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Fulfilled: Rumors of War Rising

By Wilfred Hahn

In the July and August issues of MCM, we reviewed the Bible prophecies relating to earthquakes. We concluded that a rise in the frequency of earthquakes yet lies ahead for the world; moreover, that there are two distinct groups of earthquakes that are yet to occur.



Firstly, there is the heightened earthquake activity that unfolds in the first half of the Tribulation period. These quakes are the ones mentioned by Christ in the Olivet Discourse (“earthquakes in divers places,” Matthew 24:7, KJV). Secondly, there are five earthquake occurrences mentioned in the Book of Revelation, all of which follow the 5th seal, therefore falling into the Great Tribulation period (namely, the latter 42 months of the 7-year Tribulation).

The Olivet prophecies mention other endtime phenomena occurring besides earthquakes. When the disciples asked Christ, “When shall these things be?” He said the following:

“And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:6-8, KJV).

All three accounts of the Olivet Discourse or portions thereof (found in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21), confirm the future occurrence of earthquakes, wars, rumors of war, pestilences, and nations rising against nations and kingdoms against kingdoms.

We observe then that war-related events figure very prominently. Both “hear[ing] of wars and rumors of wars”



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and “nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” are mentioned. Just when do these occur, and what is the difference between these two indicators of global strife and conflict? We want to more clearly emphasize the timing and the different nature of these two phenomena.

Difference Between Wars and Nations Rising

The timing and the roles of the two signs of “hearing of wars and rumors of wars” and “nations rising against nation” are very different. They do not refer to the same endtime phenomena for at least two reasons.

First, they occur in different time periods. To illustrate this observation, we must note that Christ clearly partitions the Olivet prophecies into three separate time periods: 1. That which is before the “end” comes (“the end is not yet”); 2. the beginning of the end, which is also referred to as the “beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:8, Mark 13:8, Luke 21:9); and 3. the time that comes thereafter (events described from Matthew 24:9 and Mark 13:9 onward). These periods correspond to the time leading up to the Tribulation Period, the first half of the Tribulation (42 months), and the next 42 months, often referred to as the Great Tribulation.

We must therefore notice that inter-country conflicts are mentioned in two different contexts: Firstly, the “hearing of wars and rumors of wars” (Matthew 24:6) occur before the end comes (this meaning the period before the Tribulation period starts). Secondly, we must then note that the occurrence of “nation



rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” unfolds at a different and later time.

This phenomenon is clearly part of the time that is called the “beginning of sorrows.” “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:7-8).

Different Types of Strife

Just what is the difference between the “hearing of wars and rumors of wars,” and the advent of “nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom”? Moreover, if wars always occurred down through history, just when do wars now become markers of the time before the Tribulation is to start?

The main distinction that we can draw between the two war-related phenomena is that in the first stage (the pre-tribulation period), wars and rumors thereof are mainly only being heard about. There obviously are wars and strife occurring, whether between individual countries or alliances, as always has been the case throughout history. But, the main emphasis in this prophecy is the actual “hearing.” As such, though the frequency of war and strife may be rising in the world, it is also the hearing of these wars and rumors themselves that are increasing. In other words, the intensity of the “news” of wars, geopolitical strife ... etc. is also increasing. That suggests a time where the globalization of “news-making” and news delivery itself is expanding.



Most certainly, new technology and media forms have expanded the supply and speed of international news. Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that there is both an increase in the news items (i.e. war and rumors of war), and also an expansion in the “hearing”—namely, the capacity of news—being prophesied. At any one period of time, more people are hearing about wars than there are countries and people actually participating in them.



Later, during the first half of the Tribulation, the situation changes markedly. Now, the general condition is that all nations and kingdoms are rising against each other. These wars no longer need to be mostly “heard” about or reported, because they are occurring everywhere, involving the entire world. In any case, the emphasis during this time is not the “hearing” but the general state of war. This corresponds with the period of the second seal, when the rider on the red horse takes peace away from the world. “And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword” (Revelation 6:4).

