

# MID-EAST e-NEWS

An electronic journal of the Middle East, for those who want to be informed.

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## Contexts

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## Welcome

*e-NEWS* is three years old! This issue completes 3 full years of bringing you the background to the complex situations that exist in the Middle East. We look forward to many future issues, and intend to continue bringing you a variety of articles on the various contexts that cause the Middle East - and areas to which its religious component extends - to be an interesting but complex region.

Remember, go online to retrieve your copy of Israel in Lebanon, a concise but thorough guide to the events during and since the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict.

Go to [www.morethantourists.com/pdfs/IsrLebanon.pdf](http://www.morethantourists.com/pdfs/IsrLebanon.pdf)

Email your responses to [pkclark@pmbx.net](mailto:pkclark@pmbx.net) & check the web for back issues.

## Quiz

Can you name these people and their countries? All have appeared in *e-NEWS* over the past three years.



8  
♠



♥  
8



And now a less demanding question, that might provide a guide for future articles.

During the past three years of *e-NEWS* some of our articles have appeared as part of a series, a number of which are listed below. Which are your favorites?

*How Far Back Does It Go?* (Issues 1-10)

*Israel – People Groups* (27-36)

*The Crusades* (24-44)

*Christian Zionism* (58-72)

*Islamic Interface* (Various issues, since *e-NEWS* 17)

*Jerusalem* (27-39)

*Islam* (34-63)

## Christian Zionism c) Entity - On Schedule?

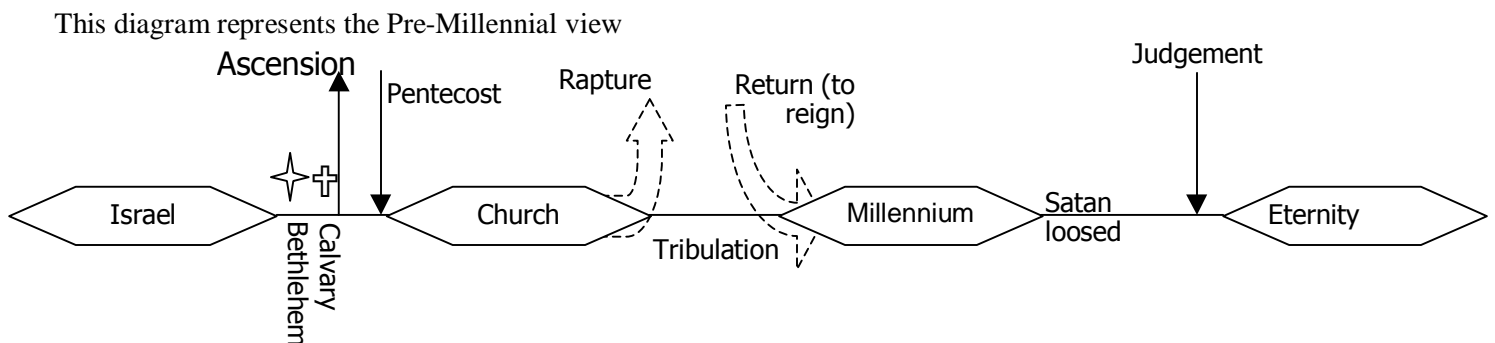
Jesus' words in Matt 24:15-16 have been taken to refer to a future time when an active temple-based sacrificial system is disrupted: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains."

Other interpretations assume that they refer to the events of AD 70, when the Romans under Titus destroyed the Temple, or the Bar Kochba revolt of AD 135. The latter arose from the intention of the Roman emperor Hadrian to build a Temple to Jupiter on the still empty site of the 'Second' Temple. This is an example of how alternate interpretations of verses allow the development of a variety of theologies.

*Post-Millennialism* sees a gradual process of world Christianization, still in the future, during which Christians will dominate society. By degrees, during this period, Satan is bound and unable to interfere with gentiles obeying the Messiah. He will be released for a final confrontation, after which the resurrection (of the dead) and rapture (of believers) will be followed by judgement and the heavenly state.

