“Thus saith the Lord God: Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them?”

Ezekiel 38:17

WRITTEN OVER 100 YEARS AGO

John Thomas: His “Introductory Remarks” to the 1854 book Anatolia; or Russia Triumphant and Europe Chained. PAGE 3

PROPHECY FULFILLING

An old glass slide of Daniel chapter two. PAGE 5

John Ramsden provides the historical circumstances which were current as John Thomas wrote his book Anatolia in 1854. It was a book ahead of its time, for it is only now—over 150 years later—that we are seeing his Bible-based expectations coming to pass. PAGE 6

MILESTONES UPDATE by Don Pearce considers the Russian invasion of Georgia and the global financial crisis. PAGE 12

Russia’s Conquest of Europe Foretold in The Bible. Following the Russian invasion of Georgia, the question is: Who’s Next? In this article Paul Billington looks at those countries considered to be vulnerable and compares them with what the Scriptures tell us. PAGE 20

Russia & her association with the Roman Empire. This article written by Graham Pearce in 1977 provides the useful connection between Russia, Constantinople and Rome. PAGE 26

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Bear Facts to keep you awake!

CZAR-LIKE POLICIES OF Vladimir Putin are placing Russia on a course that is foretold in the Bible, and which is summed up in the title “Russia Triumphant & Europe Chained.” Several articles in this issue reflect this fulfillment of Bible prophecy.

John Ramsden looks at the background circumstances to the publication of Anatolia in 1854. He sees the relevance of that Exposition of Daniel to current circumstances.

MILESTONES

Don Pearce brings us further background to events in the news

The long-foretold conquest of Europe by Russia has suddenly become much closer. The article on page 20 takes a further look at the Biblical and geographic identities in Ezekiel’s prophecy.
ANATOLIA: Russia Triumphant & Europe Chained

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

All the author bespeaks for the following pages is a patient, sober-minded, and candid perusal. He is aware that the title-page is an exhibition of startling propositions, very much at variance indeed with the suppositions of those who are considered the most enlightened statesmen and politicians of the day. That Russia should be triumphant with such powers against her as France and England is amongst the impossibilities of those who put confidence in princes, and make flesh their arm. But their thoughts are not the purposes of “the Most High who ruleth over the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.” He has decreed the triumph of Russia over the east and west, previous to the final overthrow of its own dominion after the manner of Sennacherib; and he has registered that decree in a more appropriate connection. It may, he knows assuredly that it is possible to foretell the results of a war on which we have scarcely entered. The impossibility here expressed is fully admitted by the author, provided the Bible be not the foundation in the premises. Of himself he knows nothing more about what shall come to pass than his contemporaries; but, being instructed by the scriptures of truth, he is as familiar with the grand leading events of the future as with the outline of the past. Believing that the Bible is indeed a revelation of the purposes of God, and having diligently studied it for many years, and by the past verification of his interpretations being convinced that he reads the prophetic word aright, he knows assuredly that it is possible to foretell the results of the present war. They will disappoint all expectants in the interest of Turkey; and convince them ere long that “solid guaranties,” however diligently sought, can never be obtained so long as the Holy Land continues a province of a Gentile dominion.

This assurance of speech may be deemed high ground for an author to assume who makes no pretensions to any other inspiration than a diligent study of the scriptures, independent of human symbols or authority, can impart. Be it so. The ground is indeed high when compared with the low ground of religious scepticism characteristic of this generation; but it is no higher than every one ought to take and be able to maintain, who aspires to sonship in the family of the Father of the faithful and “The Friend of God.” “By their fruits ye shall know them.” The following pages are the author’s evidences. Let the reader examine them, and judge.

Besides the general title expressive of the subject-matter of the book, it has been thought expedient to give it a name for convenient reference. As the subject relates to the East, and to events introductory to the manifestation of “the Kings of the East,” who are to rule all nations for a thousand years, ANATOLIA, a euphonious Greek derivative, from αὐατολη, the east, or day-spring, has been bestowed upon it.

Unlike “The Coming Struggle,” “The Supplement to The Coming Struggle,” and “The Coming Rest,” all inaccurate unacknowledged plagiarisms from Elpis Israel, a work published by the author in London in 1850, and republished in New York in 1851—Anatolia is original throughout. It is an exposition of the book of Daniel from alpha to omega, with so much of the testimonies of other prophets as is necessary to its comprehension. If a person would understand the end of Daniel he must commence at the beginning of the descriptions of what he witnessed: so if an inquirer would know the truth of what is presented in the title-page of this work, he must begin at the beginning, and having read
The endeavor, however, will be without avail; the
but to preserve Jerusalem from his dominion.

in Jerusalem” in the present Eastern Question.

prominency which is given to the “Holy Shrines
approaching future is the scriptural reason of that
Jehovah’s land and people. This exigency of the
desolations with which they have overspread
compensation in kind for their abominable
be in operation to convene the forces of the
Jerusalem.” It is manifest, then, that means must
because “his fire is in Zion, and his furnace in
“there will he sit to judge all the nations;”
decreed. His tribunal is in the Holy City; for
there will he sit to judge all the nations;” because “his fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.” It is manifest, then, that means must be in operation to convene the forces of the nations there, that they may receive compensation in kind for their abominable desolations with which they have overspread Jehovah’s land and people. This exigency of the approaching future is the scriptural reason of that prominence which is given to the “Holy Shrines in Jerusalem” in the present Eastern Question. The Holy Land and City will increase in political importance as the war proceeds; till the struggle will be not to keep Russia out of Constantinople, but to preserve Jerusalem from his dominion. The endeavor, however, will be without avail; the

Czar will take the city—but after that, “The Deluge!”

To the household of faith, and to Israelites, this work will be found particularly interesting and important. It will demonstrate to both classes that the day of their redemption is dawning, It

will enable them to discern the signs of the times, which are so luminously indicative of His appearing, whose right it is to reign. Jews by nature and adoption have suffered long and grievously at the hand of the oppressor who has scattered and peeled them by his severities. But the day of retribution approaches, when they shall “Reward Babylon even as she rewarded them, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup that she hath filled, double shall they fill to her.” Therefore, “Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets: for God will then have avenged you on her.” These are the words of him who said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not fail.” This is the principle—Vengeance on Babylon for his people’s sake; a principle overlooked by the knight-errants of the till, whose amplest conceptions extend not beyond their balance sheets and “the light within!”

Having, then, now introduced the reader to the great subject of this work, he is invited to proceed, being well assured that when he shall have reached the end, he will admit that the Bible being received as true, the startling propositions embodied in the title necessarily result from the establishment of the things herein proved to be noted in the scriptures of truth by his friend and well-wisher,

THE AUTHOR.


The Russian Emperor Nicholas 1, 1825-1855
till you have commingled the iron nations of the old Roman territory with the clay of your own hereditary dominions, is the unfeigned and earnest hope of your Majesty’s well-wisher.

THE AUTHOR.

Russian Holy Places Today
The so-called “Holy Places” was a hot political issue in 1854 which had international repercussions — but it is by no means a dead issue. Roman Catholic priests have been known to come to blows with their Orthodox “brethren” in some of these places in modern Israel.
The Russian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem (shown right) is but one site that is claimed by Russia today.
In a controversial move Israel’s Prime Minister Olmert recently recognized Russia’s claim to these properties in Jerusalem.
There is a passage in Ezekiel 36:2 that many have seen as referring to these “holy places.” It is one reason for the Vatican’s long-standing policy of wanting to internationalize the city of Jerusalem — which means, of course, placing it under Vatican control. It is but another issue that must be settled between these “sister” churches!
For many years following the publication of the Exposition of Daniel by John Thomas, originally entitled Russia Triumphant and Europe Chained, public lectures were held outlining the main features of the prophecy. These would often focus upon Daniel chapter 2 and the prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar’s Image, relating it to the process of history—at the end of which the kingdoms of men would unite in one colossal confederacy joining together both Western and Eastern Europe under Russia. This confederacy would be broken to pieces by a little stone, representing the Kingdom of Christ.

The kingdom to be established would be the restored Jewish kingdom of Israel.

The above glass slide was used in public lectures during the 1890’s in South London U.K. It could as easily be used for presenting an explanation of the prophecy today—but on powerpoint rather than by “magic lantern”!
A REMARKABLE BOOK WRITTEN IN 1854

By John Ramsden  LONDON, U.K.

No! that’s not the front page headline from one of London’s tabloid newspapers announcing the Russian invasion of Georgia—or even recording Europe’s dependence on Russia for much of its oil and gas supplies!

In fact, it was the sub-title of a book written in 1854 by a Doctor of Medicine, John Thomas. Because it looked forward to events in the Middle East prior to Christ’s return, it was called “Anatolia”—a word of Greek origin relating to the rising of the sun in the east.

Following the publication in 1848 of his earlier book, Elpis Israel, the third section of which focused attention on Bible prophecy concerning developments which would occur in Britain, Europe and Russia and their relationship to coming developments in the Middle East, he made an extended tour of Western Europe (what is now Germany, France, Switzerland and the Netherlands) seeing for himself what was going on there.1

Following the great year of revolutions throughout Europe in 1848, it was clear from both his own experience and from his studies of the prophet Daniel and other Old and New Testament prophecies that, prior to the return of Christ, great changes would occur in Europe, and that Russia, away on the far horizon, would develop into a major end-time power.

So John Thomas summarised what he had learnt on the title page of his book, listing not only the great events which Daniel had led him to expect, but also setting down an outline sequence of those events. All this, he recognised, was “an exhibition of startling proportions very much at variance with... the suppositions of the most enlightened politicians” of his day. His book was, as he explained, “An exposition of Daniel from alpha to omega with so much of the testimonies of other prophets as is necessary for its comprehension.”

1854: The Crimean War in Southern Russia

The timing of its publication was significant. Following the 900-year old dispute between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox churches over rival claims to care for the Holy Places in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, the Russian Emperor Nicholas—who had been sent a copy of the book—and who was no doubt greatly influenced by the patriarch to move back towards Constantinople—from which the earlier “Caesars” of the former Eastern Byzantine Empire had been expelled in 1453—only to become the “Czars” of Russia. This, however, was only one of several such attempts made by Russian Czars to move southwards. The impending collapse of the Ottoman Empire—dubbed by Czar Nicholas I as “the Sick man of Europe” led to further Russian adventures in the late 19th Century. Indeed the results of both world wars led to further aggrandisement of the “Russian Empire.”

So thus began the Crimean War in 1854, a move which caused strategic alarm to both France and Britain who were most anxious to protect their political ambitions in the Middle East. That very year the French had secured permission from the Egyptian Pasha to construct the Suez Canal. Britain, with her mighty imperial...
interests in raw material supplies from the Indian sub-continent, had more than a passing interest in this development, as we shall see.

John Thomas envisaged that Russia might well be victorious and that France and Britain, the two most advanced nations in Europe would be the losers, thus starting the process of events leading to the return of Christ. So what led him to this conclusion? He had received no special visions or exclusive revelation from God—other than that which all of us can find for ourselves today in the Prophecy of Daniel.

His Reasons were Based on Bible Study

In his 120-page book he draws together the events outlined in various chapters of Daniel’s prophecy. Chapter 2 told of events in “the latter days” portrayed in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a great image symbolising a sequence of national power. He understood from chapter 4 that the cut down tree, representing the old Babylonian Empire, would re-emerge in the last days in the new form of United Europe led spiritually by a new “Babylon the Great” (Rev. 17). Daniel chapter 7 showed how the great sequence of world powers, represented by beasts would end with the great 4th beast representing the papally influenced European Union. Next, chapter 8 indicated how Rome would emerge from Greece and that in the last days there would be two great powers based in Rome and Constantinople (Istanbul)—neatly reminding him of the two legs of Nebuchadnezzar’s Image. Finally, in just one extended prophetic vision stretching over chapters 10, 11 and 12, he foresaw the time when a great “king of the North” would descend on Israel and bring about the appearance to the world of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Land. This “King” would be the Russian-led power described in Ezekiel 38 which would eventually, though quite possibly not till after the return of Christ, lead a great Confederacy of European and some Arab and North African nations against Israel (Ezekiel chapter 38).

The Sequence of Events

To arrive at this climax in world affairs many other great events would have to occur first, some of them quite a long time ahead of 1854. A few of these are summarised on the preface to the book, which to those readers not familiar with 19th Century European history, may seem a little obscure (note the title page shown above). For example:

• The remains of the old French empire would have to go—which it did some 15 years later. Despite his defeat at the hands of the British at Waterloo, Belgium, in 1815, Napoleon’s imperial instincts and ambitions lived on. His nephew, Napoleon III sought to expand the French empire towards Spain, Italy and Germany, but his adventures came to an abrupt halt with his defeat by Prussia in 1870.

• Britain would have to move into Egypt to further its emerging role of promoting the return of the Jews to their land. Thus in 1875, the Jewish British Prime Minister, Disraeli, bought the shares of the now destitute Egyptian pasha for £4 million, and to protect their investment the British were obliged to occupy the Suez Canal zone in 1882. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 43:3.

• The old Turkish Ottoman Empire, which had established itself in Constantinople in 1453, (in fulfillment of the 6th Trumpet prophecy of Revelation chapter 9) had to be removed (again as prophesied in Revelation chapter 16:12) so that the occupied land of Palestine could become the State of Israel before the return of Christ. This occurred gradually in line with the many prophecies of Jeremiah and other Old Testament prophets concerning the return of the Jews to their land but was not completed until some 70 years later!

• Only then would come about the formation of what he called a “Russian-Latino-Greek Confederacy” which, in accordance with

On a visit to the churches inside the Moscow Kremlin, we asked the accompanying Russian Tourist official why there were Islamic type crescents underneath the crosses on the Byzantine style onion-shaped domes on top of the Cathedral of the Assumption. She turned to us with great surprise and asked if we had forgotten from whence the early Russian Czars had come. Fortunately, we recalled the work of the 6th Trumpet Angel of Revelation chapter 8 (when the Muslim hordes drove out the Caesars of the Eastern Roman Empire from Constantinople in 1453) and we wondered if that was the reason. “Exactly,” she replied “and ever since those days the old Russian Czars have nursed the idea that one day they would return to Constantinople.” One day they will!
Daniel 11, Ezekiel 38, and Joel 3 would in due time descend on Israel for what Revelation 16:16 refers to as Armageddon. This Confederacy describes some form of working relationship, if not actual political union, between western Europe, the successors to the western leg of the former Roman empire, and eastern Europe and Russia, the successors to the former eastern, or Byzantine, leg of the Roman empire.  

and, interestingly enough for us today, he wrote: “England would strengthen itself in Afghanistan and Dedan” (the Gulf States) as and when Russia strengthened its own ties with Iran!  

A glance at the map of Europe in the 1850’s would show how just unlikely, even impossible, the whole idea would appear to be. At that time

Russia’s Ambition for Expansion

Ever since the time of Peter the Great (above panel) Russian leaders have frequently pursued the ambition to expand their territory, both into Europe as well as southwards to Turkey and beyond.

Punch magazine of 1885 shows the Russian Bear on the prowl heading south to Afghanistan, Bulgaria and Armenia (and hence, the territory of modern Georgia).

