WAITING FOR MESSIAH

THE HOPE OF ISRAEL IN A WORLD OF TERROR & CORRUPT GOVERNMENT
“At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” Daniel 12:1.

WRITTEN OVER 150 YEARS AGO

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“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” John 17:17.
Speak Out the Truth

When did Satan ever succeed but by plausible arguments? Doth he understand his trade so ill as to come forward in his own naked character? If that were the case, we had no need to be warned against “the deceitfulness of sin.” Our Lord predicted false Christs; and if Satan is permitted to set up a mimic Christ, he will surely set up mimic Christians, and a mimic church. As to men of great piety being members of it, that is only another proof that infidelity under the mask of liberality has pervaded “the church” in proportion as it has pervaded the outer world; and hence the great necessity of those who would be esteemed of God as his real servants, to come out and stand aloof both from the professing as well as from the non-professing world. This was the case with the church at the period immediately preceding the Deluge; she had mingled herself with the men of the earth, and that judgment came upon her as well as upon them, Noah and his family—a family of separatists—alone, being saved.

“If the study of the prophecies, and the belief which it inculcates of the speedy coming of Christ, had led merely to an intellectual speculation without its practical tendency being seen to draw the believer to a closer walk with God, and a greater separation from the maxims and practices of the world, it would not have been so much opposed as it has been; but professors call every attempt to rise, and still more to lead others above the ordinary standard, a breach of Christian unity and love.

“But our first duty is to protest clearly and boldly against the sins of the church.” She has settled upon her lees, and all she beggs is, like the world, to be let alone. This sort of happiness consists in the conscience being asleep: the true believer tries to awaken it, and they detest him for his pains. Hence it comes to pass, that the Sons of God, who are children of peace, are, nevertheless, the occasion of much disturbance in the world, and of much suffering to themselves. “I am for peace,” said David, “but when I speak, they are for war.” Why speak then? Why not exercise love, and charity, and forbearance, and avoid giving offence by disagreeable truths? “I tried,” he says, “to refrain even from good words, but it was pain and grief to me; as I mused the fire kindled, and at the last I spake with my lips.” Jeremiah found the same thing; see ch. 15:10; 20: 7-11. A greater than David said, even he who will be Prince of peace, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword; for I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law; and a man’s foes shall be they of his own household”—Matt. 10:34-36. When holiness and zeal are combined in any man, that man becomes a sword in a wicked world. If a man be holy without zeal, he will be scoffed at indeed by many, but despised for his insignificance. If a man be zealous without holiness, he exposes himself to that withering rebuke, “Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam in thine own eye.” This would be all easy if we had no contention but with the unconverted world; but we have a multitude who belong not fully to either camp. It seems uncharitable to call them enemies; it seems unfaithful to admit that they are friends. Hence arises the difficulty. It is the Lord’s special and distinctive commandment to his disciples that they love one another. But who is a disciple? And how far is our love to one whom we suppose a disciple to be carried? I lay before you a statement which I believe to be the truth of God. There is a man whom I suppose not to be a Christian. This statement does, I say, offend that man. What is my duty? Should I out of love to the man, suppress the statement; or should I out of love to the truth, make the statement, though I offend the man? Suppose we adopt the former mode of keeping the peace; then it is clear that this consequence would follow; the prejudices of our brother, and not the contents of the Bible, would become the measure and standard of our statements of truth; an evil than which I cannot imagine any thing more absolutely destructive. If this be admitted, the church, instead of growing to the measure of the stature of Christ, would dwindle into the dwarfish littleness of the most puny, timid believer in her communion. We must adopt the latter mode then, and speak out; and in so doing we must incur the consequence, namely, we shall be reproached for disturbing peace and harmony, and brotherly love; as renders of the body of Christ; as destitute of that meekness which characterized our master, whose commandment we shall hear was love.”

Reproduced from Herald of The Kingdom, December 1860.

The Two Regions of Tarshish

As to Tarshish, there were two regions so called in the geography of the ancients. Jehoshaphat built ships at Eziongeber, a port of the Red Sea, that they might sail thence to Tarshish. Now, it will be seen by the map that they could only sail southward towards the Strait Babelmandeb, from which they might then steer east, or north for India. As they did not sail by compass in those days, but coastwise, they would creep round the coast of Arabia and so make for Hindostan. The voyage occupied them three years. In the days of Solomon, the trade was shared between Israel and the Tyrians; for “he had at sea a navy of Tarshish with the navy of Hiram; once in three years came the navy of Tarshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks.” These products point to India as the eastern Tarshish—a country which has always conferred maritime ascendency on the power which has possessed its trade and been its carrier to the nations.

But there was also a Tarshish to the northwest of Judea. This appears in the case of Jonah, who embarked at Joppa, now Jaffa, on the Mediterranean, “to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of Yahweh.” He could only sail towards the west. Like the eastern Tarshish it was a country, not a city, whose “merchants” frequented the Tyrian fairs. Addressing Tyre, the prophet says, “Tarshish was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kinds of riches; with silver, iron, tin, and lead, they traded in thy fairs.” These metals are pre-eminently the products of Britain, celebrated by the Phoenicians as Barata, or “the land of tin,” as some interpret it. The merchandise of the northern Tarshish and of the eastern, identifies Britain in the north, and India in the east, with the two countries of that name.

From “Exposition of Daniel”
By John Ramsden  LONDON, U.K.

Terror in Tarshish

India has long been identified as the Eastern Tarshish of Bible times: Today India and Israel are allies.

Amidst the violence and bloodshed of the recent attacks in Mumbai, there were two items of considerable interest to the Bible reader. First, the assault on Chabad House, the Jewish community Centre in the downtown area, and second, the way that the attack was described in the media.

On the surface, such an attack on a Jewish centre seemed strangely out of place in what was essentially another round in the continuing Islamic-Pakistan versus Hindu-India conflict ostensibly concerning rulership of the Kashmir province. But when one commentator was asked the significance of the attack on Chabad House, he explained that it was because of the way India was so supportive of Israel, which in turn was supported by Britain and America—the fundamental enemy of Al Qaeda.

The Tarshish Background

Recent editions of the Bible Magazine have explained how the Bible tells us of a latter day confederacy of nations described as “Tarshish and the young lions thereof.” This is a power which, in addition to sponsoring the return of the Jews to their land in Israel, would continue to support them thereafter. Indeed, as the prophecy of Ezekiel chapter 38 explains, there will come a time when another group of nations including much of Europe, but led by Russia, will descend onto the land of Israel. When that happens it will be opposed by this power of Tarshish which previous writers have, beyond any doubt at all, identified as a group of essentially English-speaking people, comprising in the first place Britain, then America and also the British Commonwealth.

As will be seen from so many different cartoons illustrating the nature of this power, India has always been one of the component members.

But there is More to it than That!

Whilst Tarshish as described in, for example, the prophecies of Ezekiel and Isaiah as referring to this essentially Anglo-American led alliance, there are several references elsewhere to what appears to be another “Tarshish” away in the east.

The Biblical books of Kings and Chronicles tell us of the days of Israel’s King Solomon around the times of 900 BC. Not only was he noted for his wisdom and the leadership of his people but also for his great building achievements—not the least being his magnificent Temple. In this latter enterprise he was helped by the neighbouring King Hiram of what today we would regard as Lebanon. Hiram was based at the great maritime and trading centre of Tyre—from whence ships set out for the Tarshish in the west, namely Britain. Together, however, Hiram and Solomon engaged on some joint enterprises eastwards as we read in 2 Chronicles 9:21.

