

Saddam and the Prince of Persia 4-06-03

The backlash against our government's stand against Iraq has caused me to wonder what is going on in the spiritual realm. Perhaps I am naïve or uninformed, but it doesn't seem to be that complicated. There is a tyrant that brutally attacked a neighboring country, Kuwait. The world rose up and pushed his army out demanding a cease-fire under certain conditions. He refuses to obey those conditions. He tortures his citizens, his Olympic athletes that don't perform well, and any opposition. He murders his own people with weapons outlawed by the civilized nations of the world. Defectors have verified his continued development of weapons of mass destruction.

I do understand that war is a last resort after all options have been exhausted. Twelve years of documented deception and refusal to comply with the cease-fire would seem to be going the extra mile. But why does the world seem to be so adamantly opposed to stopping this man from supplying terrorists with weapons of mass destruction? He has shown his affinity to terrorism by financially supporting the families of homicide bombers in Palestine and al-Qa'ida's assistance in the war. Does anyone really doubt he would even think twice about providing al-Qa'ida with VX nerve gas to kill innocent lives in the western world? Why is much of the world opposed to using force to stop him and free the Iraqi people from his brutal oppression? If innocent lives are the issue, we must consider the half-million of his soldiers that have died in senseless wars. Financial commitments and obligations don't fully answer the world sentiment either.

I do believe the Bible holds the answer. It is rather an ominous thought but one I believe the Scripture verifies. The ancient region of Persia included two famous ancient Biblical cities, Nineveh and Babylon. Nineveh is today known as Al Mawsil. It was founded by a descendent of cursed Ham, Nimrod. (Genesis 10:8-11) (some texts list Asshur as the one that built Nineveh). 1 Chronicles 1:10 refers to Nimrod as a mighty warrior. There are two minor prophets whose entire mission was to Nineveh. Most of you are familiar with Jonah. He did not want to obey God's call to preach to Nineveh. *Halley's Bible Handbook* states that Jonah was "in patriotic dread of the brutal and relentless military machine that was closing in on God's people (p.459)." Sound familiar?

On the second verse of that book, Adam Clarke makes this comment; **their wickedness is come up before me.** - This is a personification of evil. It ascends from earth to heaven; and stands before the Supreme Judge, to bear witness against its own delinquency, and that of the persons whom it has seduced. —Adam Clarke's Commentary This took place about 800 B.C. Adam Clarke is saying that he interprets this text as saying a demonic angel influenced this region toward evil. That spirit had to give an account to God for what he had done there. Nineveh was known for its barbaric brutality toward enemies of the state. They used to entertain and instill fear by skinning their enemies alive. We know that angels are timeless beings and often have territorial assignments. Is that spirit still there seducing those in power to barbaric acts that instill fear in those who would resist them?

Commented [notes1]: 8 Cush was the father of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on the earth. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; that is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD."

10 The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calneh, in Shinar.

11 From that land he went to Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah

Gen. 10:8-11 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 10 Cush was the father of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on earth.

1 Chron. 1:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."

Jonah 1:2 (NIV)

Move forward in time about half a century and we have the story of 2 Kings 18, 19. General Sennacherib of Iraq, known as Assyria in that day, has already taken the Northern nation of Israel into captivity. He proceeds to take some of the cities of Judah. Remember, the Messiah was promised to come from this family in Judah. He comes to lay siege against Jerusalem, where the lineage of Jesus is taking refuge behind the walls. He declared that their God couldn't save them. The King of Judah, Hezekiah, called on the Lord for assistance. In response, God sent an angel of the Lord and wiped out 185,000 of Sennacherib's troops! What spirit inspired Sennacherib and what angel stood in protection of the people of God? The Bible has the answer.

Move forward 50 more years and we have the prophet Nahum. I believe that many prophecies have an intermediate and an ultimate fulfillment. Nahum in poetic flare describes the destruction of Nineveh. Let me read just a portion and see if it doesn't sound like something we would read about today.

Nahum 3:1-5a (NIV) *1 Woe to the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims! 2 The crack of whips, the clatter of wheels, galloping horses and jolting chariots! 3 Charging cavalry, flashing swords and glittering spears! Many casualties, piles of dead, bodies without number, people stumbling over the corpses-- 4 all because of the wanton lust of a harlot, alluring, the mistress of sorceries, who enslaved nations by her prostitution and peoples by her witchcraft. 5 "I am against you," declares the LORD Almighty.*

Move forward again about 100 years this time. When Daniel was praying to understand a vision related to the future of the Jewish people, an angel came to bring him the answer to his question. That angel was detained 21 days by another spiritual power named the Prince of Persia. (Daniel 10:11-13) *11 He said, "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you." And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling. 12 Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. 13 But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.*

Now we have the name of the spirit that had to give an account to God in the book of Jonah. He's the one that railed against God through Sennacherib. He's the one that caused the Iraqis of Nahum's day to be so brutal to the Israelites. The Prince of Persia seems to be some kind of demonic power over that region of the world. One would assume that dark power did not want Daniel to record the encouraging words of his vision. The angel Michael helped the angel with the message get through to Daniel. In Daniel 12:1 we find that the angel Michael is assigned to fight for the Jews. He may have been the angel that destroyed Sennacherib's forces. Since Michael helps to fight against the Prince of Persia, we can assume the Prince of Persia's role is to attack the Jewish people. This battle between these two angels has been going on since at least 800 B.C.