The First World War was triggered when Austria and Germany attacked Serbia, who was an ally of Russia. When the Second World War ended, Stalin sought to expand Russia’s empire as far west as he could, bringing down the “iron curtain.” He would no doubt have gone further but for the existence of NATO. His successors followed the same ambition as was seen during Middle East wars and the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan. Today the ambition is being revived by Vladimir Putin.

Foot Note: 1. One version of the Will appears in the Herald of the Kingdom 1851, pg. 224
Russian Nation to participate in the advantages of other nations without losing any of its own.
3. No opportunity must be lost of taking part in the affairs and disputes of Europe, especially in those of Germany, which from its vicinity is of the most direct interest to us.
4. Poland must be divided by keeping up constant jealousies and confusions there; the Authorities must be gained over with money, and the assemblies corrupted so as to influence the election of Kings. We must get a party of our own there, send Russian troops into the country, and let them sojourn there so long that they may ultimately find a pretext for remaining there for ever; should the neighbouring States make difficulties, we must appease them for the moment by allowing them a share of the territory until we can safely resume what we have thus given away.
5. We must take away as much territory as possible from Sweden, and continue so, that they shall attack us first so as to give us a pretext for their subjugation; with this object in view, we must keep Sweden in opposition to Denmark, and Denmark to Sweden, and seditiously foster their mutual jealousies.
6. The consorts of the Russian princes must always be chosen from the German princesses in order to multiply our family alliances with the Germans, and so unite our interest with theirs; and thus by consolidating our influences in Germany, to cause it to attach itself spontaneously to our policy.
7. We must be careful to keep up our commercial alliance with England, for she is the power which has most need of our products for her navy, and, at the same time, may be of greatest service to us in the development of our own. We must export wood and other articles in exchange for her gold, and establish permanent connections between her merchants and seamen and our own.
8. We must keep steadily extending our frontiers northward along the Baltic, and southward along the shores of the Black Sea.
9. We must progress as much as possible in the direction of Constantinople and India he who can get possession of these places is ruler of the world. With this in view, we must provoke constant quarrels, at one time with Turkey, and at another time with Persia; we must establish wharfs and docks in the Euxine, and by degrees make ourselves masters of that sea as well as the Baltic, which is a doubly important element in the success of our plan; we must hasten the downfall of Persia, and push on in the Persian Gulf, if possible re-establish the ancient commercial intercourse with the Levant through Syria, and pierce our ways into the Indies, which are the store-houses of the world. Once there, we can dispense with English gold.
10. Moreover, we must take pains to establish and maintain an intimate union with Austria, apparently counteracting her schemes for future aggrandisement in Germany, and all the while secretly arousing the jealousies of the minor States against her. In this way, we must bring it to pass that one or the other party shall seek aid from Russia, and thus we shall exercise a sort of protectorate over the country, which will pave the way for future supremacy.
11. We must collect around our house as around a centre, all the detached sections of Greeks which are scattered abroad in Hungary, Turkey, and South Poland. We must make them look to us for support, and thereby establish beforehand a sort of ecclesiastical supremacy, which will pave the way for universal sovereignty.
12. When Sweden is ours, Persia vanquished, Crimea war with Russia was to many people quite preposterous. Hardly surprising, then, that John Thomas’ U.K sales agent, Richard Robertson, wrote to him very diplomatically saying that “It requires no ordinary perseverance to encounter numerous discouragements in the

What kind of Bible Christian was looking for a United Europe when the map looked like this?

Only one who understood Bible Prophecy!

it was, to the man in the street, nothing less than unbelievable to suggest that both east and west Europe would form up under Russian leadership. Even less believable was how such a Confederation would lead the occupation force which would come to “Jerusalem and its Holy shrines” (the core subject of the Crimean War)... “and meet its subsequent destruction on the mountains of Israel” (see title page again).

A Preposterous Suggestion?

Indeed, the suggestion in 1854, at a time when Britain was locked into the disastrous
way of disseminating a pamphlet bearing the ominous title of “Russia Triumphant Europe Chained!” Or as we might say today, “How do you expect me to sell a book saying that our national enemy will win?” 2

In the event, Russia was not triumphant at that time and perhaps John Thomas had been a little too optimistic in his timing and expectation of the date of the Lord’s return.

Nevertheless, the prophecies of Daniel, Ezekiel, Revelation and others, still stand and, startling though the prospect may sound to many of our friends today, that 1854 book title states very bluntly what we can see beginning to happen again in our own days.

A Russian-Latin-Greek Confederacy

A careful reading of Ezekiel chapter 38 reveals several important features about the role of Europe and Russia in the last days. The European Union was reviewed in the last Bible Magazine, and the position of Russia is dealt with from time to time (see article on page 20 of this issue).

Note carefully how that in verse 2 Gog, the leader of this Confederacy, is described not only as “Chief Prince of (Rosh) Meshech and Tubal” (alias Russia today) but is also leader of “The land of Magog”—or central Europe. Other parts of Europe are also mentioned such as Western Europe, Turkey and others in verse 6. But then, in verse 7 Gog is told to:

“...prepare for thy self, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them.”

Now that is extremely interesting for two reasons.

First, Gog is instructed to prepare itself—or rather, “establish” itself. Clearly establishing such a confederacy cannot be achieved overnight. On the contrary, this could take several years and indeed might not be completed until after Christ’s return, and the implications of this possibility could be developed in a future article.

Second, the word guard. Very often original words used in the Old Testament for guard mean protecting, or defending people. But on this occasion the original Hebrew word mishmar, means virtually to act as a prison guard or to hold in custody—such as was used when Pharaoh shut up in prison Joseph and his contemporaries. 3

So it is hard to escape the conclusion that, even if Russia does not actually physically invade Europe (though as recent events have demonstrated in Georgia that is not beyond the bounds of possibility), it could well have Europe in subjection to its will through other ways.

John Thomas wrote his book long before oil and gas were everyday commodities and it is only now that we are realising the sheer economic power with which Russia could enslave Europe, and for it to become subject to its great political ambitions. Other articles in this issue mention the extent to which immense oil and gas reserves and their rocketing prices help, Russia in acquiring not only vast wealth but also tremendous political and economic bargaining power.

But what about the Churches Involved?

Yet, in all this, the Bible also makes it clear that the Roman Catholic power will be immensely influential at the time spoken of in Ezekiel 38. So we ponder on the prospect of just how this great spiritual power leading a united Europe will come to terms with the ambitions of the emerging and aggressive Russian leadership.

We do not know how or when it will happen but we watch with great interest two major developments.

First: the way in which, after almost a thousand years of being divided since the Great Schism of 1054, the eastern and western legs of the apostate church (the “Latino” and the “Greek” legs) are reaching an astonishing degree of rapprochement. Pictures from the Vatican’s own English language newspaper (above opposite) record the dramatic steps toward the growing “confederacy” developing between these two apostate churches. They leave us in no doubt that it cannot be long before the Patriarch takes second place to the Pope and plays “second fiddle.”

Second: we note how the Popes and Russian Presidents are coming together in a way which, 30 years ago many claimed was unthinkable. Who, as recently as the 1970’s would have envisaged a German Pope (from Magog!) sitting down with the President of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal discussing their shared mutual ambitions?
RE-UNION & PERFECT PEACE?...

...Provided you know your place & keep a Respectful step Behind!

The Roman Catholic Church headed by the Pope and the Orthodox Church headed by the Patriarch of Constantinople

But, interestingly enough, John Thomas foreseeing just this very situation in 1854 wrote:
“When, therefore, the Czar gets possession of Constantinople he will not be hostile to the Pope. On the contrary will honour and acknowledge him, and be the enemy of the Holy Land.”

The present “Czar Putin’s” adventures into Georgia took it within reach of neighbouring Turkey and we note, in passing, the difficulties Turkey is having making itself acceptable to the European Union. Who knows but what Turkey could easily turn to Russia or its Islamic neighbours for support?

If not Headlines, just Economic Reality?

So we wonder how long it will be before the sub-titles of a book published 158 years ago do in fact become, if not the headlines of a London tabloid paper, the economic and political reality of the European Union. Its leaders have shown their complete impotence to do anything about the emerging power of Russia on which their growing needs for energy are becoming ever more dependent.

Footnotes
1. For details of his itinerary see Herald of the Kingdom, May 1854.
2. Richard Robertson, a Customs Officer, probably at the nearby Surrey Docks, lived in South London, just round the corner from Guy’s Hospital where John Thomas was a doctor. Maybe that is how they first met up. He is often mentioned by Dr Thomas but does not seem to have become a fellow member with him.
3. Ezekiel 37:7 mishmar “one to whom reverence is due,” a term used of a ruler or jailer: Elsewhere “putting in charge of” or effectively imprisonment: see Genesis 40:3; 42:17.

Putin honours and acknowledges the Pope, recognizing his influence. In 1854 John Thomas had written: “When, therefore, the Czar gets possession of Constantinople he will not be hostile to the Pope. On the contrary will honour and acknowledge him, and be the enemy of the Holy Land.”
The Russian Bear stirs herself, the World economy on the verge of collapse & the Pope maneuvers...

By Don Pearce  Rugby, U.K.

Several matters of the past few months belong to the category “this is what we have been anticipating!” Yet the speed at which they have happened and the scale of what could be the consequences are at the same time exciting, though troubling. In spite of anticipating financial meltdown and the growing aggression of Russia, when these things are beginning to come to pass, we can’t help wondering just how bad it will get before the Master’s call. How much of our comfortable lives of today are going to be impacted by these unfolding events. I suspect quite deeply. Living in prosperous times is faith testing, how much more when in times of economic difficulties. Gordon Brown has already warned that we should expect an increase in violent crime as a result of the economic slowdown (Daily Telegraph 26-09-08). Let us take courage! The days are short, the Master is approaching, and the call must be near! The Signs of the Times are writ large across the political heavens.

We start with the awakening bear.

The King of the North moves South!

“And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown…” (Dan 11:40,41).

The coming forth of the King of the North, still lies ahead, but how exciting it has been to see the preparatory work for this coming forth!

Whilst the world’s eyes were focused on the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in China, Russia, as the latter-day king of the North, punched her way through the mountain range that separates Russia from Europe and the Middle East.

“The Caucasus Mountains are generally perceived to be a dividing line between Asia and Europe, and territories in Caucasia are alternately considered to be in one or both continents. The highest peak in the Caucasus is Mount Elbrus (5,642 m) which, is generally considered the highest point in Europe” (Wikipedia).

Her troops are now established in the South Ossetia region and in another region of Georgia—Abkhazia.

This whole region was under Soviet control, but with the collapse of the Soviet in the 1990’s, the many countries that make up this region became independent.

To the north of the Caucasus Mountains lies the Russian Federation, to the south Georgia. There are many disparate groups within the Russian Federation and to the north of another of the mountain passes into Georgia lies Chechnya. One of Putin’s first acts on becoming President in 2000 was to crush the Chechen rebels, establishing Russian control of this mountain pass. The other pass is at the foot of North Ossetia and runs through to South Ossetia in Georgia. The South Ossetians are mainly Russian speaking and have long been a source of trouble to the Georgian authorities, seeking—and largely succeeding—a measure of autonomy. Russia has been cultivating her links with her former citizens, handing out Russian passports to all who wanted one.

Russia bided her time, awaiting an excuse to exert control of South Ossetia. The occasion came through the rashness of the rather unstable Georgian President, Mikheil Saakashvili, who felt emboldened by the talks earlier in the year of NATO membership, along with the Ukraine. The NATO doctrine is mutual support if a member is attacked. But the situation had not gone that far, membership was only a discussion matter, which had been postponed in any case until the NATO November meeting.

Let’s step back a bit. The Georgian President has been a strong supporter of the Americans in Iraq, in fact she had 2,000 troops there—considering British troop levels were only twice this, and the next below is Poland with only 900 troops, this is a measure of her support for the King of the South! The US flew these troops back to Georgia in August in order to help in the battles with the Russians.

The other intriguing nation involved in Georgia is Israel!

Israel And The War In Georgia

“Since 2000, Israel has sold hundreds of millions of dollars in arms and combat training to Georgia.

“Weapons included guns, ammunition, shells, tactical missile systems, antiaircraft systems, automatic turrets for armored vehicles, electronic equipment and remotely piloted aircraft. These sales were authorized by the Israeli defense ministry” (Ynet 10 Aug 2008).

“Saakashvili filled two key positions in his government with Georgian Jews who had lived for a long time in Israel and spoke fluent Hebrew: Davit Kezerashvili was made defense minister and Temur Yakobashvili state minister for territorial integration, responsible for negotiations over Abkhazia and South
Ossetia. Saakashvili was recently reported as ‘enthusing’ that ‘both war and peace are in the hands of Israeli Jews’” (Time 8/28/08).

Israel has been involved in training the Georgian military forces for some time. Saakashvili cultivated his ties with Israel, though an interesting article with the above heading published by the Johnson Research Letter as a research paper in September 08, indicated that this was not an Israeli government policy.

“Saakashvili created a close relationship not with the State of Israel as such, but with a private network of Israeli mercenaries. This network included some highly placed figures, such as retired generals Israel Ziv and Gal Hirsh (known for losing the latest war in Lebanon) and Roni Milo, former mayor of Tel Aviv, making it influential enough to secure defense ministry approval for various arms deals. But it was by no means influential enough to shape Israel’s foreign policy, and in fact the foreign ministry and much of the country’s establishment regarded its activity with serious misgivings.”

It also carried an interesting paragraph about Russia’s interest in the Russian speaking Georgians.

“How do the million or so ‘Russian’ Israelis fit into the picture? Putin has courted them as an important section of the Russian diaspora. Many still have strong links with Russia and a correspondingly strong interest in good relations with Russia (visa-free travel, for instance). Many still lack good Hebrew (or English) and rely on Russian TV for their view of world events. Israeli politicians who speak Russian (including Barak and Sharon) have got themselves interviewed on Russian TV as a way of reaching this part of their electorate.”

Georgia is of interest because this is part of the territory of Togarmah. The Georgians and the Armenians trace their history to Togarmah, the son of Gomer and so grandson of Japheth. Along with all the other of Japheth’s sons (with the exception of Javan) they form part of the companions of Ezekiel who are listed in chapter 38. They are joined by two of Ham’s four sons, Cush and Phut—Libya and Ethiopia/Sudan. At the moment her President is in the King of the South camp, but clearly this has to change – and this is what we are beginning to see!

We are not concerned with the action of the 6-day war in Georgia in August, but we are very interested in its outcome.

Outcome of the Russian—Georgian Conflict

The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs

(14-08-08) writing at the height of the conflict used the phrase: “The war is a mid-sized earthquake which indicates that the geopolitical tectonic plates are shifting, and nations in the Middle East, including Israel, need to take notice.”

What did this startling news indicate? It may well be that we will look back at this Georgian conflict as a turning point in Russian-European affairs.

Consider what has already happened.

• Russia has seen the weakness and disarray of NATO and Europe—no one came to the aid of Georgia.

• France and Germany refused to back EU calls for sanctions against Russia, any criticism of Russia’s actions were therefore muted. As we shall see Germany is pushing ahead with her ties to Russia.

• Russian troops have breached the Caucasus Mountains. They are determined to control Georgia—they are hoping that President Saakashvili will fall and be replaced by a pro-Russian President.

