

From Our Pastor

June 2, 2018

Sabbath Greetings to Everyone!

The war against the USA began on November 4, 1979 when a group of Iranians stormed the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, taking more than sixty American hostages. My good friend, Jack Scruggs, was the last person to board the last bus and leave the embassy just in time to escape being taken prisoner. Even though this was an act of war, the US did not retaliate, and the prisoners spent 444 days behind bars. The hostages were finally free on January 21, 1981, just hours after President Ronald Reagan delivered his inaugural address.

It has been almost thirty-nine years since that first attack. During most of those years Iran has continued the war and its terrorist proxies have targeted American civilians and military personnel around the world.

The list of attacks is long: the 1983 bombings of the U.S. Marine barracks and Embassy in Beirut, attacks on US Navy vessels such as the Cole and Roberts, more than a decade of IED attacks against U.S. military personnel in Iraq, bombing of the Khobar Towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, killing 19 U.S. airmen, among others. Iran's terrorist proxies have killed more Americans worldwide than any group except al-Qaida. The response to nearly 500 murdered Americans has been tepid at best-- sanctions and trade restrictions primarily. To the horror of many, the US also gave the Iranians 1.7 billion dollars in unmarked cash in September of 2016 as part of the "Nuclear deal," while State Department officials admitted that the money would likely be used to fund terrorism groups.

With 50,000 Shiite combat troops menacing Israel from Syria, Hamas and Islamic Jihad increasingly firing rockets and launching attacks on Israel from Gaza, plus the ongoing war with the Iranian backed Houthi fighters in Yemen, it is apparent to many that the Iranian plan to conquer all of the Middle east and bring about the return of the Mahdi is taking place. As reported this week in israeltoday.co, "In recent years, Iran has been executing a plan for the Middle East that is based on the so-called Mahdi doctrine. According to this Shia end-of-days vision, the active participation of the pious in the creation of mayhem and war in the world could actually lead to a hastened return of the Mahdi. Mahdi is the Shiite messiah, the hidden twelfth Imam who will return after an Islamic uprising that will spread all over the world and will cause mayhem in specific Arab countries. The Iranian plan for the Middle East and the Mahdi doctrine were explained in a regime-produced documentary from 2011 titled "The Coming (of Mahdi) is Upon Us."

The response to Iranian aggression and acts of war may be changing. In a speech at the Heritage Foundation last week, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced a

new policy that aims to roll back Iran's hegemonistic drive in the Middle East and to prevent the Islamic Republic from attaining a nuclear weapon.

He stated clearly: "Iran must end support to Middle East terrorist groups, including Lebanese Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad...Iran must also end its military support for the Houthi militia and work towards a peaceful political settlement in Yemen.

Iran must withdraw all forces under Iranian command throughout the entirety of Syria. Iran, too, must end support for the Taliban and other terrorists in Afghanistan and the region, and cease harboring senior al-Qaida leaders.

Iran, too, must end the IRG Quds Force's support for terrorists and militant partners around the world. And, too, Iran must end its threatening behavior against its neighbors – many of whom are US allies. This certainly includes its threats to destroy Israel, and its firing of missiles into Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Pompeo explained that these requirements are "very basic," and that the length of the list was "simply a scope of the malign behavior of Iran."

If Secretary Pompeo's words reflect the current US position, then thirty-nine years of wishful thinking and cowardice have come to an end. Real understanding of the enemy has arrived. Will this result in war or peace? As a nation we have rejected the Creator God who blessed us more than any single nation in history. The blessings predicted for Joseph's descendants in Genesis 49:22-26 were showered on Britain and America beginning in about the year 1800. Since the 1960's the reverence for the God of the Bible reflected in our founding documents has been replaced by the exaltation of self and the Laws decreed for our benefit by our Creator have been rejected and replaced by the folly of men's ideas.

On Mount Sinai God predicted the result and we have seen it often: "... I will send faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; the sound of a shaken leaf shall cause them to flee; they shall flee as though fleeing from a sword, and they shall fall when no one pursues... and you shall have no power to stand before your enemies." (Leviticus 26: 36-37) So will our new-found statements of courage endure? The coming months will be critical ones.

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