

# STRAIGHTWAY

*"And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him" Mark 1:18.*

**CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP**

The Witness Outreach of  
Foundations Bible College  
P.O. Box 1166 · Dunn, North Carolina 28335

*30 years*  
1973-2003

VOLUME 31

MARCH 2003

NUMBER 3

## **The War with Iraq**

Dr. H. T. Spence

During the writing of this article, the United States of America stands on the brink of war with an enemy it confronted twelve years ago. Where once the father of our President led our country into battle, now his son leads us. At that time the intent was to liberate Kuwait from an Iraqi takeover; now the intent is to exterminate the leader of Iraq, a godfather of terrorism. Although at that time, there was a unanimous support from the United Nations and many in the Arabic world, now we seem to be standing more alone. Perhaps these differences have psychologically affected what people feel about the war twelve years ago and imminent war today. However, in the light of horizontal circumstances as well as the Scriptures, we have a greater

purpose for going to war with Iraq now than we did a dozen years ago. Oil was at stake before; now the attacks against our country on September 11, 2001 (which people tend to forget), have more and more focused concern upon the Iraqi Hussein as a key instigator to this and other attacks. It is evident that this enemy hates America with the intensity of an antichrist. Perhaps this intensity results from the Muslim view that Christianity, the archenemy of Islam, is synonymous with America.

The purpose of this article is to approach this seemingly inevitable war from several perspectives with the hope of bringing some resolve of conscience amidst the end time in which we live.

## The Gulf War Of 1991

In 1990, with no provocation, Iraq maliciously took the little country of Kuwait for its oil refineries and technology. In 1991, the Western world believed that our future fuel supply was in jeopardy, and it seemed that Saddam Hussein was not finished in his hostile takeover of nations. The world's sympathy went out to little Kuwait and globally amassed an army unprecedented in war history. Patriotism was high; the world was for us and with us. Even Japan, which has no armed forces (due to the agreements designated by America to Japan at the end of the World War II), gave financial aid to support the allies in the Gulf War. Should we have gone to war then? Most everyone in the global family of nations believed we should; and, we did.

The Neo-Evangelical and Charismatic literary writers published numerous books announcing the potential of that war as the

fulfillment of prophecy concerning Armageddon of Revelation 19. Amidst a massive build-up of firepower, the potential of the "end of the world" was being prophesied. Armageddon was the name men chose for this potential holocaust of warfare. Hussein was viewed as the antichrist, and mankind was said to be in the vestibule of Revelation 19. True, it was a collection of nations that had arrived for battle; true, it was a potential of a world war; true, even religion played a major part as Hussein cried for *Jihad* in the name of Islam. Nevertheless, several biblical objections need to be made concerning these assumptions.

## The Battle of Armageddon?

In recent years there has been considerable discussion concerning the meaning and interpretation of the term *Armageddon*. The Hebrew word *Har meghiddo* corresponds with the Greek word *harmagedon*, meaning "Mount of Slaughter." Geographically, it relates to the Mount of Megiddo that is located adjacent to the plain of Megiddo to the west and the large plain of Esdraelon to the northeast. This area was the scene of many great battles of the Old Testament such as that of Barak and the Canaanites in Judges 4 and the victory of Gideon over the Midianites in Judges 7. We also read of King Saul dying here and the fatal struggle between Josiah and Pharaoh-necoh (II Kings 23:29; II Chronicles 35:22). The low hills around Megiddo, with their outlook over the Plain of Esdraelon, have witnessed perhaps a greater number

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of bloody encounters than have any other area geography in the world.

Although there are some who believe *Armageddon* simply stands for the “final” battle of global war without indicating any particular locality, we take the position that the term is directly associated with the location of the final arena of the last mighty struggle between the powers of good and evil. Prophecy places Armageddon at the *end* of the Tribulation Period. The prophecy of Revelation 14:14-20 indicates a future event yet to come in the Tribulation Period. In this battle, the sickle is in the hand of the Son of Man; the Lord is returning to the earth because it is ripe with rotten blood of the grape vineyard. This is the prophetic pronouncement of the coming of the Battle of Armageddon. In Revelation 16:12-16 the river Euphrates is dried up so that the “the kings of the east” may enter the Middle East to prepare for the Battle of Armageddon. The Battle of Armageddon will be the final battle of this war. The drying up of Euphrates is a direct result of the pouring out of the sixth vial. God will do this to “prepare” the way for “the kings of the east to come up to the Battle of Armageddon.” Although Antichrist will be at war with world powers on earth, this sixth vial brings another war that prepares for Armageddon. The actual battle takes place in Revelation 19:11-16 when Christ returns with His saints. The casualties of this battle are so great in such a short period of time that an angel prepares the fowls of

