

A WORLD IN MOTION

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In this special edition

LOOKING BACK AT 10 KEY EVENTS FROM THE PAST YEAR

&

LOOKING FORWARD AT 5 DEVELOPING STORIES TO WATCH (AND PRAY FOR)

2017

THE NUMBERS: THE WORLD IN 2017



3.6%

The estimated average world economic growth



83 million

The estimated number of people added to the world population



63,562

The combined fatalities for this year, of the four major world conflicts



55%

The percentage of refugees that come from just three countries—South Sudan, Syria and Afghanistan

2017—LOOKING BACK AT TEN KEY EVENTS

2017 has been another dramatic, violent and tumultuous year. It can be challenging to take off the world's 'glasses' and put the Lord's on when considering the events of the past year, but that is our mandate. If we hold to the truth that He is sovereign, then we need to also believe that He is actively engaged in that which is going on in our world. And, if He is engaged, then we as the Body of Christ have a part to play in the outworking of His plans. Action begins with being informed, thus we bring you this special edition of A World in Motion in which we look back at 10 key events that impacted our world in 2017, and forward to five developing stories that will carry into 2018.



'DEFEAT' OF THE ISLAMIC STATE

The latter half of 2017 saw the official "defeat" of the Islamic State (IS) with the liberation of Mosul (Iraq's second largest city) in July and Raqqa (IS' 'capital' in Syria) in October. The battle for Mosul saw some of the most intense urban warfare since World War Two, while the fall of Raqqa involved some of the worst aerial bombardment of the war in Syria, leaving the city totally devastated.

The end of a physical 'state' (aside from a few pockets along the Euphrates, bordering Syria and Iraq) is a tremendous victory, and should be celebrated as such, but most role players are cautiously optimistic. No one views this as a complete defeat, as Islamist militancy is not a new

phenomenon. The Guardian explains that there have been four major waves over the past 50 years: the first two (in the late 1970s and early 80s, and then in the early 90s) remained largely limited to the Muslim world; the third and the fourth (from the mid-90s through to 2010, and from then until now) have combined great violence in Muslim-majority countries with a series of significant attacks in the West. All four waves followed a similar trajectory: a slow, unnoticed period of growth, a spectacular event bringing the new threat to public attention, a phase of brutal struggle, then retreat. Many times, extremist groups are allowed to re-emerge due to poor management of the region in the wake of conflict, allowing a vacuum to develop that then gets filled by militants. It is therefore important that nations supporting the rebuilding of Iraq and Syria stress the unconditional involvement of all ethnic groups, since there is unmistakable evidence that marginalisation of ethnic groups (whether they be in the minority or majority) becomes fuel for extremism.

From a Christian Perspective

The Christian communities in Iraq suffered tremendously under the Islamic State and need assistance if they are to return and become re-established in their traditional home of Mesopotamia (Nineveh plains region and beyond). It is imperative that they play a role in a post-IS Iraq and Syria. An Egyptian bishop says that by killing hundreds of Christians across the Middle East, the Islamic State has in fact strengthened the Church and been "the greatest preacher for Christianity in the world".



THE NUMBERS: TERROR ATTACKS



1,060

The number of terror attacks across the world, including in conventional war zones



7,345

The estimated number of fatalities



Islamic State affiliate/ inspired attacks remain the most numerous.

386 occurred across the world and had the highest number of fatalities: 3,148.



Taliban attacks:

Predominantly in Afghanistan and neighbouring Pakistan—second most numerous with 95 attacks and 1,029 fatalities.



Al-Shabaab attacks:

Predominantly in Somalia and neighbouring countries—third most numerous with 73 attacks and 943 fatalities.



DONALD TRUMP'S FIRST YEAR AS PRESIDENT

President Trump's first year has certainly been eventful. From an American perspective, one of the most positive aspects of 2017 has been an overall improvement in the economy, a reduction in unemployment, and numerous deals that will see an increase in manufacturing within the US. How much of this can be attributed to Mr Trump's influence is, however, extremely difficult to ascertain.

