

MID-EAST e-NEWS

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Welcome

A new, and overdue, series begins today: an outline *History of Islam* occupies a 1/3 column on page 2. As usual, I value your input.

Some other issues you may want to keep tracking as you browse for news are listed on p3.

Request: I would be interested in any information some of you might have about education in Arab Countries (for some of my college research). Especially related to teaching styles, teacher training, etc.

Keep in touch.

Email your responses to pkclark@pmbx.net & check the web for back issues.

Iraq Election

The election in Iraq was reported on Sunday to have gone reasonably well, with as many as 70% having voted. Since Shiites and Kurds have been supporting the election, and are likely to have turned out in force, we will probably find that Sunni participation is less than 50%. (But then, the vote in Texas in November was less than 50%, and they weren't risking their lives to even go and vote!)

How Does The Election Work?

There will be 275 seats available to candidates in the election.

As is usual in the Middle East, the multiplicity of parties is eased by various groups forming a *list* of their candidate members.

Voters will then vote for this list.

The proportion of votes that is received for each list then determines how many of its candidates will receive seats in the assembly. [Example: If a party achieves 4% of the vote, then they will receive 11 seats (4% of 275) in the assembly].

Candidates obtain their seats according to their place in the list, so the order in which they are placed on the list is significant. [Eg. the first 11 candidates would receive seats].

What is the Election For?

A Transitional National Assembly (TNA) is being elected, with each province electing separate Provincial Legislatures. The northern, Kurdish, region will elect its own *autonomous* National Assembly.

The TNA will itself elect a President and two deputies, who will appoint a *temporary* Prime Minister and a cabinet. This should be done by February.

By August a Constitution should be drafted, or at least in process, and this will be voted on (if ready) in November. (A delay of 6 months is allowed for).

If the constitution is approved, by voters, then new National Elections will be held in December, 2005 (Dec. 15th) for a constitutional government, which could take power by the end of the year.

A Reminder

As we have watched the news the second half of this month we may have been greatly encouraged by the progress in relations between the Israeli government and the Palestinians. As news comes in from Afghanistan it may seem that the country is becoming more organized, more willing to live by rule of law, and less dangerous to natives and aid workers.

The first days of February may even confirm early reports of a reasonable, maybe even a high turnout among Iraqi voters. This, though the bulk of votes may have been in Kurdish and Shiite areas, would show how many Iraqis are determined to resist the militants. As the National Assembly is organized in the coming weeks, we may sigh with relief, thinking that maybe this whole thing will come together after all!

I just wanted to remind readers that the turmoil we see on our TV, in the newspapers, and hear about on the radio, is not a guerilla war, nor is it really a ground war, though the car bombs and suicide bombs may divert our attention for a while. And – in spite of the helicopters, drones, bombers and other planes being used against the various targets – neither is the air war where we should be directing our focus.

The real war, the one we are being distracted from by the flash-bang of man-made weapons, is a conflict over the territory of people's souls. Whatever the outcomes of current events, we should be praying for those in spiritual bondage, those deceived by lying teachers, those who in fear have for centuries not dared to even *listen* to the gospel. We should, like Daniel, be participating in the war in which we have all been enlisted, on our knees against the ruler of this earth. *The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*

Jerusalem – Daniel’s Kingdoms

In the Biblical record of Jerusalem there is a 400-year between Nehemiah’s reconstruction and the Temple that Jesus knew. This article gives a brief survey of the events in the Holy Land during that time.

In Daniel 2, Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a statue. Daniel’s explanation of the dream is a prophecy of kingdoms that would follow Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. There is general agreement over which Empires correspond to which portions of the statue, and the rock which destroyed it.

Head	Gold	Babylon	606 BC	Nebuchadnezzar
Chest/Arms	Silver	Medo-Persia	538	Cyrus
Belly/Thighs	Bronze	Greece	331	Alexander
Legs	Iron	Rome	63	Pompey/Caesars
Feet	Iron/Clay	Rome (future?)		
	Rock	Kingdom of God		Jesus

(Whether the Iron/Clay represents a modern-day reincarnation of the Roman Empire – the EU has been suggested – is an area of discussion today).

Daniel 7 and 8 record additional details about the kingdoms that would succeed that of Nebuchadnezzar. Chapter 8 was written during the reign of Belshazzar and the Ram in vv3-7 seems to represent the Persian Empire. This is reinforced by the parallels between the Goat – which came rapidly from the west, but which failed at the height of its power – and the conquests of the Greek, Alexander the Great. He died while still young, and his conquests were shared between four of his generals, ruling Thrace, Greece (Antigonids), Syria (Seleucids), and Egypt (Ptolemies), though the latter three were most significant.

It is in this context that we cover this material in our series on Jerusalem. The Holy Land was ruled by the successors of Ptolemy (not the geographer, but Alexander’s general of the same name) but they were challenged frequently by the Seleucids of Syria. Over a period of 75 years the Syrian Wars were fought between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, until in BC 200 the Ptolemies (under Ptolemy V) were forced to yield Palestine to Antiochus III.

In this context Daniel 11 prophesies the dissolution of Alexander’s short-lived empire (vv1-4) and then the complex rivalry between the Ptolemies (kings of the South) and the Seleucids (North). Antiochus’ repeated assaults on Egypt are recorded, and his being turned back by Rome (11:30) before then turning upon Jerusalem and the Temple (11:31/32).

Antiochus IV came to throne in BC 175 and dealt roughly with the newly-occupied Jews. In BC 168 he outlawed Judaism and attempted to put an end to the sacrificial system. The two Apocryphal books of Maccabees document the events that led up to the Maccabean revolt, including the defilement of the temple when Antiochus sacrificed a pig on the altar.