• Russia is eyeing with displeasure moves by Ukraine to sever links with Russia and move to the West. The Russian navy based at Sevastopol in the Crimea is under notice to move by 2017. The Crimea is heavily populated by Russian speakers and an E-W split of Ukraine is a distinct possibility. Russia has been giving out passports to the Crimeans as she did to the Ossetians.

• Russia has taken offence at the West’s outcry over her invasion of Ossetia and Abkhazia. They say they were provoked—all they have done, they claim, is to support her Russian citizens. She is now openly taking steps that she knows will upset the American administration.

• Syria has offered to house Russian missiles. Russia is busy enlarging port facilities in Syria so that her Mediterranean fleet do not have to return through the Dardanelles to Sevastopol whenever they need attention.

• To counter America’s threat to site her missiles in Poland and the Czech Republic, Russia is actively pursuing her friendship with Iran. No longer is she holding back the installation of a missile shield around Iran’s nuclear sites, nor the completion of Iran’s nuclear power stations. Furthermore she is in talks about establishing port facilities in the Persian Gulf on the island of Qeshm situated in the strategic Straits of Hormuz.

• Israel is greatly concerned at this movement of Russia into the Middle East. Not only did she immediately stop any military supplies to Georgia, but has had frequent contact with Medvedev and Putin. As we write, Olmert is on a trip to Russia to try to prevent the spread of advanced weaponry to her Middle East neighbours.

The Russian Bear Awakes

Newspaper cartoonists have had a field day depicting this new aggression of Russia as a bear. This has long been used as a symbol for Russia. We reproduce a cartoon on page 15 depicting Europa discerning the signs written in the sky.

C.C. Walker in the December 1905 issue of The Christadelphian comments thus “...in 1885 there was another agitation over Russia, and I well remember at that time that Punch had a magnificent cartoon entitled “WHAT OF THE NIGHT?”—Europa on a battlefront, looking out in the dark sky with a beacon fire at her side, and a sword in her hand, while high in the sky shone the constellation of the great Bear!

Brother Roberts lectured on the subject of this cartoon several times, up and down the country. It arose over Russian aggression in the direction of Afghanistan.

“The roots of the bear connected to Russia go deep. The first time this image concerned Russia was in the 16th century, when bears were depicted as shield-bearers on the Muscovy Company emblem (an English company founded in 1596).” Moscow News 19-9-08

The symbol goes back much further to the visions of Daniel. King Nebuchadnezzar had
seen the nations as a mighty figure of a man; many years later God revealed the kingdom of men under the symbols of wild animals. Assyria and Babylon were depicted as a lion; Persia as a bear; Greece as a leopard and Rome as a terrible beast. The bear details are given in Daniel 7: 5

“And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.”

The Persian bear went through two phases; that of the Medes and that of the Persians—through marriage the Medes merged with the Persians. The 3 ribs represented the three-fold administrative division of which Daniel was the chief president (6:1,2). It certainly devoured much territory, extending over 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia (Esther 1:1). We know that these four beasts extend right through to our time (7:12). Just as Nebuchadnezzar’s image was depicting “what shall be in the latter days” (2:28), so these as well as depicting unfolding history, are found to be present at the time of their destruction at Christ’s return. So the developing Kingdom of Men will incorporate all these beast elements. John Thomas, writing in the Exposition of Daniel of the situation in his day 140 years ago, made this prediction.

“...the Deity hath chosen for them the Bear to signify them as an element of the Image in the latter-days. The latter-day symbol then of Persia is a Bear; and a Bear is at this time her formidable neighbour, and has already taken from her a large portion of her territory. The Russian Bear is destined to supersede her present government as an independent sovereignty, and to grasp Persia between its teeth from near India to Ethiopia, which is to be ‘at his steps.’ This is no mere conjecture, but absolutely certain; for Yahweh has declared by Ezekiel that Persia shall be an element of Gog’s confederacy, and that Gog’s is the Russian power will be seen when I come to treat of the King of the North at the time of the end” (p12).

How much closer we are to this time when the Russian Bear will control the territory of so much of Asia. Ossetia and Abkhazia represent the first of many paw prints by the advancing Russian Bear!

**Medved shows his Colours**

When Medvedev and Putin swapped jobs in May, there was much speculation as to who would be the dominant partner. It seems clear that Putin still directs affairs although no longer President. However the events in Georgia indicated that Medvedev was no appeaser. His declarations and actions were just as ruthless as Putin’s. He is living up to his name. Medved is the Russian word for bear. It takes its origin from one of the characteristics of the Russian brown bear—it likes honey. Medu = honey, ed = eat; i.e. honey eater. So his name is based on the Russian word for bear, which is derived from its characteristic—a honey eater. It is interesting that Ezekiel 38:12 describes Gog being attracted to the great spoil and prey that Israel contains, whilst other prophecies concerning the coming invasion speak of it in terms of a crusade against Israel (Joel 3:9; Isaiah 34:8).

**Germany and Russia—a Strategic Partnership?**

Germany and Russia have just held their biannual bilateral government summit. Stratfor (3-10-08) made these dramatic comments.

“Germany is the closest thing that Russia has to a friend in Europe these days. And considering that Chancellor Angela Merkel is openly distrustful and critical of the Russian government, that is truly saying something. Merkel certainly wants to stand up to Russia—she is from the former East Germany after all and knows full well what it means to live under Russian “influence”—but she has found herself trapped by geography and history. Her country is economically dependent on Russian energy supplies. Even if Berlin could muster the political will to challenge Moscow, and suffer through the energy dislocation and economic weakness that would come from a massive defense buildup, the thought of the Germans rearming to fend off Russian expansionism is something that sows more than a little terror among Germany’s neighbors.

“It could be far easier for the Germans to cut a deal with the Russians to share influence in the regions that lie between them. This has happened before—and has been known to lead to a world war. The winds of history are blowing through Merkel’s window, and it would be truly odd for her to not have felt a bitter chill.

“Germany faces a truly agonizing choice: a confrontation that will make it suffer greatly, or a conciliation that will make its neighbors suffer even more.”

A Stratfor article (2-10-08), detailed the implications of the joint security agreement that the two countries were discussing.

“Russian President Dmitri Medvedev and German Chancellor Angela Merkel met Oct. 2 in St. Petersburg to discuss a multitude of issues ranging from the fallout from the Georgia-Russia war to energy supplies and the global financial situation. One topic of discussion was even more intense: a new collective security agreement between Europe and Russia, dubbed Helsinki II. Moscow is pushing hard for discussions about an agreement between Russia and Europe outside of NATO, in order to undermine the U.S.-dominated alliance.

“Russia has been especially vocal about its initiative of a new legally binding treaty on collective security in Europe, which Medvedev put forward in Berlin in June. At the time, most of Europe seemed to ignore Russia’s move to balance its security concerns in Europe with those of the United States, which is installing ballistic missile defense interceptors and related radar in Central Europe. However, all of Europe and the United States have taken a step back to re-evaluate their dismissal of Russia since it proved its prowess by invading Georgia in August.”

Its aim is to replace America’s guardianship of the peace in Europe, effectively the role of NATO, with Europe’s own peace deal. Although “new” Europe—those countries formally part of the Soviet—are for NATO, “old” Europe (except Britain) are against this sign of American power. A security agreement, perhaps initially between Germany and Russia, but then embracing the EU would be an attractive way of offering energy security in an area increasingly dependent upon
Russia for its supplies. *Stratfor* continued: "The Russian security proposal is a calculated overture to a Europe that could not be in greater disarray on security and defense matters. European security and defense policy—which French President Nicolas Sarkozy has attempted to revitalize—has dragged on for decades. With Washington and its allies entangled in Iraq (for the United States) and Afghanistan (for the bulk of NATO’s truly expeditionary combat power), Russia has an opportunity to halt NATO enlargement and renegotiate the alliance structure in its Western periphery."

"To this end, Moscow is targeting Germany, the one player that has both the geopolitical impetus to bargain with the Kremlin (it is dependent on Russian energy) and the means within NATO to nix membership invitations to countries that Russia does not want to see join, such as Ukraine and Georgia. Moscow’s tactic is based in history: In great part, it was West Germany’s decision to negotiate with the Soviet Union that gave the original Helsinki accord its symbolic power, and now the opportunity has arisen again for Germany to cut a deal."

"But it is not just Russia and Europe that are rethinking their alliances; the issue has popped up among the U.S. presidential candidates as well. And it is not just the security alliance of NATO that is being questioned anymore; the larger issue of the effectiveness of the United Nations is also on the table."

Just today (7-10-08) *Stratfor* reports that Russian President Dmitri Medvedev will propose a new European security mechanism in an Oct. 8 speech at an ongoing World Policy Conference in Evian, France. Watch this space! *Stratfor* (6-10-08) followed up with this heading and article.

### The German Question

What it had to say was a thrilling vindication of our traditional understanding of Bible prophecy concerning the time of the end. Germany is the strong power of Europe and with the terrible economic abyss that many countries are staring into, as we see later, Germany will no doubt emerge as the undisputed leader of Europe.

"In one sense, Merkel’s reasons for her stance are simple. Germany is heavily dependent on Russian natural gas. If the supply were cut off, Germany’s situation would be desperate. Russia might decide it could not afford to cut off natural gas exports, but Merkel is dealing with a fundamental German interest, and risking that for Ukrainian or Georgian membership in NATO is not something she is prepared to do. "She can’t bank on Russian caution in a matter such as this, particularly when the Russians seem to be in an incautious mood... The German move is not just about natural gas, however. Germany views the U.S. obsession with NATO expansion as simply not in Germany’s interests."

"First, expanding NATO guarantees to Ukraine and Georgia is meaningless. NATO and the United States don’t have the military means to protect Ukraine or Georgia, and incorporating them into the alliance would not increase European security. From a military standpoint, NATO membership for the two former Soviet republics is an empty gesture, while from a political standpoint, Berlin sees it as designed to irritate the Russians for no clear purpose."

"Next, were NATO prepared to protect Ukraine and Georgia, all NATO countries including Germany would be forced to increase defense expenditures substantially. 'To this end, Moscow is targeting Germany, the one player that has both the geopolitical focus of Russia. But on a deeper level, Germany was, as always, caught between the potentially competing demands of Russia and the West. Even if the problem were small now, there were no guarantees that it wouldn’t grow."

"Therefore, Merkel went to St. Petersburg and told the Russians that Germany does not favor NATO expansion. More than that, the Germans at least implicitly told the Russians that they have a free hand in the former Soviet Union as far as Germany is concerned—an assertion that cost Berlin nothing, since the Russians do enjoy a free hand there. But even more critically, Merkel signaled to the Russians and the West that Germany does not intend to be trapped between Western ambitions and Russian power this time. It does not want to recreate the situation of the two world wars or the Cold War, so Berlin will stay close to France economically and also will accommodate the Russians."

"The Germans will thus block NATO’s ambitions, something that represents a dramatic shift in the Western alliance. This shift in fact has been unfolding for quite a while, but it took the Russo-Georgian war to reveal the change."

"We can anticipate a profound shift in Russian–EU relations. There is to be a Dragon power—Russia; and a Beast power—the EU as at present, but we anticipate a considerable fracturing of the present with Britain and others no longer part of this grouping, leaving a coalition of nations more closely corresponding to the earlier phases of the Beast with Germany at its heart."

"It is surely not coincidental that as Europe and Russia stand on the brink of great changes there is a another force exerting itself upon the lives of men—that of the economic meltdown."

**Global Meltdown—Have they done Enough?**

This is something we have been anticipating, but now rapidly changing into grim realities. I was reminded only yesterday that my father had
always insisted that the ecclesial welfare fund should not be neglected, as a time of economic hardship would surely come. That was at least 25 years ago, and now it looks as if it is here. Our comfortable lives may well be shaken, and our faith tested. The cartoon in yesterday’s Daily Telegraph shows a dyke wall of rescue fund banknotes and British Prime Minster Brown stuffing wads of pound notes and the US Treasury Secretary Paulson stuffing wads of dollars to stem the breaches.

Christopher Booker revealed in the Sunday Telegraph (5-10-08) that much of Europe’s banking woes were due to a change made last year in the EU bank regulations.

“At the heart of this catastrophe lies a drastic change made last year in banking regulations, which has led to the current freezing of the money markets. Without it, most of the banks that have collapsed, such as Lehman Brothers, might have survived.

“Last December, a leading City economist, Professor Peter Spencer of Ernst & Young’s Item Club, warned that unless something was done urgently to modify the new rules, the resulting paralysis of the banking system would ‘make 1929 look like a walk in the park’. Last week, as his prediction seemed to be coming true, the US was moving to change the rules. But in the EU they are enshrined in a directive which could take months, or years, to unpick.

“(Under) a complex ‘Risk Assessment Model’, a bank at the end of each day’s trading must produce a statement of its assets to show whether or not it is solvent. If not, the bank must declare this to the regulatory authorities, such as Britain’s Financial Services Authority (FSA), and cease trading.”

Europe however blames the Americans for selling them worthless bonds in spite of them being rated as safe. The euro “one size fits all” is under great strain, as was warned at its inception. But who potentially is strong enough to pick up the pieces? The finger points to Germany. She has been buying up companies in other countries who have been struggling with the effects of the high oil prices. Now the sharp fall in the stock markets and liquidity, with recession looming, there will be many more opportunities for Germany to emerge the dominant power in Europe. As The Trumpet put it (7-10-08):

“The fathers of the euro did not dispute the euro might not survive a crisis. They knew the European economic union was risky, but they saw it as an acceptable risk—Bismarck might even call it a desirable one—as a last-ditch option to force the pace of political union. As the Telegraph said, “They welcomed the idea of a ‘beneficial crisis.’” And as “ex-Commission chief Romano Prodi remarked, it would allow Brussels to break taboos and accelerate the move to a full-fledged EU economic government.”

“Europe’s founders now have their “beneficial crisis.” But it will not be Brussels that will come out on top of the federalist European superstructure.

A medal of Pope Leo XII in 1825 depicts a woman sitting upon the globe and has an inscription claiming universal authority.

“We can expect that it will be the European nation with the best economy, strongest banking sector, and the largest gold reserves in Europe and maybe the world. It will be the nation that dominates the European Central Bank: Germany.

“German banking officials have been awaiting the opportunity to assert control over the European economic union. U.K author and political economist Rodney Atkinson wrote in the Salisbury Review earlier this year that a member of the German Bundesbank once commented after being warned that the one-size-fits-all euro could cause serious economic problems, ‘Good, that means we can use the crisis to acquire the kind of power which otherwise might not be given to us’” (April 2008).

Don’t forget that the depression of the 1930’s lead to Hitler and WWII!

The Surprising Geopolitics of Joseph Ratzinger, “The Pope of the West”

The change between the picture given in Revelation ch. 16 and that of ch. 17, is that of the new status of the False Prophet. By the time we come to ch. 17, the Papacy is found to be riding the European Beast and said to be sitting on many waters, indicating the universal appeal of her adulterated wine.

Pope Leo XII had the above medal minted in commemoration of the second year of his reign, the jubilee year of 1825. The backside of the medal reveals a depiction of a woman, sitting on the globe, holding a communion cup, while sitting on the world. The inscription reads...
“...I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company...”

Ezekiel 38:4

“...at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought:”

Ezekiel 38:10

“... I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them.”

Ezekiel 11:5

“Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever.”

Isaiah 30:8

“...one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive”

Acts 25:19
EDITORIAL

The Approaching Era of Panic!

