

From Our Pastor

November 18, 2017

Sabbath Greetings to Everyone!

We need to keep up on the fast moving developments in Saudi Arabia. With the tacit backing of his father (King Salman), Saudi Arabia's 32- year-old crown prince has established himself as the most powerful figure in the Arab world, rushing into confrontations on all sides at once.

The New York Times reported, "Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman ordered the arrest of 11 princes in his royal family and nearly 200 members of the Saudi business elite, and has begun to take power from the kingdom's conservative clerics. He has blockaded neighboring Qatar, accused Iran of acts of war and encouraged the resignation of Lebanon's prime minister. And in Yemen, his armed forces are fighting an Iranian-aligned faction in an intractable war. The crown prince has moved so quickly that American officials and others worry that he is destabilizing the region."

Assuming, of course, that what has been taking place in recent months can be described as "stable."

There are indications that the recent power "consolidation" in the wealthy and powerful Saudi Kingdom are related to the growing conflict with Shiite elements supported by Iran. It is agreed by most observers that the nation of Lebanon as it has been known no longer exists. Lebanon is now controlled and armed to the teeth by Hezbollah--a proxy fighting arm of Iran. The arms buildup by Hezbollah has greatly increased in recent years, as have reports of Iranian fighting units being deployed there. The obvious target is Israel, not Syria.

The crown prince's threats against Iran and Lebanon have raised the specter of war between Iran and the Saudis, or in other words between the Sunni and Shiite factions of Islam. The Saudi military is bogged down in Yemen where they should have won easily. Just over a week ago, Saudi Arabia said it intercepted a ballistic missile fired from Yemen after a loud explosion was heard near Riyadh airport. The only place that Yemeni rebels could have procured that type of missile is from Iran. If war comes, Riyadh would be forced to depend on the United States or Israel for assistance, and the conflict would spread rapidly.

The Arab peoples understand that they are the descendants of Ishmael, Abraham's son by a servant girl named Hagar. The bones of Ishmael are revered by Muslims and are believed to be kept in the Kaaba in Mecca. Before Ishmael was born, an Angel of the Lord spoke to Hagar. "The Angel of the LORD said to her: "Behold, you are with child, and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has heard your affliction. He shall be a wild man; His hand shall be against every man, And every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." (Genesis 16:11-12)

The history of the middle East is one of nearly continual conflict between tribes, nations, and religions. The periods of peace have been short lived and usually enforced by a dominant power. Once again war looms in the region, and this time it could involve many nations and armies as centuries old conflicts find new turf to fight over.

Remember the words of Jesus Christ, "When you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately."

"Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." Luke 21: 9-10

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