“For the king’s ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Hiram.”

Israel, as a nation, was not renowned for its naval or maritime skills, so whilst Solomon may have provided the financial investment and construction resources at his shipyards at Ezion Geber on the Red Sea near Eilat, it was Hiram who provided the naval expertise and sea going man-power. Together, their enterprises took them to a destination sometimes referred to as Ophir, but which on other occasions was described as Tarshish.

“And Hiram sent him by the hands of his servants ships, and servants that had
knowledge of the sea; and they went with the servants of Solomon to Ophir, and took thence four hundred and fifty talents of gold, and brought them to king Solomon” (2 Chronicles 8:18).

And then again:
“Even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses” (1 Chronicles 29:4).

One problem we face is that neither classical historians nor archaeologists can be sure where Ophir-Tarshish was. However, the Bible describes it as a place of great mineral wealth and timber used in the completion of his magnificent Temple.

Similarly, Solomon apparently used timber from “almug trees” for construction purposes. This is a little known tree identified by timber industry experts as sandalwood.

“And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees, and precious stones” (1 Kings 10:11).

So Where is Ophir-Tarshish?
So although so far in our studies we have not yet discovered where Ophir-Tarshish is, what does become very significant is to note the other items which the Hiram-Solomon partnership imported from that area.

Setting out from Ezion Geber there would be the long haul down the Red Sea and through the Straits of Babelmandeb and into the Indian Ocean. Bearing in mind there were no compasses or satellite positioning equipment in those days, it has been suggested that they would simply have followed the Arabian coastline aided by the prevailing currents in a north easterly direction. It seems it was not a frequent expedition, but one taking place every three years.1 This we learn from 1 Kings 10:22.

“We cannot accept that Palestine will become Jewish... Our Islamic nation has been tasting the same for more than 80 years...

Osama Bin Laden in 2001

Chabad House Mumbai

We cannot accept that Palestine will become Jewish... Our Islamic nation has been tasting the same for more than 80 years...

Osama Bin Laden in 2001

Chabad House Mumbai

India is represented as a “young lion” in these illustrations

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and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks.”

Thus, Ophir-Tarshish was a place not only of great mineral wealth, precious stones and timber. The choice of the animals identified in the text is also very interesting. Identifying the possible location of such indigenous animals has presented secular zoologists with a field day of speculation.

However, when the Bible student approaches the matter with the help of a concordance and Gesenius’ Hebrew Lexicon a feasible solution soon presents itself. It appears that the original words for “apes” and “peacocks” are both of Tamil-Indian origin—the real meaning of the latter being “baboons.” Both of these are indigenous of India! The description “ivory” is even more interesting. Although the original word occurs over 50 times on at least 41 occasions it is related to teeth or tusks—obviously elephants, which are also in India. And the “almug” tree apparently provided the sandalwood used in ancient Persian and South Asian palaces! So putting all this together, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Ophir-Tarshish would have been a location on the Indian subcontinent.

But isn’t all this Missing the Real Point?

Yes it is! For although we may have established India as being the Ophir-Tarshish of King Solomon’s times, our real interest in the news from Mumbai stems from our understanding of the greater role for Tarshish, our real interest in the established India as being the Ophir-Tarshish.

Ophir-Tarshish would have been a location over 50 times on at least 41 occasions it is related to teeth or tusks—obviously elephants, which are also in India. And the “almug” tree apparently provided the sandalwood used in ancient Persian and South Asian palaces! So putting all this together, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Ophir-Tarshish would have been a location on the Indian subcontinent.

It is when we view Tarshish therefore, whether East or West, or as shared participants in the same purpose, that we note with interest the burgeoning relationships between Israel and India. India, now under threat from Iran to abandon its nuclear arms deals with America is also living in the shadow of continuing violence from the Jihadist powers of Islam. Not surprisingly we note reports of growing cultural and educational ties between India and Israel, with New Delhi confirming last September that Israel sent 40,000 tourists to India in the previous year! In November 2008, Turkey proposed to supply India with oil on a pipeline running through Israel, thus relieving India’s anxieties about Islamic sources of oil. In 2006, diamonds and precious stones account for 60% of Israel’s trade with India, and recently the Indian government announced “new partnerships in culture and education to consolidate bi-lateral ties.”

Indiathat Eastern Power of Tarshish

So it is not difficult to see why a Muslim terrorist force should pick on a Jewish community in Mumbai to vent its Anti-Israel hatred. But more to the point it has drawn attention to the growing support of Ophir-Tarshish for Israel which has always been, and yet will be again, one of the characteristics of the Tarshish family of “young lion” nations of Ezekiel 38:13. Thus yet again the news media unwittingly testify to the way in which the most High rules in the Kingdom of Men.

Footnotes

1. There is a minor problem here. Some would contend that the journey involved a round trip of three years, but that does not seem to be what the text is saying. Either way Ophir-Tarshish was a very long way from Ezion Geber.

2. In Job 39:13 the word translated “peacocks” comes from a different original Hebrew word probably meaning ostriches.

WISE WORDS OF ADVICE FROM AN ELDER TO THOSE

By the late Graham Pearce U.K.

The apostle Peter in his first epistle wrote to the brethren these words: “As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). We might feed a new-born babe on many “foods,” but they would all more or less be harmful. Its mother’s milk is alone suitable, and on this it grows astonishingly. This simple figure Peter applies to the brethren. They were not all newly immersed, yet he desired they would all be like new-born babes, feeding on the milk of the word, that they might grow thereby. Though adults they had great need—like a new-born babe—to grow in divine things.

The apostle Paul wrote to the brethren at Ephesus commending their “faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints.” Because of this, he prays on their behalf: “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints etc.” Here were brethren already developed in Christ, yet Paul ceased not to ask on their behalf for these things. How essential did Paul regard their growing in knowledge, and becoming further enlightened and established in the Hope.

The Master, in his prayer to his Father, recorded in the 17th chapter of John’s Gospel declares that “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world... and they have kept thy word.” Nevertheless later he prays, v. 17: “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.” These men had responded promptly to the call of the Master three years earlier, showing that they were already men of understanding, faith and love. They had for three years listened to the incomparable Teacher, the Light of the World, and beheld the grace and truth of his ways. Yet it was fitting for Christ to pray for them, that they might be sanctified by God’s word.

In the light of these words of Peter, Paul and the Master, who will deny that there is great need for us to grow in its understanding of God and His ways, and to apply ourselves diligently and continually to the task. Are we sufficiently aware of this need for ourselves? Have we arranged our lives so that there are regularly recurring times of instruction and study, and we can truly say that we know in ourselves that we are growing? The full assurance of understanding (Col. 2:2) will not come to us automatically as we grow older.

“Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God” (Prov. 2:3-5).

Those who have been in the Truth for a year or two are inclined to think they are equipped with the knowledge of God. They are easily caught up in a Preaching of the Gospel scheme, and go to various places to endeavour to convert people. Would they not be wiser if they realised that their primary task is to grow in understanding and grace, and that their position is one of learning and not teaching. They should rather spend their time in the company of the
wise mature brother, being satisfied with that round the fire atmosphere of Malachi 3:16, “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another.”

