

Timothy Ministries News & Insight

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Does Bible Prophecy Predict A Caliphate?

A caliph is a successor of Muhammad, and a caliphate is the group of nations under the caliph's dominion. Does Scripture foretell the formation of a new Islamic caliphate in the



Photo by Rachel Graciano

Middle East? Not exactly, but it does predict the End-Time rise of a ten-nation federation in the eastern Mediterranean world, under a ruler with ties to what is now Iraq. That ruler, the Antichrist, is not yet

identifiable, but the current atrocities of the so-called Islamic State may set the stage for a new strong man in Iraq who will present himself as a moderate to gain acceptance in the public eye. Having come to power, he will establish a brief, false peace in the Middle East (Daniel 9.27).

In my 2008 paper, "Battling Babylons" (http://www.tmin.org/pdfs/Battling_Babylons.pdf), I wrote, "Watch for Iraq, Syria and possibly Lebanon and Turkey to unite in a revived Assyria." This has not occurred yet, but the proclamation of a caliphate by ISIS, and the stated goals for which they are fighting so viciously, confirm that the formation of such a federation is a priority for radical Muslim leaders. The coming Antichrist will probably unite fragments of the ISIS "caliphate" under his own rule.

I also explained in "Battling Babylons" that — as counterintuitive as it seems to us now — the book of Revelation identifies the literal city of Rome as doomed to destruction in the End Time by action of the Mideastern federation. It should not surprise us, therefore, that in their propaganda video of Feb. 15, filmed

on the shore of Libya, an ISIS militant declared, "We will conquer Rome, by the will of Allah."

ISIS has little interest in Rome as a city, but sees Rome as a symbol of the anti-Islamic West. As such, Rome will remain in radical Islam's cross-hairs until the end.

❖ Roderick Graciano

John The Baptist Didn't Invent Baptism

It's easy to grow up in church today thinking of baptism as a uniquely New Testament phenomenon, but immersion rites did not originate with John the Baptist. In fact, the Egyptians had purificatory rites involving water ablutions before the time of Moses, and Greek pilgrims who participated in the pagan initiation rites at Eleusis were baptizing themselves in the sea by 530 BC. More importantly, the Jewish culture from which Christianity emerged had long practiced various immersions for restoring ritual cleanliness (Lev 14, 15, 16), and had immersed their priests in a ceremony of consecration (Ex 29, 40; Lev 8). Nearer to the Christian era, the Jewish sectarian community at Qumran had been practicing rituals of immersion for perhaps a hundred years before John the Baptist appeared, and the mainstream rabbis had also



Photo by Roderick Graciano, 2008

One of the immersion pools at Qumran

developed a protocol for proselyte conversion that included full immersion.

We realize, therefore, that the meaning of John's baptism, and the Christian baptism that followed it, must derive from the first-century Jewish understanding of such a rite. Of the various facets of meaning that baptism had for the Jews, the primary one taken over by John the Baptist and by Jesus was that of consecration. The Jews who flocked to John at the Jordan to be baptized were, by their repentance, consecrating themselves to receive the new phase of the Kingdom which John was announcing. Likewise, Jesus, by His baptism ceremonially consecrated Himself to His high-priestly duties in the Kingdom, and now His followers consecrate themselves by baptism to follow in His priestly footsteps (Revelation 1.6; 5.10).

Everyone Mentoring And Being Mentored

Dan and Hillary Donohoue are planting a church in Parkland, WA, and Roderick and Kaaren Graciano, along with others, are lending their

assistance. Discipleship is a priority for this new congregation, and we've often verbalized that priority with the catchphrase, "Everyone mentoring, everyone being mentored."

This aspiration of high congregational involvement in discipleship is undeniably elusive. Young Americans don't naturally seek out spiritual mentors, and older Christians find it increasingly difficult to find mentors they can learn from. Nevertheless, the Bible clearly encourages us in the *life-long* pursuit of edifying and being edified by one another in direct ways — both in public services and in appropriate one-on-one or small-group meetings. The apostle Paul even coined a word, *synarmologeo* (Eph 2.21; 4.16) to express God's intent that the members of the Body fit together in a complementary fashion, in order that we might build ourselves up by what every individual part contributes **at the joints**, i.e., at our relational connections (Eph 4.16).

It's a privilege, therefore, for us older folks to have this opportunity in the Parkland church plant to speak into the lives of younger ministers and students who have embraced the call to mentor and be mentored.

Timothy Min Turns 39

This April 2015 will mark the 39th year of Timothy Ministries' service to the Church at large and outreach to neighbors near and far. What adventures we've had! I'm thinking back to 4-wheeling Bibles to remote ranches in the hills of Baja, to Kaaren hosting Muslim students and other long-term guests in our home, and to the times Timothy Ministries has provided an organizational framework for other ministers and missionaries in transition. I'm thinking of the countless mentoring/counseling meetings that Mike Keith and I have had with Christian men over the years, the courses I've had the joy of teaching, and the many "students" who have taught me so much. We are profoundly grateful for the privilege God has given us to do the work we love for so many years, and for the many friends through whom God has encouraged us and made our work possible. May God return the blessing to you all a hundredfold!