It seems correct to conclude that the general mode of all the nations of the world at that time will be “war.” While our newspapers around the world today are full of “rumors of war”—reporting on actual wars, or geopolitical challenges or civil unrest—a general state of war involving the majority of nations does not yet exist. Obviously, the world has not yet entered the Tribulation period.

Rumors of War Are Increasing Today

Can we deduce that “rumors of war” and the “hearing” of these related events are today increasing, thereby signifying that the pre-tribulation time indicated by Christ is now here?

A recent study of this topic (published by Mark Harrison and Nikolaus Wolf of the University of Warwick and Humboldt University, respectively¹) concludes that the incidence of war has been steadily rising worldwide over the last 130 years or so. While the authors state that “many indicators of interstate conflict have been flat or declining for decades or longer [...] there has been a steady upward trend in the number of bilateral conflicts over 130 years, increasing by an average rate of 2% per annum during this period.”

The conclusion of this study is different to that of many other such studies in recent decades on the trends of “inter-state” and “intra-state” conflicts. For example, a recent report of the World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2011) concludes the following:

Interstate war has declined dramatically since the two world wars of the first half of the 20th century. Major civil conflicts (those with more than 1,000 battle deaths a year) increased during the postcolonial

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and Cold War era, peaking in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Since 1991–92, when there were 21 active major civil wars, the number has steadily fallen to less than 10 each year since 2002.

Do the reports contradict each other? No. The emphasis of the World Bank report is on actual wars (above a death count of 1,000) rather than the “hearing” and “rumors of wars.” It uses a rather subjective starting point for its observations, namely after the two major world wars, and then compares it to that prior time, thus exaggerating its conclusion. And finally, it does not take into account the number of countries that are involved in any one conflict.

In contrast, in the first report, the analysts count conflicts between pairs of nations, not just wars that may involve multiple nations. As an example, World War II will have accounted for upwards of a dozen of bilateral conflicts, as nations declared wars against many others separately. As such, the main reason that wars and inter-country conflicts have increased is because of the growth in the number of sovereign nations over the period of study. In 1870, there were only approximately 50 nations. Today, there are more than 180 sovereign nations in the world.

New Geopolitical Instigations for Strife and Rumors of War

Turning our attention to current-day news, who would not be aware of rising economic problems all around the world? Mankind's economies and financial systems are steadily heading to the final collapses that are outlined in



prophecy, occurring in the final 7-year Tribulation period. Huge economic dislocations are presently underway, affecting both nations and individual households.

Over history, such changes have always been connected to interstate strife as well as civil unrest. The most classic example of this in recent centuries was the French

Revolution. Huge wealth imbalances, poverty and economic difficulties played a significant role in the societal disruptions of that time.

As sovereign high-income nations face technical insolvency, their bond markets literally collapsing, citizens have taken to the streets in violent protest. Austerity measures and cut-backs in living standards have brought out looting and violence. In the lesser-advanced nations, soaring prices of agricultural commodities (in no small part a side-effect of rich-country financial speculation and investor desperation to escape the travails of currency debasement) have contributed to the so-called Arab Spring and other protests around the world.

The cost of food typically comprises as much as 40 to 50% of household living costs in lesser-advanced nations (compared to only 10% to 15% in the advanced, high-income nations.) As such, when the prices of wheat, corn, rice and other staple grains rise (recently, increases of 50% and more have not been uncommon), this exacts huge stresses upon the lower-income nations.

A recently-released study entitled “Austerity and Anarchy,”²² clearly connects deteriorating economic conditions with rising anarchy and chaos. Such



trends would also qualify as factors of “hearing” and “rumors of war.” (The Greek definitions of the words most usually translated as “war” included the notions of “strife” and “conflict,” and are not necessarily restricted to the actual state of war.) The aforementioned study, published by the Centre for Economic Policy Research, concludes that periods of rising economic austerity are linked with a higher number of protests, riots, and civil disturbances. The larger the government budget cutbacks, the higher the number of such incidents.

