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Dear Associates and Friends,

June 2011

As I write these words in June of 2011, several countries in the Middle East are in turmoil and the nation of Syria is experiencing what may be a revolution leading to a change of regime. God is paying particular attention to what happens in Syria and Damascus. Why? Because it is one of God's domiciles, like Jerusalem. You would know that fact if you had read Dr. Ernest L. Martin's article "[The Damascus Phase of End-Time Prophecy](#)" in the past. Now I want you to read that article again.

I am re-issuing this article because of the new developments in the world, and most notably in Syria. I reformatted the article to PDF style, emphasized important points made by Dr. Martin, and added notes to bring the text up to date.

If you have read this article before, it will have a much greater impact upon your understanding at this time than it did the first time you read it. If this article is new to you, you will be amazed, even stunned, at what it contains. Dr. Martin's article was written originally in November 1999, updated by him in November 2000, edited by me in 2005, and finally updated for this June 2011. (The *Byte Show* with GeorgeAnn Hughes that I presented was done from the 2005 edition of this article.)

The purpose of the Associates for Scriptural Knowledge (ASK) is to bring you the latest and best understanding of the Holy Scriptures. This is done primarily through the research and work of Dr. Ernest Martin. When new information comes to light I try to expand upon his work. Current events in the Middle East and in Syria demand a new look at the information regarding the importance of the capital city of Syria, Damascus, and how that city and nearby Mt. Hermon relate to prophecy, to the world, and to you and to me.



Map of the Middle East with Syria emphasized

The Current Situation

First I want to describe the current situation in the Arab Middle East. Several nations in the region are in flux as to their political stability and structure. Tunisia and Egypt have had changes in government but the new rulers have yet to satisfy the majority of the people and further unrest is possible. Other governments in

the region may change and the current situation is chaotic in several countries. Yemen, Libya, and Syria are undergoing open rebellion at present. Outright rebellion has taken place in Libya, openly assisted by military forces from NATO countries. Their purpose is to overthrow the current rulers of Libya. Syria is openly killing demonstrators seeking reform, and Yemen has frequent mass demonstrations calling for regime change and political reform.

With that background here are some points of analysis.

- Countries that are rich in oil revenues have thus far avoided major societal disruptions because they have increased payments to their citizens and avoided unrest. Currently these payments have stifled societal disruptions and demands for regime change. However, the people in the oil-rich countries will soon wonder and demand an answer to the question, why have you not done this before?
- Countries with monarchies have survived to the present. An excellent article by Brian Whitaker was published in the April 27, 2011 of the *Guardian* newspaper titled “[God Save the Arab Kings?](#)” It points out that Arab monarchies underpinned by religion have been relatively unscathed by the Middle East uprisings, but that they may yet be susceptible to serious unrest in the future. These countries are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, the Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Jordan. (These last two monarchies do not have oil revenues.) Demonstrations demanding reform have occurred in all of these countries, but they have not advocated regime change. Lack of reform may change that political dynamic.
- Countries suffering the most disruption have been so-called “republics.” In each of them (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen) the top leaders of those countries have attempted to make their rule hereditary while maintaining a façade of being republics. These regimes pursued populist or socialist strategies but egregious corruption and exploitation of the people by the ruling elite have shown these leaders incapable or unwilling to deliver on promises over many decades.
- A 265 page report sponsored by the United Nations titled “[The Arab Human Development Report, 2004: Towards Freedom in the Arab World](#)” (written when the current pressures for change were still building) notes that there are no Arab democracies. Why? It is because up until a few months ago, Arab populations put up with suppressive autocratic rule as a normal part of life. Things have changed. The current uprisings are led by young people who can now view various media from around the world that makes clear to them that a different model of life is possible. The young people are demanding change in the Arab Middle East. Just the fact of the publication of this 2004 United Nations report shows that the concept of freedom is becoming more and more important in the Arab world. The demand for economic and political freedom is increasing. This trend will continue.
- Interestingly the risings are not related in any way to the issue of Israel. They are strictly internal developments within the several Arab countries. See the April 17, 2011 Commentary which is a reprint of George Freedman’s article from Stratfor.com, “[The Arab Risings, Israel, and Hamas](#).” The article points out that there are no risings in Palestinian territories. In fact, Palestinian territories have been relatively quiet compared to the non-monarchical Arab countries.
- See the free Stratfor.com article “[Obama and the Arab Spring](#).” According to the analysts at Stratfor (who deal with hard geopolitical realities and trends), the Obama administration has come to three conclusions about the so-called “Arab Spring” of uprisings in Arab countries: (1) the risings are genuine and democratic, (2) American opposition may result in an anti-American backlash from new regimes, and (3) **“the United States must embrace the general idea of the Arab risings.”** The Stratfor analysts think the Obama administration is wrong in this understanding. They believe **“not all demonstrations are revolutions. Not all revolutions are democratic revolutions. Not all democratic revolutions lead to constitutional democracy.”** That being said, there is no going back to the same

kind of repressive regimes that Tunisia and Egypt formerly had lived under. Liberty and economic freedom is the goal in these countries, not American-style democracy.

Syria and Damascus

It will come as a surprise to many people in the Middle East and around the world to learn that in the future God Himself will reside in Damascus for a period of time, and not in Jerusalem. An area near to Damascus, the capital of Syria, is the first, the original, Mount Zion. God will return to that location for a period of time before He comes to Jerusalem. Dr. Martin's article will give you the background information regarding this future event that will, in turn, begin a sequence of prophetic events that will have profound importance for all mankind.

