideast.

As foretold, after the death of Alexander the Great his four generals divided up his kingdom. Cassander ruled Greece and Macedonia. Lysimachus was given Asia Minor. Seleucus (Nicator) ruled Syria and Babylonia as far as India. Ptolemy (Soter) ruled Egypt, part of Ethiopia (including the modern Sudan), Judea and part of Syria.

The kings of the north and south

referred to in this chapter were the Greek rulers of Egypt and Syria who for centuries struggled over control of Palestine. The Bible always speaks from the focal point of the Holy Land. Syria was north of Palestine, Egypt was south.

The "king of the north" continued to be Syria up until 65 B.C. (see box). From that time on the "king of the north" represents the Roman Empire.

THE KING OF THE NORTH

The king of the north was Syria under the Seleucid dynasty. In 65 B.C. Pompey reduced Syria to the status of a Roman province, despite the pleadings of Antiochus XIII. The line of Seleucus continued in the kings of Commagene, who continued to rule until A.D. 72 when it too was extinguished by Rome. The son of the last king, Caius Julius Antiochus Epiphanes Philopappus, served as a Roman consul in the

tions" of the Roman Empire include those of Charlemagne, Otto the Great, Charles the Great (of the Hapsburgs), Napoleon and Mussolini-Hitler.

Students of biblical prophecy generally understand that the fourth kingdom mentioned by Daniel (depicted by the legs of iron, and feet part of iron and part of clay) is the Roman Empire (Dan. 2:32-45). "And in the days of these kings [ten

year A.D. 100. Thus Rome swallowed up the western Seleucid empire, utterly abolishing it. The eastern area broke up into independent kingdoms under local rulers. Rome also took Macedonia and Greece, renaming it Achaia. In the celebrated story of Cleopatra we note that Egypt too fell into the Roman sphere, but Ethiopia remained an independent area continuing the traditions of the "king of the south."

Rome is the fourth and last of the world-ruling empires which Daniel prophesied would dominate this world (Daniel 2 and 7). The Roman Empire would meet catastrophe and be revived again and again. It would continue to reappear until the Messiah appears on the scene and destroys all human kingdoms and governments, and establishes the Kingdom of God.

The Seven Heads. The ancient Roman Empire fell to the Heruli and their allies in A.D. 476. Then Justinian revived the Roman Empire in the West in A.D. 554. It was, in our time, revived by Benito Mussolini. *Il Duce*, the leader, ruled the sixth major revival of the Roman Empire.

According to the prophecies of your Bible, there were to be seven major "heads" (leaders) or seven revivals of the Roman Empire, beginning A.D. 554 when the "deadly wound" was healed by Justinian (Rev. 13:3-5). The other "resurrec-

kings represented by the "ten toes"] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces [smite the image on its feet and toes of iron and clay] and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44).

The seventh chapter of Daniel lists four beasts: lion, bear, leopard and a "fourth beast, dreadful and terrible," unlike any beast known to mankind.

Daniel was inspired to foretell the destruction of this fourth beast (the Roman Empire): "... I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame" (Dan. 7:11).

Then follows the coming of the Messiah to this earth in power and glory: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of

heaven.... And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (verses 13-14).

Very few understand that the Roman Empire is to exist, quite literally, at the coming of the Messiah, and once again will wreak great havoc in the name of "peace"—just before the establishment of the prophesied Kingdom of God on this earth.

United States of Europe. Immediately after World War II, Winston Churchill, in a speech at Zurich, urged the creation of a "United States of Europe." Since that time, many steps have been taken toward achieving this goal. A New Europe is coming as certainly as the sun will continue to rise and set.

Many Europeans realize they will forever remain impotent as individual nations unless they can bind themselves together in a strong union. Only then can they speak with a strong, united voice and exercise their political and military power to utmost advantage.

The recent war in the Mideast painfully underlined Europe's weakness in international disputes. The nations of the EEC were forced to stand by as the United States and Russia made the important decisions concerning the October '73 Middle East struggle *without even consulting them*. Europeans charge that they were not only *not* consulted, but they were only informed belatedly—after the international situation in the Mideast had deteriorated to the point where the United States felt impelled to put her forces (including those on European soil) on full alert.

Europeans now are demanding a bigger say in what goes on in the world—including the Middle East, where their umbilical oil line could be severed without either their knowledge or consent.

In order to have more freedom to maneuver in future crises, Europeans are continuing to consider steps to bring about their own political and military independence

from United States control and influence.

Daniel prophesied over 2500 years ago that Europe will sooner or later end up with a strong central government (like that of the ancient Roman Empire).

This strong United Europe is foretold in the seventeenth chapter of Revelation: "And the beast [the final manifestation of the Roman Empire] that was, and is not, even he is the eighth [head], and is of the seven [of the seven heads of Daniel 7:4-7], and goeth into perdition" (Rev. 17:11).

The Coming Beast. Now notice that "the beast" (the leader of this final revival of the Roman Empire) will have under his control and direction the full power of "ten kings" or ten rulers who will give him full allegiance: "And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These [the beast and the ten kings] shall make war with the Lamb [Christ at His coming], and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings..." (verses 12-14).

This battle, to occur near Jerusalem (see Zech. 14:1-4), is described in chapter 16 of the book of Revelation:

"... The kings of the earth and of the whole world [are marshaled by the demon world]... into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (verses 12-16).