Politically, 2017 has been tremendously challenging for Mr Trump: many of his proposed policy changes, on which he fought the elections, have met stiff opposition within both Congress and the US Senate, despite Republicans controlling both houses. For many conservatives, an end to the funding of abortions overseas is seen as a major victory under the watch of Mr Trump, though the fight continues within the US. The ongoing probe into Russian influence in the presidential elections continues to undermine and detract from efforts made by Mr Trump's administration.

On an international level, Mr Trump made a dramatic statement by making his first overseas visit to an Arab nation – long-time US ally, Saudi Arabia. He did, however, also go on to visit Israel, the sworn enemy of most Arab nations. Mr Trump flew directly from Riyadh to Tel Aviv, in what appears to be an unprecedented direct flight by a US president between these two nations, which do not have diplomatic relations.

From a Christian Perspective

Under the Trump presidency, there has been an increase of Christian influence within the White House and the administration, through regular prayer times, Bible studies and Christian 'voices' within Mr Trump's circle of influence. Some early fruit of this has been the vocal support of the US administration for persecuted believers, a warming of relations with and reaffirmation of support for Israel, and a direct addressing of the issue of Islamic extremism, right in Saudi Arabia.



ATTACKS ON CHRISTIANS IN EGYPT

2017 was a brutal year for Christians in Egypt, as groups like the Islamic State vowed to "wipe them out". Christian communities in the Sinai Peninsula came under direct attack in February, with hundreds fleeing the region. On Palm Sunday in

April, two churches were attacked by suicide bombers, killing 49 (including Muslims). A bus carrying Coptic Christians came under attack near Minya in May, and 28 were killed. In July, three more Copts were murdered over an eight-day period.

Christian communities have also faced stiff opposition from Muslims as they oppose the building of any new churches, even if it is to replace buildings that were destroyed previously. According to Al Arabiya, the head of the Egyptian Centre for Developmental Studies and Human Rights, Joseph Malak, sent an official warning to Egypt's prime minister, ministers of interior and other government representatives, calling on them to bring an end to the closure of churches and to re-open those that are closed.

From a Christian Perspective

The way that Christians have forgiven those who attacked them and who killed their loved ones has been an incredible testimony to Egyptians and the rest of the world. In a now-famous TV news broadcast, a Muslim news anchor attested that Egyptian Christians are "made of a different substance". Bishop Stephen of Beba and Fashn, speaking during a memorial service for the murdered Coptic priest Samaan Sheheda, said: "Martyrdom has always given power and strength to the Coptic Church and Christianity through the ages."



WORLD REFUGEE CRISIS

Conflicts, violence and persecution in the Middle East, Asia and Africa have left a record 65.6 million people displaced around the world. That equates to one person becoming displaced every three seconds. Among them are nearly 22.5 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18.

Syria, Afghanistan and South Sudan are responsible for 55% of refugees worldwide. Syria's six-year conflict alone has driven more than 5.5 million people to safety in other countries, and the war-torn nation continues to be the world's biggest producer of refugees.

In South Sudan, about 2,500 refugees are crossing from South Sudan into Uganda every day. The South Sudanese refugee crisis has become the largest in Africa and the third largest after Syria and Afghanistan, with 4.29 million people having been forcefully displaced due to civil war.

In Asia, what seems to be an act of ethnic cleansing by the Myanmar military that began in August has forced over 620,000 Rohingya Muslims across the border into camps in neighbouring Bangladesh. Most Rohingyas, a Muslim minority, are seen as 'illegal immigrants' by the Buddhist-majority Myanmar.

Countries that have also seen a dramatic increase in refugees are Yemen, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nigeria and Burundi.