If it is fitting to say to those young in the Truth that they should content themselves with learning, it is equally good to beseech our elders that they do not fail as teachers. Nothing equals the power of living exposition and explanation of the scriptures. This is our great need today. Statements of Faith may preserve the letter of the Truth, but they have no power unto salvation. The scriptures relevantly expounded are a great power able to transform us. Paul writing to Timothy in his 2nd epistle told him that the scriptures were able to make him wise unto salvation, and that they are profitable for doctrine, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. And then he added these words: “I charge thee therefore before God... Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine...” Timothy was to do these things to the brethren. Paul was relying on Timothy’s exposition of the scriptures to preserve the brethren in the way of righteousness. And so it must be today. Elders should be stirred up so that they furnish their minds and become mighty in the scriptures; and that they take steps to gather around them in informal and private ways those who will hear. The spirit of our age to organise and systematize everything rather turns us away from these simple, profitable paths of instruction.

Mutual consideration of the scriptures in the manner suggested is not everything. Doubtless we must study ourselves; study the scriptures; study suitable books to help us in understanding the scriptures. What shall we read? There are many voices. There is no lack of writing that may be classed as the Truth’s literature. But we are not wise if we take everything as good and worthwhile. If there is a wise, mature brother to help us, let us give heed to his advice. Otherwise we must sample various publications and writers. After reading, we should ask, does it compare scripture with scripture unto edification; does it enlighten our eyes, and reveal to us the riches of the glory of the inheritance (Eph. 1:18); has it a sanctifying power (John 17:17)? After reading has it produced a clearing away of the mist that normally seems to exist between ourselves and the unseen realities of God? does it cause us to be lighthearted and glad, and to sing with melody in our hearts? Along these lines we can determine whether a writer is truly a teacher in Israel. Let us be severe by this standard. Let us continue to read only those writers who positively build us up. We can easily spend our time unprofitably. Jesus told his disciples: “Take heed what ye hear,” and the wise man said: “Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.”

Current writings come to our notice much more frequently than older writings. Yet it is a sound generalisation that the water is purer nearer the fountain head. God revived the Truth through the instrumentality of Dr. Thomas, and it is not likely that any in our time have had such a grasp of the scriptures as he. This thought may help us in deciding what we study.

Written in 1946
While the economic crisis deepens, events continue to unfold just as prophecy has predicted

By Don Pearce  RUGBY, U.K.

Once more the terrorists have struck. This time the target was Mumbai—the former Bombay, one of the main cities of India and a bustling centre of commerce with many western links. The targets were carefully chosen: Western hotels, an Indian railway station and a Jewish hostel. Only one known terrorist was captured—the rest fled or were killed. The one captured confessed that they had selected their victims deliberately.

The finger points to an Al Qaeda group. The ease at which they were able to carry out their attacks has forced anti-terrorism leaders around the world to sit up and confess that no-place is safe. As Jesus warned, men’s hearts would fail them for fear of those things coming upon the earth. He also drew the parallel between Noah’s age and the age at the time of the end. The characteristic of Noah’s days is summed up in one word—violence! (Gen 6:11).

Yet we know the greatest threat to Israel is not Muslim terrorists, but the so-called Christian countries that make up the majority of Gog’s companions!

A Grim Financial Outlook!

The speed of the financial collapse of the markets around the world is causing great concern. The job losses are no longer just with the wealthy bankers, but are now affecting the ordinary man-in-the-street. Factory closures are continuing at an alarming rate. The lead headline from the New York Times.com (6-12-08) reads:

U.S. Loses 533,000 Jobs in Biggest Drop Since 1974

And that was just for November! Adding in the revised figures for September and October it reached 1.2 million. A total of 1.9 million US jobs have been lost since the start of the recession a year ago.

“This recession, which officially began in December 2007, now appears virtually certain to be the longest downturn—and possibly most severe—since the end of World War II, as evidenced last week by a demoralizing rat-a-tat of grim reports on jobs, sales and public confidence. “The reports signaled that even after 11 months, more than the entire length of the last two downturns, this recession has only now entered its fiercest phase, and economists say the pain will not end soon. “‘For the average American it’s going to be devastating for the next 6 to 12 months,’ said Bernard Baumohl, chief global economist at the Economic Outlook Group, a research and forecasting firm. He added, ‘I have not seen anything particularly hopeful right now, which tells me we have a ways to go.’” New York Times (8-12-08).

Here in the UK is a similar picture, though on a smaller scale. Household names like Woolworths and MFI have called in the administrators as they fight off bankruptcy. The Sunday Times (7-12-08) had a double-page spread under the headline:

How bad is the economy going to get?

“Last week saw jobs slashed, interest rates cut, house prices plunge and a fixture of Britain’s high streets go to the wall. When is all the bad news going to stop?”

It made it clear there was no end in sight—the economy is in free-fall. The Bank of England has slashed bank interest rates in an effort to stimulate business; at the time of writing it is at 2%—a rate last seen in 1951. There are prospects of more cuts, which would take Britain into uncharted territory, as it has never fallen below 2% since the central bank was created in 1694! Lack of business has seen a steady rise in unemployment figures and most optimistic economists foresee them doubling from their present level to nearly 3m, with the gloomiest suggesting an increase to 3.5m. This would be its highest level on record, beating the peak in 1984, when 11.9% were unemployed. Even the taxman is having to slash jobs—3,400 jobs are under threat and 90 regional tax offices face closure!

House prices continue to fall shedding more value per year than many of their owners earn in the same period! Having fallen 16% during the past 12 months, analysts see them falling another 20% in 2009.

The Sunday Times article carried a series of “Fear Factor Charts” at the conclusion of its sections on Business, The World Economy, Housing, Jobs, on a scale of 1(least) to 5 (greatest) they all but one read 4!

On 24th October when it was announced that Britain was well on the way to being in recession, the Daily Telegraph carried this headline (My emphasis):

Recession: Just how Bad can it Really get?

“It was a day that left economists
scrambling for the right doom-laden adjective. “Shocking”, “dire” and “horrific” were just some of the words used to describe official confirmation that Britain is halfway towards its first recession since Margaret Thatcher was being turfed out of Downing Street and into the Lords. 

“...it was Charlie Bean, one of the Bank of England’s own deputy governors, whose language managed to eclipse all the City professionals.

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime crisis, and possibly the largest financial crisis of its kind in human history,” he said, in a stark abandonment of the measured, cautious language that is a hallmark of central bankers around the world.”

Other leading lights in the economic world were using similar language. Nouriel Roubini, Professor of Economics at New York University, who had accurately predicted many of the banking and insurance collapses some 18 months before hand—when he had been mocked for his pessimism but now shown to have been completely accurate in his predictions—said “I fear the worst is yet to come!” (Sunday Times 26-10-08). Warren Buffett a 78-year-old speculator declared “In my adult lifetime, I don't think I have ever seen people as fearful.”

We recall the words of the Lord Jesus—initially spoken to the disciples and the problems they faced in the ending days of the nation of Israel in AD70, but which we rightly extend to a description of the days of his return —our days!

“Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and 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 heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:24-28).

The Powers of Heaven shall be Shaken

Jesus was referring to the political heavens, the governments. Sun moon and stars; earth, sea and waves refer to all aspects of life, political, economic and religious. Is not this what we see? Again we perceive a two-fold application. One concerns Israel and their political heavens and earth, the other concerns the rest of the nations. We see turmoil in both spheres. The Israeli Prime Minister Olmert has had to resign because of corruption charges. This has brought the Israel government down, because Tzipi Livni was unable to form a coalition government. Elections are due on February 10th. There is much internal strife within Israel, between the religious Jews who look for the coming of Messiah and the secular Israelis who despise what they stand for. We know the political lights of the Israeli heavens are to fall when Gog invades Israel. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining (Joel 3:15).

