

Scott's Blog - 6/10/08

The US and the Last Days

When we study the portrait of the End Times we find in the scriptures, the major players are hard to miss.

Israel? Check. Miraculously back in the Promised Land as Ezekiel 36-37 predicts.

Russia, Iran and their fellow members of the Gog and Magog Invasion force? Ezekiel 38-39 coming into focus.

The Revived Roman Empire? Check the value of the Euro versus the dollar to see this sleeping economic giant is starting to awaken.

The 'King of the South'? This petro-dollar fueled Islamic coalition is building on both the wealth of the Saudis and the nuclear capabilities of Pakistan.

The "Kings of the East"? The 200 million man army of Revelation 9:16 is no longer a stretch to imagine as we see the rise of Communist China on the world stage.

But any discussion of the cast of characters that will eventually slam head to head in the Battle of Armageddon, a question will inevitably be raised -

"So where is the United States in the Last Days?"

Some have tried to squint hard and read the United States presence into passages like Revelation 17-18, the vivid portrait of Babylon as the focal point of religion and commerce in the empire of the Antichrist.

I have found such arguments unconvincing. When the scripture refers to Babylon, it tends to mean Babylon. The description of this "city set on seven hills" tells me that we aren't referring to a nation. When we see that Iraq is well on the road to recovery, and that international concerns are looking at the literal site of Babylon as a key communications and diplomatic hub, we can set aside speculations that these predictions refer to the United States.

So where are we? It seems incredible that a nation that is the 800 pound gorilla in matters economic, military and diplomatic is a non entity in the Last Days.

I believe there are two possible answers to this Biblical mystery. One is horrific. The other is amazingly hopeful.

Let's start with the potential bad news.

Yes, the United States is the straw that stirs the drink in our world today. But with that high profile status comes danger. Every disgruntled group with pretensions of greatness wants to make their mark by bringing us down.

9-11 showed just how devastating a blow can be struck by a small handful of committed fanatics.

But we may not have seen anything yet.

What if one of these disgruntled fanatics finds himself the leader not just of a splinter cell, but an entire nation?

And what if that nation were to obtain the technology to construct and deliver weapons of mass destruction?

Consider this entry from Joel Rosenberg's Flash Traffic Blog:



(Washington, D.C., June 6, 2008) -- Using some of his most apocalyptic rhetoric yet, Iranian leader Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is vowing that the United States and Israel will soon be "annihilated," even as he refuses to abandon Iran's nuclear program.

Marking the 19th anniversary of the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, Ahmadinejad said: "Today, the time for the fall of the satanic power of the United States has come and the countdown to the annihilation of the emperor

of power and wealth has started."

He also insisted that "I must announce that the Zionist regime (Israel), with a 60-year record of genocide, plunder, invasion and betrayal is about to die and will soon be erased from the geographical scene."

Are Israeli leaders thus planning to launch a massive air attack on Iran before the end of the year, or even before new national elections in Israel which may take place as early as November? Or are they trying to persuade the U.S. to do it before President Bush leaves office? Perhaps both. Which underscores the point I've been making for some time -- while we intensify our efforts to pray for peace in the epicenter, we also need to be intensifying our efforts to prepare for war.

"An Israeli attack on Iranian nuclear sites looks 'unavoidable' given the apparent failure of Western sanctions to deny Tehran technology with bomb-making potential," Deputy Prime Minister Shaul Mofaz said Friday, according to Reuters report. "If Iran continues with its program for developing nuclear weapons, we will attack it. The sanctions are ineffective," said Mofaz.

<http://joelrosenberg.blogspot.com/>

There is a reason why such saber rattling makes international headlines. No serious analyst of events in the Middle East believes that if a man like Mahmoud Ahmadinejad gets nuclear weapons that he will hesitate to use them. Not just on Israel, but on the U.S as well.

What if, heaven forbid, he is successful?

There are those who speculate that a WMD attack on the United States may either cripple the country, or cause us to become steadfastly isolationist, a mere bit player on the world stage.

Joel's riveting book "Dead Heat" paints a vivid picture on this possibility. Check out his interview on the Glenn Beck program at <http://joelrosenberg.blogspot.com/>.

So what is possibility number two for the fate of the United States? Believe it or not, there is an amazingly hopeful scenario that can make a real difference in the way we live today.

Check out Scott's Blog tomorrow for the answer!

Scott's Blog - 6/11/08

The US and the Last Days - Part II

One common criticism that is leveled at those who focus on biblical prophecy is that this is a message of gloom and doom that inevitably leads people to check out of life in the here and now.

In my experience the precise opposite has been the case. I believe that, properly understood, the conviction that Jesus could return for His people at any moment is a powerful source of Scripturally based optimism.

Consider how the doctrine of the Rapture effects our understanding of the role (or conspicuous lack thereof) of the United States in End Times prophecy.

If you have been following along with the blog this week, you know we have devoted some time to exploring this question.

There are two schools of thought as to why the United States is absent in the Last Days. One school of thought speculates that the United States may be taken out before hand by a limited war or a terrorist attack.

But consider another alternative. What if the United States is a non player in the End Times because of the Rapture of the church?

Think about it.

On 9-11 our entire nation was shaken to the foundation by an event that removed 3,000 lives from this earth.

Could you imagine if we multiplied the impact of that event by 33,000?

In it's latest research, the Barna Group estimates that 47% of Americans are Bible believing, born again Christians. This would mean that 101 million people in this country have a personal relationship with Christ. <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=Topic&TopicID=8>

Imagine the impact the sudden removal of 101 million people would have on this country.

Transportation systems would be paralyzed.

Our economic system would grind to a screeching halt.

Key people in government, military and social services would leave irreplaceable gaps in our country's ability to function.

The United States would collapse.

Now when we consider the effect of this event on other key nations and power blocks in the Last Days we can see that although the sudden vanishing of believers would be felt, it would not be nearly as devastating.

In fact, in some nations, it would be business as usual.

Why is the United States conspicuously absent in Biblical prophecy?

I believe the post Rapture condition of our country will be so weakened that we will be reduced to a minor bit player on the world's stage, most likely co-opted into the power sphere of the Revived Roman Empire under the Anti-Christ.

And this is reason for optimism. And personal and practical investment in outreach.

I would love nothing more than to see the figure of those who will be caught up with Christ to rise to 110 million, or 120 million or 200 million!

How could this happen?

By believers committing themselves to a vision of connecting others to Christ, not our own comfort.

By walking our talk so that people don't merely hear about God's love, but see it in reality.

By praying that we would make the most of our time and our lives.

And *do* this, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation *is* nearer than when we *first* believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts. (Romans 13:11-14)

I want to make it to the Rapture and do my best to bring as many people along with me as I can.

Let's pray that the Lord makes that an ever growing reality in our lives as we await His return.