heaven to come and dispose of their carcasses because of the stench and threat of disease. These birds of prey are called in advance to be ready and waiting when the Antichrist comes with his other kings into the great valley of Armageddon, just south of Nazareth, for the final phase of the Battle.

To culminate the total geography of the Battle, Jesus will initiate the matter at His descent to the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14), at which time an earthquake there will produce the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The Battle starts in Bozrah of Edom, southeast of the Mount of Olives, and winds its way north in a counterclockwise direction in the plain of Esdraelon to Jezreel, near Nazareth, to the foothills of the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountains. A turning south initiates the final stage of the Battle at Megiddo in the valley of Armageddon.

To conclude these brief observations: the last battle with Iraq and this present one lack a number of biblical realities in order to be the “Battle of Armageddon.” It would mean that we have already come through the great Tribulation Period; that a personal Antichrist is reigning globally under one world government with dictatorial powers; that the nations have at least dwindled down to eleven (with the Antichrist making the eleventh one); that other battles of Antichrist have plucked three major nations leaving seven; that all the religions (over 3,000 at this time in history) have become one; and that Christ is setting His feet upon the Mount of

Olives before Antichrist makes his way to Megiddo. Yet, before all of this, we believe the Bible prophesies of a secret coming of Christ (the Rapture) to take the saints off this earth before the Great Tribulation Period begins. The Battle of Armageddon is a final battle where Antichrist and his armies will face the personal, glorified Christ and His saints.

### **Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden**

There seems to be a greater need for this war in 2003 than for the last one, in that the one of 1991 was basically for economic reasons. This present war is retaliation to attacks on America. There is a maze that one may travel and find the connection between Saddam and Bin Laden. It is best to describe it as the connection between the Al Qaeda and the Iraqi Al-Istikhbarat/Al Askariyya (Iraqi Military Intelligence), headquartered at the army base at Salman Pak southeast of Baghdad. Although space does not allow us to present the detailed case of Saddam Hussein and the Osama Bin Laden connection, let us note some of the highlights.

After the Gulf War of 1991 there were several coup attempts in Iraq and a multitude of serious defections, including Saddam's daughter and his most trusted aid, his son-in-law. At the end of June 1996, a large number of military officers were arrested on suspicion of plotting to overthrow the regime. Approximately 400 officers of various ranks were executed, including

some senior Republican Guard officers. These executions were ordered directly by Hussein and supervised by his eldest son, Uday Hussein. Even the Iraqi National Congress (INC) tried to overthrow Hussein. After the attempted assassination of Uday Hussein on December 12, 1996, mass arrests and many executions followed. Saddam realized that in order for his regime to survive, he needed to reorganize and develop a body of trusted individuals. In addition, he needed to expand his international capabilities in order to obtain equipment to rebuild his military and weapons of mass destruction. Hussein and elements within his military intelligence realized the only organization that could quickly provide this was the Al-Qaeda and its leader Osama Bin Laden. Through affiliation with Bin Laden, Saddam could also gain acceptance and support from other Moslem States and groups. This would be no easy task considering that one of Bin Laden's first religious visions was Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Although Bin Laden tried to warn fellow Muslims and Kuwait officials, he was rebuffed and considered insane. After the Iraqi invasion, he offered to bring his soldiers out of Afghanistan to force Iraq out of Kuwait. In 1992 and 1994, when Bin Laden was in Sudan, Saddam attempted to recruit him; however Bin Laden refused. By 1995, Bin Laden knew he had to leave Sudan; the only safe place he could go was Afghanistan. During this time, with trusted advice from Al Qaeda members, Bin Laden turned to Saddam.

Iraq had stood up to America, "The Great Satan," and was viewed as defeating the United States in Desert Storm. Iraq became the only safe country from which Bin Laden could obtain funds to directly and indirectly support the Al-Qaeda.