On the wider scale we see whole countries are facing bankruptcy! “A string of countries face the risk of “going bust” as financial panic sweeps Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America, raising the spectre of a strategic crisis in some of the world’s most dangerous spots” (Daily Telegraph 14-10-08).

It mentioned Pakistan, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Argentina, Hungary and Iceland as vulnerable countries. Huge loans are being made to prop them up, with no certainty that they are going to work!

The Creation of a New “West European Republic” is Inevitable

The EU itself is not immune; the euro zone countries are under great strain as we touched upon in the last issue. Lord Tebbit who was a minister in the Margaret Thatcher government, recently gave a speech to mark the anniversary of Lady Thatcher’s speech in 1988 when she told the College of Europe in Bruges: “We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them reimposed at a European level, with a European super-state but still be bound by agreements within a looser EU structure.

“He says: ‘We can see the possibility of a new European community of sovereign independent states co-operating willingly together. Most would be existing nation states —but one would be the West European Republic.’

‘“We cannot drift on as we have been,” said Tebbit. ‘It is not fair either to the British people nor to the European Union. We need to show Thatcherite courage and determination to lead the country along that path.”’

D’Estaing shows the Way ahead for Britain

Giscard d’Estaing the former French President and architect of the European Constitution made it clear that the rest of the EU didn’t want to be continually thwarted in their political union plans. Here are some extracts from what he had to say at a conference organised by the Daily Telegraph and the think-tank Global Vision in London on September 8th.

“Two different approaches to European integration can be seen. For a majority of member-states, representing a clear majority of the population, the position is that integration must be continued as set out in the Union Treaty, and that the EU is not yet “complete”. At a time when new powers are emerging the unification of Europe must be made more effective and understandable. In those areas over which the Union has competence, decisions should be able to be taken by qualified double majority, thus avoiding the delays and uncertainty of the vetos of twenty-seven member-states. The building and development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy must be reinforced, gradually being detached from exclusively national impetuses. And the European Parliament must conquer the democratic legitimacy which the election of its members confers on it.

“For these States, the EU is on the right path, but its integration needs to be improved, and fresh efforts devoted to accomplishing this task.

“For other States, including the UK, the degree of European integration achieved today is enough, and should not be deepened. The dominant feeling is “too much” rather than “not enough”. The excessive interventionism of Brussels damages the efficient functioning of the market. And other vital relationships, especially that with the USA, ought to be given more weight, as well as the new factors resulting from economic globalisation. These States do not want more “initiatives” and would prefer a more modest conception of European union.

“Let us be realistic: these two approaches, these two stances, are incompatible, yet, at the moment, they co-exist within the EU. To avoid the possibility that these tensions grow and end up in a crisis, we need to ask...
ourselves what is the best way to go forward. “Let us be clear: we are not talking here of a two-speed Europe, arbitrarily separating the good from the bad, the strong from the weak. After fifty years of living together, a two-speed Europe would provoke an acrimonious dislocation of the system. On the contrary, for a Europe already united, it is a question of pursuing its integration, at a realistic pace, respecting the identities and competences of member states. This approach, based on the democratic legitimacy of the double majority, would be open to all, but, just as for monetary union, include opt-outs.”

“In the case of the UK, because of its island situation and financial importance, these opt-out clauses would take the form of a “special status”. Much detail would need to be worked out, as had to be done with the treaty regarding monetary union.

“That is why, if I may, I suggest that we end the permanent antagonism which weighs down our relationship and reduces our capacity for action, by deciding to pursue the great movement for European integration, in which we would agree to grant the UK a special status.”

All thy Company that are Assembled unto thee
Ezekiel 38:7

It is interesting how one can think one understands a prophetic Bible verse, yet it is only when almost in hindsight, it hits one that there is an aspect one had not seen before.

One such verse is that on Ezekiel 38:7.

“...the Egyptians... and the company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them.”

Surely this speaks to us of the nations willingly seeking to Gog to be their protective shield. They have come to her. She is a guard unto them in the spirit of Nehemiah’s men and the Jewish servants being a guard unto the workers who laboured in the rebuilding of the wall.

“Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day. So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing” (Nehemiah 4:22-23).

True the word can have the sense of a gaol guard, in which case these companions would be prisoners, but Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Lexicon distinguishes the passages for the two meanings, and the Ezekiel and Nehemiah passages are listed under guard, rather than place of confinement, gaol, prison.

So it has been remarkable to see so many nations turning to Russia for their military protection, countries moreover who are to be expected to be in the Gog camp. Here are some of the headlines with brief comments.

Syria under Moscow’s wing (Guardian 21-8-08)
Syria has asked Russia to be her protector, to use her ports so that Russian warships are on the spot to protect her from any Israeli or American threats.

Libya. Military and Nuclear Cooperation (thedailystar.net 29-11-08).
“…the Libyans were in talks to buy $2 billion worth of anti-aircraft missiles (S-300 and Tor-M1 surface-to-air missile systems), fighter jets (Ssu-30 and Mig-29 fighter jets), helicopters, tanks (T-90 battle tanks) and a diesel submarine.

“The Russian military presence will be a guarantee of non-aggression against Libya from the United States.”

Again we see Libya turning back to her former Soviet protectors. For the past few years Libya had buried her problems with the West, but it now appears this was a temporary move. Qadhafi perceives the Russians more willing to be her protector than America.

Russia Plans to Sell Missile System to Iran
The Epoch Times (21-11-08)
“Dan Goure, a senior Pentagon arms adviser on the system, described it as “one that surely scares every Western air force”.

“Another Russian military initiative which should worry Jerusalem is the arrival in Beirut Saturday Dec. 6 of Mikhail Dmitriiev, head of the Russian military cooperation department, to prepare the visit to Moscow next week of Lebanese defense minister Elias Murr.

“After greeting his Russian visitor, Murr said: ‘There are no obstacles in terms of equipping the army. We prepared for my visit to Russia next week. I will discuss… with the Russian defense minister what could be provided to the Lebanese Air Force.’”

This will be very worrying for Israel. The prospect of Hezbollah having access to even more sophisticated weapons is not a situation that Israel relishes.

EU warns to Russian pan-European security pact idea (euroactive.com 19-11-08)
“…This is an agreement of strategic importance. We feel that it is strategic for the European Union and I think Russia thinks likewise’. said Commission President José Manuel Barroso.

The EU, driven by Germany, is looking to push America out of Europe and rely on Russia to be their defender. It makes sense for a Europe so heavily dependent on Russia for energy, to seek to bind herself in closer ties to their powerful eastern ally.

The death of the Russian Patriarch
Alexy II’s death came unexpectedly on December 5th, aged 79. He was younger than Pope Benedict XVI and had been suffering from heart problems. He had been busy planning a trip to Austria to share in celebrations surrounding the restoration of the Russian Orthodox Church in Vienna.

Press Release. (16-10-08).

Under Alexy, the Russian Orthodox Church flourished in this post-Soviet era. He was often seen in the company of politicians; indeed many Russian politicians saw the wisdom of being seen to support the Church. Some of the statistics for its growth are startling.

“At the end of the 1980s the Russian Orthodox Church counted 6,000 parishes; currently this number is almost 30,000. Back then there were three institutions of theological education; now there are more than 100. There were 18 monasteries; now there are more than 750. It should be noted that none of these monasteries are empty: some of them have more than 500 monastics (e.g. the Diveevo Convent).

