Close to the Climax

In view of the escalating crisis in the Middle East including Libya, Egypt, Bahrain, Syria and Yemen, these insights, spoken by Derek Prince over two decades ago, may provide excellent guidelines for prayer regarding the Middle East. Once again, we are grateful that these excerpts from Derek’s timeless sharing have amazing pertinence to present situations. Though Derek was speaking here in response to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the observations he makes are very relevant to the current situation in Egypt and other Middle Eastern nations. Some of Derek’s comments have been edited to bring them up to date in light of current events. We trust they will be helpful to you.
WHAT KIND OF CONFEDERATION?

It is often said, especially in Israel, that the Middle East is the home of the three great monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. I don’t personally accept that evaluation, but it contains a significant truth that these three religions are primarily monotheistic. There have been various attempts to bring the representatives of those religions together without success. Actually there is one major barrier to the bringing together of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. That awkward barrier is the historical personage, Jesus of Nazareth. If Jesus were taken out of the way, it is perfectly conceivable that the three religions could somehow coalesce. In fact, there have been many different attempts by Christians, including the pope of Rome himself, to form some kind of confederation of world religions. But in a sense, the barrier, as I have said, is Jesus.

Now, the word antichrist has two meanings. Christ, of course, is the Greek form for “Messiah.” The first meaning of the preposition “anti” is “against”; the second meaning of “anti” is “in place of.” So, the full outworking of antichrist is first of all, against the true Messiah—to remove Him, to get Him out of the way. Secondly, once He has been removed, to replace Him with a false messiah.

So, you could envisage a confederation of ten nations in Europe, around the Mediterranean, down the east side of the Mediterranean on into North Africa. And you could imagine a world religion which is a combination of Judaism, Christianity without Christ, and Islam. That is a kind of potential scene of what could emerge out of this move of world attention back to the Middle East.

HOW THE ARAB MIND WORKS

My first wife, Lydia, as is widely known, spent twenty years in Palestine living amongst Arabs. She got to know them very, very well. Lydia used to make comments about them which at first I thought were rather cynical. But the longer I lived, the more clearly I saw how true they were.

One of the things she said was, “When a Muslim talks to you, he’s not thinking in terms of what is the truth. Truth is not important. What he is saying to himself is, ‘Now, if I say this, what will the other person say?’ Or, ‘If I say that, what will that other person say?’” In other words, language is used by them to produce a response—the kind of response they want from the people that they’re talking to. Lydia made it clear that the concept of being truthful in the way that we understand it is not valid amongst them. It just isn’t part of their thinking. It’s not part of their background.

Now, Saddam Hussein was a particularly brazen individual, but he was characteristic of Arab rulers. They are out to dominate, to suppress, to parade their ego, to show how important they are and how much honour is due to them, and they will certainly and mercilessly revenge any kind of opposition to them. The behavior of Saddam Hussein in Kuwait was, in a very vivid yet shameless way, a kind of portrait of Arab rulers. As I have said, democracy, mercy and forgiveness, are concepts that have no real meaning for them. And if we try to relate to them on that basis, a lot of Western governments are doing, there is a failure to connect with reality. I believe that Saddam Hussein, in many ways, was like Adolph Hitler. Hitler announced in advance what he was going to do, he put it in print, and nobody thought he could be that wicked. So they kind of behaved as if, “Well, he doesn’t really mean it. And if we treat him nicely, he’ll treat us nicely.” History has proved how wrong that point of view was. I believe that the outlook for Saddam Hussein was essentially the same. He was brutal. He was ruthless. He intended to gain power and use it for his own ends. And he would do anything whatever that was necessary to fulfill those ends.
THE SPIRITUAL POWER OF ISLAM

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. 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. You probably know that every mosque proclaims five times a day certain statements about god and about Mohammed. I don’t want to quote them exactly because I don’t like saying them. But we need to bear in mind that those proclamations from the mosques of the Middle East and North Africa have been going out five times a day for more than 1,300 years. And if you have the same mathematics as I have, that’s 2,372,500 times that proclamation has gone out from each mosque in the Middle East.

If you multiply that number by the number of mosques, which is probably at least a million, you’re into the billions. 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, and especially chanted proclamation. You see, the proclamation from the mosque goes out in a form of chanting, and if you analyze most of the major world religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism) all of them employ chanting of proclamations in one degree or another as a way of affirming their faith.