THE NUMBERS: NATURAL DISASTERS



Wildfires – a global phenomenon affecting the United States, Canada, Russia, South America, large parts of Europe, South Africa and New Zealand. In the **US**, 5.6 million acres of land burned this year, with 40 people losing their lives in one week in California. In **Portugal**, 1.3 million acres burned and 100 lives were lost.



Hurricanes/Typhoons

Costliest tropical cyclone season on record.



8

The number of major/super hurricanes/typhoons this season (3+ category) out of a total of 20



1,365+

The total fatalities in the Atlantic (hurricanes) and Pacific (typhoons) regions



\$378 billion+

The total cost of damages in both the Atlantic and Pacific regions

A notable trend, however, is beginning to emerge: almost 500,000 Syrians returned to their homes this year. According to the UN refugee agency (UNHCR), more than 440,000 internally displaced Syrians and about 31,000 of those who fled abroad have gone back. In Iraq, of the 5.3 million people been forced to leave their homes since 2014, more than 2.2 million people have returned home.

From a Christian Perspective

World leaders are still coming to grips with the reality of the ongoing refugee crises. But for the global Church, God has opened the borders of difficult-to-reach nations by bringing the unreached to new places where the Church has an opportunity to be Christ's hands and feet on earth. As the refugees start returning, the Church needs to be proactive in making the most of the opportunities that the refugee crisis has created for reaching out, and to consider how to partner with local believers to 'rebuild' the Church as they return home.



CHINA'S MILITARY MODERNISATION PROGRAMME

Chinese president Xi Jinping continued to oversee an ambitious military modernisation programme, including developing capabilities for China's forces to operate far from home. This year, China launched their largest warship and first domestically built aircraft carrier. Later, China opened its first ever overseas military base in Djibouti, probably the first of many expanding their military footprint as China's rapidly modernising military extends its global reach. Djibouti is a small country on the Red Sea, wedged between Somalia and Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa. It is already home to military bases for the US and France and Japan, but China's widening influence is becoming increasingly apparent.

Djibouti has hosted the largest US permanent military base in Africa since 2002 – Camp Lemonnier is home to more than 4,000 personnel. Only six weeks after China officially opened the naval base, Saudi Arabia declared that it too would construct a base in Djibouti. With the military real estate in Djibouti becoming very congested, tensions are likely to rise as the US, China and Saudi Arabia drive their own military, economic and political agendas.

From a Christian Perspective

China has vowed to better patrol around Somalia, which is known for pirate attacks. They also plan to carry out international humanitarian campaigns. This could greatly help the region, but world leaders are questioning the true reason for Chinese military expansion in the Horn of Africa. Meanwhile, the US has dramatically increased the tempo of its military operations in the Horn of Africa in an effort to counter violent extremism throughout the East Africa region.

While military expansion is almost always initiated with a political agenda, it has also often enabled the growth of foreign Christian ministries in areas where security is an issue. The presence of foreign militaries can 'open the doors' for Christian missionaries to work more easily and securely, and thus allows the Gospel further into unreached areas.



EU ELECTIONS AND THE RISE OF THE FAR-RIGHT

Despite some reassurances for the future of the EU with the national election results of both the Netherlands and France in the first half of 2017, there was a setback with the German elections in late September. The parties that dominated German politics for years – the Social Democrats (SPD) and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), plus its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU) – all lost support at the ballot box, while voters flocked to the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD), the first far-right party to enter the German parliament in more than half a century. The hung parliament in Germany meant that Chancellor Angela Merkel had to go looking for new coalition partners. Exploratory coalition talks failed after weeks of discussion. But Germany's president, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, told parties that they owed it to voters to try to form a government, urging former coalition partners to break the political impasse. SPD leader Martin Schulz has signalled their willingness to discuss a way out, but it does not appear to be something that will be resolved before February 2018.

Although the rise of populist far-right parties across Europe is cause for concern, many analysts have drawn the conclusion that, for many voters, it was more about voting against the establishment than outright support for far-right ideals and principles. What is of concern, however, is that their presence in various governments could mean that they become highly influential, although they generally tend to be more obstructive than constructive (even if they have 'only' 10% or 15% of the vote).