As banks failed and the stock market dropped; as businesses closed and jobs were lost, the President of the United States warned the American people of serious risks to their country’s economy and he called for urgent action. A $700 billion bailout of Wall Street was implemented as comparisons were made with the Great Depression triggered by the Wall Street crash of 1929.

Such were some of the news headlines as the world staggered towards the end of the year 2008. But that was not all. Uncertainty over energy supplies that Russia had threatened to disrupt; the military threats from Russia and Iran—terrorism and its consequences—all was telling us that the world was on course for unprecedented disaster. Some catastrophic emergency could soon plunge civilization into a state of terror and panic.

The words of Daniel the prophet and of Jesus of Nazareth will soon come to mind—“...there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time... upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of (the political) heavens shall be shaken” (Daniel 12:1; Luke 21:25, 26).

“They Repented Not!”

As a series of disasters struck the United States over the past few years—hurricanes, military frustrations, overseas, financial problems, and in the wake of terrorism (especially 9/11) increasing security concerns (and costs), it has become difficult to imagine a rosy future here in North America.

Other western nations have been experiencing similar trends. In Britain, the ruling Labour party under the premiership of Gordon Brown has been sinking in popularity just as the economic fortunes of the country have continued to follow the pattern that has been seen in the United States. The turmoil in the financial markets is described as “global,” so the effects are felt more or less everywhere!

As we see these events taking place we must be conscious that God’s judgements are involved — whether men recognize this or not. The Scriptures reveal to us this fact of life, and that one aspect of Divine judgement is designed to humble the pride of men:

“...Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Gen. 11:4).

This was the work of what the Bible calls “sin in the flesh.” “Sin,” which is the transgression of God’s law (1 John 3:4) is at work in human nature—or “flesh”—through “the lusts of the flesh,” that is to say, its natural desires (see Ephesians 2:2; 2 Peter 2:18 etc.). So Paul says “the mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be” (Romans 8:7, Revised Version).

Now where this human mind is at work, whether in an individual man or collectively in a group of men, the impulse directing thought is the natural sinner. When formed into a governing body of some kind it is therefore the government of—or by—sin. In a democratic system, sinners (the people, who are directed by the impulses of the lusts and desires of the natural man) appoint a government which is composed of corrupt members who are themselves of that race of which it is written “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.”

So from Babel unto this day, human society has been ruled by the kingdom of sin, or sin manifested in the flesh politically. This system demands the worship of all who are subject to it. All must pay honour to it or face the penalties imposed by its authority.

But it is a system that has been and still is, in rebellion against God’s way. It has made itself a name, but as the book of Revelation tells us “her sins have reached unto heaven” (Rev. 18:5) and so consequently the most terrible judgements await her. It is the spirit of Christ that says through the prophet Isaiah:

“I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled...
So everything is promised to Jesus Christ, and through him to the people of God. As Paul told the believers at Corinth: “All things are yours” (1 Cor. 3:21).

While the world trembles in the face of financial losses, of military aggression or of terrorism, the people of God lift up their heads knowing that such light affliction is but for a moment, and “worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory:

“While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18).

The kingdom of the transgressors must inevitably be brought to ruin—and upon those ruins the kingdom of righteousness under Jesus Christ will be established. Thus, the era of panic will give way—ultimately—to the era of peace so long hoped for.

“Take Heed”

Jesus had foretold the destruction of the Jewish state by the Romans which came to pass around A.D. 70. It was a time of impending judgement. Today it is to be the turn of Gentile states to receive the judgements written, but the words of Jesus as he warned his generation of impending disaster, are now applicable to the age in which we now live. He said: “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:34-36).

The words imply a time of testing. How attached to the present system are we? What do our daily activities and way of life testify of us? There is no doubt that “the cares of this life” occupy many today—and those cares are time consuming; they eat away our time—time that should be spent in seeking God through his word. We must give time to the reading and contemplation of the Scriptures, for it is through these that God communicates with us.

Jesus also tells us here to pray always. Do we do that? Or are we too busy... with the cares of this life?

When the approaching era of panic overtakes this world, we will wish that we had taken heed to ourselves. Yes, we shall then lament the time wasted on the cares and anxieties of this life. Let us remember this:

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:19-21).

We know of a literary certainty that what we have said of Russia will come to pass; and we wish the reader to make a note of our full assurance of faith, that when it comes to pass he may know that prophecy can be understood before it is fulfilled.

JOHN THOMAS,
Herald of The Kingdom, 1854, page 208

The more we understand of what we profess to believe, the stronger is our faith therein...

JOHN THOMAS,
Anastasis, published 1866

The effect of the Bible is to make the man who studies it, better, happier and wiser. It is vain for the leaders of unbelief to assert the contrary.

ROBERT ROBERTS,
Christendom Astray, written in 1862

... in the light of the prophetic word, we may expect there to be a deal between the Vatican and Russia. The Vatican preparing the way for the Russian takeover of Western Europe.

Graham Pearce
Russia, the Vatican & the Invasion of Israel, published in February 1970

For this shaking of all nations we wait, the signs of its approach being as clear to us as the signs portending the overthrow of Israel’s heavens and earth were to Paul.

JOHN CARTER,
The Letter to Hebrews, published 1939
For the first time since the fall of Soviet communism in 1991, Russia has engaged in military action against another sovereign country. For seventeen years the Russian Bear lay dormant, but in August of this year it revived, growled, and began devouring its small neighbour, Georgia. It was a landmark event that took the western world by surprise, and rang alarm bells which no one wanted to hear.

And it’s not all over yet!

“Who’s Next?”

That was the question posed by the Canadian news-magazine Maclean’s last August. Declaring that “Moscow has shown the will to crush small neighbours,” the magazine listed other nations who face “the growing Russian threat.” These included Ukraine, the Baltic States, Poland, the Czech Republic and the “once-captive nations of Eastern Europe” (specifically mentioned are Hungary, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia). The Maclean’s article comments: “It is unlikely that Russia would use such naked force elsewhere, but its vast reserves of oil and gas give it substantial leverage, including in western Europe.”

Quoting a professor of international relations at the University of Toronto, the magazine continued:

“Unless Russia pays a cost for this (invasion of Georgia), unless we really think of this as a very major event and an extraordinary set of moves by Russia, then further down the line we will be paying collectively in the West a really heavy price... We could, six months or a year from now, be facing a situation in Ukraine which would be much more difficult to ignore.”

This echoes the words of the Georgian President at the height of the Russian action against Georgia. He said, “If the whole world does not stop Russia today, then Russian tanks will be able to reach any other European capital” (Reuters, Aug 8, 08).

Russia’s Military Build-up

Russia’s future intentions may be gauged from the announcement (September 30, 08) that “Russia will spend nearly 1.3 trillion rubles on national defence in 2009” (Interfax).

Also on September 30, 08 Tass reported a speech made by the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in which he said that Russia must strengthen its strategic nuclear deterrence force. He is quoted as saying:

“Alongside re-equipment of the Army and the navy and measures to enhance their mobility the strategic nuclear deterrence force should be strengthened, a unified system of air and space defense created, and the status of Russia as a great maritime power raised.”

In addition to upgrading Russia’s nuclear deterrent Medvedev called for the construction of more nuclear submarines. And, as the Sunday
Times (U.K.) reported, Russia is considering arming its Baltic fleet with nuclear warheads for the first time since the cold war. The warheads could be supplied to submarines, cruisers and fighter bombers of the Baltic Fleet based in Kaliningrad said the newspaper.

Against this background of sharpening swords and spears there has been the direct threats made by Russia to use them. This may be a form of deterrence (if you do that—we will do this), but some news-headlines have been a chilling reminder of the worst days of the cold war—of the Cuban missile crisis and of the Nixon “Red Alert” order to all U.S. nuclear forces in 1973. As a Daily Mail (U.K.) headline read in August: “Russia threatens nuclear strike on Poland,” or a Daily Telegraph article read:

“Poland faces not just the prospect of having Russian missiles pointing in its direction but also risks “100 percent” a military attack. And not just any attack, if Gen Anatoly Nogovitsyn is to be believed, but a nuclear attack.”

The article continued:

“Poland, unlike Georgia, is already a member of Nato. A Russian military assault on the country would, if Warsaw were to invoke article five of the Nato treaty, oblige Britain and the other members of the alliance to come to Poland’s rescue. In other words, it could be the beginning of World War III.”

What Scripture Requires

In 1849 John Thomas published his book Elpis Israel in which he set out the original true Gospel and gave a detailed exposition of prophecy. He wrote:

“The Bible is the enlightener. If men would not be carried about by every wind that blows, let them study this. It will unfold to them the future, and make them wiser than the world. The coming years will not be years of peace. The policy of the Autocrat (of Russia) will be to throw his adversaries off their guard, and take the Sultan (ie. the allies) by surprise. He is to “come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he will enter into the countries, and overflow and pass over. And many countries shall be overthrown.” This is the career marked out for him; which neither France, nor England, nor the world combined can obstruct, or circumvent.”

And again:

“...the Russo-Assyrian autocrat shall attack Constantinople by sea and land, and with such whirlwind impetuosity that the Sultan’s dominion shall be swept away. The whirlwind-nature of the attack implies, I think, not only its overwhelming character, but that when it is made, the allies of the Sultan will be off their guard; that, by the Autocrat’s assurances of peace and moderation for which they will give him credit. Constantinople will be left unprotected, and it will fall into his hands before they can come to the rescue.”

These “assurances of peace and moderation” are exactly what we are hearing now. Several statements have been made by Medvedev claiming that Russia does not seek a return to the cold war—however, the evidence suggests that Russia is seeking nothing short of world domination. This is precisely what John Thomas foresaw from the prophetic word over 150 years ago.

A principal passage used by John Thomas in arriving at his conclusions was Ezekiel chapter
38. In verses 2 and 3 Ezekiel is told:

“Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, And say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog...”

The prophecy describes a vast alliance of nations (by their ancient names) in a military operation against “my people of Israel” (verse 16). The ultimate fulfillment belongs to a time when a “people” are gathered from the nations—to a time when their land, having “been always waste” and “desolate,” is now thriving and inhabited again (verse 8 and 12). It will be “in the latter days” (verse 16).

A note in the Companion Bible points out:

“The historical interpretation of this prophecy is confessedly impossible.” It has never yet been fulfilled—and it is only within the last century that the conditions described of Israel have come about. Who are these nations that form the alliance described by Ezekiel? Do they point to Russia?

The Land of Magog

Gog (a name which means “all that is powerful, gigantic, and proud”—Companion Bible) is to be “of the land of the Magog” as well as prince—or ruler—of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal (c/p R.V.). It is fascinating to follow the clues provided by both Scripture and history in order that we may trace these ancient names and places.

“The land of Magog” is geographic information and must be considered with the further statement that Gog’s “place” is in “the north parts” (v. 15)—or more correctly, “the uttermost parts of the north” (R.V.). The Hebrew text is crucial to our consideration and speaks of the remotest extremities of the north. In fact the word “north” actually carries the idea of “hidden, unknown.” The land of the Magog, to which this prophecy refers obviously lay beyond the civilised world of Ezekiel’s time.

It has long been noted by students that the Jewish historian Josephus (writing at about the time of Christ) identified the biblical Magog with the Scythians of Greek literature. An even earlier historian, Herodotus (approx. 450 BC), placed the Scythians north of the Black Sea.

These ancient documents suggest then, that the land of Magog includes territory stretching across Asia to the Ukraine, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary and as far as Germany. Certainly this answers the requirements of the prophecy in placing the land of Magog in the remote and unknown north of Ezekiel’s time.

There is also a possible link between Magog and the name Magyar. The Magyars are a race found in Hungary who originated from the area of Tobolsk in Siberia.

Russia

In the third century B.C. the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek. This translation has survived and is known as the Septuagint Version or LXX. These early translators understood the Hebrew word Rosh (meaning head or chief) as a proper name, and rendered it by the Greek word Ρως.

Now the Encyclopaedia Britannica, in discussing the origin of the term Russia, says: “It is certainly derived, through Rossiya, from the Slavonic Rus or Ros (Byzantine Ρους or Ρουσιος).” Edward Gibbon likewise, in his Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire says of the name ‘Russians’ that “Among the Greeks, this national appellation has a singular form, Ρως.”

Now is it not remarkable that the Septuagint translators, 280 years before Christ, should choose the very word that the Byzantines and Greeks used as the early name of Russia?

“Moschi”

Rosh then, is the name of a people to be ruled...
over by Gog. He is also to rule over Meshech—or “Moschi” (LXX). Samuel Bochart, who wrote in 1640 AD, equates ‘Moschi’ with the Moscovites in European Scythia. How accurate is this equation?

References to the “Tabali and Mushki” in Assyrian annals date as far back as the 12th century BC. Herodotus (Book 3) mentions “the Moschi” and “Tibareni” among tribes in Asia Minor (at the eastern end of the Black Sea) that paid tribute to Darius the Persian (about 450 BC). They are noted again by the Greek geographer and historian Strabo (born 63 BC) as inhabiting the area now known as Georgia. Muir’s Ancient Historical Atlas (Map 5) places the Moschi just south of the Caucasus mountains.

The area south of the Caucasus mountains however, cannot really be considered ancient Magog. Whilst it is north of Israel, it certainly was not in the remotest extremities of the north as the prophecy requires (c/p also the LXX “the farthest north”).

In early times many invasions of this area took place. Is it possible that some of the Moschi chose to migrate further north? Rollin’s Ancient History (Vol. 2, p. 421, Ninth edtn. pub. 1800) describes how Scythians, when threatened “secure their wives and children, by sending them in carriages to the most northern parts of the country...” Had the Moschians acted similarly, they could have travelled (following the Black Sea coast and river Don) to the Moscow area (note the opinion of Russian historians later in this article). According to Encyclopaedia Britannica archaeological findings in the area of Moscow reveal settlements dating from antiquity.

The early records of the Assyrians, Herodotus and Strabo doubtless refer to the original settlements of the Moschi and Tibareni (or Meshech and Tubal). But Ezekiel places Rosh, Meshech and Tubal in connection with each other, and as being ruled by a Magogian leader. The implication is thus made by Scripture, that in the latter days these tribes would be found in the remote north—that is in Magog. Rosh is definitely Russia; Meshech points to Moscovoy or Moscow and Tubal (Tibareni) is associated with the names Siberia, Tobol and Tobolsk.

When we consider the above collectively, we have the clearest and most positive identification that we could wish for: Gog of the land of Magog, ruler of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal must point to the leadership of today’s Russia and Soviet historians insist, and some western scholars agree, that the movement of the Slavs into the area took place many centuries (ago). It is assumed that when Herodotus, who lived for a while on the shores of the Black Sea, referred to a land-tilling people, he was describing settlers rather than Scythians... “The name Russia comes from the word “Rus” (also “Ros” and “Rhos”) and there is evidence that the term was used in referring to people of the area before the arrival of the Varangians” (i.e. Vikings of the eighth century A.D.).

“Tartar rule (the Mongol Tartars invaded in 1240 A.D.) resulted in the growth and rise to power of the state of Moscow.” “Prepare for Thyself”

The union of “Rosh, Meshech and Tubal” followed the rise of Moscow as leader of Russian lands. In just over 150 years (from 1533 to 1689), territorial expansions were tremendous—bringing practically the whole of northern Asia under “the rule and protection of Moscow.”

