

## A Christian Worldview of the Iranian War.02

**Similar to Christianity in which all professing Christians believe in the Ecumenical Creeds, such as “The Apostle’s Creed,” yet there are major “branches” with distinct differences between the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant Churches, as well as various “denominations” in these branches, so also in Islam there are major “branches” with various “denominations” in those branches**

**The two major branches that developed through the history of Islam are “Sunni,” composed of around 80-85% of Muslims, and “Shia,” composed of about 18-12%**

- While they have the same foundational beliefs, among them being the 7 previously stated, and the same required basic practices, there are varying degrees of differences between them
- Because the focus of this study is on Iran, we will only look at three key beliefs of the present leadership “regime” of the government in Iran that came to power in 1979 which is Shia

**(1) The foremost difference between the Sunni and Shia is in their understanding of authority and who was to be the rightful successor or Caliph after Muhammad died in 632**

- While the Sunni believe that the rightful Caliph was to be elected, the Shia believe legitimate authority was to come through the family line of Muhammad and his son-in-law Ali, with the name “Shia” being derived from the Arabic designation “party of Ali”
- So great were these differences among Muslims that between 656 and 692 there were two civil wars, and these “parties” eventually “solidified” into the Sunni and Shia branches of Islam

**Critical events during this time were the assassination of the third Caliph, Uthman, in 656, with Ali becoming the fourth Caliph and then being assassinated in 661, and the death of Husayn ibn Ali, the grandson of Muhammad, at the Battle of Karbala (Iraq) in 680**

- While Husayn ibn Ali is honored by both Sunni and Shia, his death is so significant in the history of the Shia that it is commemorated in an annual ritual event called “Ashura” to honor him as a martyr and mourn his death as a sacrifice in the “struggle” against tranny and injustice
  - He is believed to be the foremost example religious devotion and resistance against oppression, and, as such, this forms Shia identity and their willingness to die as martyrs for their faith
- ➔ **It is important to understand this in regard to the Shia leadership and the Iranian war**

**(2) While both Sunni and Shia have leaders identified as an “Imam,” they define their roles and authority differently**

- Sunnis define their “Imams” as a prayer leader of a mosque who gives guidance to the community, and anyone, having studied the basic teachings of Islam, can become an Imam
- Shia define their “Imams” as a man chosen by God, who descended from the family line of Muhammad through Ali, was a sinless, perfect example, and has absolute, infallible authority

**Among Shia, there are different “denominations” based on how many “Imams” are recognized, some recognizing five, others seven, and the majority twelve, who are called “Twelvers,” with the leadership regime in Iran being “Twelvers”**

- The twelve began with Ali, the third was Husayn ibn Ali, and the twelfth is Muhammad al Mahdi who was born in 868

- Because Shia believe that their Imam must be living, they believe that, to avoid assassination, Muhammad al Mahdi went into hiding in 874 and is presently living somewhere on earth
- He is believed to be “the Mahdi” who will reappear at the “the end of time” to establish Islam on the earth

➔ **The stated purpose of the Iranian government is to prepare the way for his reappearance**

**(3) An essential aspect of Twelver eschatology (end-time prophecy belief) is that prior to the reappearance of the Mahdi there will be moral decay, false teaching, conflict and civil war among Muslims, global turmoil and chaos, and finally an apocalyptic war at the end of time, and the way must be prepared for his reappearance by removing the obstacles for the Mahdi’s reappearance**

- A primary example of this is that when Ayatollah Khomeini became the “Supreme Leader” of the Iranian government in 1979, traditional Shia moral law was instituted and strictly enforced

**The stated core mission of the Iranian government, and specifically the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) military branch, in distinction to the Iranian army, is to prepare the way for the Mahdi through promoting chaos, terrorism and military engagements in order to bring about the final apocalyptic war and victory of the Mahdi**