For thousands of years, Megiddo has been a most strategic place, the very crossroads of the Middle East. These kings and their armies meet at Megiddo, then move south to the valley of Jehoshaphat (near Jerusalem) where the climactic battle actually takes place. "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him [the returning Christ] that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet... These both were cast live into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat

upon the horse... and all the fowls were filled with their flesh" (Rev. 19:19-21).

As we read earlier, this same annihilation of the beast is described in Daniel: "... I beheld even till the beast [the human head of the coming ten-nation combine] was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the *burning flame*" (Dan. 7:11).

In the Bible a king often represents the kingdom (see Daniel 2:38-39; 7:17, 23). So these "beasts" are human governments or kingdoms which have plundered and destroyed the nations down through the centuries. They have acted like wild beasts. That appears to be why God compares them to ravening animals.

Now return to the eleventh chapter of Daniel.

We have seen that the king of the north was Syria—until that nation was swallowed up by Rome and became a part of the Roman Empire. From that time forth, the successive kings of the north were the successive leaders of the Roman Empire.

We have also seen that the Roman Empire would have seven heads or revivals, beginning with Justinian in A.D. 554. The seventh (last) head of this Roman Empire is yet to arise—maybe sooner than we think!

The Mussolini-Hitler kingdom was the sixth head of the beast. The next leader to unite the peoples of Europe will constitute the "beast" mentioned in Daniel and Revelation. He will also be the "*king of the north*" mentioned in Daniel 11:40-45.

End-Time Prophecy. Why will this "king of the north" become involved in the Middle East? Because the Mideast is of great importance strategically. It is at the very geographical center of the earth—the vital crossroads between three continents. Also, it is very important because it boasts over 50 percent of the world's proven oil reserves.

Now let's pick up that part of this prophecy that has been fulfilled in just the last 80 years: "And at the time of the end [this was in 1895-1896] shall the king of the south [Ethiopia] push at him [Italy in

Eritrea]; and the king of the north [Italy under Mussolini] shall come against him like a whirlwind [from the air with the fighter planes and bombers], with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over" (verse 40). Mussolini fulfilled verse 40—but not verse 41. Mussolini as "king of the north" did not enter into Palestine. He was stopped in Egypt.

Which countries is the coming "king of the north" prophesied to enter? Which nations will he conquer? Verse 41 shows that he will move into what has been called Palestine: "He shall enter also into the glorious land [the Holy Land], and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon."

What about Egypt? Will it be subject to the coming "king of the north"? "... And the land of Egypt shall not escape" (verse 42).

You can understand prophecy

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Verse 43 says that “the Libyans and the Ethiopians [meaning the Cushite peoples of the Sudan and probably Ethiopia] shall be at his steps.”

But at this point in time, the “king of the north” is going to hear some alarming news—probably a military threat from Russia and those nations allied with her. “But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many” (verse 44).

Beast and False Prophet in Jerusalem. Notice how this king will move his headquarters to Jerusalem: “And he shall plant the *tabernacles* of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him” (verse 45).

He will set his palace in Mount Zion, which is situated between the Mediterranean and Dead seas.

We have already seen that the beast of Revelation 17 and 19 will fight the Messiah at the valley of Jehoshaphat—near Jerusalem. But a “false prophet,” a great false religious leader, will also move his headquarters to Jerusalem. This is strongly indicated in II Thessalonians 2:1-8.

This same “false prophet” is called the “man of sin” and the “son of perdition” (II Thess. 2:3). He is described as one “Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (verse 4).

Jerusalem—Under the Gentile Heel?

The “king of the north” is going to move to Mount Zion, and he will be joined there by the false prophet who will work great miracles. This king of the north (also called the “beast”) will at a later date take half of the people of Jerusalem into captivity.

The “east” and “false prophet” will both be in Jerusalem to oppose Christ’s return. He returns to this earth in dazzling power and glory. The horrible punishment of these two evil leaders is described in Revelation 19:20.

Now notice Jesus’ prophecy regarding Jerusalem at the time just before His second coming: “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains. . . . For these be the days of vengeance. . . . For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people” (Luke 21:20-23).

Verse 24 has certainly not yet been completely fulfilled—even though it was partially fulfilled in A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed by Roman armies: “And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”

God tells of a coming great battle to occur near Jerusalem: “For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle: and the city shall be taken and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle” (Zech. 14:2-3).

When will this take place? It will be at the second coming of Christ. “And his feet [Christ’s] shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives. . . . And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee” (verses 4, 5). (Compare I Thessalonians 4:14-17, I Corinthians 15:51-54 and Revelation 11:15-18.)

Then occurs the terrible destruction which will befall those who

fight against Christ at Jerusalem: “And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes [sockets], and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth” (Zech. 14:12).

The mighty power of God will bring about this instantaneous death.

Lasting Peace Prophesied for Our Time. Prophecy reveals that there will continue to be further strife and bloodshed in the Middle East. Neither the United Nations nor any other power or nation will be able to find a workable solution to today’s vexing Mideast impasse. There will be more talks, more truces—and more bloodletting. Bible prophecy shows that no human government will ever be able to bring lasting peace to this volatile part of the world.

Only the ushering of the ruling Kingdom of God under the leadership of the returning Jesus Christ will bring a permanent peace to the Middle East—and the world. □

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