“The Russian Orthodox Church does not know of the “crisis of professions” that plagues many Christian Churches in the West. On the contrary, the number of people wishing to enter theological seminaries and academies is significantly higher than the number of students these schools can take in. For example, more than 5,000 students currently study at the St. Tikhon Orthodox University in Moscow.

“Because of this, when people speak of the “post-Christian era”, this does not apply at all to the Russian Orthodox Church, which is currently flourishing” Press Release, (16-10-08).
Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad has been appointed as interim leader, who, with Metropolitan Kliment of Kaluga and Borovsk are the two front runners to succeed Alexy. Kliment is said to be the Kremlin’s favourite. A successor has to be appointed no earlier than 40 days and no later than 6 months from December 5th. Apparently a voting method has to be adopted as Alexy was voted in unopposed. There is talk of selecting 3 candidates and then drawing lots between them.

On other Church matters, a Roman Catholic priest created an upset for Israel in a UN debate on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The UN is well known for its blinkered anti-Israel outlook. There is a “human rights” group, which closely monitors UN activities called EYEontheUN (http://www.eyeonthune.org/). Among their many categories, two are of interest; anti-Semitism and Discrimination against Israel.

November 24th is marked as an annual UN Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People; this was the date in 1947 that the UN voted to establish a Jewish State. Each year it marks the same pattern of “mourning” that decision and studiously avoiding any acknowledgment of Israel’s legitimacy—which had been conferred by the UN! The EYEontheUN report 25-11-08 carried the headline: - (my emphasis).

UN General Assembly President Accuses Israel of Apartheid and calls for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel.

“The President of the UN General Assembly has launched an unprecedented attack on a UN member state from the Assembly podium. Going beyond even existing UN resolutions, Miguel d’Escoto Brockmann of Nicaragua accused Israel of apartheid and called for “a campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions” against it. Reminiscent of a classic antisemitic slur, Brockmann (himself a Roman Catholic priest and one-time official of the World Council of Churches) also claimed our Palestinian “brothers and sisters are being crucified” by Israel.

“Brockmann’s assault is a gross abuse of the position of Assembly President,” commented Anne Bayefsky, Editor of EYEontheUN. “He knows full well that his outrageous personal views will be translated into six languages and webcast around the world.” Brockmann assumed the Presidency in September 2008, having been nominated by the Latin American and Caribbean regional group.

“Brockmann made the apartheid allegation twice in one day, once in the morning at the annual meeting of the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and again in the General Assembly in the afternoon. In his words: “I spoke this morning about apartheid and how Israeli policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territories appear so similar to the apartheid of an earlier era, a continent away. I believe it is very important that we in the United Nations use this term. We must not be afraid to call something what it is. It is the United Nations, after all, that passed the International Convention against the Crime of Apartheid, making clear to all the world that such practices of official discrimination must be outlawed wherever they occur.”

“Brockmann’s call,” said Bayefsky, “was in effect, a call for the political destruction of Israel by means of the same strategy adopted against apartheid South Africa.” Brockmann said:

“More than twenty years ago we in the United Nations took the lead from civil society when we agreed that sanctions were required to provide a non-violent means of pressuring South Africa...Today, perhaps we in the United Nations should consider following the lead of a new generation of civil society, who are calling for a similar non-violent campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions to pressure Israel...”

The adoption of the 1947 partition resolution, accepted by Jews and rejected by Arabs, is now bemoaned by the UN. Former Secretary-General Kofi Annan described Palestinian Solidarity Day as “a day of mourning and a day of grief.” This year, as in years past, the UN used the occasion to fly only two flags, that of “Palestine” and that of the United Nations. Though the resolution was ostensibly the UN’s first commitment to a two-state solution, today the flag of the member state of Israel is left out.

Wikipedia has quite an entry on this priest—here is a paragraph.

d’Escoto has been criticized for his harsh criticism of Israel. Following Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinedjad speech to the U.N. General Assembly, calling and wishing for the destruction of the Jewish state, D’Escoto embraced him, prompting Israel’s Ambassador to the U.N. to refer to d’Escoto as an ‘Israel-Hater.’”

The Vatican has been working to destroy Israel right from its creation as a State in 1948.

“A day before state hood was proclaimed, L’Osservatore Romano published the Vatican’s unequivocal assertion that ‘modern Zionism is not the true heir of biblical Israel.... Therefore the Holy Land and its sacred sites belong to Christianity, which is the true Israel.’” (Cross on the Star of David by Uri Bialer).

They have worked with the Arabs to try to bring about Israel’s downfall ever since as Biale’s book testifies using evidence from Vatican and Israeli released documents. It is not difficult to see how all nations are brought to come against Israel—most nations despise Israel and the Vatican’s influence is increasing.

Barak Obama President-elect of the US.

Our interest lies in America’s approach to Israel and the Middle East and if the special relationship with Britain is kept alive. It is very early days and with Israeli elections in the offing, his hand is stayed until the next Prime Minister of Israel is voted in. Potentially he should be friendly to Britain. Prime Minister Brown’s Labour Party is much closer to the Democrats than it was with Mr Bush’s Republican Party. Obviously he has little experience, but is putting a solid team of advisors around him. Will there be a place for Gordon Brown to be the elder statesman?

Just as the countries that make up the Gogian confederacy are turning to Russia for protection, so we are beginning to see the countries which will make up the opposition grouping—the “King of the South” countries—turning to America, Britain and India for protection from Iran.

We see the impact that the Somali piracy is having on the amount of trade going through the Suez Canal, which forms a vital lifeline for Egypt’s economy. It would not seem far-fetched to see Britain and America being asked by Egypt to come to their defence.

Facing Financial Hardships—a Test of Faith.

The economic troubles of the world are bound to have an impact on our lives; few will be insulated from it. With plummeting share prices impacting pension funds, falling house prices affecting retirement nest-eggs, unemployment prospects ever more real, how are we going to cope? Is this a time of testing for Christ’s household? For decades we have had comparative prosperity, with its attendant distractions for those seeking to walk the narrow way to the Kingdom. How often the Master and his apostles warn of the dangers of wealth, in that they insulate us from the need for the Kingdom of God.

Maybe in these remaining days we will have to learn to live with less. Remember too we are anticipating the day when we will be walking away from ALL our possessions. The journey to the Judgement Seat of Christ will not be encumbered with our earthly possessions. There is but one thing that we take with us and that is our minds. This is what the Master wants for his service. So we have to ask ourselves, “Where is our treasure?” Is it a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth? (Lk 12:33), or is it a treasure on earth which in the words of Haggai is being put into a bag with holes? (1:6) a wonderfully apt picture of the present situation! What did the Master warn?

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Lk 12:34).
WHEN CHRISTENDOM UNITES AGAINST CHRIST!

For many years the head of the Russian Orthodox church, Alexy II, has been seen as the obstacle to re-union with Rome. His removal from the ecclesiastical scene opens up interesting possibilities.

“...the Church must breathe with her two lungs!”

“...the Catholic Church desires nothing less than full communion between East and West.”

John Paul 2  *Ut Unum Sint* 1995
The death of the Russian patriarch Alexy II opens up the prospect of what, for Bible readers, could be some very significant developments in the near future.

For several years past there has been great personal animosity between the leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Pope as head of the Roman Catholic Church. This has made any form of co-operation between them virtually impossible.

