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The burgeoning Iranian nuclear crisis, - (if not one now it will soon be), - has taken a turn that has 'danger of war' written all over it. Secretary Rice's State Department has warned Iran that she must cooperate or face punishment. Now the form of that punishment may be taking shape. It could come as a partial international blockade of Iranian ports that would deny the Iranians benzene and refined petroleum products. Such an action would strangle the Iranian economy. With limited refining capacity of its own, Iran would be forced to react or retreat. The US put together a training exercise for the potential operation that includes both American and British carrier groups, as well as French planes and a sub and a Brazilian frigate. What is especially noteworthy about the exercise is the participation of European powers France and Britain, and the commitment that their respective leaders have made to such an enterprise. A blockade of course, is an act of war. And French President Sarkozy has committed to even military action, if necessary to stop the Iranian nukes.¹

The Europeans are acting because the danger from Iran is becoming both real and apparent to them. Lieutenant General Henry Obering, head of America's missile defense, described the situation to a German newspaper: "Iran has the ability to reach most of Europe". He was talking of course, about Tehran's current missile capabilities, and his concern that even right now, the regime of the 'Mad-Mullahs' could 'reach out and touch' the European continent and even Britain with a bit of ballistic delivered terror. Intelligence estimates are that by 2015, the US mainland will be part of their reachable target area. This is a problem that will not just go away. If left untouched, by then of course, they should have quite the nuclear capability. A bit unsettling, that piece of news is. That of course is what's behind the US drive to set up a missile defense system in Europe and in turn is raising the ire of the offended and threatened Russians.²

All of this together raises the danger of something that could easily spin out of control. Israeli Professor Benny Morris laid out the risks in an opinion piece in the New York Times. Israel faces a threat to its very existence. Tehran may cross the nuclear point of no return as early as next year. Faced with the prospect of one day soon facing a nuclear Iran committed to its destruction, or dealing with the problem now, Morris believes that Israel will "almost surely" strike the nuclear sites in the near term; - sometime between the American elections in November and the inauguration of the new president in January. The danger then lies in the prospect that Israel will not be able to finish the job with conventional weapons alone. Professor Morris opines that conventional bombing will fail and that the Israeli leadership will then authorize the use of smaller, tactical nuclear weapons against the hardest targets. The other choice is of course to let the Iranians get the bomb and face almost certain and devastating nuclear war a few years down the road. This would bring a destabilized Middle East, - (there's a redundancy for ya), - and "serious injury to the West's oil supply and radioactive pollution of the earth's atmosphere and water". But strike now, and risk of course that all hell will break loose anyway. Here's Morris's conclusion: "In either case, a Middle Eastern nuclear holocaust would be in the cards".³ There's a remarkable passage in Scripture that seems to give the prophetic vision of nuclear war. **"Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, Their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, And their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths."** (Zechariah 14:12)

Another analyst projected the consequences of impending military action out farther, seeing a failed conventional strike leading to the outbreak of World War III. Beginning with the probability of attacks by Iran's proxies like Hezbollah he sees it spreading from there. Hezbollah is now armed with Iranian cruise missiles capable of targeting even the American naval presence in the region. From there it spreads to the Syrians, and there are attacks against Tel Aviv and the Israeli reactor at Dimona. The Russians, possibly get in too. The North Koreans and the Chinese use the opportunity to take care of business in their part of the world, - going after South Korea and Taiwan.⁴ With the exception of the Russians coming in, that's just the scenario laid out by Illuminati writer Peter Lemesurier in his 1981 book, the Armageddon Script.

It is Lemesurier's contention that a planned World War III will be used to usher in the rule of the Antichrist, who will set up a One World Government out of the chaos of a disintegrating world.

From the Muslim side, Iran's President Ahmadinejad is spearheading the drive for the Islamic version of the coming world savior known as the Mahdi. When you look at what he believes, that alone becomes reason enough to take Iran's nuclear ambitions very seriously indeed. He is convinced that it is his special divine mission to usher in the chaos that will lead to the return of said Mahdi. He also calls for the destruction of Israel and denies that the Holocaust ever took place. At the UN last year he prayed that the "perfect and pure human being, the one that will fill this world with justice and peace" would soon come. Interviewed for a recent article by CBN, author Ron Cantrell explained. The Mahdi is to come at the end of time, and go to Mecca with a returned Jesus. There he will "teach Jesus to pray" at which time Jesus will "replace the Gospel with the Koran" and set up the One-World "lasting pure religion" of Islam. As Cantrell says, for Ahmadinejad it is a "win-win situation. The man is a true believer. Either we create the necessary chaos by attacking him, or he gets his nukes and creates it later himself."⁵

