

The Council of the European Union have announced they are prepared to offer an ' *unprecedented package of European political, economic and security support'* to both Israel and the Palestinian Authority as part of a forthcoming Middle East peace agreement. So far there has been little progress in the current round of peace talks, which are set to conclude at the end of April next year. Both Israel and the PA already enjoy strong support from the European Union. Europe is the Palestinian Authority's biggest financial backer, collectively donating nearly a billion euros annually in order to keep the Palestinian government afloat. The EU is also Israel's largest trading partner, and Israel enjoys special access to Europe's single market. But the European Union has promised even more political and financial assistance to try and ' sweeten the deal ' and bring about a lasting peace agreement between the two sides...

Quote: *""The EU will provide an unprecedented package of European political, economic and security support to both parties in the context of a final status agreement," a statement from the council read. "In the event of a final peace agreement the European Union will offer Israel and the future state of Palestine a Special Privileged Partnership including increased access to the European markets, closer cultural and scientific links, facilitation of trade and investments as well as promotion of business to business relations." The EU would also offer both states "enhanced political dialogue and security cooperation," the foreign minister declared.*

Both the US and the EU have of late taken a tougher stand on Israel regarding the 'settlements' issue. Earlier in the year, the European Commission's ruling that a clause be inserted in all future treaties with the state of Israel specifying their exclusion to the territories of Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem caused widespread consternation. Israeli leaders initially insisted they would immediately halt all co-operation with the European Union. Israel threatened to pull out of the Horizon 2020 initiative, a seven-year EU scientific research programme that is to bring billions of shekels into the Israeli economy by providing European grants to Israeli academics. But a compromise has since been agreed upon, and Israel has promised that only organizations operating within the 'Green Line' will be eligible for the funding.

The book of Daniel foretold how that four great world empires would arise that would rule over the nation of Israel. These were Babylon (Daniel 2:38), Medo-Persia (Daniel 5:28), Greece (Daniel 10:20) and Rome. The prophet Daniel also foretold how that during the days of this fourth world empire the Jewish Messiah would be “cut off” and the city of Jerusalem and the Second Temple would be destroyed (Daniel 9:26). The New Testament and the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus document these events. Following the destruction of the Temple and the rebellion against their Roman occupiers, the Jewish people were scattered throughout the world, just as the Lord Jesus Christ had prophesied (Luke 21:20-24). But on May 14th 1948, Israel became a nation once again, concluding a 2000 year exile from the land and fulfilling literally hundreds of Old Testament prophesies.

The book of Daniel also predicted that in these last days a final world empire would arise out of the ashes of the old Roman Empire (Daniel 2:41, 7:7, 9:27). And sure enough, on the 25th of March 1957 the Treaty of Rome was signed, which gave birth to the European Economic Community. This would eventually become what we know as the European Union today. The Bible states that out of this empire a world leader will arise who will “confirm” or 'strengthen' a covenant with many for a period of seven years (Daniel 9:27). It's very interesting that the EU budget is always agreed for a seven-year term. And it is extremely interesting that the European Union has announced it is prepared to strengthen any future Middle East peace agreement. Of course we know that the peace won't last. The prophets Joel (3:2), Zechariah (12:2) and John in the book of Revelation (11:2) tell how this world leader, the Beast, will turn against the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem will once again be divided. Thus will begin the period described in the book of Jeremiah as the “
time of Jacob's trouble
”, Jeremiah 30:7. Daniel adds that there will a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation (Daniel 12:1). The Lord Jesus Christ also foretold a time of “
great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be
”, Matthew 24:21. Dark days are ahead for the Jewish people.

But praise God that the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, is coming back! And Israel shall be saved. But why does Daniel say the Messiah had to be “cut off”? Isaiah tells us in chapter 53, “He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken”. He gave His life a sacrifice for our sins. Isaiah 53:6 says this, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all”.
He bore God's punishment for our sins when He died upon the cross. And all who believe on Him for salvation can know their sins forgiven and have everlasting life in heaven. Do you know the Messiah? Have you trusted in Him for salvation? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation today (Acts 16:31).

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