The situation is further complicated by the conflict which exists within the whole of the Eastern Church itself. At the core of that situation has been the rivalry between the Bishop of Bartholomew in Constantinople—historically the head of the Eastern church, albeit with an almost non-existent flock there—and the leader of the Russian branch with his numerically much greater following. Indeed as the Economist magazine reported:

“Orthodoxy is caught up in a spectacular slanging match which is none the gentler for being conducted with volleys from footnotes of mediaeval history and episcopal decrees.”

So it will be interesting to see whether the temporary appointment of Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk achieves the necessary emollience to heal the relationships between all concerned. This seems to be essential to implementing further stages of ecumenical cooperation which the Bible reader is looking for.

However, the conflict between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches goes back much further—in fact almost a thousand years. It was in AD 1054 that the apostate religious church, which had strayed far from the teachings of Christ and the early Christians, broke apart in a dispute known as “The Great Schism.” This created the spectacle of there being two churches, one in Rome and the other in Constantinople, corresponding to the two legs of the image seen in vision by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, around BC 600.

Arcane and Abstruse

The issues involved seem to us, today, decidedly arcane and even abstruse in nature. The major problem was the struggle for supremacy and power between rival church leaders, but there were also arguments as to whether the Holy Spirit, to which both churches made claims, came either directly from God or via his Son Jesus—a description which Latin scholars will recognise as the “Filioque clause.”

The estrangement, at times vicious and bloodthirsty, continued for almost 900 years. The worst example was at the time of the Fourth Crusade, when in 1204 AD an unruly Catholic mob, ostensibly setting out to remove “Muslim infidels” from the Holy Places in Jerusalem diverted the thrust of their attack to sacking the city of Constantinople and striking fear into the Patriarch.

The Orthodox church in Russia, which had flourished in power since the Middle Ages, was suppressed following the Communist Revolution in 1917. However, with the collapse of Communism in the late 1980’s there has occurred what many regard as one of the most remarkable signs of our times, the re-Christianisation of Russia.

with the collapse of Communism in the late 1980’s there has occurred what many regard as one of the most remarkable signs of our times, the re-Christianisation of Russia.

No doubt John Paul II could see the threat that secular materialism was presenting to churches of all religions and it is not surprising that the ecumenical movement he was fostering with the Anglican, Methodist, Baptist and even Lutheran churches were receiving his priority attention. But obviously his efforts in those directions were being undermined by his own personal inability to bring about peace and unity with his “Eastern Brethren.”

Putin to the Rescue?

Not surprisingly, therefore, he even sought the help of President Putin to open up a pathway for him to Russia and even provoked advance publicity in anticipation of such an achievement. But all to no avail.

Earlier in 1965, his predecessor Pope Paul VI had lifted the 1054 AD Bull of Anathema against the Eastern Church after meeting the then Patriarch Athenagoras, ironically in Jerusalem. By any standards this was an astonishing gesture after some 900 years of separation. Then, a few years later, the death of the old patriarch Dimitrios and the emergence of the new Patriarch Bartholomew presented the opportunity which Pope John Paul II needed to fulfil his plans.

Against that background he moved carefully to placate the 900 years old animosity with lots of very acceptable “mea-culpa” apologies for the sins of the earlier Catholic Church against the Orthodox (Readers will recall the similar outpouring of “apparent grief” at the sins of the earlier Catholic Church against Israel!). First came the apology for the sacking of Constantinople: then the invitation to Bartholomew to visit the Vatican to embrace his “brother” there. After all, had not “Saint Andrew” founded Bartholomew’s church, and was he not the actual brother of “Saint Peter,” allegedly the first bishop of Rome? Most appropriate! Then the return of St John Chrysostom’s relics from Rome to Constantinople, and next the return of treasured icons of “Saint Mary” to their owners in Russia. This outbreak of fervent expressions of fraternal love for one another culminated in an “Ecumenical Celebration” at the Vatican, superbly timed to celebrate “Saint Andrew’s Day” at which a
Russian Army choir sung the hymns in both Latin and Greek! And why not? The hardened observer of ecclesiastical politics can only marvel at the astute way these matters have been handled.

So What Now?

The threat of secular materialism continues to grow. So too, does the eastward expansion of the European Union toward former Russian controlled countries. The urgency for the Churches to unite is greater than ever. When eventually they do, the one great factor they will have in common with the political Euro-Russian confederacy led by the Russia Gog will be their antipathy towards Israel.

As we pointed out last time, the prophecies of Daniel, Ezekiel and Revelation (and others, too) leave us in no doubt that before Christ reveals himself to the nations (and that may not be until some time after he has returned to call his household to judgment) there will come about a great Euro Russian confederacy which will in due course “...ascend and come like a storm... to cover the land...of Israel.” In step with them will be one, grand, united ecumenical religious church under the leadership of one described in Revelation 17:4 as “Babylon the Great.” There was, and can only be, one spiritual head! Antichrist, which has been around for a long time, will then come fully into view.

PUTIN KISSES GOODBYE TO AN OLD PROBLEM?

The real issue is the same as with the Church of England, namely accepting the supreme, universal authority of the Pope in Rome. It is one of power politics as to who will be God’s vicar on Earth—the Pope or the Patriarch?

As if to conceal that issue, great play is also made of what is called “The Filioque Question.” This stems from the Nicene Creed, the relevant part of which reads “...I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of Life who proceeds from the Father...” This is still used today in the East. However, it is believed that the Spanish Catholic Church at the Third

WHAT ARE THE

ROMAN CATHOLIC

Priests are shaved
Sitting/kneeling for prayer
Heavy organ music
Baby sprinkling
Latin (still used)
Unleavened wafer
Relics are revered
Celibate priests
Fish eaten on Friday
Easter is a sad event


Food For Thought

“At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.”

 Jeremiah 18:7,8

“...until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.”

 Daniel 4:32

“...for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness...”

 Isaiah 26:9 & 10

“And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:”

 Nehemiah 8:5

DIFFERENCES?

Council of Toledo in AD 589 added the Latin word “filioque” which means “... and from the Son.” This means that the Holy Spirit emanates from both the Father and the Son. The Bible student realizes that neither of these basically trinitarian ideas have any scriptural basis no matter how they may be used to justify the continuing division of the church.

Meanwhile what are the more evident differences, the existence of which can often be observed by the holiday maker in Greece or Russia visiting an Orthodox Church?

EASTERN ORTHODOX

Long hair & beards are essential
Usually stand for the entire service
No musical instruments, much chanting
Baby baptism
Greek, Balkan or Cyrillic
Leavened bread
Icons worshipped
Married priests
Vegetarian diet on Wednesdays
Easter is joyful

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In January 1849, exactly one hundred and sixty years ago, the first copies of the book *Elpis Israel* came off the printing press in England. It was “published by the author,” John Thomas M.D. The Greek form of the title has the meaning “Israel’s Hope,” and as the title page explained, the work was “an Exposition of the Kingdom of God, with reference to ‘The Time of the End’ and ‘The Age to Come.’”

“*Elpis Israel*’s subject-matter is national, not sectarian. It treats of a nation, and of its civil and ecclesiastical institutions in a past and future age. It is designed to enlighten both Jews and Gentiles in Israel’s Hope...” So wrote Dr. Thomas in his preface to the book. He said that it was “the echo of no living sect, but the advocate only of what is written in the oracles of God...”

The inspired Scriptures alone has been the source of belief for the people known by the name Christadelphian. They have no other authority than this, and no human leader is recognized by them.