*A-Millennialism* (which derives from *post-*) sees "the end of the age" as culminating in the AD 70 destruction of the Temple. This expects Jesus' return at the end of the Millennium, which is seen as the current Age of the Church rather than a future 'Christianization' of the world. Amillennialism sees Satan as currently bound, but to be freed briefly prior to the events of the last days.

*Pre-Millennialism* expects the return of Jesus before the Millennium, which is preceded by the 7-year Tribulation (the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, the previous 69 having concluded at the Crucifixion). Versions of this belief refer to the rapture of believers, and include Pre-Trib., Mid-Trib. and Post-Trib. By this interpretation the 'second coming' begins with the rapture (Jesus calls the believers), includes the millennium (during which Jesus reigns) and culminates with his coming in judgement after Satan is temporarily loosed.

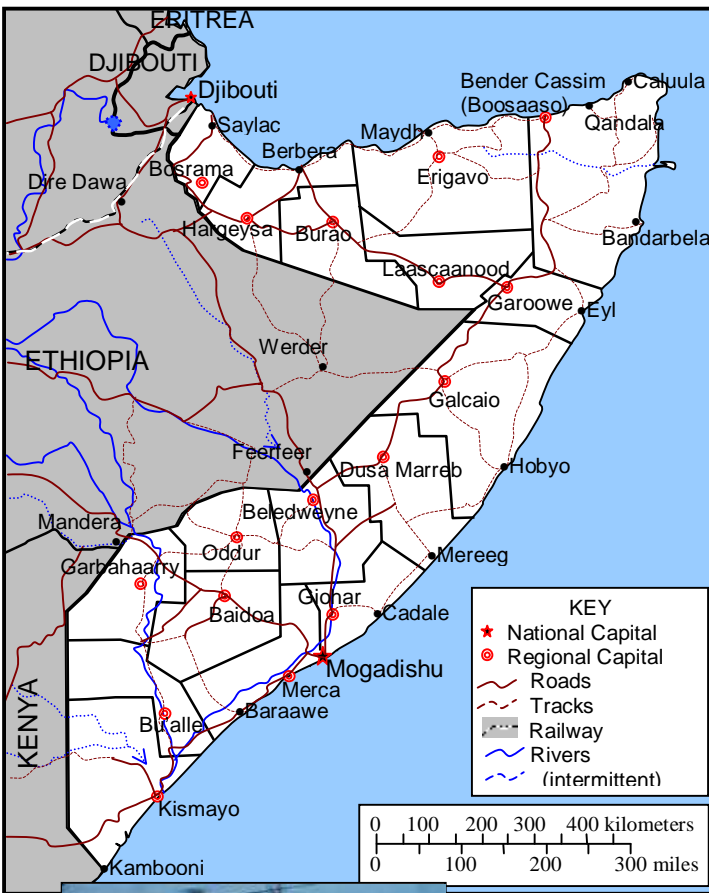


The role of Israel in these various positions is not initially clear. Post- and A-Millennialists tend to consider that Israel no longer holds the privileged position in prophecy that it did previously to their rejection of Christ - though there are different attitudes to this. Historic Pre-Millennialism also makes little distinction between Israel and the Church, acknowledging that God's covenant now includes people of all nations. The idea of dual fulfillment of prophecy is recognized, and allows for an initial occurrence (of the Tribulation, for example) in 70 AD, with the greater fulfillment being expected in the future.

In the Dispensational position, however, there is great significance given to the time of the rapture, which will initiate a period of Tribulation for a restored (but still unbelieving) Israel. This will include a restored temple and sacrificial system - however, during this 7-year period, the temple will be desecrated once again (as was done by Antiochus IV in 167 BC, see *e-NEWS* 35). This sequence of events, and the expected antecedents (establishment of Israel, rule over Jerusalem, construction of Temple), mean that this version of Pre-Millennialism has a much sharper interest in contemporary Israel, and the development of conditions that might anticipate the unfolding of prophecy.