- For this reason, they devote their resources to the development of weapons of warfare, such as missiles and the stated “right” to make atomic weapons, in order to create chaos and destroy the obstacles to their mission, the foremost being the United States, “the great Satan,” and Israel, “the little Satan,” as well as other Sunni Muslims and nations such as Saudi Arabia
- Accordingly, they have chanted in gatherings and at the beginning of every school day, “Death to America, Death to Israel”

➔ **One cannot understand “the Iranian War” apart from this “religious” mission and motivation of Twelvers who exercise the authority of governmental leadership in Iran**

**In presenting “A Christian Worldview of the Iranian War,” the critical question is “What is God doing?”**

- ➔ The answer to this question is to “view” the war through the revelation of God in His word which records God’s will and ways with the nations of the earth, along with the spiritual forces that empower them, and what He has revealed about His purposes for them in prophecy

**First and foremost, the Scriptures reveal that God is “on the throne of the universe,” sovereignly overruling and providentially guiding all things according to “the counsel of His will” (Eph.1:11) in executing His righteous judgments concerning the nations**

- Psalm 9:4-8 = You have sat on the throne, giving righteous judgment. <sup>5</sup>You have rebuked the nations; you have made the wicked perish; you have blotted out their name forever and ever. <sup>6</sup>The enemy came to an end in everlasting ruins; their cities you rooted out; the very memory of them has perished. <sup>7</sup> But the LORD sits enthroned forever; he has established his throne for justice, <sup>8</sup> and he judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness.

**Scripture reveals God sovereignly raises up and destroys human governments, nations, kingdoms, and empires according to His righteous judgment in His ordained time**

- This is made known from the first book of Scripture, the Book of Genesis, to the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, and especially in the prophets of the Old Testament through whom God declared His judgments to raise up and destroy nations, kingdoms, and empires
- A vivid example of this is the Book of Daniel that foretells the rise and destruction of kingdoms/empires on the earth, symbolized in hybrid “beasts,” and culminates with the rise of “the Antichrist” and the Second Coming of Christ in His eternal kingdom (Dan. 2; 7-12)
- The overall theme of Daniel is stated in **Daniel 4:17** = *The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones [the divine counsel], to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will*
- God’s judgments are not only against the human rulers and nations but the spiritual beings who were the “gods” and ruling spirits of and over those nations
- **Exodus 12:12** = *For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD.* (Also Num. 33:4; Ps. 82, which is about the spiritual rulers/gods)

**It is vital to understand that God Himself “views” the evil, sinful actions, not only of individuals, but of nations, as sin against Him and He “takes it Personally” (Deut. 7:10)**

- For this reason, He “views” them as His Personal enemies and makes declarations in pronouncing judgment that He will Personally “*rise up against them*”
- **Psalm 92:9** = *For behold, Your enemies, O LORD, for behold, Your enemies shall perish; all evildoers shall be scattered.*
- **Isaiah 14:22** = “*I will rise up against them,” declares the LORD of hosts, “and will cut off from Babylon name and remnant, descendants and posterity,” declares the LORD.*

**An essential principle of God’s righteous judgment against nations to destroy them is that their “iniquity” has “filled” like a cup and become “complete”**

- He revealed this at the time He made His covenant with Abraham, telling him that his descendants would be slaves in Egypt and return to the “Promised” land when the “iniquity” of the people of the land was “complete”
- **Genesis 15:16** = *And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.*”

**In Hebrew, there are three words for “sin” with distinct connotations and meanings**

- (1) “Peshah,” usually translated “sin,” and connotes the evil desire and act of sin
  - (2) “Chattah,” usually translated “transgression” and connotes the violation of God’s law
  - (3) “Awvon,” usually translated “iniquity” and connotes not only sinful acts but, most importantly, the corruption of human nature (DNA) that is conformed to sin and Satanic culture
- While in His mercy God gives nations time to repent, and, if they do, will “relent” of His planned judgment, such as is recorded in the book of Jonah (3:10), when, in God’s judgment, the “iniquity” of a nation has become “complete,” He will sovereignly act to destroy that nation, kingdom, and empire in His time and according to the means He chooses
  - **Jeremiah 50:31** = “*Behold, I am against you, O proud one, declares the LORD God of hosts, for your day has come, the time when I will punish you.*”

**An aspect of God's sovereign and providential judgment against nations is that He will "harden the heart" of leaders of a nation, as well as the people of that nation, who reject Him, His moral laws and His will, with the express purpose to destroy them**

- Exodus 14:17 = I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen.

