

## **EARNESTLY CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH –Feb. 2024**

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### ***Israel's CALM before the STORM***

Israel is the world's "tinderbox"! When war breaks out in Israel the talk often turns to concern over a greater "regional" conflict even to the point of eventuating into a world war. It is amazing how this tiny nation commands the attention of the entire world like no other nation. It is the ONE nation God has uniquely chosen (Deut. 7:6; Amos 3:2). And Israel has a unique centralized role related to last days' prophecy (cf. Dan. 9:24-27; Zech. 12-14).

What has characterized Israel's experience ever since the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 has been "war desolations" (Dan. 9:26). Israel has unceasingly been at war since the very day she was re-established as a nation in 1948. Israel, above all, longs for PEACE! A deceptive peace will eventually come – albeit it will be very short-lived. The Bible teaches that when the unsaved world says, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction will come upon them (1 Thess. 5:3). In view of the prophecy of Daniel 9:27 I take it that the cry of "Peace and safety" revolves around a perceived solution to the "tinderbox" called Israel.

Immediately on the heels of the rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4), Antichrist will broker a 7-year "peace plan" with Israel allowing them to resume "sacrifice and offering" in conjunction with a rebuilt temple (Dan. 9:27). Right now, Israel is intensely involved in a war to smash the terrorist movement in their midst that threatens their very existence.

It may well be that Israel will be very successful in destroying the terrorist movement that threatens them and building on this Antichrist will broker a "7-year plan" that will further ensure "peace and safety" for Israel. Whatever the details in exactly how it comes about, the Bible teaches that in the later days Israel will be back in the land (they are there) and will come to eventually "dwell safely". Three times in Ezekiel 38, Israel is said to "dwell safely" (Ezek. 38:8, 11, 14). This prepares the way for the GREAT war of Gog and Magog!

Israel's state of dwelling safely will SUDDENLY be shattered with the overwhelming invasion of Gog and Magog as prophesied in Ezekiel 38-39. This MUST happen in the Tribulation Period after Israel is already in a covenant relationship with Antichrist because God's destruction of Gog and company will MARK a permanent turning in Israel to YHWH their God (Ezek. 39:22). First Israel will errantly embrace Antichrist as "savior" in a "covenant with death", and only when they realize they have been deceived will they then turn to Jesus as the true SAVIOR!

Israel is not going anywhere! In the "latter days" they will be back in the land very prosperous and eventually dwelling safely (Ezek. 38). This will set the STAGE for the fulfillment of last days prophecy. When the Lamb begins to open the seals in Revelation 6 – the first seal broken brings forth a rider on a white horse signifying his coming in "peace". This pictures the Antichrist! He initially comes deceptively as a "man of peace". But just that quick the second seal is opened and peace is taken from the earth – which I think probably involves the war of Gog and Magog referenced in Ezekiel 38-39 (cf. Rev. 6:1-4). This is the order - Antichrist will bring a "false peace" to the world in conjunction with brokering a 7-year covenant with Israel. This will usher in the time called "Jacob's trouble" but in the end "he shall be saved out of it" (Jer. 30:7).

Israel's tumultuous existence will eventually give way to a temporary/deceptive time of "safety". This in turn will give way to the war of Gog and Magog, followed by Antichrist and the whole world turning on Israel in what will be the WORST of times for the nation of Israel. But God will preserve Israel, and in that crucible, Israel will FINALLY turn to Jesus as their Messiah/Savior and then He will come and deliver them (Mt. 23:39).

**Thot:** The nation of Israel is just as secure as the covenant promises of God!

***Earnestly Contending, Pastor Dwight J. Oswald***