

## Feeding the Hungry

A NASA water study conducted by satellite and released in February 2013 indicates an alarming decline in the waters in and below the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and elsewhere in the middle east. According to the study, parts of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran along the Tigris and Euphrates river basins had lost 144 cubic kilometres of water from 2003 to 2009, roughly equivalent to the volume of the Dead Sea. This is one of the areas the middle east depends on for wheat production. According to the data collected by NASA, this fertile crescent region is experiencing the world's second fastest rate of water depletion, after northern India.

Fifty years ago the Middle East and Africa were importing only small amounts of food but by 2010 according to Cargill, a large grain trading company, the region was importing over 150 million tonnes, the largest amount in the world. If water levels drop further there will be even more demand. That demand is difficult to meet even now.

Some Middle Eastern countries have exhausted groundwater supplies in their quest for self-sufficiency when it comes to food security, part of a "green revolution" that began in the 1970s. For example Saudi Arabia has provided farmers virtually free electricity to pump ground water to the surface, however because of the water loss caused by these practices, the Saudi government plans to cease wheat production by 2016.

Water is a fundamental part of the social contract in Middle Eastern countries where governments often rely on subsidized food and fuel, and cheap or free water to avoid dissent. While to date water has played a limited role in prompting unrest, permanent water loss will change water's role in potential internal conflicts.

Will the world experience conflict, food shortages, starvation and famine forever as populations grow and natural resources like water diminish? The Bible tells us that a day is coming when the kingdoms of men will be superseded by the Kingdom of God, and that there will be food in abundance. The prophet Joel tells us to *"Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil."* Joel 2:23-24.

God tells us through the psalmist that those who trust in Him can have confidence that He will provide for their needs. *"Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing."* Psalm 65:9-13

And again, *“Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.”* Isaiah 49:8-10.

Are you ready for God’s Kingdom at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ?

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