- Joshua 11:20 = For it was the LORD'S doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy but be destroyed, just as the LORD commanded Moses.

**While God has acted directly to destroy people and nations, such as in the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the Passover, He ordinarily chooses to use other nations, kingdoms, and empires to conquer and destroy them**

- Jeremiah 50:9 = For behold, I am stirring up and bringing against Babylon a gathering of great nations, from the north country. And they shall array themselves against her. From there she shall be taken. Their arrows are like a skilled warrior who does not return empty-handed.

- Ezekiel 26:3 = Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will bring up many nations against you, as the sea brings up its waves.

**In this regard, as God is pleased, He will name specific rulers that He sovereignly uses to accomplish His judgments and purposes among the nations**

- Jeremiah 27:6-8 = Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant... <sup>7</sup> All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson, until the time of his own land comes.

- Isaiah 44:24-45:4 = Thus says the LORD, I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, <sup>25</sup> who frustrates the signs of liars and makes fools of diviners, who turns wise men back and makes their knowledge foolish, <sup>26</sup> who confirms the word of his servant and fulfills the counsel of his messengers...<sup>28</sup> who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose' <sup>1</sup> Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: <sup>2</sup> "I will go before you and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, <sup>3</sup> I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. <sup>4</sup> For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me.

**It is most important to see that God "called" these kings by name, designated them as "my servant" and "my shepherd," and "anointed" them - the Hebrew word is literally "messiah" - to "fulfill His purpose" to "subdue nations" and yet He explicitly states that they "do not know" Him and, in fact, worship other gods**

- People who interpret "what is happening" in the world *exclusively* through their own religious, moral, and/or political "views" may not see "what God is doing" through such kings and nations

- This is the very thing that the prophet Habakkuk wrestled with when God revealed to him that He was raising up and would bring the Chaldeans/Babylon in judgment against His own people

- Habakkuk 1:5-6 = "Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told. <sup>6</sup> For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth

**This brings us to key components of God's ways and judgments through the course of history which have to do with His covenant people, Israel**

- The Scriptures reveal that God chose and made covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their family line whom He named "Israel," and an important aspect of this covenant is that He promised to give them the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:7; 13:15)
- While there are various details of this covenant, such as with those who are not faithful to the covenant, being "their God" by covenant, declared that He will never break this covenant with the people as a "nation" because they are "His people" (Gen. 17:7; Rom. 11:29)
- **Jeremiah 31:35-36** = *Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the LORD of hosts is his name:* <sup>36</sup> **"If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the LORD, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever.**
- As He stated when He called Abraham, God's purpose was that through them "*all the families of the earth would be blessed*" (Gen. 12:3), which would ultimately come through Christ
- Because this was His purpose, He also stated the moral/spiritual law, "*I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse*" (Gen. 12:3)

**In the course of history, God made a subsidiary covenant with Israel through Moses, promising covenant blessings if they obeyed Him, thereby becoming a "light to the nations" (Isa. 51:4), and covenant curses if they disobeyed Him, thereby "profaning His name among the nations" (Ezek. 20:9, 39) (See Lev. 26; Deut. 28)**

- According to the covenant curses, God declared that if Israel continued in rebellion against Him, He would raise up nations against them to discipline them, eventually exile them from their land and "*scatter them among the nations*" (Lev. 26:33; Deut. 28:64), which happened in 587 B.C. through the Babylonians and in 70 A.D. through the Romans
- The Scriptures record that while God would providentially "raise up" nations to discipline and scatter His covenant people because of their sin, He would later bring His judgment upon those nations and destroy them, as He did with empires such as Babylon (Isa. 14-15; 47; Jer. 50-51)
- He also promised that He would bring Israel back to their "Promised" land (Deut. 30:1-5), which took place at the time of Cyrus under the leadership of Zebubabel, Ezra and Nehemiah beginning in 538 B.C., and again in "*the latter days*" of history (Deut. 4:30), which is currently accelerating after the Holocaust with the establishment of the nation-state of Israel in 1948