**False Religion Exposed**

John Thomas’ advice to his readers was:

“Search the scriptures with the teachableness of a little child, and thy labour will not be in vain. Cast away to the owls and to the bats the traditions of men, and the prejudices indoctrinated into thy mind by their means; make a whole burnt offering of their creeds, confessions, catechisms, and articles of religion; and, after the example of the Ephesian disciples, hand over your books of curious theological arts, and burn them before all.” These mountains of rubbish have served the purposes of a dark and barbarous age; the word, the word of the living God alone, can meet the necessities of the times.”

Those who took this advice were soon to discover that the Bible taught something quite different to the inherited traditions of men. They found that “the kingdom of God” was not a heavenly realm inhabited by immortal souls of the dead somewhere in outer space, but that it was “the kingdom of the LORD over Israel” (1 Chronicles 28:5; 29:23; Acts 1:6 etc.). That although overturned in the days of Zedekiah it is to be restored when he comes whose right it is (Ezekiel 21:25-27). They also came to learn that Jesus of Nazareth was not the second person in some tri-une godhead, and that search as they may, the word “trinity” did not even appear in the Bible—it was a fiction of theology. Not only that, the whole concept of a substitutionary sacrifice as taught in Christendom was not a Biblical idea at all. Every man dies for his own sin, says Deuteronomy 24:16 (also Ezekiel 18:4). These and many other Bible truths shocked many readers of *Elpis Israel*. Some burnt copies of it; most rejected it but a small number welcomed the breath of fresh air.

**The Restoration of Israel**

The idea that the ancient kingdom of David should be restored was a direct challenge to the Replacement Theology of the Catholic Church and her daughter churches. During most of the 19th century the doctrine could be shrugged off and confined to the area of religious debate, but when Theodore Herzl began his Zionist movement and outlined the concept of a Jewish state in practical political terms, the whole issue took on a more serious character.

The restoration of Israel, as taught in the Scriptures and explained by John Thomas in *Elpis Israel* attracted a considerable following. Thus the “Christadelphian” movement came into being and enthusiastically spread the message of the coming restoration of Israel’s kingdom. In 1849 John Thomas wrote:

“The truth is, there are two stages in the restoration of the Jews, the first is before the battle of Armageddon; and the second, after it; but both pre-millennial. God has said, “I will save the tents of Judah first.” This is the first stage of restoration...

“There is, then, a partial and primary restoration of Jews before the manifestation, which is to serve as the nucleus, or basis, of future operations in the restoration of the rest of the tribes after he has appeared in the kingdom. The pre-advventual colonization of Palestine will be on purely political principles; and the Jewish colonists will return in unbelief of the Messiahship of Jesus, and of the truth as it is in him. They will emigrate thither as agriculturists and traders, in the hope of...”

Did the Christadelphian movement influence those in high places in favour of the Jewish people and the nation of Israel?

By Paul Billington  BRANTFORD, ON.
ultimately establishing their commonwealth, but more immediately of getting rich in silver and gold by commerce with India, and in cattle and goods by their industry at home under the efficient protection of the British power.”

He went on to say:

“I know not whether the men, who at present contrive the foreign policy of Britain, entertain the idea of assuming the sovereignty of the Holy Land, and of promoting its colonization by the Jews; their present intentions, however, are of no importance one way or the other, because they will be compelled, by events soon to happen, to do what under existing circumstances, heaven and earth combined could not move them to attempt.”

The Balfour Declaration and the events of the First World War, resulting in the British Mandate, brought a remarkable fulfillment of the expectations expressed in Elpis Israel. At the time Christadelphians saw those things as a vindication of their faith.

Faith & Fulfillment

In 1985 the Israeli diplomat Michael Pragai published his book Faith and Fulfilment, in which he made reference to Elpis Israel and the work of John Thomas. Pragai wrote:

“Thomas correctly predicted the decisive role Great Britain was to play some seventy years later when, after World War I, the League of Nations conferred on her the Mandate of Palestine, a focal provision of which was the establishment of a National Home for the Jewish people. Had Thomas lived to see that day, no doubt he would have rejoiced, and for good reason!”

Some years ago John Ramsden interviewed Michael Pragai in Israel for The Bible Magazine and he asked him about the above statement. Pragai replied:

“The Hope of Israel (i.e. Elpis Israel) was mentioned to me by some pilgrims, and I made it my job to go and locate a copy and read it. And I found a copy in the rare book department of the National library here at the University in Jerusalem—and I read this book from A to Z. Every single page and every line. It was very very impressive, and it shows—it demonstrates—that people who had that insight were right, and they certainly belong to that rare category of human beings, whose vision was correct—whose vision was right—and whose vision will in the future, be shown to be very right and very straight...”

John Thomas had also pointed out in Elpis Israel that Britain’s protection of the Jews would seem “inefficient,” and so it turned out to be as she sought to appease the Arabs. Nonetheless it was sufficient for the purpose of establishing a Jewish foothold in the Land so that ultimately the State of Israel became a political reality.

Indirect Influence

The Christadelphians behaved like the early christians of the First Century C.E. As Gordon Childe put it in his book What Happened in History:

“...with their hopes and fears focused upon the coming Kingdom and the life beyond the grave, the early Christians accepted the social order as they found it here, except in so far as it conflicted with their ritual duties.”

Like their First Century counterparts,
Christadelphians remained aloof from involvement in politics—yet were intensely interested in them, recognizing that God would work out His purpose through the developing history of world affairs. Though not directly involved in the practice of politics, they were conscious of their duty to make known the manifold wisdom of God to the principalities and powers in high places (Ephesians 3:10; c/p R.S.V.). This they did as opportunity permitted.

**British Leaders Influenced?**

In 1876 the editor of *The Christadelphian* magazine, Robert Roberts, published a pamphlet entitled *Prophecy and the Eastern Question*, copies of which were sent to a leading statesman, Mr. Gladstone. The work was obviously read with interest for Robert Roberts received a personal reply telling him so—and this from the Prime Minister himself! The pamphlet was soon in demand all over the country and its message concerning the restoration of Israel made a tremendous impact at the time.

Most frequently however, contact with those in high places came about through providential circumstances. For example, there is some evidence to suggest that as a child Lord Balfour had a Christadelphian tutor (a Mrs Armstrong of Huddington in Scotland). Details are few and our information comes from an insertion in a magazine.

What is certain is that Winston Churchill, had a Christadelphian chauffeur prior to the First World War. This was Sidney W. Butler who was baptized on December 13, 1909. He worked for Churchill until 1914. Elpis Israel was discussed thus conversation on the topic would have been natural, and we can be sure that Churchill would have been aware of John Thomas’ comments concerning Britain’s role in the restoration of the Jews to their ancient homeland.

Christadelphian interest in the return of the Jews to (what was then) Palestine brought active support. As Michael Pragai has written: “From the outset, the Christadelphians were ardent supporters of the idea of the Return of the Jews to the land of Israel, which was essential to fulfilment of the End of Time. Long before the rise of Jewish Zionism as a political movement at the end of the century, the Christadelphians offered practical assistance to Jews who looked to the land of Israel a haven of refuge. They supported such pre-Zionist groups as the Hibbat-Zion movement in Tzarist Russia. As late as the 1940’s, when the Nazi destruction of European Jewry was underway, they actively aided attempts to rescue Jews from Europe.”

**The Kindertransport**

The “Kindertransport” (or child transport) was the system organized for bringing Jewish children to Britain from Nazi Germany and occupied Europe during the late 1930’s. Some 10,000 children are said to have been rescued from the Holocaust.