At this time, various differences between Iraq and other Shiite Muslim terrorist organizations were set aside in order to unify against the United States. In May of 1996, the country of Sudan expelled Bin Laden because of the international pressure by Saudi Arabia and the United States. Bin Laden then moved back to Afghanistan. It was during this period that agents from Iraq met with members of the Al-Qaeda and began working together. In August of 1996, Bin Laden signed and issued a Declaration of Jihad outlining the Al-Qaeda goals: Drive US Forces from the Arabian Peninsula, overthrow the government of Saudi Arabia, liberate Muslim holy sites, and support Islamic revolutionary groups around the world. With the Al-Qaeda, Saddam now had the means to de-stabilize and change certain Mid-East countries in order to build a united front against America.

In July 1998, with these two entities working together, the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were bombed within nine minutes of each other killing 224 people. In January of 2001, there was an attempted attack on the USS *Sullivans*; in October 2001, there was a successful attack on the USS *Cole*. Let us not forget September 11, 2001, when the World Trade Center

Twin Towers were destroyed by hijacked commercial airlines crashing into upper floors. We must also remember the airline crash into the Pentagon building and the thwarted attack that ended in a Pennsylvania field. Of course, there have been many other bombings that have not been well publicized in America: a number of truck bombings against Americans in the Saudi US military residence that have killed dozens of our men over the past four years. The Israeli Intelligence sources state that in the past three or four years, Iraqi Intelligence officers have been shuttling between Baghdad and Afghanistan, meeting with Al-Qaeda officials. In October of 2000, Pakistan military near the border with Afghanistan captured Iraqi Intelligence officer Salah Suleiman. Since February 1999, the Iraqi National Congress has issued urgent warnings to Washington concerning the growing relationship and mutual support between Saddam and Bin Laden.

Nevertheless, amidst all that has happened over these years, it must be acknowledged that our nation is facing what we created several years ago. The overthrow of President Abdul Karim Kassim on February 8, 1963, by a military coup, was orchestrated by the CIA of our country. This coup set Saddam Hussein on the road to absolute power. It was the bloodiest coup in the history of this region. Individuals from a list provided to Saddam by the CIA were eliminated once power was secured; this led to the decimation of Iraq's professional class. Now we

face the nightmare of what we aided in building.

### **What Does This War Mean?**

It is not our concern as a minister of the Gospel to explore economic or other secular ramifications that may be the outcome of this war. Our burden is to draw from Scripture potential scenarios and their effect upon us as Christians.

One most surprising scenario to this conflict could be the wholesale surrender of the Iraqi people encouraged by seventeen million flyers that have been dropped by our military planes over Iraq. A few have already surrendered at the border of Kuwait. If this would happen on a massive scale, no doubt it would bring a global sigh of relief. Although the media has portrayed the people of Baghdad marching in the streets, proclaiming they are ready to die for Saddam, yet we must understand the great oppressive fear that dominates the populace. What do the people of Iraq truly feel about their leader? It is estimated that some 4,500 children under the age of five die every month from hunger and disease with an additional 4,000 to 5,000 ill or elderly Iraqis who die pre-maturely every month due to the lack of food and medicine. The few supplies allowed to come into Iraq are diverted for Saddam's army and family. It is evident that the Iraqi dictator cares not for his people; they are expendable. Could bringing such a man to the brink of capture lead to his implementation of a massive killing of his own people

(like a Jim Jones killing) believing such a death would honor Allah? Suicide has been proved a viable option to the glory of Islam. We have yet to see what a nation of citizens would do under the panic and fear of such a war knowing that the enemy only wants their leader. Although we saw many defect in the Gulf War, the media-military blitz this time could ensue an overwhelming response that would shock the world.

Yet, from a global perspective, this war is placing America out on a limb of which only God knows the outcome. We are not stating because of this line of reasoning that we should not go to war with Iraq, for it may be God's will for this to happen. The last Gulf War's overwhelming victory had shockingly low casualties for a war of that magnitude. Although only a sovereign God brought about such an outcome, it must not be assumed He will ordain it so this time. I do believe God sovereignly appointed, at a critical time in our history, George W. Bush as our President; he probably is the best of our choices for leadership. God is definitely speaking to our beloved country.