In many ways the situation mirrors that of the final run-up to the start of World War II. We, the West, the US & Israel, - are all set to appease the Palestinian terrorists by granting them their own state; - justified by a dubious claim to land that is not their own. That was much the same case Hitler had when he demanded and was given the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia by Britain and France. (Anybody see anything wrong in that ?) Just so, it is the powers of the Quartet, - the US, Russia, the EU and the UN, - that are preparing to sanction the giveaway of Israeli land for a terror state. In addition, just like Hitler, the Islamo-Fascists, this time led by the likes of Ahmadinejad have promised the destruction of the Jewish state, just as Hitler gave away his plans for the Jews; - first in his book *Mein Kampf*, and later in numerous speeches before adoring Nazi audiences. There is a remarkable parallel. When will we learn? Just as was the case in the 1930's, - (when it was the then disgraced Winston Churchill and a few allies), - few are those who are pointing to the ultimate danger that we face. In the end, Churchill was proven right about Hitler's threat to the world. Ultimately over 70 million people paid with their lives for the fact that the world chose to close their eyes and hope rather than act to stop what was in hindsight to many, - (and foresight to some like Churchill), - a preventable war. In the 30's it was Churchill who was an almost lone voice that cried out from the Wilderness. The world ignored him. What price this time?

PEACE & SAFETY

Secretary of State Rice is ever-hopeful of a Palestinian peace deal by the end of the year. "There is still time for them to, in accordance with Annapolis, reach agreement by the end of the year." Then Rice uttered these significant words: "...since this president came to office, the notion of two states living side-by-side in peace and security has become common wisdom".⁶ And common words, she might have added, as that phrase, - "peace and security", has come to be used by many to describe the world's aspirations for the Middle East. "Peace and safety" is just the phrase the Bible tells us the world will be invoking in the days just prior to the sudden destruction that will characterize the End of the Age and the Rapture of the Church. Here's the passage: "For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, '**Peace and safety!**' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape." (1Thessalonians 5:2-3)

THE IDENTITY OF JESUS – PART II

Headlines suggest that a "Messianic Revival" may be in the making – in Israel! Congregations of Christian-Jews are growing and thriving in the Land of David. One leader of the movement talks of a new openness in Israeli society to consider the claims of Yeshua. There exist probably about 120 congregations with perhaps about 15,000 members; - a yet small number, but gathering in strength and influence.⁷ Still the majority of Jews dismiss the claims of what they see as a Gentile god. It was not always so. Remember, the Church began in Jerusalem, and was originally composed of almost exclusively Jewish believers. So what happened?

PROPHETIC CLAIMS

Prophecy pointed to him, this coming Messiah. The hope of Israel! The light to the nations! By the first century the anticipation among some segments of the population was palpable. The Jews were an unusually religious people. So much of their national life was centered around their sacred writings and customs. Yet despite the fact that the scriptures were so much a part of daily life, the expectation of just who the Messiah would be, and what he would bring, varied among the groups that made up the Jewish nation. Often this was just the natural response of people reacting to their own wishes and desires. To a large degree the role that the Messiah would play had become politicized in the popular mind. The yoke of Roman rule laid heavy on the populace. The hopeful eyes of an oppressed nation were focused on the prophecies regarding the ultimate victorious nature of the messianic office, rather than the predicted sufferings found in the same Scriptures. If their hope was misplaced it is understandable to a degree how this could be so.

The prerogatives of the Jewish leadership had been progressively usurped, culminating in the removal of the power over life-and-death from the Jewish authorities in AD 14. To the minds of many, a Messiah who did not confront and ultimately vanquish the Romans was no Messiah at all. This feeling would have been more pronounced in the circles of power, which no doubt, felt the sting of that loss even more acutely. The politicizing of messianic expectations undoubtedly contributed to the ultimate rejection of Jesus' ministry. An example of a contrasting result can be seen just a hundred years later, when the Jewish authorities put their stamp of approval on the 'Messiahship' of Bar Kochba. Rabi Akiva signaled that approval by declaring Kochba, 'Messiah King', to tragic results. Thousands of Jews were killed when the Romans took the stronghold of Betar. The political nature of what was expected from the 'Promised One', certainly was a major factor in the reaction to Christ by the Jewish nation.⁸

But it is not like the prophetic input was not clear. The claims of Daniel 9 were very specific. Micah told of his birth in Bethlehem. His miracles and ministry were written of in detail. Zechariah talked of his entry into Jerusalem on a colt. And once he had been crucified, it could have been confirmed that the circumstances of his suffering, death and burial were accurately predicted in Isaiah 52 & 53 and Psalm 22. To the many who would see, this was the expected Messiah. There are hundreds of prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the coming and the identity of the Anointed One. Jesus did clearly match the identity of the Promised One in every detail. Christ was the unique fulfillment of those prophecies. What is possibly most amazing to realize is that so many of those Old Testament prophets probably did not even realize themselves the full significance of those prophecies. 1 Peter 1:10-12 speaks to their searching for the **"time and circumstances"** to which their revelations had led them. So let's look at some of these prophecies.

