

World Watch Weekly *Jesus told us to “watch” (Luke 21:36), and this section touches on an array of items that may have prophetic significance. For more about what to watch, see [“Five Prophetic Trends to Watch.”](#) For the latest news, follow this Twitter feed: [@Mike Bennett](#).*

Intel Minister: Israel Ready to Respond to Syrian Counter-Strikes

[Jerusalem Post](#) reported Nov. 2:

“The morning after Israel reportedly attacked a weapon depot in Syria, Intelligence and Transportation Minister Israel Katz said on Thursday that Israel has ‘a red line, which is preventing the smuggling of weapons to Hezbollah.’

“Katz said in an interview to Army Radio that he cannot address directly the alleged attack, but stressed that ‘Israel has previously operated and will continue to operate to prevent weapons smuggling from Syria to Hezbollah, based on intelligence we have.’

“‘I think that the other side knows it as well. Actions that we have taken in the past—those that we acknowledged—were along these red lines, which are basically smuggling of weapons [to Hezbollah] and the entrenchment of Iran in Syria.

“‘Israel is ready to respond to any counter-strikes that follow from our actions,’ he added.

“It was reported by multiple Arab media sources late Wednesday night that Israel’s air force attacked a weapons depot situated in rural areas around Hisya, south of the Syrian city of Homs.

“Several reports claimed that the Syrian military launched a surface-to-air missile against Israeli jets from its 72nd Division Base but did not hit them. ...

“This is the third strike in Syria attributed to Israel in recent weeks.”

In the powder keg that is the Middle East, how will peace finally come? See our article [“Peace in the Middle East.”](#)

Netanyahu: 100 Years After Balfour, Palestinians Should Accept Jewish State

[Jerusalem Post](#) reported Nov. 2:

“[British Prime Minister Theresa] May told [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu that her country was proud of the role it played in establishing the State of Israel. It has related to the Balfour Declaration’s [100th] anniversary ‘with respect and pride,’ she said.

“But May also paid homage to the political debate in Britain around the anniversary. The Labor party, including its Shadow Foreign Secretary Emily Thornberry, believe that Great Britain should mark the event by unilaterally recognizing the State of Palestine.

“Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat on Thursday demanded that Great Britain apologize for the document.

“‘Obviously, we recognize the sensitivities that this [anniversary] raises,’ May said.

“‘Britain remains committed to a two-state solution,’ said May. She added that she believes that some of the barriers to the peace ‘are clearly settlements.’

“The two leaders also spoke of the strong ties and shared values between the two countries.”

For background on the Balfour Declaration and historical and prophetic background on the conflicts in the region, see [“Middle East Conflict.”](#)

Syrian Opposition Leader Implores U.S. Not to Abandon Syria to Russia and Iran

[Al-Monitor](#) reported Nov. 1:

“Russia and Iran are hijacking the Syria peace talks to outmaneuver the United States and cement their influence in the country for decades to come, opposition leader Riad Seif told Al-Monitor in an exclusive interview on the sidelines of his first official visit to Washington. ...

“In particular, Seif raised concerns that so-called de-escalation zones negotiated in Astana amount to little more than a partitioning of Syria among rival powers, without any say from the Syrian people. The coalition announced today that it was boycotting the Astana talks, declaring that it ‘will not participate in

any negotiations with the regime outside Geneva or without UN sponsorship.’

“The four de-escalation zones are developing in a very dangerous way, and they are going to turn into four countries,’ he said. ‘They say these four de-escalation zones are only for six months, but they’re renewable. ... So this might go on for dozens of years or maybe forever.’

“The United States only has observer status at the Astana talks, which are spearheaded by Bashar al-Assad regime backers Russia and Iran and opposition patron Turkey. The seventh round of the Astana talks concluded Oct. 31.”

For background on Russia’s influence in the region, see [“The Russian Bear Returns to the Middle East”](#) (2016).

Donald Trump’s Asia Adventure

[CFR](#) posted Oct. 31:

“As President Trump prepares to embark on a five country journey to Asia, including stops in Japan, Korea, China, Vietnam, and the Philippines, his team has been working in overdrive to ensure that the visit is a success. Although domestic politics now threaten to distract, the trip is about the United States and its role in the region, not about the president, his advisors, and their political machinations. ...

“Yet it now appears there will be no grand bargain [with China]—not on North Korea, not on trade, and not on the South China Sea. ...

“China is but one stop on the President Trump’s Asian adventure, but the president’s overwhelming focus on Xi and China make that difficult to remember. The region is full of U.S. allies and partners, all of whom are awaiting a signal from the president, demonstrating that they matter. ...

“Of course, this trip is only a first step in putting the United States on firmer ground in Asia, after many months of confusing signaling and disruptive initiatives. The next step should be creating a strategy for dealing with Chinese maritime assertiveness, the regional rollback of democracy, and the advancement of free trade (since the United States pulled out from the Trans-Pacific Partnership). But first things first—let’s just hope the president and the rest of the world can enjoy a tweet-free, drama-free ten days.”

For background on the declining American influence in the region, see our 2012 blog post [“Post-U.S. World?”](#)

China’s Maritime Advance

[Foreign Affairs](#) reported in its July/August issue:

“The South China Sea is fast becoming the world’s most important waterway. As the main corridor between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, the sea carries one-third of global maritime trade, worth over \$5 trillion, each year, \$1.2 trillion of it going to or from the United States. The sea’s large oil and gas reserves and its vast fishing grounds, which produce 12 percent of the world’s annual catch, provide energy and food for Southeast Asia’s 620 million people.

“But all is not well in the area. Six governments—in Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam—have overlapping claims to hundreds of rocks and reefs that scatter the sea. Sovereignty over these territories not only serves as a source of national pride; it also confers hugely valuable rights to drill for oil, catch fish, and sail warships in the surrounding waters. For decades, therefore, these countries have contested one another’s claims, occasionally even resorting to violence. No single government has managed to dominate the area, and the United States has opted to remain neutral on the sovereignty disputes. In recent years, however, China has begun to assert its claims more vigorously and is now poised to seize control of the sea. Should it succeed, it would deal a devastating blow to the United States’ influence in the region, tilting the balance of power across Asia in China’s favor.

“Time is running out to stop China’s advance.”

For background, see our Discern magazine article [“Route of Contention”](#) (2014).