The attack of September 11, 2001, may be a prelude of further punishments to our country. We must never declare, amidst our grief and sorrow for lives lost, that our country does not deserve such reappings that we have received. God truly has not rewarded us according to our iniquities as a nation; how-

ever, we may be in the prelude of it. Amidst His wrath, one of the evident mercies of God may be the selection of a better President than his predecessor, and even the one that God could have put in, Al Gore. Nevertheless, how could God use a very evil nation to judge a nation that at one time seemed to have been a righteous nation? God has often used evil nations to judge less evil nations. This truth is clearly declared in the book of Habakkuk. If we come out of this war with few casualties, it will be nothing but the mercy of God. If we come out of this war with casualties of an alarming proportion, it does not mean it was not God's will for us to go to war. America's pride in its firepower could rise to the belief of invincibility. To counteract our pride and "arm of flesh" confidence, God could send sand storms to affect our weapons and equipment much like the storms He sent against the famous Spanish Armada when it sailed against the inferior navy of Elizabeth I in 1588.

This may be the time when God is going to give America over to a judgment that ultimately will lead to our final absorption into the global perspective. We are not above such a judgment from God. Having a better President does not make our country better morally, for America is getting worse morally and deeper in its religious apostasy. Yet, one benefit that continues to be a blessing to us is our continual support of the nation of Israel.

Although this battle is not Armageddon, it could be the way

God will begin drawing global attention to the area of Babylonia. Daniel 8:19-20 states,

*And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be. The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia.*

Although this prophecy concerns the time of the Medo-Persian Empire that followed the Babylonian Empire, this prophecy also implies that such geography will rise again, "in the last end." The country of Iraq geographically is found in the cradle of Babylon, which is to revive both as a mystical religion (Rev. 17) and as the global capital of Antichrist (Rev. 18).

Babel seems to be connected in its first occurrence in Scripture with the Hebrew root word *balal*, meaning "to confound." At Babel the Lord confounded the language of all the earth. However, the native etymology is Babel, meaning "the gate of God." Heaven's view was the former interpretation; Nimrod's view was the latter. The word *Babel* is also occasionally applied to the whole district of Chaldea, coinciding with the plain of Shinar as well as to Babylonia, a major province to Persia.

Without going into the history of this geography, Babylon presently is found near the modern village of Hillah, which lies on the west bank of the Euphrates, about fifty miles directly south of Baghdad. Although this geography must return to prominence, for so many poten-

tial locations for the Antichrist's headquarters this presently seems unlikely. Nevertheless, there potentially are several scenarios that may come even from this war. The bombing and devastation wrought by us as a country upon Iraq could produce a resounding, universal sympathy of rebuilding, similar to the rebuilding of Japan and West Berlin at the end of World War II. Our own contribution in rebuilding Japan has made it one of the wealthiest nations on earth and in some ways greater than our own. With Saddam out of the way, the Western world may want to build a showplace in behalf of the suffering Iraqi people.

So often, certain events become epochs of drastic change. It is now happening in our own country with the Homeland Security; the 9-11 incident may cost us what remaining freedoms we had. This could be God's timing for the world to enter the preliminary stages of focusing on Babylon. If we destroy the country of Iraq with the potential firepower we have, especially the infrastructure of the country, we may return with such benevolence that we would begin restructuring the country or parts of it to become a world-class economic center. Instead of rebuilding Baghdad, for one reason or another the rebuilding may begin south.

### **Conclusion**

Whatever the outcome of this war, global attention has now moved from Kuwait into the geographical heart of Antichrist prophecy. The

country of Iraq is nestled within the next global economic and political arena.

In the last war with Iraq, 20,000 military personnel were converted to the Islam religion via the influence of Saudi Arabia. Will the cost be higher this time? There is now a growing sympathy for Islam; what was somewhat of an unknown religion to the West has now been popularized by the events of September 11, 2001. The atrocity of that day became the best public-relation ploy for the aggressive Islamic religion that now increasingly dominates over one billion people throughout the world.