**From its establishment as a nation-state in 1948, "Israel" has fought 6 major wars against Muslim nation-states (not simply "Arab") as well as suffered continuous acts of terrorism and antisemitism, yet it is evident that "against all odds" God has given them victory and sovereignly preserved the nation so that, ultimately, they will be saved (Rom. 11:26)**

→ While Iran, along with its surrogates such as Hezbollah and Hamas, are used to discipline Israel for their sin, because the stated purpose of the government "regime" of Iran is the destruction of Israel and the Jewish people, they are under God's curse, and it is evident that at the present time He is executing His righteous judgment against it through this "war"

**This then brings us to the question of what prophecy in Scripture indicates is taking place through God's judgment of the government of Iran by this "war"**

- There are at least two things that may be taking place, which will only be confirmed as accurate as history unfolds

**First is a prophecy in Jeremiah 49:35-39 concerning “Elam,” which is the historical geographical location of Persia and the present nation state of Iran**

- The greater context in Jeremiah chapters 46-51 is God’s declaration of judgments against nations that include Egypt, the Philistines, and Babylon, all of whom He says He will destroy with the one exception of Elam

- **Jeremiah 49:35-39** = *Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, the mainstay of their might. <sup>36</sup> And I will bring upon Elam the four winds from the four quarters of heaven. And I will scatter them to all those winds, and there shall be no nation to which those driven out of Elam shall not come. <sup>37</sup> I will terrify Elam before their enemies and before those who seek their life. I will bring disaster upon them, my fierce anger; declares the LORD. I will send the sword after them, until I have consumed them, <sup>38</sup> and I will set my throne in Elam and destroy their king and officials, declares the LORD. <sup>39</sup> “But in the latter days I will restore the fortunes [captivity] of Elam, declares the LORD.”*

**There a number of significant things about this prophecy that may be taking place**

- (1) This prophecy has to do with “*the latter days*,” the time we are living in
- (2) God would “*scatter*” the people of the land to the nations, which, for the most part, only took place in the land at the time of the Iranian Revolution in 1979
- (3) God would “*destroy their king and officials*,” which took place in the initial attack against Iran on Feb. 28, when the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was killed, and most, if not all their “*officials*” are being killed
- (4) God will “*set His throne*” in the land, which means His kingdom rule in believers in Christ, which is manifestly taking place among the people of Iran where many believe the greatest revival on earth has been taking place
- In 1997 when the Iranian Revolution took place there was estimated to be less than 500 “Muslim Background Believers” - Muslims who converted to Christ
- Today, it is estimated there may almost 3 million
- (5) God says, “*I will restore the fortunes/captivity*” which may be that, with the “regime” change, there will be significant influence of Christians in Iran who will be used of God to bring spiritual revival to the surrounding nations to help accomplish God’s purpose for the evangelization of nations leading to the end of the age (Ps. 2:8; Matt. 24:14; Acts 1:8)

**Second, the attacks by Iran against the surrounding Muslim (Sunni) nations have caused them to “join” with the United States and Israel against Iran**

- This may lead them to join the “Abraham Accords” which may make the way for two things:

- (1) **The time of “*peace and security*” before the Second Coming of Christ**
  - **1 Thessalonians 5:2-3** = *For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup> While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.*
- (2) **The covenant foretold in Daniel 9:27 may be enacted, making the way for the temple in Jerusalem to be rebuilt and then for the “Antichrist” to appear, who is most likely the Muslim Mahdi (Matt. 24:15; 2 Thes. 2:1-12)**
  - **Daniel 9:27** = *And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”*