This welding together of the Russians, Moscovoy and Siberia, fulfilled the first step in a long period of preparation as required by Ezekiel 38 (see verse 7). The prophet had foreseen these peoples and their lands under one rulership—and so it must be.

Further territorial gains (1801, 1855 and 1904) pushed the frontiers of Russia further east, south and west. Territorial gains were made again following the Second World War when half of Europe was chained. But God had said through the prophet “I will turn thee back...” (Ezekiel 38:4), and this certainly followed the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991.

But the prophecy continues, “...and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army...” So there is a resurgent Russia who comes forth with a revitalized military capability. And also with new allies.

Gog’s Allies

Ezekiel names several allies of the latter day Gog. Ezekiel 38:5 reads: “Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them...”

We can hardly ignore the growing and obvious support that Russia is giving to Iran (the Biblical Persia) today. But there are to be others: “Gomer, and all his bands” (v. 6) requires some investigation. Josephus (Antiquities Book 1, chap. VI) says Gomer answers to the Galatians and Galls—“Gallia” was the Latin name for what is now France. The Assyrians had noted a northern tribe by the name Gimirrai which has been equated with the ancient Cimmerii. The Encyclopaedia Britannica comments: “The name (Gimirrai) has also been identified with the Biblical Gomer.” This identification of Gomer with the Cimmerians supports Josephus. Young’s Concordance has the following: “Gomer: He was progenitor of the Cimerians, Cimbris, and other branches of the Celtic family, as well as the modern Gaul and...”
Cymry...” The descendants of Gomer “settled on the north of the Black Sea, and then spread themselves southward and westward to the extremities of Europe.”

Ezekiel’s phrase “... and all his bands (or tribes)” requires that we include all main branches of the Celtic race—in short, this must mean that Western Europe is to become an ally of Gog.

In this regard, note what the Encyclopaedia Britannica has under “Celts.” They once inhabited “the Galatia of history” says Britannica. “Ancient writers spoke of all these Gauls as Cimbris, and identified them with the Cimmerians of earlier date... The Celts continually moved westward... The Belgae, who were Cimbric in origin, had spread across the Rhine and given their name to all northern France and Belgium.”

An interesting map on the cover of the Pictorial Atlas of the Bible World (Hammond) shows this. Across all Western Europe appear the words—“Descendants of Gomer and Javan later inhabited this area.”

Anticipating Fulfillment
On the basis of Bible prophecy students have long expected Europe to come under the dominion of Russia. John Thomas, produced an exposition of Daniel’s prophecy in 1854 entitled: Anatolia; or Russia Triumphant and Europe Chained!!! The title page of this work (see pages 3 and 7) leaves us in no doubt as to his expectations—for him, the fulfillment of Bible prophecy concerning Russia was an absolute certainty.

In this book John Thomas described the extent of Russia’s future dominion, and in placing Ezekiel’s prophecy of Gog as a parallel to Daniel’s prophecy (which Ezekiel 38:17 allows for), he wrote:

“By turning to a map of Europe and Asia, the reader may trace out the territory of the Kingdom of Babylon as it is destined to exist in its last form under the King of the North in his Gogian manifestation. The names of countries furnished by Ezekiel will lead him to a just conception of its general extent. Beside “All the Russias,” it will take in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Prussia, Austria, Turkey, Persia, Tartary, Greece, the Roman Africa, and Egypt. This will be a dominion of great magnitude, extending from the North Sea to the Wall of China and Afghanistan, and from the Ice-Sea to the Deserts of Africa and Arabia.

“The organization which this vast empire will assume, when fully developed, is represented in the second chapter of Daniel by a Colossus in human form, which as an apparition flitted before the mind of Nebuchadnezzar in a dream. Daniel says that the scene of which it was the subject, was representative of what should be “in the Latter Days.” This being admitted, it follows that what is recorded in that chapter is yet in the future. The scene

“I will bring thee forth, and all thine army...” Ezekiel 38:4.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 Russia experienced economic difficulties which was reflected in the army as well as in society generally. The West poured cash into Russia, but she soon revived and has become extremely prosperous following the development of her oil and gas industry. So as Ezekiel had said (chapter 38:4) she was turned back, but is now being brought forth with all her re-equipped army, and will gather the allies mentioned in verses 5 & 6.
exhibits a Colossus standing on its feet in unrivalled brightness of glory, and terrible to behold.”

So how is this “vast empire” to be established? Since the Cold War ended and Europe was seen to be uniting, many have thought that Russia’s Image empire would be established by peaceful means. We must now question that assumption. The conclusions presented in Anatolia may prove to be correct after all. John Thomas wrote:

“...leaders (of Britain, France etc.) are all wrong in supposing that “the age of conquest is past for ever,” and that they will succeed in establishing the freedom and independence of Europe. There never has been such an age of conquest as that which will soon open upon the world; and as to the establishment of European freedom and independence, the war to be initiated is the setting in of an overwhelming inundation that will submerge them under one of the most terrible and scorching despotisms that ever wrung the heart of nations... and then, unless Britain can form some alliance beyond the limits of the Kingdom of Babylon, she will have to fight the battle of freedom and independence alone, and at the price of her own existence if she fail. France, as I have said, is Gomerian; and as such must come into confederacy with the great Cossack Ruler of the Gogian image.”

The military “inundation” foreseen by John Thomas was not a guess made on the basis of a personal point of view—it was based upon Daniel 11:40 and other Scriptures.

In his book Russia, The Vatican and the Invasion of Israel (published in 1970) Graham Pearce saw the involvement of the Catholic Church in Russia’s take-over of Western Europe. He expected an accommodation between Russia and the Vatican so as to create a pan-European Christian-socialist state. He wrote:

“...in the light of the prophetic word, we may expect there to be a deal between the Vatican and Russia, the Vatican preparing the way for the Russian takeover of Western Europe. Through the chain of archbishops, bishops, priests, and local priests, a suitable message will be passed to every catholic and the ‘submission’ of Western Europe will be assured.”

Then, in reference to the 1854 book Russia Triumphant and Europe Chained he said:

“This is a true reflection on what the prophets say. Europe is to come under cruel bondage, with freedom suppressed... We remember the parable of the latter-day “king of Babylon” of gathering unto himself all the nations and heaping unto him all people. So the lights are to go out in Europe, it is to be “in chains”. This may not take place immediately Russia takes over Western Europe. But as the occupation proceeds, and is consolidated over some years, then the chains will be found to be brutally there.”

Since those things were written in 1970, we have seen meetings between Russian leaders and the pope. We have seen the growing rift between the European Union and the United States. We have seen the emerging energy weapon of gas and oil held over Europe by Russia—and now we have seen that Russia is willing to use military force against those neighbouring countries that resist her.

The Impending Crisis

So “Who’s Next?” According to Maclean’s magazine “Russia’s invasion of Georgia is part of a bigger fight that pits Moscow against the West.” In an article under the heading “Putin’s Master Plan” Russia’s ambitions are explained in such a way as to demonstrate the fact that what Bible expositors have long-expected is now on the verge of being accomplished.

As we write these lines in early October, Vladimir Putin is accusing the Ukraine of delivering weapons to Georgia during the conflict there last August. He is reported as saying:

“A more serious crime than arms deliveries in a conflict zone cannot be imagined...

“Several years ago, we could not have imagined Russians and Ukrainians making war against each other, but that has happened and it’s a crime.”

So we watch the march of events. They are telling us in the clearest possible way that the great crisis predicted in the Bible is almost upon us. Russia must first consolidate her empire—which means her gaining the supremacy over Europe. She must then gather her allies (including Iran) in preparation for her assault upon Israel. It was in 1849 that John Thomas wrote in his preface to Elpis Israel:

“The future movements of Russia are notable signs of the times, because they are predicted in the Scriptures of Truth. The Russian Autocracy in its plenitude, and on the verge of dissolution, is the Image of Nebuchadnezzar standing upon the Mountains of Israel, ready to be smitten by the Stone. When Russia makes its grand move for the building-up of its Image-empire, then let the reader know that the end of all things, as at present constituted, is at hand. The long-expected, but stealthy, advent of the King of Israel will be on the eve of becoming a fact; and salvation will be to those who not only looked for it, but have trimmed their lamps by believing the gospel of the kingdom unto the obedience of faith, and the perfection thereof in “fruits meet for repentance.”

So the task before each one of us is plain. May the Lord in his mercy strengthen us to prepare ourselves before him.
The reading of Daniel chapter 7 informs us that the fourth beast represents a kingdom or rulership over the civilised world; that it goes through various phases expressed by ten horns arising, followed by another special horn; that this special horn with eyes and mouth oppresses the holy ones for a time period of three and a half; and that finally one like the Ancient of days comes to the earth and sets up his throne, at which time the holy ones wrest the kingdom from the little horn and the beast is destroyed, as expressed in the words “the beast was slain and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame.” The fourth beast has been recognised as a symbol of the Roman Empire since the days of John. So Daniel chapter 7 tells us that from God’s point of view, the Roman power, the fourth beast, is the representative of the kingdom of men right through to the return of Jesus Christ. This is important. The whole Roman beast, whatever its changes with time, is manifest at the end, and the special horn is still there, as also the brazen claws destroying ‘the residue.’ A recognition of this guides us to look for all Europe formed into one constitutional power at the end.

This deduction from chapter 7 is confirmed by chapter 8. Chapter 8 deals with the same Roman power, but from a different point of view. Whereas chapter 7 highlights the western European development of the Roman power and its persecution of the true christians in those countries, chapter 8 is concerned with the same power in relation to the land of Israel and the ‘Holy People,’ the Jews. In this chapter the symbol used is a little horn arising on the goat, emphasising its close connection with the goat or Grecian civilisation. In this chapter there can be no uncertainty that the Roman power is meant because of the interpretation of the beasts given in verses 20-23, and from the detail of the peculiar actions of this little horn.

• It crucified Christ, verse 11;
• it destroyed the worship and temple, verses 11-13;
• it destroyed the power of the Jewish nation, verse 24;
• it was opposed to God’s truth, verse 12.

All this took place in the first century. But Daniel was told that the angel had come to “make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation,” verse 19. And so verse 25 spans the many centuries while the land was left empty and desolate of divine favour with a few words and records:

“And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace destroy many.”

Then the prophetic records adds

“He shall also stand up against the prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.”

This means that this power is in existence when Christ returns. So, as in chapter 7, this same Roman power continues right to the return of Jesus Christ, the Prince of princes, and is destroyed by him—“broken without hand”—by miraculous power.

East and West Division, but Still one Beast

Nebuchadnezzar’s Image with its two iron legs conveys to us what is well known in history,—the division of the Roman Empire into east and west. The book of the Revelation also brings this before us in the development of a variety of beasts. Most of us are so much better acquainted with the history of western Europe than eastern European, that we are inclined to think of the Roman power or the 4th beast as Western Europe with Rome as its centre, and almost ignore Eastern Europe. It is desirable to correct this assessment. We need to learn a little more about the eastern Roman Empire, known as the Byzantine empire, after Byzantium or Constantinople; and we need to appreciate that the division of east and west is not fundamental: there is more in common between east and west than divides the two. This will make it easier for us to recognise that there is yet to be a revived Roman beast, with the east and west combined.

The importance of the eastern part of the Empire is reflected in the change in the 4th century when Constantinople became the new
centre of the Roman world. This development is expressed in the following quotation:

“The Empire had always consisted of two halves, corresponding roughly to the eastern and western basins of the Mediterranean, with their respective hinterlands. Under Roman administration, the two cultures had fused in a remarkable way, so that it is justifiable to speak of a Graeco-Roman civilisation (a little horn of the goat, G.P.). Yet certain differences always remained. If the West for example, learned to speak Greek, the East never learned to speak Latin. The East was the seat of far older civilisations than Rome, which could, and did, look down on the upstart conqueror. Despite a formidable apparatus of propaganda — court poets and historians, coin imagery and legends, Imperial pronouncements, speeches and panegyrics, official and unofficial — employed with the set purpose of spreading Roman ideals, an obstinate resistance was offered in many quarters to the Roman ‘way of life.’

“The East, too, was the home of the great cities, with which western Europe, with the exception of Rome herself, and perhaps Carthage, had nothing to compare. Under the successors of Alexander the Great, political economic organisation, banking, commerce and industry in the Aegean world had already reached a high degree of complexity. In the West, Roman civilisation, a comparatively new growth in many regions, thinned out as it departed further from the Mediterranean; and the economic preponderance of the East became more marked with the agricultural decline of the Italian peninsula and the chaotic conditions which prevailed during much of the 3rd century (3rd and 4th seals, G.P.).

“The shifting of the centre of gravity, political as well as economic, was acknowledged in 330 by the foundation of Constantinople as the New Rome, twin capital of the reconstituted Empire as it emerged from the reforms of Diocletian and Constantine” (The Root of Europe, section 4, pg. 37).

For centuries the whole of the Roman empire was governed from Constantinople, and the whole empire was subject to the revised code of laws and the new religion introduced by Constantine. The laws and government promulgated from Byzantium by Constantine were strengthened by Justinian in the 6th century, in particular giving more privileges and immunities to the Church and the clergy. Although East and West drifted apart in various ways, this Roman constitution continued the basic constitution of both the East and the West right through to the time of the French Revolution. Christianity was the other great common link. John Thomas pictured that in the final revival of the Roman beast there would be an Emperor again in Constantinople, ruling both the East and the West, and like Justinian favouring the religion of the western Church as a means of binding all together.

Russia in Relation to the Roman World

For most, a consideration of Russia means a consideration of Ezekiel chapter 38, and the belief that, as a rather isolated happening, Russia will come down on the land of Palestine to take a spoil. This is seen as something separate from ‘European prophecies.’ A more detailed knowledge of history will show that it is just as important to take Russia into account as Germany in the final development of the Roman 4th beast. As the western Roman world over the centuries pushed northward into Germany, so the eastern Roman world pushed northward into Russia. In the West, starting with Pepin and Charlemagne in the 8th century, Christianity, commerce, and Roman civilisation pushed north to the Baltic; for ten centuries there was the Germanic-Roman empire known as the Holy Roman Empire. A not dissimilar movement went on in the eastern Roman empire, usually known as the Byzantine Empire after Byzantium or Constantinople. Russia is recognised as part of the developed Byzantine civilisation. The Byzantine civilisation is described geographically as follows:

“A compound of Roman, Hellenistic, and Christian traditions, it can be described in terms of geographical area over which its influence was once predominant. Originally limited to the territories of the eastern Roman
Empire, above all to the Balkans and Asia Minor. Byzantine civilisation made a thrust northward into Russia shortly before most of Asia Minor was lost to Islam. The Balkans and Russia remained its main strongholds during the remaining part of the Middle Ages. Today the area occupied by ‘the heirs of Byzantium’ is basically the same, with the addition of the territories won for Orthodox Christianity by Russia’s eastward expansion; it comprises the European lands inhabited by the Serbs, the Albanians, the Greeks, the Bulgarians, the Rumanians, the Russians. The history of these six people reveals a striking similarity which to some extent overshadows their ethnic and linguistic differences; they are united by a common membership of the Eastern Orthodox Church and by the powerful influence exerted by Byzantium on their medieval culture; moreover they were all subjected for several centuries to the rule of Asiatic empires—the Balkans to the Ottoman, Russia to the Mongol—and on emerging from their political servitude, succumb, gradually in the case of Russia, more rapidly in the case of the Balkans, to the influence of West European ideas and institutions” (Oxford Slavonic Papers. Russia’s Byzantium Heritage. D. Obolensky, pg. 48).