From a Christian Perspective

Analysts of the German election have generally concurred that Ms Merkel's 'open door' policy towards immigrants was a major factor in her party losing support and struggling to secure a coalition government. Ms Merkel has continued to retain the 'moral high-ground' on this matter, despite it almost costing her career. Economists believe that Germany and the EU can weather the current political storms, though there may be some short-term challenges. The general feeling towards immigrants in Europe may have taken a knock, but it does appear that there remains a measure of acceptance, which is good news for the sharing of the Gospel among refugees in the near future. How long this door of opportunity remains open is impossible to determine.

THE NUMBERS: NATURAL DISASTERS cont.



More than 1,200 people died across **India, Bangladesh** and **Nepal** as a result of **flooding**, with 40 million affected by the devastation.

Flooding destroyed or damaged 18,000 schools, meaning that about 1.8 million children cannot go to classes.



102

The number earthquakes this year with a magnitude above 6 on the Richter's scale



Mexico experienced the strongest earthquake this year on 8 September, measuring 8.2, which killed 98. A subsequent aftershock of 7.1 on 19 September killed 370.



Iran/Iraq experienced the deadliest quake this year on 12 November, measuring 7.3, at a depth of only 19 km below the surface, which killed 540.



70 million

The number of people facing hunger around the world—mainly due to drought and conflict



DEATH OF CHINESE WORKERS IN PAKISTAN

Two Chinese nationals, Lee Zing Yang (24) and Meng Li Si (26) were abducted and killed by the Islamic State in May in Quetta, the provincial capital of Baluchistan province in Pakistan. Their deaths went largely unnoticed, except for IS and Pakistan government statements that the two were “preachers” who had posed as business people to enter the country. The number of Chinese nationals in Pakistan has risen sharply after China pledged to invest \$57 billion in projects linked to its ‘One Belt One Road’ (OBOR) infrastructure plan aimed at linking China with the Middle East and Europe. In the aftermath of the abduction and killing, the South Korean national who set up the language school where the two taught, Juan Won-seo, was ordered to leave Pakistan, as well as 11 Chinese citizens who were said to also be part of the missionary group.

From a Christian Perspective

A number of mainstream news outlets have picked up on the possible link between China’s drive to develop new trading routes to the West and beyond, via the OBOR, and the work of Chinese Christian missionaries. The Chinese government is now aware of the connection, as are the receiving nations. It means that Chinese missionaries may face much greater scrutiny when applying for visas and when leaving China. They will need to be much more vigilant, more security-conscious and more aware of challenges. It could impact the finer strategic planning process. However, China’s economic drive, and the receiving nations’ hunger for investment, may outweigh overall concerns regarding Christian activities.



KURDISH REFERENDUM

There was an overwhelming victory for the Iraqi Kurds in their vote for independence in September, only for their hope to be shattered a month later as Iraq’s Supreme Court declared the Kurdish independence referendum to be unconstitutional. The implications of the referendum were, however, more political than legal. It signalled a new and potentially dangerous period in the relationship between Kurdistan and Iraq, creating the risk of a civil war. In response to the referendum results, the Iraqi government took control of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk. They also banned direct flights to Kurdistan and demanded control over border crossings.

Kurdistan is not an actual state, but a ‘geo-cultural region’ wherein the Kurdish people constitute the majority of the population, and where Kurdish culture, language, and national identity have historically been based. It stretches across three countries: Iraq, Turkey and Iran. The estimated 25-35 million ethnic Kurds spread across Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran have direct implications on these four countries: one fighting a civil war (Syria), one recovering from civil war (Iraq), one recovering from an attempted coup (Turkey) and the other engaged in proxy wars in Yemen and Syria (Iran).