The Bible says in 2 Timothy 3: “In the last days evil men and enchanters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” Most translations render that “evil men and impostors.” But the correct translation is “enchanters.” What the translators of the Bible probably have failed to recognize is that chanting or incantation is a major spiritual power for evil or for good. I believe that if we want to see God’s will done in the Middle East, we as Christians must learn to make the appropriate proclamations in faith.

THE POWER OF PROCLAMATION

You might respond, “Well, it’ll take us a long while to do it two billion times.” However, I don’t think that is the correct way to look at it, because I believe that truth is far more powerful than error. It doesn’t take the same number of proclamations of truth to defeat error. We have the truth, and it’s up to us to make intercession for the Middle East. Specifically, we need to be making proclamations of the victory of Jesus, of the power of His name, of the power of His blood, of what has been accomplished by His death on the cross, of His exaltation in glory as the supreme ruler of the universe, and also of the important fact that He is coming back again in power and glory to establish His kingdom on this earth.

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. And I want to offer you three themes for this prayer and proclamation.

THE ISRAEL PROCLAMATION

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. (Notice how the gathering is taking place from the Soviet Union at this time.)

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...
Next, with regard to Islam, I believe we need to pray along the line following. We need to pray that the present crisis in the Middle East and the lining up of the Arab nations against one another will open the way (in some way that we perhaps cannot yet see), for the iron fortress of Islam to be broken open so that its captives may be delivered and so that the truth may penetrate.

In Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union, God’s people prayed and agonized for many years and apparently nothing much was happening. But then there came a moment when their prayers and their proclamations became effective. And in one short year, the total situation in the communist nations was completely changed and reversed. Most of us would never have believed in advance if anybody had told us what would happen, or that it could happen so dramatically and so quickly. I believe that should encourage us as Christians and believers that the apparently impregnable fortress of Islam will also yield to our prayers and our proclamations.

Let me just say that 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.

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

Next, our third theme for intercession and proclamation is for the troops. There are tens of thousands of troops gathered in the Middle East from the West. Nobody could have imagined that such a number of people from a Christian background (many of them strong Christians), would find themselves there in the Middle East—in what was essentially a kind of fortress that would not admit much of the influence of the West. It is a significant fact that many Middle Eastern nations do not permit Bibles to be sent through the mail to the troops. If they already had Bibles with them, they were allowed to keep them. However, the intention is to keep out any representation of any other religion but Islam from those nations. But you see, God has intervened and overruled and made it possible for those people from the West to be there.

During World War II, I spent three years in the deserts of the Middle East, so I have a little idea of what it’s like to live in a desert. The desert where I served was not so intense as others, but bear in mind those troops are not allowed alcohol. They have very few kinds of entertainment, and they have suddenly been cut off from pursuits that they thought made life exciting and worthwhile. I believe that is an opportunity for the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to move into that vacuum and turn many of them to God.

I believe, on the basis of my own experience, that this is a time when the Holy Spirit can visit that great assembly of troops in the Middle East. And if any kind of revival breaks out there, it is going to affect the whole spiritual atmosphere of the Middle East.

It’s like the story of the Trojan horse. You remember that when the Greeks wanted to capture Troy, they left a huge wooden horse outside the city. The Trojan people came and took it into the city. But they didn’t know there were armed Greek soldiers inside the horse. During the night, the Greek soldiers came out of the horse, opened up the gates and let the Greek army in so that Troy was taken. In a sense, I would say, the presence of the Western troops in the Middle East is a little bit like that Trojan horse. Inside it is something that can split the whole of that kingdom spiritually wide open.

A very exciting little addendum is that our radio programme in Arabic has been aired directly into various parts of the Middle East. The Arab people there have had the opportunity to hear that. It is a significant fact that many Middle Eastern nations would not permit any representation of any other religion but Islam from those troops. If they already had Bibles with them, they were allowed to keep them. However, the intention is to keep out any representation of any other religion but Islam from those nations. But you see, God has intervened and overruled and made it possible for those people from the West to be there.

So, what is happening in the Middle East is exciting, it’s dramatic, and it’s critical. In regard to what is taking place there, I want to urge you, as I have said already, not to be passive. Don’t just sit back and watch the news and say, “Well, there’s nothing much I can do.” Or, “Let’s hope things work out.” If you are a committed Christian and you know how to pray and you know the power of the Word of God and 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.