All in all, significant geopolitical tensions are exacerbated by current financial market trends. For instance, oil prices at under \$90 U.S. per barrel puts Saudi Arabia back into the position of government budget deficits at a time that it is explicitly buying the loyalties of its citizens. In such a situation, the Middle East instabilities can only get worse. The U.S., should its budget negotiations fail this fall (not unlikely), is on automatic pilot to cut military expenditures (this being what the citizenry actually wants). But, it will stretch the efforts of U.S. military actions and geopolitical policing abroad. Opportunistic non-aligned nations, no doubt, will seize advantage.

Thoughts to Ponder

We can only provide unreliable opinions with respect to short-run developments and trends in “rumors of war.” All the same, we conclude that it can be shown that the qualifying conditions for rising “rumors of war,” as Christ told his followers, are already in place. Moreover, unstable and deteriorating economic and financial trends worldwide, can only serve to accelerate further this fulfilment in the future.

World affairs today very much meet the condition of a rise in the “hearing of

wars and rumors of wars.” Not only are there today many more nations in the world that can have spats and conflicts with each other, but there is also a rising incidence of actual wars, as well as a huge increase in the size and reach of international media. Rumors today are more frequent and spread much quicker. The smallest “rumor” will be sure to at least be broadcast on the Internet.

We can validly conclude that we are living during that time where the “end is not yet.” In other words, we are living very near to the Tribulation period. Most joyously, that also means that the Rapture is as imminent as ever.

Much war lies ahead for the world, once the Restrainer has been removed from the earth. The horseman on the red horse, signifying a world where all nations will be rising up against each other, is still ahead. Daniel says, “[...] The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed” (Daniel 9:26).

Crucially, the two most significant wars of all time, pivotal to human history and God’s plan for mankind and the earth, also still lie ahead. First in chronological order is a war in heaven. “And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him” (Revelation 12:7-9). What follows are horrible consequences for the world.

The final war, the most significant of all time, then is terminated at the end of the Tribulation period. The Bible says that the world’s rulers and nations “will make war against the Lamb, but the

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The Bible says that the world's rulers and nations "will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers" (Revelation 17:14).

Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers" (Revelation 17:14). It could be argued that this battle has been occurring throughout history, coming to its climax involving the entire world at the end of the Tribulation period.

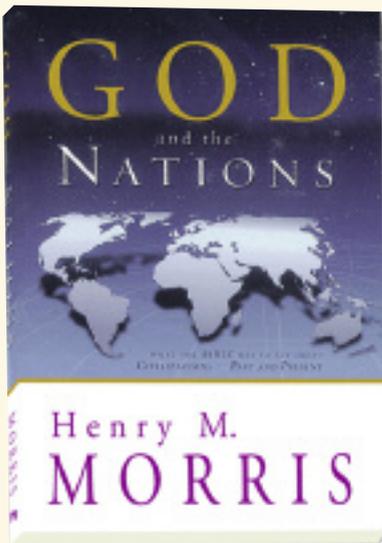
Then, a new era is ushered in. People will no longer be preoccupied with war. Economies will no longer be driven by the "military state," or nations striving to outwit their enemies with new destructive technologies. The stockpiling of weapons and expending trillions of dollars waging war or on peace-keeping exercises will cease.

The prophet Micah tells us that "He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords

into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore" (Micah 4:3-4). ^{MC}

ENDNOTES

- 1 The Frequency of Wars. Mark Harrison, Department of Economics and CAGE, University of Warwick, Centre for Russian and East European Studies, University of Birmingham Hoover Institution, Stanford University; Nikolaus Wolf, Wirtschaftswissenschaftliche Fakultät, Humboldt-Universität Centre for Economic Policy Research. Accessed September 3, 2011, www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/staff/academic/Harrison/public/ehr2011postprint.pdf
- 2 Austerity and Anarchy: Budget Cuts and Social Unrest in Europe, 1919-2009. Jacopo Ponticelli and Hans-Joachim Voth, Centre for Economic Policy Research. Accessed September 3, 2011, www.voxeu.org/sites/default/files/file/DP8513.pdf



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