About 60 years after Daniel, the book of Esther records another attack in this same region. There is another attempt to annihilate the Jewish people who are now in exile in Persia. A man named Haman was incited, through his pride, to see that the

Commented [notes4]: 12 Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.
13 But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.
14 Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come."
Dan. 10:12-14 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 1 "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered.

Dan. 12:1 (NIV)

destruction of the Jews was finalized. Is this effort the work of the Prince of Persia focused on trying to kill off the lineage of the Messiah?

Later, in the intertestamental period, Antiochus Epiphanes of Assyria (the same region in which the Prince of Persia presides) also was incited to take over and brutally murder the Jewish people. He took particular pleasure in desecrating the altar of God by sacrificing a pig there. Was this dark angel inciting him too?

Once the Jews were disbursed from Jerusalem, the Prince of Persia seemed to be silent for years. That is unless he was involved in Hitler's attempt to exterminate the Jews, though that is outside the Persian region. In 1948 the battle in the Persian region began again. The League of Nations decided to parcel out Palestine to the Jews. The area was basically a wasteland as the prophets had predicted it would be. Some Jews had returned before that time and were living peacefully with the Palestinians of the area for about 50 years restoring the land. The area the League of Nations originally allotted the Jews was almost the size of their former glory, but immediately there was Arab opposition. Was the Prince of Persia back at work? The size of the land was halved to pacify the Arabs. When the Jews began to occupy the land, a coalition of Arab nations attacked them. Vastly outnumbered, the Jews somehow were victorious. Since then, there have been a number of wars against Israel by their Arab neighbors. Amazingly, the little nation survives. It seems Michael is better at combat than the Prince of Persia.

The Prince of Persia knows there is one way to wipe out the Jewish people. One nuclear bomb would do it. It seems like madness, but Iran and Iraq (both in the area of ancient Persia) are desperately trying to develop one. Saddam was never particularly Islamic in the past. Most Muslim leaders do not consider him a religious person. Why is he against Israel? It is one way he can hope to rally his Arab neighbors to aid him. By standing against their enemy, he hopes they will support him, and the ploy is working. Syrians, Iranians, and Saudis are volunteering to perform suicide missions for him against American troops. The Arab League is insisting that America stand down and back off.

During Desert Storm, Saddam fired his scud missiles against Israel. If the coalition had not seized the northwestern part of Iraq in this current war, he probably would have done so again, just to increase sympathy from other Arab nations. Who do you think is behind this? I believe it is the spiritual power of darkness, the Prince of Persia. This time he seems to have his overseer coordinating world opinion against anyone who would stop him in his plans.

We can understand that before Christ, the Prince of Persia was trying to destroy the lineage of David through which the promised Messiah was to come. Remember Herod the Great slaughtered the children of Bethlehem in hopes of killing this new baby king. The Prince of Persia's M.O. is to incite these crazed megalomaniacs to try to murder the Jews. But if in the past it was to prevent the Messiah from coming, what is the reason today? Why is the Prince of Persia inciting the Arab world and Saddam Hussein in particular to build WMDs?

The prophets foretell the conversion of the Jews to their Messiah. Though the prophecies are too numerous to list them all, we will read a few of the clearest. Zechariah 12:10-11 (NIV) *10 "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. 11 On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great, like the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.*

The day will come when the Jewish people will repent and turn to their Messiah. It does not come until the 'times of the Gentiles' is fulfilled. Some Messianic Jews believe the 'times of the Gentiles' ended in 1967 when the Israeli army took the temple mount. Since that time an increasing number of Jews have found Jesus to be their Messiah. "In 1967 there were no messianic Jewish congregations in the world. Today, according to an article in *Christianity Today*, there are over 350. In 1967, there were an estimated 2,000 believers in Jesus among the Jewish people. An article in *Charisma* magazine mentions a 1990 survey that suggests that more than 1 million Jewish people in the United States alone express "some sort of faith in Yeshua."⁴

Commented [notes6]: Your People Shall Be My People by Finto p.143

Luke 21:24 (NIV) *24 They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*

Jesus was answering the disciples question about when Jerusalem would be destroyed. This took place in 70 A.D. Since that time the church has been predominately Gentile. From the days of Jesus until that war of 1967, Gentiles controlled Jerusalem. The times of the Gentiles reigning over Jerusalem has come to an end. One could argue that the "trampling on" is still happening, but you cannot argue the fact that the power over the area has shifted. (also consider Romans 11:25) There was a furious effort under Clinton to allow Arafat and the PLO to have Jerusalem for their capitol. It fell through. I don't believe it will ever happen, for the 'times of the Gentiles' has come to an end. But what does that have to do with Jews recognizing Jesus as their Messiah? Let's look at other prophecies.

Commented [notes7]: 25 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. Romans 11:25 (NIV)

One of the clearest is found in Hosea 3:4-5 (NIV) *4 For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol. 5 Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days.* That is so clear that there is no comment needed except to say that David represents the Lord Jesus, who is called the Son of David.