From a Christian Perspective

The dream of a Kurdish independent state is a complicated affair, with a host of factors – economics, history, ethnicity, geography, and religion – all playing a role. In recent years, Kurdistan has been a haven for Shiites, Sunnis and Christians amidst the Islamic State’s reign of terror in the Middle East. Considering that Kurdistan is bordered by Armenia in the north – a Christian majority country – the Kurdish Church is possibly positioned to become a Middle East ‘gateway’ for missionaries in the region, and we pray for the best possible outcome for the future of this region.



AL-SISI MEETING WITH US EVANGELICAL LEADERS

Less than a month after Egyptian president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi met with a group of evangelical Christian activists from the US (in November), Egypt raised the security threat level to its highest and carried out air strikes and raids against militants responsible for the country’s deadliest terror attack – on a mosque in North Sinai that left more than 300 dead.

At the November meeting between the first ever US delegation of evangelical Christian leaders and the Egyptian president, the fight against militants [the Islamic State] was one of the discussion points, as well as the prospects for peace between Israel and the Arab world and the situation of Christians in Egypt and elsewhere in the region. President Sisi emphasised Egypt’s openness to all religions. But many Christians have had to flee the Sinai Peninsula as militant groups have escalated their attacks, and the military has struggled to defeat those who pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in November 2014.

The US delegation also met with two influential Muslim leaders: Grand Mufti Shawki Ibrahim Abdel-Karim Allamand and Mrs Jehan Sadat, the widow of Egypt’s former president Anwar Sadat.

From a Christian Perspective

Egypt is a land rich in Biblical history and significance, and the US delegation of evangelical leaders believes God has a special calling on this nation.

From a regional mission perspective, Egypt continues to be highly significant. Egypt is home to 47% of all

4 KEY EVENTS – 2018



Egyptian Presidential elections

will be held no earlier than 8 February 2018 and no later than 8 May 2018. The current President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi made some indications that he might run for a second and final term, if the people want him to run.



South Korea

will host the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeong Chang from 9 to 25 February 2018. It will involve 83 nations.



The 2018 **Russian presidential election** will take place on 18 March 2018. If in the first round no candidate attains an absolute majority (more than half), then according to the law, a second round will take place exactly three weeks later, on 8 April 2018. The incumbent, President Vladimir Putin, announced that he will seek re-election for a second consecutive term and fourth term overall.



The 2018 **FIFA World Cup** will be the 21st and take place in Russia from 14 June to 15 July 2018. It will involve 32 qualifying nations.

believers in the Arab world, and while Christians there face multiple ongoing challenges, they are positioned and equipped in such a way (shared culture, language etc.) to greatly impact the wider region.

At the meeting, President Sisi asked the Christian community for prayer because Egypt is in a battle. This is very true in a literal sense, as evidenced by the recent tragic attack on the mosque in the Sinai region, but is also true of the spiritual world, and the Body of Christ needs to be praying for both.



THE QATAR CRISIS

Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates broke off diplomatic relations and imposed an economic boycott on Qatar in a coordinated move in June, accusing it of financing militants in Syria and allying with Iran.

Since then, the boycott against Qatar has been extended to 11 individuals and two other entities (the Qatar-based International Union of Muslim Scholars and the Muslim Brotherhood), as well as adding a major group of Islamist scholars to their 'terrorist blacklist' for the Persian Gulf. Qatar

blamed President Trump's trip to Saudi Arabia earlier this year for the boycott, but the Trump administration is encouraging all sides to end the dispute and has offered to host talks at the Camp David presidential retreat in the US. So far, only Qatar has agreed to engage in negotiations.

Qatar is the world's largest gas exporter and hosts the biggest US military base in the Middle East. As a result, the Trump administration is again caught up in the Arab world tensions and conflict because of its strong support of Saudi Arabia (with whom the US signed a \$110 billion arms deal in May). Ongoing conflict with Qatar could throw the region into further turmoil, placing the US in another tricky position between two allies.