We'll be looking of course at just those concerning the coming of the Messiah. These were all written hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus, yet in their precision and detail they can unmistakably refer only to the life of Christ. Some have suggested that Jesus, being a man with a 'messiah complex', arranged his life to have fulfilled these prophecies in order to prove he was the promised Savior. While it is true that he may have been able to have arranged some of his actions to conform to the predictions of scripture, so many more were entirely out of his control. Grant Jeffrey, writing in *Jesus, The Great Debate* conservatively figured the probability of anyone fulfilling just seventeen of the prophecies at one chance in 480 billion x 1 billion x 1 trillion. This was not some easily arranged feat. The specificity of the predictions makes that impossible.⁹

Let's look at some examples of what was written hundreds of years before Christ, found in the books of the prophets as well as the psalms. These are no general pronouncements, but can be applied only very specifically. They describe in detail the birth, life and manner of death of the predicted Messiah. The Bible does set quite the high standard for itself. Micah 5:2 says, **"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."** Written approximately 700 BC this passage points not only to Jesus' physical birth in Bethlehem, but also his descent

from the line of David, also born in that village. But look at just the circumstances that were necessary to make Jesus' birth in that location possible. In the second chapter of Luke we have the story of the Jesus' birth. In it we have the description of the specific census that made necessary the return of his parents to that location. We now have historical confirmation that return to an ancestral home was indeed required in census taking of that time. Without it Jesus would have failed the very first requirement of the ancient prophecies.

In Isaiah 40:3 we have the prediction of a **"...voice crying in the wilderness, prepare the way for the Lord, make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God."** Matthew chapter 3, points to the ministry of John the Baptist as the fulfillment of this passage. John specifically talked about **"...one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."**(Mat. 3:11) Jesus triumphal entry into Jerusalem riding on a colt was predicted centuries prior to the event. Zechariah describes the Messiah's entry into the Holy City. **"Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout Daughter of Jerusalem! See your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."** (Zech. 9:9) Fulfillment of this prophecy is found in Luke 19:28-40.

There are more. Psalm 41:9 speaks of the betrayal of **"...my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread"**, referring of course to the actions of Judas. Zechariah 11:12-13 has more to say on the subject of Judas. **"I told them, 'If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not keep it.' So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me, 'Throw it to the potter'- the handsome price at which they priced me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord to the potter."** To any who are familiar with the story of Christ's death, this is a chilling fulfillment of the account found in the 26th and 27th chapters of Matthew. Thirty pieces of silver was the very price given to Judas by the chief priests. Matthew 27:5-6 describes how after he had handed Jesus over, Judas threw the money into the temple. The priests used that money **"...to buy the potters field"**, in which to bury foreigners.

Probably the most important prophetic passage of the entire Old Testament is found in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. So many of the details of Christ's trial, suffering and execution are found in that one chapter. Verse 7 talks about his silence before his accusers, and in verse 12 we see how he was condemned with criminals. **"He was pierced for our transgressions"**. (v5) And in 53: 9, Isaiah tells us how he would be buried with the rich. In fact his body was taken by Joseph of Arimathea, a well to do member of the Council who buried him in his own tomb. Psalm 22 is another source of fulfilled prophecy. In it the psalmist foretells remarkable details of the crucifixion, confirmed in John 19. Starting in verse 15 and running through verse 18, it reads, **"...my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing."** The story of the crucifixion is well known, and it was predicted hundreds of years before that grisly mode of death had even been invented.^{10 11}

The messianic prophecies I have cited are by no means exhaustive. Various lists can be found which mention many more. My point here was to show that details of the life and death of Jesus were predicted hundreds of years before his birth. The existence and importance of the Messianic Prophecies was known and appreciated by the Jewish scholars of Christ's day. In fact certain writings in the Book of Daniel point to a very specific time for the coming of the Savior. In order to understand the profound significance of the prophetic writings it is important to appreciate the expectations of the Jewish teachers living at that time. Those expectations pointed, among other things, to his appearance during the first few decades of the 1st century, the very time of Jesus ministry on earth. Jesus was expected, not least of which for the reason of the signal prophecy found in Daniel 9, which we will see, prophesied the coming of the "Anointed One" down to the exact day!

¹ US, UK, France launch sea exercise for naval blockade on Iran, DEBKAfile, July 21, 2008

² US missile defence chief: Iran can strike most of Europe, Earth Times, July 22, 2008

³ Benny Morris, Using Bombs to Stave Off War, New York Times, July 18, 2008

⁴ Expert, Israel May Go To Nuclear War Over Iran, News Max, July 21, 2003 with analysis by Hawk, Steve Quayle, July 21, 2008

⁵ George Thomas, Waiting for Islam's Messiah, CBN, July 17, 2008

⁶ "Still time for peace deal this year": Secretary Rice, Jerusalem Post, July 25, 2008

⁷ Wendy Griffin, Messianic Revival In Israel?, CBN, July 13, 2008

⁸ Paul E Little, Know Why You Believe, Chariot Victor, 1999, pg 53-59

⁹ Grant Jeffrey, The Great Debate, Frontier Research, 1999, pg 229-239

¹⁰ Paul E Little, Know Why You Believe, Chariot Victor, 1999, pg 55

¹¹ Grant Jeffrey, The Great Debate, Frontier Research, 1999, pg 229-239