

From our Pastor January 20, 2018

Sabbath Greetings to Everyone!

Turkey's President Recep Erdogan continues pursuing his goal of rebuilding the Ottoman empire and becoming the dominant force in the Muslim world. For fifty years Turkey has been an ally of the US and a member of NATO. Important US air bases are located in Eastern Turkey. During the cold war of the early 1960's my father often landed his nuclear armed B-47 at those bases. That mutually beneficial relationship is drawing to a close quickly. The Associated Press reported, "Erdogan on January 16th called on NATO to take a stance against the United States, a fellow ally, over its plans to form a 30,000-strong Kurdish-led border security force in Syria. Turkey has been threatening to launch a new military offensive in Syria against Syrian Kurdish militias, which Turkey considers to be terrorists because of their affiliation with outlawed Kurdish rebels fighting Turkey."

It appears that Turkey is planning to attack a US backed force of Kurds this week. The result could be a serious problem for the US and NATO. The Kurdish militia is the U.S.-led coalition's chief ally in the campaign against IS militants in Syria. The campaign has been very successful during the past year and the Kurds have trusted their US supporters. ISIS forces are leaderless, have lost most of the cities they controlled, and are now on the run. The Kurdish militia now controls about 25 percent of Syrian territory.

The Middle East is often a quagmire of mixed and changing loyalties, ethnic rivalries difficult for a Westerner to understand, and situations that are more grey than black and white. Turkey views the U.S.- backed Syrian Kurdish forces as terrorists--an extension of the Kurdish insurgency raging in its southeast. It has criticized the U.S. for extending support and arming the Kurdish forces as part of the campaign that drove the Islamic State group from large parts of Syria. The Kurdish Democratic Union Party, or PYD, the political arm of the main Kurdish militia, is appealing to the UN Security Council. They know that the Turkish forces are vastly superior to their own and that the US is in a corner, wanting to help but not willing to bear the political fallout or risk potential of a direct conflict between American and Turkish forces in the areas.

Some Bible historians trace the ancestry of modern Turkey to Edom, or Esau. This is largely due to the account in Genesis 36: 9-15 " These are the descendants of Esau, the ancestor of the Edomites. 10-13 Esau's wife Adah bore him one son, Eliphaz, and Eliphaz had five sons: Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. And by another wife, Timna, he had one more son, Amalek....

These are the tribes descended from Esau. Esau's first son Eliphaz was the ancestor of the following tribes: Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, Korah, Gatam, and Amalek."

While history does not record exactly where all the families mentioned in the Bible migrated to, it is simple to connect the name "Ottoman" with "Teman"--first grandson of

Esau. If that is accurate, then the shortest book in the Old Testament--Obadiah--applies to Turkey today.

Obadiah is about the Edomites--descendents of Esau, Jacob's twin brother--during the last years prior to the return of Jesus Christ to rule the earth. The mindset described is very clear: "The pride of your heart has deceived you, dwelling in the clefts of the rock; his dwelling is lofty, saying in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though you rise high as the eagle, and though you set your nest between the stars, I will bring you down from there, declares the Lord." (Obadiah 1: 3-4).

We hope for "peace on earth" and pray "Your Kingdom Come" every day, but peace is only possible when people obey the true God, and it is obvious that the mindset of the vast majority of people in the world is resistant to any message from God. As the prophet Jeremiah proclaimed, "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

When Jesus Christ returns He will offer a new heart to everyone (Ezekiel 36:26) and all war, pain, and suffering will end. Between now and that time the world will experience great tribulation such as the world has never seen (Matthew 24:21).

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