On the 15th day of Chislev in the year 145 (6 Dec 167 BC), the king erected the abomination that desecrates on the altar of burnt-offerings. And in cities around Judah they built high altars.

And they sacrificed incense at the doors of houses and in the streets.

Also, when they found Torah scrolls they tore them up and burnt them.

And whenever someone was found with a scroll of the covenant or observing the Torah, he was put to death under the king’s decree. (1 Maccabees 1:29-33, 41-57)

Next Issue: *The Hasmoneans and Herodian Jerusalem*

History of Islam

In this overview we shall try to obtain a grasp of the foundations of Islam, its origins and teachings, in a series of brief articles under the headings:

- Muhammad**
- The Qur’an**
- The Hadith**
- Teachings of Islam**
- Traditions of Islam**
- Practices of Islam**

Visions and Revelations

Muhammad founded the religion as a consequence of a series of visions and revelations over a period of 23 years. These visions and revelations were recorded, written or memorized, by his followers.

Born around A.D.570 in Mecca, he was orphaned by the age of six, and grew up in the care of his uncle.

He obtained experience with trading caravans while working with his uncle, and at the age of 25 led a successful trade to Syria for Khadija, a wealthy widow about 15 years older than him. She then invited him to marry her, and he accepted. Of their 6 children, four survived childhood.

It was 15 years later, A.D.610, that he had his first vision, said to come from God through the angel Gabriel. His wife encouraged him – though he himself had concerns that he might be being oppressed by a *Djinn* (evil spirit). When the messages resumed, 3 years later, his first converts included Khadija, Zaid, his adopted son, and Abu Bakr, his most loyal and lifelong adherent and the first Caliph after the death of Mohammed.

The various accounts of Muhammad’s life were written by later biographers. One of the earliest, Ibn Ishaq, died in 773, 140 years after Muhammad. Not all biographers agree in the details.

(Much of this information was obtained from: Answering Islam, Geisler & Saleeb, 2002)

The Fourth Crusade

The status quo between Saladin and Richard Lionheart was not challenged for many years. In Europe the Popes were losing their political power, and when Innocent III called for a Crusade in 1198 there was little response. Eventually, in 1200, Boniface of Montferrat approached the Venetians to provide transport. After some bargaining Venice accepted the task of transporting 30,000 troops to Egypt, the goal of this Crusade. Unfortunately, when only a fraction of the expected number of Crusaders arrived on the island of Lido in 1201, the Venetians demanded the full amount they had bargained for. This would have made puppers of the Crusaders, but the Venetians blockaded them on the island of Lido until some agreement could be made.

As part of the agreement they were forced to make with the Venetians, the Crusaders assisted them in attacking the Balkan port of Zara. Simon De Montfort refused, and sailed home, but the others participated. Since the king, Emeric, was Catholic, Innocent III excommunicated the Crusaders for this action.

Boniface was absent during the Zara campaign. He had met with Alexius Angelus, the son of Byzantine Emperor Isaac II. Isaac had been deposed recently, and Alexius offered to pay the Crusader's debts if they would replace his family on the throne in Constantinople. That is how the Fourth Crusade was diverted from attacking the Muslims in Egypt to participating in the fall of Constantinople and the ultimate schism between the Eastern and Western branches of the Catholic Church.

Assisted by the Venetians, who had long enmity with Constantinople, the Crusaders attacked Constantinople in 1203. The people preferred the emperor who had usurped the throne to Isaac II, or anyone supported by the Latins, but when the usurper fled the city accepted the return of Isaac, and Alexius was installed as co-emperor on August 1, 1203.

Once installed on the throne the Crusaders found that the treasury did not have the finances to repay the

Venetians. At the same time political groups within Constantinople would frequently attack the Crusaders in the streets. Alexius asked the Crusaders to move camp to the other side of the Golden Horn, but tensions were still high. The presence of a mosque in the city – a Christian city – offended the Latins, and during an attack on this mosque a large part of the city was burned.



A Medieval illustration of Constantinople. The channel of the Golden Horn is on the right. Notice the chain across its entrance.

Alexius IV was murdered early in 1204 and again the Crusaders prepared to attack the city. Alexius V brought out his troops to defend the walls, a force greater than that the Crusaders could provide, but before the assault started Alexius retired through the gates. His troops and imperial guard defended the city, though Alexius himself fled during the night. Innocent III prohibited the Crusaders from fighting but his call was ignored.

Constantinople's walls were strong but the Crusaders were able to make some small holes, and the Venetians also scaled other portions from the

sea. Once they had a section of the city in their hands the Crusaders used fire to destroy the defenders' positions ahead of them, but once again the fire got out of control and even more of the city was destroyed by it than the previous time. Once in control of the city the Crusaders and Venetians went on a 3-day rampage, looting and destroying many of the marvelous buildings and works of art in the ancient city.

Apology: *A Religious War?* is delayed (front page pressure) and will continue next issue.

Events we should pay attention to:

A woman terrorist was caught attempting to assassinate the Mosul police chief. She admitted to being trained at Russian-supplied camp in Syria.

Christian churches around the world are being attacked. Militants in Aceh, however, were grateful for the aid brought by Western countries, including the transportation provided by the US military.

An Egyptian Coptic family was killed in their home in New Jersey on Jan. 14th. Authorities do not want to jump to conclusions about it being a sectarian killing, though Hassan Armanious was active in Internet chat-room debates about Christianity and Islam.

