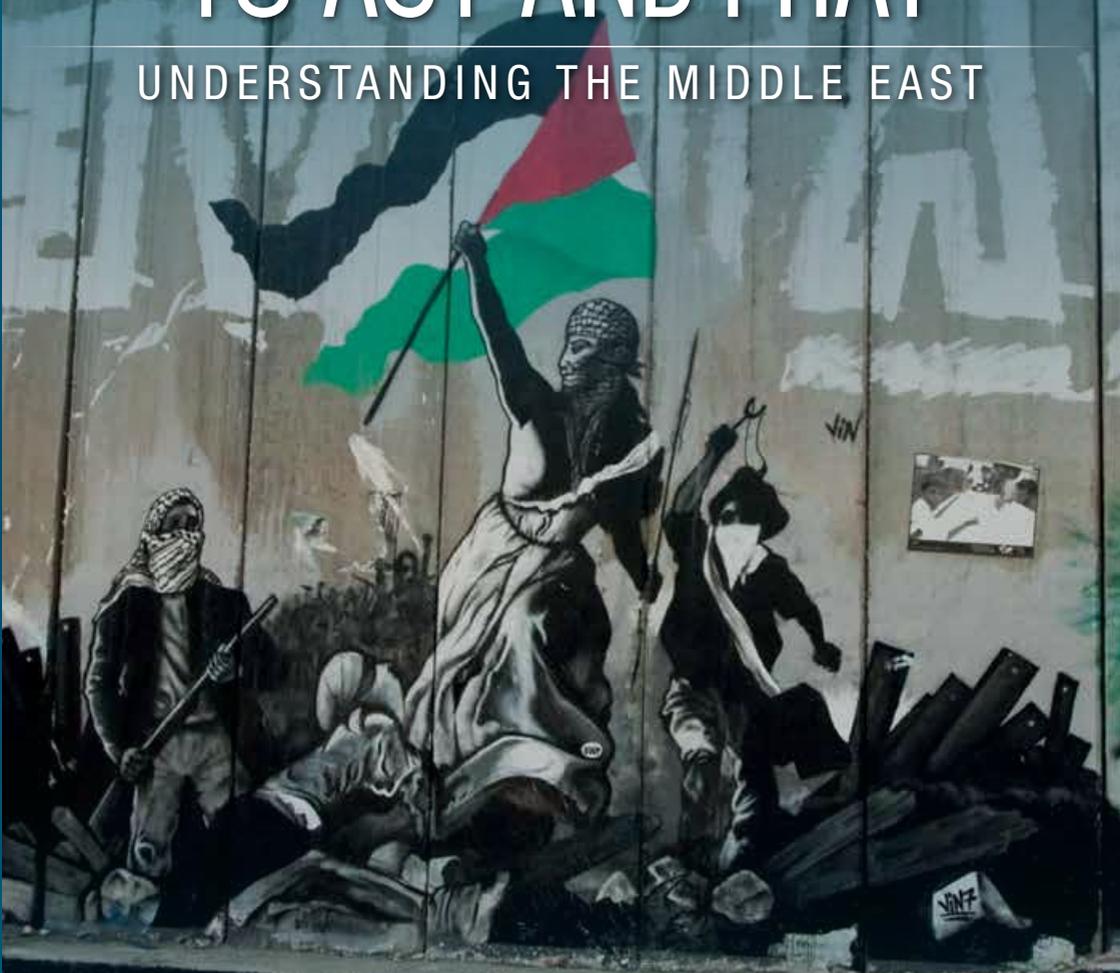


A CRITICAL TIME TO ACT AND PRAY

UNDERSTANDING THE MIDDLE EAST



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A CRITICAL TIME TO ACT AND PRAY

In view of the ongoing instability in the Middle East, these insights recorded by Derek Prince in his personal Update number 60 in November 1990, may provide excellent guidelines for prayer regarding the Middle East. We are grateful that the article here has amazing pertinence to present situations. Although Derek was speaking in response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the observations he makes are very relevant to the current situation across the Middle East nations. Some of Derek's comments have been edited to bring them up to date in light of current events.

Looking Back

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 four, five or six 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 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.'

Understanding Islam

The dominant spiritual power in the Middle East 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.

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.

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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.

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.

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 emphasise that I pray them out of a deep concern and compassion for the Muslim people.

Let me just say 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.

Proclamation

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.

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. 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.

Time to pray

Stand in 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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Ebenezer Operation Exodus International & UK Office**

PO Box 9103, Bournemouth, BH1 9DA, UK
+44 (0) 1202 294455 - enquiries@ebenezer-ef.org
www.operation-exodus.org