Saddam has been constructing the world's largest mosque, estimated to exceed one billion dollars. A \$500,000 model of the mosque fills a large meeting room in Iraq. The French architect, Jacques Barriere, was commissioned to design the structure, which is to cover an area near Baghdad the size of twelve football fields. It will be surrounded by a moat in which the crowning touch will be an island formed in the shape of Saddam's thumb, with the ground contoured exactly to match his fingerprint. It is their hope that when Allah looks down on this mosque he will see Saddam too.

The world waits with fear, anxiety, and trepidation in the light of the unknown. Only a Sovereign God sees with infinite detail the outcome of this war. Will biological and chemical warfare be introduced with massive destruction of lives in various ways? Will our armed forces



come back with greater sympathies toward Islam? Will this be in some form the beginning preparation for the future Babylon? The generation before the coming of Antichrist is a crucial generation because it will prepare the many fields of humanity to make global dictatorship possible. We do not believe Saddam is the Antichrist, but perhaps in some ways we are witnessing a forerunner of the Antichrist.

At what point are we found in the global plan and time calendar of God's agenda? Where do we stand as a nation today in the light of no national acknowledgement in Scripture? At what corner of world events will we find ourselves at the beginning of this battle, at its midpoint, or at its end? Men's hearts may fail them because of fear at the

sights and sounds of humanity's sea waves roaring. Nevertheless, may we as Christians hear the words of our Savior, "Let not your hearts be troubled."

Pray for our President and the men who surround him in counsel. May they be conscious of the need of God.

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Foundations Bible College & Theological Seminary

## “The Golden Passional” —Isaiah 53—

### **Palm Sunday: April 13, 2003**

9:30 AM — Special Film

10:30 AM — Sermon: “The Golden Passional”

— the President, Dr. H. T. Spence

6:00 PM — Sermon: “Who Hath Believed Our Report”

(Isaiah 53:1)

— the President, Dr. H. T. Spence

### **Monday: April 14, 2003**

8:00 AM — Sermon: “He Shall Grow Up Before Him”

(Isaiah 53:2a)

— Brother Adam Watt

10:00 AM — Special Film

7:00 PM — Sermon: “He Hath No Form Nor Comeliness”

(Isaiah 53:2b)

— the Vice President, Dr. Dennis L. Lowry

### **Tuesday: April 15, 2003**

8:00 AM — Special Film

10:00 AM — Sermon: “He Is Despised and Rejected of Men”

(Isaiah 53:3)

— the Vice President, Dr. Dennis L. Lowry

7:00 PM — Sermon: “Surely He Hath Borne Our Grievs”

(Isaiah 53:4)

— the Principal, Dr. Douglas Wilson

**Wednesday: April 16, 2003**

- 8:00 AM – Sermon: “He Was Wounded for Our Transgressions”  
(Isaiah 53:5) — Pastor Mark Cowles
- 10:00 AM – Sermon: “All We Like Sheep Have Gone Astray”  
(Isaiah 53:6) — Rev. Gary Dean
- 7:00 PM – Sermon: “He Was Oppressed, and He Was Afflicted”  
(Isaiah 53:7) — Pastor Mark Cowles

**Thursday: April 17, 2003**

- 8:00 AM – Sermon: “Who Shall Declare His Generation?”  
(Isaiah 53:8) — Rev. Gary Dean
- 10:00 AM – Sermon: “He Made His Grave with the Wicked”  
(Isaiah 53:9) — Pastor Mark Cowles
- 3:00 PM – Board of Trustees Meeting
- 7:00 PM – Sermon: “It Pleased the Lord to Bruise Him” (Isaiah 53:10)  
— Rev. Gary Dean

**Friday: April 18, 2003**

- 8:00 AM – Sermon: “He Shall See of the Travail of His Soul”  
(Isaiah 53:11) — the President, Dr. H. T. Spence
- 10:00 AM – Meeting of the Boards
- 11:45 AM – Special Noon Meal
- 7:00 PM – Oratorio

**Sunday: April 20, 2003**

- 6:30 AM – Sunrise Service: “The Power of His Resurrection”  
— Brother Samuel Sanderlin
- 9:30 AM – Special Film
- 10:30 AM – Sermon: “Dividing the Spoil”  
(Isaiah 53:12a) — the President, Dr. H. T. Spence
- 6:00 PM – Sermon: “He Poured Out His Soul unto Death”  
(Isaiah 53:12b) — the President, Dr. H. T. Spence