Thus Russian and what we call the Satellite countries may largely derive their culture and institutions from Byzantium—the eastern Roman empire—and also Western Europe. The following further quotations from Obolensky are enlightening:

“If we survey the course of Russian history the following episodes might be taken to represent its main chapters:

1. the conversion of the Russians from Slavonic paganism to Byzantine Christianity which began on a large scale in the late 10th century;

2. the Mongol yoke which lay on Russia from 1240 to 1480;

3. the growth of the religious nationalism on the sixteenth century autocrats, exemplified in the formula ‘Moscow the Third Rome;’

4. the ecclesiastical schism of the Old Believers in the 7th decade of the seventeenth century;

5. the Westernising reforms of Peter the great in the first quarter of the eighteenth century;

6. the liberal reforms of Alexander II in the 1870’s;

7. the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.

The following quotations outline how Byzantium or Constantinople (the new Rome) is the main source of Russian civilisation:

“There can be no doubt that the influence of Byzantium on Russian history and culture was far more profound and permanent than that of the Turko-Mongol hordes and more homogeneous than that of the modern West. Russia owes her religion and the greater part of her medieval culture to the Byzantine Empire, both directly, and through her connections with Constantinople in the ninth and tenth centuries, and indirectly, through Slavo-Byzantine schools of the tenth century Bulgaria.”

“Byzantium brought to Russia gifts: her religion, her law, her view of the world, her art and writing.”

“Byzantine influence, which spread to Russia through the medium of Christianity and the channel of the upper class, was often slow in filtering down to the other sections of society; but filter down it did, and over the course of the Middle Ages it pervaded—in varying degrees the whole of Russian society from the prince to the peasant, leaving practically no aspect of Russian life untouched.

“We may conclude that Russia’s parent and materialism of Western ‘Bourgeois’ culture. Above all, the continuing strength of the Byzantine inheritance in modern Russia has asserted itself again and again in the form of the Orthodox Christian faith to which the peasantry and a section of the educated classes have remained profoundly loyal; and there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that the recent attempts of their rulers to destroy or subvert this religious allegiance have met with any notable or lasting success. Especially, perhaps, the vitality of the Byzantine heritage in Russia is manifested in the liturgy which retains a powerful hold on the mind and emotions of all those, both educated and untutored, who have not succumbed to atheism or religious indifference, and which is one of the greatest and original creations of the Byzantine genius.”

“It is highly significant that Russia entered the European family of nations through her conversion to Christianity, for which she is indebted to Byzantium. The heritage of East Rome was not, as it is sometimes suggested, Russia’s ‘Mark of the beast’ that isolated her from medieval Europe: it was in fact the main channel through which she became a European nation. Byzantium was not a wall, erected between Rome and the West; she was Russia’s gateway to Europe.”

Russia always part of Europe

A few further quotations emphasise how interconnected has been the history of Russia and Western Europe.

“For all the theological disputes between Rome and Constantinople, the rivalry of conflicting jurisdictions, the differences of language, customs, and traditions, in spite even of Charlemagne’s Coronation as Emperor of the Romans, there is no convincing evidence to suggest that, at least until 1054, the majority of the churchmen and statesmen of East and West were not conscious of belonging to one Christian Society.”

“Recent research has revealed the extent to which Russia in the eleventh and twelfth centuries shared in the common life of Europe: trade relations with Germany, the continuing immigration of the Scandinavians, intermarriages between members of the Russian dynasty and those of the principal reigning families of Europe, cultural connexions with Bohemia and Poland, ecclesiastical contacts with Rome—these facts of Russian history in the pre-Mongol period do not suggest any segregation from, or hostility towards, the nations of the West.”

“The really significant fact is that the beginning of Russia’s turning away from her Byzantine heritage in the late fifteenth century coincided with the growth of her connexions with the West; Ivan III’s marriage with Zoe was a harbinger of these connexions: for the niece of the last Byzantine Emperor came to Russia from Italy accompanied by a papal legate, and the marriage had been arranged by Rome; the relations then established between Russia and Renaissance Italy were paralleled

Ivan III (1462-1505)

In 1472 Ivan III married Sophia Paleologina, niece of the last emperor of Byzantium, and adopted the Byzantine double-headed eagle as his own emblem and he produced the concept of ‘Moscow the Third Rome.’
by the growing Western influences in Novgorod in the late fifteenth century, which soon spread to Moscow.”

“The reforms of Peter the Great were patently a response to the impact of outside forces, pressing on Russia from the West; their purpose was to transform Russia’s military machinery, social structure, and economic life in accordance with Western institutions and with the help of Western technology. Alexander II’s reforms, particularly the emancipation of the serfs, were both a product of Western liberalism and a consequence of the Crimean War; they, too, aimed to give Russia the efficient machinery of a progressive Western State. Finally, the Bolshevik Revolution and the Soviet regime to which it gave birth were at least in part the product of forces which arose and developed outside Russia: the two corner-stones of the Soviet State-Marxism and technology—were borrowed from the West.”

“Nor has she been a mere recipient: since the time of Peter the Great Russia has formed an inseparable part of the European system; for more than a century she has powerfully contributed to European culture, in literature and music, in science and scholarship, and in recent years she has exported to the West in a new and to some extent characteristically Russian form, the creed and practice of Marxist Socialism.”

These quotations will help us to appreciate that Russia must be regarded as part of Europe, and part of the last phase of Daniel’s fourth beast.

**Russia and Babylon**

An important feature of Russian constitution and history has been left to the last: its characteristic Babylon-type sovereignty. We have earlier described the absolute power of the Emperor in Constantinople, and his control of the supporting priestcraft in governing the people. Russia for centuries fitted into this system centred on Constantinople, and later established a similar pattern of the Tzars in Moscow. In recent years this kind of rulership was modified by the impact of communism; but the rule of Stalin was substantially the same, and it is not difficult to see a similar head arising claiming Babylonish authority over Church and State. So we ought not to fix our eyes entirely on the papacy as the essence of Babylon the Great; Babylonish qualities belong to the East as well as the West. The following quotations form the book, The Root of Europe, sections IX and X, entitled “Byzantium and the North,” and “Byzantine Influences in Russia” by Prof. F. Dvornik, will make this clear.

“The Russians were as keen as the Bulgarians and the Serbs on Byzantine political thought. They acknowledged the Basilius (Emperor, G.P.) of the Romans as the representative of God on earth and the head of Christendom, submitted to his laws and referred to him all important decisions in religious matters.”

“The metropolitan of Kiev, who for centuries remained the head of the Russian Church and Russia’s cultural leader, was appointed by the Patriarch of Constantinople, confirmed by the Basileus (Emperor), and was usually a Greek... Such a situation was only possible in Russia because the Russians had taken from Byzantium besides the Christian faith, the Byzantine and Christian version of the Hellenistic notion of the divinised king—the Law Incarnate, the Basileus, the successor of Constantine the Great, the only representative of God on earth, who wielded supreme power over all christians. This alone explains the sort of subordination to Constantinople in which Russia was held during the first four centuries of her existence. It was not the dependence of a vassal, as many historians have wrongly assumed. The supreme authority of the Orthodox Basileus (Emperor) was perfectly compatible with the political independence of the Grand Prince of Kiev and other Russian princes. The basic principles of Russian legislation were Byzantine, and this helped both Byzantines and Russians to reconcile the notion of a supreme legislator in Constantinople with an independent growth of Russian law, in which sufficient allowance was made for the gradual absorption of Western principles after her first codification of the Russkaya Pravada or Russian law, started by Yaroslav the Wise...This Byzantine conception became the principle of all Russian religious and political thought.”

“Under Mongol rule, Russia remained closed to every Western influence and Byzantium served as the only source of inspiration; the Emperor still acted as head of Orthodox Christianity and his decisions were law in Russia, even though contact with the tottering Empire and its influence steadily declined... In Russian estimation the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 was God’s punishment. Ivan III was the legitimate successor of the Greek Basileus and Moscow was henceforth the Third Rome. Ivan’s marriage to Sophia, the last Byzantine princess, and the adoption of the Byzantine Emperor’s coat-of-arms, the double-headed eagle, symbolised the transformation. There followed an intensive study of Byzantine political literature under the inspiration of the clergy, in search of Russian formulations... In 1547 Ivan IV, the Terrible, lent to this general feeling a concrete and final expression by accepting the imperial crown and officially assuming the title of Tzar. The court of Moscow as organised on the Byzantine model, and the Tzar defined his own powers in words which could have been used by the Byzantine Basileus: ‘The autocratic regime comes from God and the Tzar carries out God’s wishes. He wields every power over all things and it is his duty to provide for the salvation of his people which God has entrusted to his care.’ Moscow took its succession to Byzantine seriously and the first synod of the Russian Church in 1551 was held after the model of the great ecclesiastical gatherings as they were once held in Constantinople under the chairmanship of the Basileus. The erection of the Moscow patriarchate in 1589 finally sealed the transition.”

“A Byzantine leaven has always conditioned Russian institutions, even to the present day. It is still present in what is left of the Church, and perhaps also in the Soviet constitution, that curious blend of Byzantine autocracy and Western democracy. Even its tolerance for the existence of autonomous republics may reflect the Byzantine attitude towards minor nations, left free to use their own language and customs, as long as they recognised the supreme Basileus and professed his faith. The Russo-Byzantine idea of the Third Rome and of Russia’s messianic mission is still very much alive, and the Byzantine student will readily recognise in the diplomatic and administrative methods of modern Russia features that were once familiar in the city of Constantinople and in the empire ruled by the Basileus."

These quotations show that Russia is truly the heir to the old Roman Empire; more so, in fact than present-day Western European democracy. These considerations have provided us with a picture of Russia as a nation prepared by her long history to play her part in the final brief revival of the power of the Roman empire—the 4th beast of Daniel—when the saints slay the beast and take the kingdom. Confedrate with the Papacy, they will together provide the civil and religious elements of the last Babylonish power on earth.
PROPHECY DAYS & EVENTS (God willing)

UNITED KINGDOM


Special Prophecy Evening King’s Norton Birmingham Tuesday October 28, 08. Commences 7:45 pm.

ERITH (Kent) Special Prophecy Evening Thursday October 30th, 08. Contact Peter Moore 01474-703037. E. mail. petermoore123@talktalk.net

SEATON (Devon) Prophecy Day Saturday November 1st, 08. at 15:30 at Colyford Memorial Hall, Swan Hill Road, Colyford, Devon EX24 6QJ. Theme: Israel, Britain & the Christadelphians For more info’ contact mjelbro@talk21.com

NORTH AMERICA

UNITED STATES Florida Prophecy Day Saturday November 15th, 08. Don Pearce (Rugby U.K) and Paul Billington (Brantford, Ca). Theme Prophecy Coming Alive in 2008. Venue: Largo Ecclesial Hall, 12212 104th Lane North, (off 122nd Avenue, North off Seminole Blvd) Largo, Florida 33773. For further info’ contact Stephen Lewis (727) 593-7766.

CanadA (Ontario) Special Brantford Prophecy Day Saturday November 8th, 08. Doors open at 12 noon. First class at 1 p.m. Prophecy Coming Alive in 2008! Roger Long, Don Pearce, Paul Billington. Further information from Gary Smith 519-758-0362;

Listen or look every week as we bring you the truth behind the headlines

FROM THE BIBLE IN THE NEWS
October 09, 2008

WORLD ON THE EDGE
As the World’s profits crumble, listen to the Hebrew Prophets

Take for instance the Hebrew prophet Moses, who by faith “...refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.”

What is the reward that Moses could see? It tells us in Hebrews 11:14, that the faithful were seeking a country. In verse 13 the reward is termed “the promises.” These are the promises made to the fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Israel. The Apostle Paul calls them the “Hope of Israel” in Acts 28 and in Acts 26 the hope of the twelve tribes. The Hebrew fathers did not receive these promises, however they saw them through the eye of faith and they were persuaded of them and embraced them. They fell in love with the Hope of Israel.

The Lord Jesus Christ taught us:
“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:19-21).

The question that Jesus brought us to think about is, Where are the affections of my heart? On my treasure on earth; or, have I set my affections on the Hope of Israel reserved in heaven with the king of Israel? Today, as the riches of the world go up in smoke, we are forcefully reminded what can easily happen to treasures upon earth. As humans we always fall into the trap of thinking “all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” We simply do not have a very good ability to see that things will not continue the way they are, but will surely change. The ability to see the change that will sweep the earth comes from faith.
Now faith is the substance or firm confidence, the assured expectation of things hoped for. Faith is the evidence of the unseen promises of God—the testimony concerning the age to come (Hebrews 11:1). Faith makes the Hope of Israel a rock solid reality that we can see and be assured of. Through faith we can walk in the restored kingdom of Israel in all its glory and splendor. We can rejoice with the Jew under the reign of the long awaited Messiah, we can survey the wondrous temple, observe the nations coming to learn the word of God and be awed by the king in all his beauty. Through faith we can eat bread at his table in his kingdom. Without faith in the promises it is impossible to please God. Impossible (Hebrews 11:6). In order to believe God a man must believe His word and obey it. Romans 8:24 says that we are saved by hope. Not just any hope. The margin of my Bible shows the Greek is definite here. We are saved by the hope. The Hope of Israel. Let us not lose sight of what we do believe in. We are not saved by what we don’t believe. An atheist does not believe in immortal souls wafting off—but that fact will not help him. We are saved by believing and obeying the gospel, the hope of the twelve tribes of Israel. Through faith we understand that the present is passing, that today’s world will change and vanish away.

Today a wind of change is blowing over the world’s economies. It is terrifying how quickly billions of dollars can evaporate into nothing. The Economist says a global recession is almost certainly on the way. The article entitled “Bad, or worse” goes on to say: “According to the IMF’s most recent World Economic Outlook, published on Wednesday, the world economy is “entering a major downturn” in the face of “the most dangerous shock” to rich-country financial markets since the 1930s.” Shocking? Iceland is on the verge of bankruptcy and who is helping them? Well, that could be Russia. The National Post reports: “Russia bails out Iceland with US $5.4 billion loan.” Where will this lead? It could be another step to the ascendancy of Russia and the subjugation of Europe.

Another headline that caught my eye this week from the Associated Press was: “Russia’s Jerusalem land claim worries Israelis.” The article reports:

“The Russians are coming to downtown Jerusalem, reclaiming ownership of a landmark with the approval of the Israeli government...”

And just tonight the Jerusalem Post is reporting that Israeli Airforce Jets were scrambled to the northern border, where an aircraft had infiltrated the Israeli airspace from Lebanon. The IDF is on alert and is concerned Hizbullah may attack.

Come back next week and keep your eyes on the prophets! This has been David Billington for the Bible in the News at www.bibleinthetnews.com.

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Jesus Christ was crucified alongside two thieves. The gospel of Luke records that one of the thieves “railed on him,” saying, “If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.” The other thief however made a remarkable observation: “Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.” He then proceeded to petition Jesus, saying, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” Jesus’ response is familiar to most Christians, “Verily I say unto you, today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:40-43).