Dispensational Pre-Millennialism, then, looks forward to the rapid unfolding of a prophetic sequence. Apparent fulfillment of this sequence began with Israel's establishment as a modern state in 1948. Interest in the position of Israel in prophecy then grew exponentially upon the acquisition of Jerusalem in 1967. The seemingly miraculous defeat of a number of Arab armies, and the occupation of the West Bank, containing the most significant holy places of the Holy Land - all within a single week - greatly increased public interest in the prophecies related to Israel, the Temple and the Last Days.

Interestingly enough, this interest extends beyond the boundaries of Pre-Millennialism. The theological backgrounds of those interested in a future temple include some that might have been expected to be indifferent to the issue.



### Islamic Interface - Somalia

Somalia's current troubles could be said to have begun in 1991. In that year the president, Siad Barre, was overthrown by clan leaders. Somalia had attacked the neighboring Ogaden region of Ethiopia in 1977, creating an enemy for itself, but was expelled in the following year. During the 1980s President Barre's treatment of the Mijertyn and Isaq minority clans - preventing them participating in government - had increased Somalia's internal problems. The clan leaders that led the coup deposing Barre, however, failed to agree on a replacement, and plunged the country into years of turmoil.

#### TWO AUTONOMOUS REGIONS

In 1991 the north-western portion of Somalia declared itself independent as the Republic of Somaliland. Though it has not been recognised by any other states it has remained relatively stable since then.

During the 1990s Puntland, the territory around Garowe in the north-east, also developed independently, led by **Yusuf Ahmed**, and declared autonomy in 1998.

It was in 1992 that US troops landed in Somalia, ahead of a UN peacekeeping force. 18 US troops were killed in gun battles with clan militias in 1993, and the UN mission left in 1995, having failed to achieve its goal.

#### ATTEMPTS AT RESTORATION

An attempt was made in 2000 to establish a transitional government, even appointing a president, Abdulkassim Salat Hassan. In 2004 a new parliament was set up by a coalition of warlords, which then appointed a new president, Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, leader of Puntland. This government, based in Baidoa, is itself plagued by disagreements and anarchy, and has little actual support outside of Puntland. The president is from the Darod clan, and his Prime Minister, Ali Mohamed Ghedi from the Mogadishu-based, Hawiye clan. Attempts to bring the government back into Somalia itself, from exile in Kenya, have not been successful. Two attacks in Mogadishu in 2005 on the Prime Minister demonstrated the weakness of the government.

#### RECENT EVENTS

In February of 2006 the transitional government met for the first time on Somali territory, in Baidoa. However, in the following months, riots and fighting between rival clans in Mogadishu saw a severe outbreak of violence, with scores of deaths. On June 5<sup>th</sup> militias loyal to the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) took control of Mogadishu, and have since gained strength and driven out of the capital the warlords whose claims have divided Somalia for 15 years. Jowhar was taken by the UIC on June 14<sup>th</sup>, and Hobyo on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

To some extent the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea is mirrored in Somalia. Ethiopia seems to be supporting the transitional government (put together by an alliance of a number of clans) whilst Eritrea is suspected of supporting the Islamic Courts. The UIC claims that US finances are also providing arms for the clan militias.

#### COMMERCE AND PUNISHMENT

Only this month did the port in Mogadishu open to shipping, after weeks of restoration under the authority of the Islamic Courts. Previously, cargo ships moored offshore and were unloaded onto the backs of porters who waded out to them. Imposing their version of *Sharia Law*, the UIC recently sentenced 5 drug dealers, including one woman, to public flogging. Each received 11 strokes.



US helicopter, just prior to the Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1993 Battle of Mogadishu