From a Christian Perspective

Although an all-out-war between Saudi Arabia and Qatar seems unlikely, the ongoing tensions do create both challenges and opportunities for the work of the Gospel in the region. Due to the constraints placed on Qatar, there has been some loosening of visa restrictions for visitors from abroad, thus allowing easier access to one of the more 'closed' of the Gulf States.

PRAY > For believers from a Muslim background in the Middle East to establish vibrant, sustainable communities > For refugees returning to their devastated cities and villages in Iraq and Syria > For world leaders to display Godly wisdom and constraint as they deal with critical issues > For believers around the world to display Christ and be His ambassadors of peace and reconciliation

LOOKING FORWARD—WHAT TO WATCH (AND PRAY FOR)



NORTH KOREA

Despite widespread sanctions from the international community, 2017 saw the exponential increase of missile launches and threats of nuclear war from North Korea. The war of words between North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un and US president Donald Trump did not help the situation, with the one threatening a nuclear strike while the other warned of total annihilation. China is perhaps the prime reason why sanctions have not had their desired effect, but mounting pressure from world leaders may force China to act in 2018. The desired outcome would be North Korea's denuclearisation, with large-scale government reform that allows greater freedom for the average North Korean.

A more likely scenario in 2018 would be some form of Chinese intervention while the US military continues their show of force and military build-up in the region. The possibility of war due to military actions by North Korea remains a real possibility.

XI JINPING

Chinese Premier Xi Jinping, described by the Economist in 2017 as the world's most powerful leader, set the stage for confrontation with the West during the 2017 Chinese Communist Party Congress at which he amassed executive power over the world's most populous country. China, currently the second-largest economy in the world, made its superpower intentions clear when it opened its first overseas military base in Djibouti and launched its first aircraft carrier in 2017, effectively challenging US influence. Xi Jinping's ambitious 'One Belt One Road' (OBOR) initiative that connects China via rail, road and maritime routes to the rest of the world has also set the stage for further confrontation with the West. China continues to position itself to become the world's leading trading partner, controlling rail, road and shipping routes.

2018 could see China, under Xi Jinping's leadership, deploying more of its military along the length of the OBOR route, under the guise of security. Mr Xi is also likely to continue to grow in regional and international power. The possibility of war in the South China Seas because of actions taken around the OBOR maritime route passing through the region remains a point of concern for the near future.

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia, known for its orthodox interpretation of Islam and the oppressive implementation thereof, was

FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

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If you have any questions or comments relating to the articles in this publication or on the website, please feel free to contact us at any time.



INcontext Team Details

Contact:

General - Mike:

Mobile - 0828657380

mike@incontextministries.org

AWIM - Andrew:

andrew@incontextministries.org

Communication - Cherolyn:

cherolyn@incontextministries.org

Seminars - Eric:

eric@incontextministries.org

Events - Hanlie:

hanlie@incontextministries.org

Prayer - Donnelly:

donnely@incontextministries.org

Projects - Gustav:

gustav@incontextministries.org

Resources / Travel - Stefan:

stefan@incontextministries.org



INcontext Banking Details

SOUTH AFRICA

Bank: ABSA

Name: Incontext

Cheque acc no: 4078983933

Branch: Durbanville (632 005)

UNITED STATES

Account Name: M Burnard

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thoroughly shaken in 2017 by Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, who promised to return the country to moderate Islam that would allow more freedom and open the country to all religions. If Prince Salman's reforms take root, it will not only change the way Saudis live but would also challenge Islam worldwide. As the leader of the Sunni Islamic world, Saudi Arabia is the source of guidance for more than a billion Muslims around the world. If Saudi Arabia changes, Islam changes. But change will come at a high price. Prince Salman was behind the Arab boycott of Qatar in June, as well as the November threat of war with Lebanon (connected to Hezbollah and Iran's role in the Yemen conflict).