Few Bible verses have been misrepresented or misunderstood more than this one. Jesus’ promise to the thief has been used to support a variety of views, the most common of which is that it has been suggested that a person immediately joins Jesus in heaven at death. As with all the verses we have examined in this series, the golden rule has been to make sure that a particular verse or comment is in harmony with the whole counsel of God. In addition, it is vital that any scriptural verse should be examined in the context in which it is recorded. The final consideration and perhaps the most difficult is that we must be willing to set aside all preconceived notions we might have during our examination.

The Thief’s Faith

We shouldn’t be too quick to assume that the thief had no knowledge of Jesus, or that he was ignorant of God’s purpose and his own relationship to sin and death. The thief’s open rebuke of his fellow sufferer is a remarkably concise confession of his faith:

• He believed in God
• He acknowledged that he was a sinner
• He believed that Jesus was a sinless man
• He believed in the kingdom of God
• He acknowledged that Jesus was his Lord

Whatever circumstances had brought him into this unfortunate situation, evidently he was quite familiar with Jesus and his work and had sufficient faith to petition Jesus to remember him. There is humility evident in the thief’s request. He did not ask for a position in the kingdom, as James and John had, but for his soul to be saved. Neither did he presume to be accepted, but was fully confident that Jesus, the judge of the quick and the dead, would do what was right.

When thou Comest into thy Kingdom

Those who would promote this verse to prove that heaven is man’s reward overlook the question that was initially asked by the thief. It was about the kingdom of God; moreover it is described as “thy kingdom”, or Jesus’ kingdom. There was a certain irony in this question because over the cross of Jesus Pilate had nailed a sign, “This is Jesus the king of the Jews” (Matthew 27:37). Whilst it may be true that Pilate did this to mock the Jews, it was nevertheless a truth which was born out by Jesus’ ministry. He had spent three years circuiting Israel preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God and at the heart of this message was the nation of Israel.

In Old Testament times Israel constituted the kingdom of God. God called Israel “a kingdom of priests” (Exodus 19:5-6); they are described as His dominion (Psalm 114:2); God ruled over the nation of Israel (Judges 8:23; 1 Samuel 8:7). But when Israel failed to live up to their privileged position God overturned the kingdom and promised that it would remain desolate “until he come whose right it is, and I will give it him” (Ezekiel 21:25-27). This last reference is obviously alluding to the Lord Jesus Christ as the above scriptures demonstrate.

• The angel promised Mary that Jesus would sit on the throne of David reigning over the house of Jacob forever (Luke 1:31-33).
• Jesus promised his disciples that they would eat and drink with him in his kingdom and sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:29,30).
• Jesus spoke of Jerusalem being the city of the great king (Matthew 5:34,35).
• Jesus clearly taught that the kingdom would be on the earth (Matthew 5:5; 6:10; Revelation 5:10).

Therefore after spending three years preaching to the Jews about the kingdom and after his resurrection a further forty days to his disciples (Acts 1:3), it is not without significance that the disciples asked Jesus, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel” (Acts 1:6). They fully understood his teaching about the kingdom and its relationship to Israel.

The thief on the cross shared the same expectations; his understanding was in harmony with the disciples; he asked only that Jesus remember him at the appropriate time.

Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise

But Jesus appears to have promised the thief that he would be in paradise that very day. It is not unreasonable therefore to question exactly where Jesus went after he died, and what is meant by “paradise.”

The Biblical evidence overwhelmingly confirms that whatever is meant by the word “paradise.” Jesus did not go straight to heaven that day. For example after his resurrection he told Mary, “touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father” (John 20:17). What could be plainer?

Neither is it necessary to speculate where Jesus actually went after he died. Again we turn to the scriptures.

• Jesus said that he would be three days and three nights “in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40).
• A rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, begged the body of Jesus and laid it in his own tomb (Matthew 27:57-60), thus fulfilling the prophecy, He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death” (Isaiah 53:9).
• Three days after the crucifixion angels declared that Jesus was no longer in the tomb, confirming that he had rested there by the words, “Come, see the place where the Lord
Evangelism entitled, York wrote a report on Archbishops of Canterbury and Thirdly, in 1945 the William Tyndale declared, Protestant and reformer, Again the 16th century Herodotus (5th century BC) example the Greek historian unexpected sources. For is supported by a number of evidence about life after death. At death:

• Our bodies begin to return to the dust of the earth, (Genesis 3:19; Ecclesiastes 3:19,20)
• We have no consciousness, our thoughts perish (Psalm 146:4; 6:5)
• The opportunity for life ends, (Isaiah 38:18)
• The soul dies (Psalm 22:29; Ezekiel 18:4)
• Resurrection to life is man’s only hope, which is based firmly on a belief of the gospel (John 11:25, 26; Mark 16:16)
• The resurrection will take place at the return of Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at his appearing and kingdom (2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23)

This overwhelming Biblical evidence about life after death is supported by a number of unexpected sources. For example the Greek historian Herodotus (5th century BC) wrote,

“The Egyptians were the first who asserted that the soul of man is immortal.”

Again the 16th century Protestant and reformer, William Tyndale declared,

“In putting departed souls in heaven...you destroy the arguments wherewith Christ and Paul prove the resurrection.”

Thirdly, in 1945 the Archbishops of Canterbury and York wrote a report on Evangelism entitled, Towards the Conversion of England; in it they made a startling statement noting that,

“the idea of the indestructibility of the human soul (or consciousness) owes its origin to Greek, not to Bible, sources.”

The doctrine of the immortality or the indestructibility of the human soul is not Bible teaching. But what was Jesus referring to by the word paradise?

Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words says that “paradise” is derived from the Greek, “paradeisos,” and is an oriental word, denoting the parks of Persian kings and nobles. It was introduced into the Greek language by the historian Xenophon during the 5th century BC from Persia. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) the word is used to describe the garden of Eden (Genesis 2:8; Isaiah 51:3). We also find it corresponding to the word “orchard” in Ecclesiastes 2:5 and Song of Solomon 4:13. In each case where the Greek word for paradise occurs in the Septuagint version, it has nothing to do with heaven but always refers to the earth.

One scripture is worth a little closer examination in light of our conclusions thus far. In Isaiah 51, three times the LORD invites all that follow after righteousness to “hearken to me” (verses 1, 4-5, 7-8). God is about to announce a wonderful thing—

“For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden (paradise, LXX), and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody” (verse 3).

God intends to change the city of Zion or Jerusalem, so that it will become as Eden, or the paradise of God. Here is a word picture of Jerusalem’s future, when sorrow and mourning shall flee away (verse 11). It will be a time for Zion to “put on thy strength” and for Jerusalem to be adorned in “beautiful garments” (Isaiah 52:1).

Of course God is talking about the kingdom, when Jerusalem will be “the city of the great king”, even the throne of the LORD (Matthew 5:34, 35; Jeremiah 3:17); when the law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3). This is what the thief was looking for and this is what Jesus promised.

There still remains the problem of the word “Today;” was Jesus promising that the thief would receive something that very day? The evidence submitted in this brief examination has shown conclusively that Jesus was not promising the thief life eternal in heaven, rather that both the thief’s question and Jesus’ answer were based upon a common understanding of the gospel of the kingdom of God. Two suggestions therefore may be considered.

It is not uncommon in the Hebrew scriptures for the word “today” to be used as a declaration of intent. For example God said to Adam, “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17). Adam didn’t die the same day that he ate of the fruit of the tree, he continued to live another 930 years. Similarly, God declared His intention to remove the kingdom from king Saul, saying, “the LORD hath rent the kingdom from king Saul, saying, “the LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day” (1 Samuel 15:28). And yet Saul continued as king for another ten or so years. Several other examples could be advanced. This is the case with the thief on the cross; it was a declaration of Christ’s intention. The thief would die, but his next waking moment after sleeping in the grave, would be at the resurrection from the dead.

The second suggestion relates to the punctuation of this verse. In the Greek text of the first century there is no punctuation like our modern English; thus the comma was inserted at the discretion of the translator. We have noted in previous articles that many translations have been subjected to the bias of the translators, and were no doubt true on this occasion.

By moving the comma the verse reads as follows: “Verily I say unto you today, thou shalt be with me in paradise.” Recognized translations such as Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible and Bullinger’s Companion Bible have followed this approach.

Once again we have examined a Bible verse in the light of the whole counsel of God; let us continue to rightly divide the word of truth which is able to save our souls.
have not yet plunged into the particulars relating to his Smoky Majesty, but there is another enquiry—where did the authors of the Jewish apocalyptic get their non-Biblical ideas from? A student of Indo-Iranian culture states that Zoroastrianism, particularly its demonology, influenced Judaism from the time of the Exile onwards.

“This is particularly evident in the changed conception of Satan. Before the exile...Satan was no more than a servant of God...after the exile, he is portrayed as God’s adversary.”

To the polytheism of the society around him, Zarathushtra (the Old Iranian name for Zoroaster) revolted, rejecting their cult of many gods. He proclaimed Ahura (God) Mazda “Wise Lord,” who later was the great God of Darius I (BC 522-486). The origin of evil is explained in Zoroaster’s system by postulating that at the beginning of creation, twin spirits, sons of Ahura Mazda, chose between good and evil. One chose good and became associated with truth, justice and life. The other chose evil and its attendant forces of destruction, injustice and death.

According to Zoroaster the world was soon to be consumed in a mighty conflagration from which only the followers of the good would rise to share in a new creation. The souls of the good were to wait in heaven for this to happen, while the wicked would wait in “Hell.” In later Zoroastrianism it was also believed that the souls of the damned would be purged in the fire so that they might share in the final Renovation of the world. Incidentally, this doctrine of Purgatory also found its way into the old mother church through the same route as that of the personal evil spirit Devil—a clear indication that a fallen-angel devil has no more validity than the doctrine of Purgatory.

After Zoroaster’s death his religion spread into the territory of the Medes and Persians, and—guess what!—became contaminated with the ancient religion. Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord’s power became limited, and his good creation was now evenly opposed by an evil creation, instigated by his bad twin son.

Persecution by the Muslims during the 8th-10th centuries AD, sent some Zoroastrians to Bombay, India. By the 19th century they were called Parsees. They and the Gabars (meaning “infidels”) of Iran are the only two remaining groups of Zoroastrians. But the influence of Zoroastrianism continues to this day in other religions, including Christianity, on a global scale. Scholars tend to refer to the Zoroastrian concept of the good and evil spirits as dualism. Some among the church theologians, evidently stung by the pointing out of this clear connection, have stoutly resisted the label from applying to their form of Christianity. Semidualism appears to sit more comfortably with them. But really, this is mere quibble, and does not remove the clear descent of the personal Devil concept from Zoroastrianism. The previously referenced student of Indo-Iranian culture has found that it is possible to trace the progress of the new influence. The Jewish apocalypses spoke at first (Jubilees—2nd C. BC) of a judgement of rebellious angels. They were said to be sons and spirits of the bad angels Beliar and Mastema, as well as the angels who had misused their power of punishment. Later in The Assumption of Moses (probably 1st C. AD) the final decision is conceived as a struggle between God and the Demon.

The professor further notes that the Iranian system is particularly conspicuous in the Doctrine of the Two Spirits. In apocryphal literature both rabbinical and post apostolic Christian, the good and evil spirits oppose one another. The Book of Judah in the Testimony of the Twelve Patriarchs speaks of two spirits that serve man, one of truth, and one of error.

The previously referenced scholar of Jewish apocalyptic literature observes that the prevailing interest of the Jewish apocalyptic books are the future and the world to come. In some writings the Old Testament teaching of the Kingdom of God established on this earth persists. But generally speaking these writers despaired of the present and of this world, and looked to the future and to the world to come for the fulfillment of their hopes. The old idea of a Kingdom on earth gives place to a supernatural kingdom in a new heaven and a new earth (I Enoch 37-71) or a spiritual kingdom in heaven (II Enoch) or a temporary earthly kingdom followed by an eternity in heaven (II Esdras and II Baruch). He notes that Persian influence is to be traced in the remarkable growth during this period of the belief in demons. The evils perpetrated against Israel by the nations are ascribed to bad angels, who in the End, share the punishment of evil earthly rulers.

An early apocalyptic traces this association of the angels with evil to the story recorded in Genesis 6:1-4

“And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that
he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown."

The authors, whoever they were, of these apocryphal books took this account of “the sons of God” to mean that some formerly good angels lusted after the daughters of men (Jubilees, Testaments, II Enoch). From this illicit union it was said, evil spirits came forth (I Enoch 15:8...) who continued their work of inciting to sin until the final judgement. “This developed doctrine of angels and demons, and the notion that the present world is in the power of the Prince of the Demons, is familiar to readers of the New Testament” Not, we hasten to point out, that Jesus or the apostles teach such an idea, but that it is expressed there by the Pharisees—

“But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils” (Matthew 12:24).

It is a revealing fact that in Genesis 6:3 the earliest version of the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint or LXX), the Alexandrian text has for the Hebrew “bene ha elohim,” “angeloii” which in English is “angels.” The later version has “uioi” or “sons,” which is the correct translation. The idea of fallen angels is very old indeed. The Ethiopic version of the Book of Enoch 9:6; 10:8 says of the “watcher angels” who took human wives, “Thou seest what Azazel hath done, who hath taught all unrighteousness on earth...and the whole earth has been corrupted through the works that were taught by Azazel: to him ascribe all sin.”

But what does the inspired account say?

“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart” (Genesis 6:5-6).

It is generally accepted that man is intrinsically good, and that he therefore must look outside of himself for the cause of his wickedness. But this opinion is contrary to the inspired word, which is consistent in placing the blame for sin on man himself. If the blame was really that of a “rebel angel” then surely Genesis 6:4, saying that they were slain—and therefore adding to the inspired record. The book says that their spirits remained on the earth to tempt mankind to sin, but that God then bound all of them. The fable goes on to say that Satan negotiated(1) with God, to set some demons free, and ten percent of them were released to continue their work of tempting mankind. Two other apocryphal books add significantly to the myth. By some magic, they say, the women who lusted after angels, conceived alien forms by their husbands.

Angels were depicted as either good or bad in the pagan mythologies. They could bring benefits, or they could bring evil. Evil angels are the demons.

The Slavonic Book of Enoch, or II Enoch, otherwise known as The Book of the Secrets of Enoch 29:4-5, speaks of the pride of the angel who became Satan, and of his revolt. The Hellenistic Book of the Wisdom of Solomon states, “God created man for immortality, and made him in the image of his own eternal self; it was the Devil’s spite that brought death into the world” (Wis. 2:24 LXX). This directly contradicts what Paul states that, “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin...through the offence of one man to be dead...by one man’s offence death reigned by one...by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation...” (Romans 5:12:18). Paul lays no blame on “Satan” or “the Devil” or demons, or a “fallen angel”. This idea, as we have seen, has extra-Biblical origins.

The Book of Jubilees portrays the evil Mal’ak as wholly independent of the Lord. The prince of the evil spirits, Mastema, and his followers lead astray the children of the sons of Noah. The same book gives its own version of events which are recorded in canonical Scripture. It says that it was Mastema, rather than Yahweh, who met Moses in the desert to kill him (Exodus 4:24). The first suggestion, it says, for God to ask Abraham to offer Isaac, came from “Prince” Mastema. The book declares the final destiny of this great and evil spirit: At the end of the world Messiah will come and judge Mastema; he and his angels will then be bound and imprisoned for ever (Jubilees 10:8; 23:29; 48:15-16). This is widely at variance with the testimony of Jesus, who declared in his parable of the dragnet, “So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just” (Matthew 13:49).