Next let's look at Isaiah 59:20-21 (NIV) *20 "The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins," declares the LORD. 21 "As for me, this is my covenant with them," says the LORD. "My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever," says the LORD.*

Obviously this prophecy is yet to be fulfilled. There will be repentance in Jacob.

Ezekiel has a lot to say about the end times. Ezekiel 39:27-29 (NIV) *27 When I have brought them back from the nations and have gathered them from the countries of their enemies, I will show myself holy through them in the sight of many nations. 28 Then they will know that I am the LORD their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind. 29 I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD."*

This was not fulfilled in the earlier return from captivity. It is much more descriptive of the 1948 return. Though in a limited sense you could consider this referring to Pentecost, we have yet to see God pour out His Spirit on the house of Israel. There must first be repentance. That will only come through a severe trial.

The last chapters of Zechariah are all prophetic of this time. Zechariah 13:8-9 (NIV) *8 In the whole land," declares the LORD, "two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. 9 This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, "They are my people," and they will say, "The LORD is our God."*

This passage sounds like the turning to Christ will only come after a great purging. Only one-third will survive those days. But they will turn to the LORD and call upon His name.

In the first half of the twentieth century there was a popular doctrine called 'replacement theology'. It says that the Jews were replaced by the church as the people of God. Certainly we are one in Christ, but watch how Paul describes it in Romans 11:11-12 (NIV) *11 Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. 12 But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!*

What fullness? Replacement theology says there is no fullness, except possibly a convert here and there. Considering the above prophecies, it looks like a full third of those that survive that difficult time ahead.

In his metaphor of the olive tree, Paul says that we Gentiles are grafted in to the Jewish roots. That root system is the people of God that believed by faith that God would provide a way for them to be made right with Him. Then he suggests that the Jews will be grafted in when they become believers.

Romans 11:23-24 (NIV) *23 And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. 24 After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!*

I realize that there are some who do not agree with this interpretation of prophetic Scripture. I ask that you consider why the world is opposed to this nation of Israel that has 1% of the Arab land mass? Is it really over the Palestinians? Was God's promise in Genesis 15 conditional? (Genesis 15:18-21) If the Arabs are so concerned over the Palestinians, why do they not offer some of the 99% of the Arab land mass.

Commented [notes8]: 18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates--
19 the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites,
20 Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites,
21 Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites."
Gen. 15:18-21 (NIV)

The only Palestinians that were expelled from Israel were those who resisted the founding of Israel. No wonder they have such sympathy for Saddam. They become refugees by defying a resolution of the United Nations (then the League of Nations). Those Palestinians that did not fight were allowed to remain and keep their homes and businesses.

Did you know there is an area in which Palestinians and Jews live and worship together in peace? A homicide bomber attacked it recently. It is the Jewish Messianic community living side by side with Palestinian Christians. The answer to the struggle is the Prince of Peace. That may be why little Abigail died in that attack. This American born Christian girl's family lived in this community. She was riding the buss home from school when the homicide bomber killed her.

So what is the Prince of Persia after now? Is that remnant so frightening to his plans against Israel? Is the future conversion of the Jewish people so devastating to the kingdom he fights for? Is the evangelism of the 144,000 in the book of Revelation so devastating to his kingdom that he must make every effort to stop them as he attempted to stop the birth of the Messiah?

We certainly don't wrestle against flesh and blood! (Ephesians 6:12) The kingdom of darkness is trying to stop the progress of the Kingdom of God. It is futile of course. Saddam will be stopped, but what will happen with Iran? They have broken the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. They don't need the energy, as they have some of the world's greatest oil reserves. They are developing a nuclear bomb. Where would they use such a weapon? Shall we ask the Prince of Persia?

What does that spiritual battle have to do with us? We see prophecy unfolding before our eyes. It should encourage us that the Bible is a revelation of the way things really are. The Bible explains in the spiritual what is happening in the physical. It should inspire us to let Jesus live in us that others might see Him. It should inspire us to pray His prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." It should cause us to pray against evil spiritual powers, asking the Lord to deal with them. (Jude 1:8-9) It should bring urgency to our prayers for lost loved ones and friends.

The battle of Armageddon is a battle in which the nations of the world gather against Israel. We see world opinion turning against Israel today. This was not even possible before 1948. The pieces of the end-time puzzle are falling into place. How then shall we live? I once lived with a conviction and zeal about this being the last generation. Gradually, and with the help of brothers in Christ, I realized I should live the same regardless of what tomorrow would bring. I should live in all out obedience to the Holy Spirit whether I have one day or 30 years to live. Living all out for God is the only way to live. Then it doesn't matter when the Lord calls me home. Are you living so that you are ready at any moment? If not, then why not? We see, through these amazing prophecies, the Bible is the truth. The prophecies are coming to pass against all odds and the spiritual powers that resist their fulfillment. Live on the winning side. Live every day as if it were your last.

Commented [notes9]: 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Eph. 6:12 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: 8 In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings.
9 But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

Jude 1:8-9 (NIV)