The current and ongoing unrest in Syria may be directly related to these future events. The current government in Syria is desperate to hold on to its power. It is murderous in its intent to do so. It is openly killing non-violent demonstrators through the use of snipers who kill apparent demonstration leaders. Significant events are occurring in Syria that will change the current status of that nation in its leadership or its border, or both. Or, it may be that these events in Syria will quiet down and current events are merely a small step toward an identifiable prophetic event. Whatever the case, keep in mind that a change in the borders of Syria or a change of government of Syria are under the direct supervision of God. Syria is important. Damascus is important. Jerusalem is important.

Biblical Events That We Can Identify

There are three criteria for biblical events: (1) Border changes of nations are determined by God, and they are significant and purposeful. (2) Leadership changes are determined by God, and they are significant and purposeful. (3) Biblical events will be easy to identify for those who know the Holy Scriptures. In other words they should be and will be obvious. I wrote about these three points in my Commentary for August 17, 2006, "[The Bible and War in Lebanon](#)."

Therefore, we can only speculate whether non-biblical events have importance or relevance with respect to the writings of the Bible. In fact, most events occurring today, no matter how important, are not biblically significant or identifiable, even though they are leading us event by event, step by step to the time when prophetic events will be obvious. Every day brings us closer to Christ's return, but not every day is a significant milestone of an identifiable biblical event.

Changes to the leadership or the borders of prophetically significant nations such as Syria must be watched closely, just as events in Israel and Jerusalem must be watched closely. For a period of time before Christ returns, events in Syria near the capital of Damascus will be very important. Regime change in Syria may simply be a transfer from one oppressive government to another — just another step along the way. Or, it may be a change that tends toward relative liberty and freedom and economic prosperity that will set an example for other Arab nations.

Recent events have been called the "Arab Spring." A new phase led by the people of Syria may occur soon. The borders of Syria will eventually change, as Dr. Martin indicated in his analysis of Psalm 83. As I wrote in the 2006 Commentary mentioned above (which was specific to Lebanon, but can apply to any country in the region):

"Borders change for two major reasons: war and failed state situations. In war the victors determine new borders (as God leads them). This is understood. What is not often considered is that internal strife within a nation can cause the infrastructure, government, economy, and societal cohesion to break down and cause the nation to collapse from within. That being said, I believe the main cause of border changes (and accompanying leadership changes) will occur when several nations in the Middle East have increased domestic problems leading them further down the path toward "failed state" status. As the countries in the Middle East

surrounding Israel begin to fail, proposed international 'solutions' will increase, borders will be redrawn, resulting in decreased internal and external strife."

- **"The Bible and War in Lebanon," August 2006, emphasis mine**

If positive changes are not made by new regimes, pressure will build and more trouble will ensue, chaos will result, and borders will change according to the purpose of God's will (Ephesians 1:11). God determines borders and when they change. God determines leaders and when they change. This includes Israel and Jerusalem.

Jerusalem Is Still Important

In Jerusalem there is an organization called Sabeel. Dr. Martin gave a well-received lecture at their facility about the true Temple location. I have visited there twice. According to its website, Sabeel is an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians. The members of Sabeel understand the prime importance of Jerusalem and its relationship to the political situation with Israel, Palestine, the larger Middle East, and for the entire world:

"Due to its significance for the whole land, the city of Jerusalem has come to encapsulate the hopes, desires, and dreams of millions of people that are concerned for its well-being and the well-being of all its inhabitants. Jerusalem has been a symbol, model, and paradigm par excellence of peace throughout its history. And today, what happens in and to Jerusalem is an omen for the whole country. It can be an omen for good or bad, for conflict and disaster or for peace and neighborliness."

- **"Sabeel's Call for the Peace of Jerusalem," May 26, 2011**

I cite this quote because it shows a proper understanding of the role of Jerusalem to the problem of peace in the Middle East. The location of the Temple is key to peace in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is key to peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Peace between Israel and Palestine (soon to be a nation) is key to peace in the Middle East. We are encouraged by the psalmist to **"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love you."** (Psalm 122:6). If the issues involving Jerusalem can be solved, many other issues will be more easily dealt with and solved — issues such as the borders of a Palestinian state. Up to the present time solutions have seemed impossible. Perhaps diplomats can use Psalm 83 as a guideline for a future point-in-time rough description of what the boundaries of the nations could be. Syria and its government in Damascus will be one of those nations relating in a friendly manner to Israel — believe it or not.

Thank You

Dr. Martin's article "The Damascus Phase of End-Time Prophecy" identifies a particular future event that "starts the clock" of the prophetic sequence of Zechariah chapters 9 to 14. Dr. Martin could not have done his research without your support of ASK through your contributions. Your help and donations and prayers to God on our behalf are appreciated most gratefully.

Some people ask, what is the will of God? The apostle Paul tells us in a certain sense:

"Rejoice evermore [always]. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

- ***1 Thessalonians 5:16–18***

Turn this expression around: God's will concerning you is that you give thanks in everything. We try to do the same. To paraphrase the apostle Paul: **"whatsoever [we] do in word or deed, [we try to] do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks [for you] to God and the Father by him"** (Colossians 3:17). We try to express our thanks to you and to God. Thank you all.

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