It is not evil spirits, but mortal mankind who will be judged:

“The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28-29).

That “damnation” is not everlasting imprisonment, but “destruction”—

“...shall there be evil in a city, and the L...

This has been recognized as a mistaken translation, and modern versions have, for example the NRS, “a company of destroying angels.” The angels were not evil, rather God was bringing evil (disaster) upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians through his angels. This is in perfect harmony with God’s own declaration in Amos 3:6

“...shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?” God is the source both of good (blessing) and evil (calamity)—the evil is most emphatically not the work of an evil spirit being. Again, “And the Lord said unto him (Moses), Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the

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dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?” (Exodus 4:11).

They were good angels whom God sent, first to speak with Abraham, and then to destroy Sodom (Genesis 18-19). It was a good angel, who at God’s bidding, destroyed 185,000 troops of the Assyrian army who besieged Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:35).

But the whole idea that there are bad angels is entirely contradicted by the doctrine of Jesus Christ. In refuting the denial of the Sadducees of a resurrection, Jesus taught,

“The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection of life, neither marry, nor give them in marriage: Neither can they die any more”—in other words, they are made immortal. See more about this in 1 Corinthians 15.

By this will be the fulfillment of Christ’s promise in John 3:16,

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish (apollumi = to destroy fully) but have everlasting (aionios = perpetual) life.”

The contrast is unmistakable: either total destruction or life without end. Angels, taught Jesus, have unending life. “The wages of sin is death”, which is the cessation of life (Romans 6:23). Angels, therefore cannot sin, nor rebel against God. The whole idea of angels going bad is a “fable.”

Consider the question from another viewpoint. When Abraham was in Canaan,

“The Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever” (Genesis 13:14-15).

God promised that Abraham and his offspring would possess the land “for ever” (owlam = eternity). Jesus underscores this promise more than once, and declares,

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).

These “meek”, explains Paul the apostle, are by faith included in the seed of Abraham—“Therefore is it of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed: not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all” (Romans 4:16).

Now if it were possible for angels to sin, then it is possible (since “the wages of sin is death”) for angels to die. And if it were possible for angels to sin, then (since they will be “equal unto the angels”) it would be possible for any of the “heirs of salvation” (Hebrews 1:4) to also sin, and it would be possible for them also to die— the promise would then not be “sure”. Which are we to believe? Did Jesus tell a lie, when he promised everlasting life? Did God lie when he promised Abraham and his seed “everlasting” possession of the land? Are we to believe the fable of “fallen angels,” or are we to believe God’s promise to the faithful, that in the resurrection, they cannot die?

The apocryphal Book of Adam and Eve, was written by a Jewish author before 70 AD. The existing Latin and Slavonic versions also contain some later Christian interpolations. This book attributes the fall of Adam and Eve to the temptations of Satan or the Devil. The Apocalypse of Moses claims that the serpent was merely a tool of Satan. Furthermore, it makes Adam and Eve’s “carnal lust” for each other, “the root and beginning of every sin.” This mode of thinking has been taken on board hook, line and sinker, by the old Jezebel of apostate definition of a word or expression. We will need to do what Mr Webster did, but see how the word is used in context in the Scriptures. Aruwm occurs eleven times in the Old Testament. Looking at the ten other occurrences, Job 5:12 and 15:5 use the word in the negative sense of “crafty.” The remaining occurrences in Proverbs 12:16; 23; 13:16; 14:8; 15, 18; 22:3; 27:12 use the word in the positive sense of “prudent” (AV) or “clever” (NRS).

We may, then, safely conclude that Genesis 3:1 means that the serpent was, compared with the other animals, clever, with the possibility of also being crafty. To this Paul the apostle agrees, when he refers to this incident, saying to the believers at Corinth, “I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtility (panourgia = adroitness, in a bad sense, trickery or sophistry), so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:3).

Many other animals, particularly the predatory kind, have some level of craftiness. Paul refers to those elders in the church at Ephesus who would “arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” For, he said, “after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock” (Acts 20:29-30). But we do need to take careful notice of what Paul is saying to the Corinthians. He says that “the serpent beguiled Eve”—in other words, that “subtil” animal beguiled Eve—which is exactly what the Genesis account says.

Now surely if the apocryphal books were correct, then Paul ought to have confirmed it here. Paul would want his friends in the faith to “know their enemy.” Was the hapless reptile merely “a tool” of an evil spirit being? Was he the dummy, like Charlie McCarthy, made to only seem to be speaking, while Satan, the ventriloquist, like Edgar Bergen was speaking his enticing words to Eve? But Paul does not say that the serpent seemed to be the one who beguiled Eve—he says it was the serpent—he blames the serpent. Now if the actual tempter was an evil spirit, then Paul by his silence about this, would be perpetuating the deception! Not only so, but God blamed the serpent—

“And the Lord God said unto the serpent. Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life” (Genesis 3:14).

Was God punishing the dummy instead of the ventriloquist? “Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?” (Job 8:3) surely not.

It is the Testimony of the Twelve Patriarchs which names Belial or Satan as chief of the rebel angels (Test. Judah 25:3, etc). The development of the idea of an arch-fiend, evil spirit being in Hebrew thought, particularly in the apocalyptic period, is striking. Scholars have found traits of
help (2 Kings 1:1-6, 16) but the Lord sent Elijah to rebuke him for believing in an idol. And yet “orthodox” Christendom insists that Jesus believed in Beelzebub!

Church tradition says, “demons are angels who fell with Satan who is called the prince of the demons...” (Ryrie, A Survey of Bible Doctrine)—but is this really Bible doctrine?— Who said this?

The Bible says that Beelzebub was god of the Philistines who lived in Ekron (2 Kings 1:1-6). Jesus taught that there is only one God, the Father (Mark 12:28-33). He did not believe in Beelzebub, and he did not believe in any other sort of “evil spirit” or pagan god. Jesus believed the words of the Psalm concerning Beelzebub:

“But their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but they cannot smell; they have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but they cannot walk; nor can they utter a sound with their throats” (Psalm 115:4-7).

Jesus showed that the Pharisees were wrong in what they said about his miracles of healing: “If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand?” (Matthew 12:26). The Satan Jesus knew was himself. How then can his kingdom stand?

The grotesque Babylonian Lilutu

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References to the hairy and goatlike sa`iyr are found in Leviticus 16:1-23; 17:7; 2 Chronicles 11:15; Isaiah 13:21; 34:14. On the other hand, Lilith is a she-demon (Isaiah 34:14) related to the Lamia and Empousa of Greek mythology. These were evidently derived directly from the Babylonian Lilutu.

Another scholar refers to the Book of Adam and Eve, which says that in the beginning, God, having created Adam, called the angels together to admire his work and ordered them to bow down to their younger human sibling. Michael obeyed, but Satan refused, saying, “Why do you press me? I will not worship one who is younger than I am and inferior. I am older than he is; he ought to worship me!” (14:3).

An alternate version tells how the archangel Azazel sinned by disclosing to human beings the secrets of metallurgy, a pernicious revelation that inspired men to make weapons, and women to adorn themselves with gold, silver and cosmetics. Thus the fallen angels and their demon offspring united in both sexes violence, greed and lust.

The Book of Jubilees says that God assigned to each of the nations a ruling angel or spirit “so that they may lead them astray” (!) (15:31) hence the nations worship demons, whom Jubilees identifies with foreign gods. Pagels points out the LXX of 1 Chronicles 16:26—“all the gods (Jubilees, demons) are idols”. Jubilees warns that those who neglect God’s covenant are being seduced by the power of evil, fallen angels (1:20).

The Essenes placed in the very centre of their belief, a cosmic battle between spirit beings—angels and demons, God and Satan. This Jewish sect explained the foreign occupation of their country in this belief. To them the forces of evil had infiltrated and taken over God’s own people, by the work of Satan, Mastema or the Prince of Darkness—a concept which sounds very much like Zoroastrianism. One of the Essene sacred books is called the Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness. One passage says, “The Prince of Light you have appointed to come to our support: but Satan, the angel Mastema, thou hast created for the pit; he rules in darkness, and his purpose is to bring about evil and sin.”

Reference has already been made to “the tradition of the elders,” which Jesus thoroughly denounced, and warned his disciples to beware of. As we have seen, this modifying, and subsequent superceding of the written word of God is not exclusively a Jewish trait. The Gentiles of the Christian church have more than repeated history.

To be Continued

END NOTES

1. Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin (article on Zoroastrianism, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1967) was professor of Indo-Iranian studies, Liege University, Belgium.

2. Elaine Pagels, author of The Origin of Satan (published 1995) as professor of religion at Princeton University, This “distinguished historian of religion” traces the evolution of Satan from its origins. Reading and re-reading biblical and extra-biblical accounts of angels, she learned that “while angels often appear in the Hebrew Bible, Satan, along with other fallen angels or demonic beings, is virtually absent. But among certain first-century Jewish groups, prominently including the Essenes...the figure variously called Satan, Beelzebub or Belial also began to take on central importance.”
In the eighth and ninth chapters of John’s gospel, Jesus is teaching in the Temple courts on the Sabbath—probably in the week immediately following the Feast of Tabernacles covered in chapter seven. He is confronted by the scribes and Pharisees who, after a long discussion—

“Then took...up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the Temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.”

The opening verse of John 9 goes on to say,

“But as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.”

We are not told whether Jesus chose to leave the Temple by way of the grand stairway on the south-west corner, through the Double gate which went beneath the Royal Stoa along the southern end of the Temple Mount, or whether he set out through the eastern gate to cross over to the Mount of Olives as he often did at the end of the day. The blind man could have been begging near any of the exits, either on the Mount, or below the stairs. Those who were blind or lame or otherwise disabled were not permitted to enter the Temple itself. In Acts 3, Peter and John encounter a lame man as they are about to enter the Temple through the Beautiful Gate, where he was brought daily by his friends. Even today, many Jews beg throughout the city.

In order “that the works of God should be made manifest” in the blind man, Jesus proceeded to heal him by anointing his eyes with spittle and clay. A necessary part of the process of manifestation was in the instructions he gave.

“Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.” What was it about the pool of Siloam that caused Jesus to send him there?

The remainder of the verse tells that Siloam means “Sent.” As we often find in the Gospels, this is a word that has not been translated into Greek, but simply inserted in Hebrew. The blind man was commanded to travel from the top to the bottom of the City of David to receive his sight. We are not told any details of his journey, but simply that “He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.” Did he know the way well enough to make the journey by himself, or did he need a guiding hand?

The pool of Siloam had just been the centre of much activity during the Feast of Tabernacles a few days before. Within the larger feast, was the Festival of the Water Libation. Each morning at dawn, the priests and Levites, accompanied by multitudes of people, descended from the Temple to the pool with great rejoicing. A special golden flask was filled with the spring water, then taken up to the Temple where it was poured on the altar. The only day that differed was the Sabbath, when the flask could not be carried down and back. Extra water was brought up the day before for use on the Sabbath. There were no springs on the Temple Mount itself, just cisterns. Charles Warren recorded a maze of underground storage cisterns during his explorations. Jesus sent the blind man to use the living water in the pool of Siloam. The rest of this chapter is concerned with the consequences of this miracle for this man, and for his friends and neighbours.

The site of the city of David was settled at a very early date. The source of water known as the Gihon Spring was always the focus. With a constant water supply, the narrow valley of the Kidron below the Spring to the south, became known as the King’s Dale. The King’s gardens occupied the most fertile, well-watered (and therefore most valuable) land. Some of the spices and plants which Solomon nurtured in his garden may have come from the Queen of Sheba. The book of Nehemiah helps us to understand the topography of the city. Chapter 3 verse 15 says

“But the gate of the fountain repaired Shallun the son of Colhozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah; he built it, and covered it, and set up the doors thereof, and the bars thereof, and the wall of the pool of Siloah by the king’s garden, and unto the stairs that go down from the city of David.”

This pool of Siloah is the same as the pool of Siloah in the Hebrew. It’s the same word used in Isaiah 8:6 “...this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly...” The gate of the fountain has been uncovered next to the Gihon Spring, while we now have two pools of Siloam. The stairs that go down from the city of David—
those which the blind man must have followed—have also been discovered. When Zedekiah and his men of war fled from the Babylonians, they “...fled by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which is by the king’s garden...” 2 Kings 25:4. The modern village of Silwan which lies across the Kidron valley from the City of David is the equivalent of Siloam, but there is no scriptural connection, it simply grew up close to the pool.

Before David took what had become the Jebusite stronghold, the Canaanite inhabitants sought to control the supply of water. Walls were built to protect the citizens, but also to enclose the source of water. A secure water supply was necessary if the city was besieged—one that was not available to the besiegers. Scripture seems to indicate that David was able to gain access to the city through the water system.

The water from the Gihon was enough to support the city around it, but those in the city were not content to see the excess run off and be wasted—it was much too valuable a resource. Before the days of David, it appears, a channel was dug in the bedrock along the side of the Kidron to a reservoir at the southern end of the escarpment. Today, archaeologists refer to this as the Siloam or Canaanite Channel. As well as directing water to the southern pool, it greatly improved the irrigation of the gardens in the Kidron Valley. This was probably what Isaiah referred to as the waters of Shiloah.

Both David and Solomon were strong rulers, and the city expanded beyond the walls with little concern about sheltering the water supply from the spring. In the days of Rehoboam, however, this situation began to change. Shishak was the first to plunder the Temple and carry off its treasures. The city didn’t seem to have been besieged, but it had become vulnerable. For the next 250 years, Jerusalem suffered in wars with the Syrians and the northern kingdom, until Hezekiah sought to improve the defenses of the city by further sheltering the water system. The Assyrians were the first of the great powers that were known for laying siege to fortified cities.

down to it from the Temple Mount. The two pools are very different in size. The Byzantine pool is small and narrow, and was apparently built over by the church and then the mosque. It was simply the outlet for the water flowing through the tunnel. The larger, older pool served the city of Jerusalem in several important ways. It stored water in the event of a siege, it was a bathing pool for the people, it was the source of living water for the Temple, and it possibly served as a mikveh or ritual bath for those in need of cleansing. Several mikvehs are located by the southern staircase of the Temple Mount, and near Robinson’s Arch and the grand staircase.

The pool of Siloam has always been significant in the life of the city, from the time of David through to the time of Jesus, and its re-discovery brings to mind many of the events which shaped the history of God’s people in the land.
**LET’S TRY THE BEAR FACTS...**

Bears have a secret that many folks would like to share: although inactive for months while hibernating, they do not suffer from osteoporosis like we humans do if we don’t move around. Their skeletons retain their strength. They don’t lose muscle tissue either—only fat. Is this design or chance?

“All bears are short tempered and get angry quickly. They are fierce fighters and will attack anything that threatens them or their cubs.” So says *The World Book Encyclopedia*. Perhaps we learn the same thing from the Bible—try Proverbs 17:12 and Hosea 13:8. And if you can bear it, the same Book tells us that God designed and made (created) them.

Some nations are likened to bears in the Bible, they share the same character: when they wake up, Watch out!