In 2018, we could possibly see further reforms in Saudi Arabia, with an increased counter-response. There is also the possibility of an assassination attempt against Prince Salman, since his proposed reforms have increasingly angered clerics in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Muslim world.

WAR IN SYRIA

The war in Syria, in its seventh year in 2017, has caused the deaths of nearly half a million people and displaced more than twelve million. With support from Iran and Russia, the Syrian regime under the leadership of President Bashar Al-Assad has been able to continue to rule, despite mounting international pressure for Mr Assad to step down.

Throughout 2015 and 2016, the Islamic State (IS) carried out various attacks on government troops as well as the opposition, and was able to hold large areas of control in the country. As a result, warring factions and their international backers (including the US) found themselves loosely united in a fight to rid the country of IS. But with 2017 seeing the 'demise' of IS, 2018 could see the war in Syria escalating between opposing factions now that their common enemy has been removed. The threat of Kurdish independence is also cause for further concern as it would open a new arena of war in northern Syria, since Turkey would vehemently oppose such a move.

WAR IN LEBANON

As a democratic country in the Middle East, Lebanon is something of an anomaly. Christians, Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims have found a way of governing together, and the terrorist organisation, Hezbollah, is able to actively partake in government while at the same time fighting in Yemen, Syria and Israel as a 'military proxy' for Iran.

In November 2017, a missile was fired from Yemen in the direction of Saudi Arabia, who is fighting a proxy war against Iran in Yemen. Saudi authorities blamed Hezbollah, and as a result, Saudi Arabia accused Lebanon (a haven for Hezbollah) of declaring war.

The war in neighbouring Syria has placed a severe burden on Lebanon, as they have received over a million refugees (almost a quarter of their population), causing severe economic pressure. War with Saudi Arabia could result in a total collapse of the economy, and an escalation in the refugee crisis in the Middle East. Meanwhile, war in Lebanon would almost certainly provide Hezbollah with the opportunity to launch attacks against Israel amidst the confusion. This could prompt Israel to intervene and possibly annex parts of Lebanon in a bid to stabilise the country.

2018 is likely to see tensions continuing to rise between Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, and Israel and Hezbollah. But while the possibility of war cannot be ruled out, the role that Lebanon plays by hosting more than a million refugees would probably see international pressure implemented to resolve Saudi-Lebanon differences and thereby stave off all-out war.

PRAY > For breakthrough in the major war-torn regions of the world, that peace may be restored and rebuilding can begin > For disillusioned Muslims to find truth and freedom in Christ > For Godly wisdom in dealing with the North Korean crisis and the ongoing challenges in the Middle East > For Mr Putin, Mr Xi and Mr Trump as key world leaders

IN CONCLUSION

James 4:13-14 "Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."

These verses caution believers about presumptuous confidence and prophetic predictions that leave God out of their plans. When we contemplate the past and look at the future, both the departure and arrival points should be grounded in the sovereignty of God – He who is actively part of history and shaping seasons. The challenge for 2018 is not to predict, but to prepare; thus, when watching and observing global news, we need to intentionally seek Christ in the news. We need to separate the news from the noise and actively observe the trends and understand the seasons. What we don't pay attention to, we won't see. We need to get the bigger picture. How we watch the news, how we interpret disasters, how we view tragedies, how we observe wars and how we contextualise global events needs to guide us in seeking active,

REDEMPTIVE purposes.

2018 will require that we look at world events with 'redemptive eyes' that fully comprehend that:

- God's POWER is sovereign, He is not a spectator. *Daniel 2:21 "He changes times and seasons; He deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning."*
- God's PURPOSE is for everybody to be saved. *1 Timothy 2:3 "This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."*
- God's PRIORITY is His Kingdom, not our comfort. *Psalms 145:10-13 "All your works praise You, LORD; Your faithful people extol You. They tell of the glory of Your kingdom and speak of Your might, so that all people may know of Your mighty acts and the glorious splendour of Your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures through all generations. The LORD is trustworthy in all He promises and faithful in all He does."*