One of the labels tied to the children is shown above. Below is one of the hostels (this one was named *Elpis Lodge*) provided by Christadelphians for the Jewish refugee children. Many families took children into their homes; bottom right is Suzanne Woodin (Schlome) who was one of them.

The following quotation is taken from Barry Turner’s book (pages 163-164):

“Among the non-Jewish organisations responsible for hostels, the Christadelphians were to the fore. With their faith rooted in Jewish law, the Christadelphians had a long-standing interest in cooperative ventures, contributing generously to attempts to re-establish the Jewish people in Palestine. When the exodus of children from Germany and Austria began, they were among the first to respond.

“A refugee mother and her two teenage sons were the founder residents of one of the earliest Christadelphian hostels—Little Thorn, on the Bilton Road in Rugby. Here a small...
group of Jewish boys were given a home and were trained for careers in leather manufacture, cabinet-making, and engineering. The hostel also became a focal point for refugees to gather and socialise at weekends.

“Also in the Midlands, Elpis Lodge (‘Abode of Hope’) opened in April 1940 at 117 Gough Road, Edgbaston. Managed by Birmingham Jewry, the running of the hostel was funded by the Birmingham and Coventry Christadelphian Ecclesias. Dr Hirsch, previously headmaster of a school in Frankfurt, and his wife were wardens of the hostel, which accommodated twenty teenaged boys.

“The atmosphere of the hostel was orthodox...”

In Pearls of Childhood we read of:

“a hostel for refugee boys near Rugby, run by a shopkeeper, Mr Overton, a truly remarkable man. As a practising Christadelphian he had striven tirelessly even prior to the occupation of Czechoslovakia to convince the British government that Jews in occupied territories were in great danger and that something must be done to save the children, first from Germany and Austria, then later Czechoslovakia.”

Boys and girls were given homes by Christadelphians, one of these children who we recently met in Kent (U.K.) told us of her memories as an eight-year old in Berlin. Having had her own children she now understands what it meant for her family to let her go. Susanne Woodin (nee Schlome) is one of the 10,000 children who escaped the Holocaust.

Reuven Dafni & the Holocaust

Some years ago while engaged in making a video for the Bible Magazine we met a most remarkable man, Reuven Dafni. At the time he was Deputy Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate in Jerusalem. In an interview with us, he described the great tragedy of the Holocaust in these words:

“You see, the enormity of the crime is such that no human brain can fathom six million dead. If you read in the paper that there was an accident—six people, sixty people—maybe six hundred—maybe you can imagine, you can fathom. Not six million. So that is why we evolve methods of how to teach the Holocaust; how to bring across the terrible things which happened.”

Reuven Dafni knew only too well the horrors of Nazi Europe. In March 1944 he had parachuted into occupied Yugoslavia with the Jewish heroine Hannah Szenes and two others, in order to rescue Jews and help them escape. They travelled on foot through Croatia which was ruled by the notorious butcher Ante Pavelich, and the Roman Catholic Archbishop Stepinac who sanctified the murderous Ustashi Government there. Hannah was captured, tortured and executed. After waiting six weeks for her, Reuven Dafni heard the news and escaped himself. We will never forget the experience of interviewing this incredible man—and we shall for ever be thankful that faith in the purpose and promises of God moved some to help rescue those that they could.

The “Texas Operation”

While Christadelphians in Britain were opening their homes and setting up hostels for Jewish children of the Kindertransport, thousands of miles away in Texas someone else was doing what he could to rescue scores of Jews from Hitler’s grasp. His name was Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ). An article in the magazine Texas (Sept. 27, 1998) had the headline “LBJ’s Rescue Mission: The little-known story of Lyndon Baines Johnson and friends helping Jews escape the Holocaust in Europe.”

The details of Johnson’s activities in helping Jews to escape the Nazi horror are sketchy—and for understandable reasons. It seems that he used some covert methods, “sometimes legal, and sometimes not,” and according to one report this included false passports and fake visas so that the archives at Yad Vashem hold many stories of the Holocaust, but here in Reuven Dafni was a living witness to the horror of it all; one who had risked his life in order to try and save his brethren. He returned to tell of it, others did not.

Many Christadelphians of that time were moved to do what they could for the children of Israel. Mostly found in the English-speaking world there was little that they could do practically, but their sympathy and desire to help the suffering has continued right to this day.

Our Interview with the late Reuven Dafni

When we interviewed Reuven Dafni at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, we had no idea of the incredible experiences that this man had during the Second World War when he was parachuted into Yugoslavia in order to help Jews escape to what was then Palestine. He arranged for us to see their underground archives (below).
he could bring Jews through Cuba, Mexico and other Latin American countries. It has been estimated that he saved several hundred Jews, bringing them into the United States via the port of Galveston in Texas.

The article in Texas magazine suggests the reason for Johnson’s willingness to help Jews: “Johnson was raised in an actively pro-Jewish household. In fact, he probably was fed pro-Zionist propaganda along with his Pabulum and milk. His grandfather and aunt were Christadelphians, part of a small fundamentalist sect that believed the Second Coming, or Christ’s return to Earth, hinged on the existence of the Jewish state of Israel.

“After young Lyndon’s grandfather died, Aunt Jessie Johnson Hatcher continued to preach the word to her nephew. The gist of her message: “Take care of the Jews, who are God’s chosen people.” “Johnson was not a Christadelphian, but he took the oft-repeated advice to heart.”

In another article which appeared in an American Jewish Weekly, The Jewish Press (August 27, 08), we read the following: “Johnson’s affinity for Jews stemmed from early familial influences—his paternal grandfather and a number of other relatives were members of the Christadelphian movement, a group of fundamentalist Christians who believed the Jews would one day return to Palestine and create a new Jewish state. His grandfather would admonish young Lyndon to ‘Take care of the Jews. Consider them you friends and help them any way you can.”

There can be no doubt that Lyndon Johnson’s family would have been greatly influenced by the book Elpis Israel because it was the foundation work of Christadelphian belief, outlining “the Hope of Israel” from the Bible. LBJ himself would certainly have been aware of it. His aunt Jessie Johnson Hatcher (as with virtually all Christadelphians of that time) would have referred to it regularly.

President Johnson in 1967

Lyndon Johnson became President of the United States in 1963 following the assassination of Kennedy. He told an Israeli diplomat, “You have lost a very great friend, but you have found a better one.”

As events turned out Israel needed that friend. Looking back now, it is hard to ignore the fact that a man was brought into power who could empathize with the concept of the Jewish Return to the Biblical homeland—and that he was in power as events built up to the remarkable Six-Days War of 1967. This, surely, was the Hand of God at work. A Christadelphian could not have been so directly involved in the political world—but here was a man who had been so influenced, and doubtless impressed by Israel’s Hope, that he would use the levers of power to further God’s purpose.

It was the events of June 1967 that placed Israel in control of the so-called “West Bank” (Judea and Samaria). Not that Israel desired to occupy the territory; in the event they had no choice—and for continuing security reasons had to maintain a presence there.

The more we have studied this subject, the clearer it becomes that Israel’s presence upon “the mountains of Israel” (Samaria), and the ancient territory of Judah, is required by Bible prophecy. We have frequently referred to several passages of Scripture which teach this—for example, Jeremiah 31:5; Ezekiel 34:13, 14; Joel 3:1 as well as other Scriptures. In 1967 it was the Arab determination to destroy Israel which led to the present situation.

According to the article in The Jewish Press (referred to earlier) President Johnson had tried hard to diffuse the situation by appeals to Egypt’s Nasser, and even attempted to organize an international naval force to break the blockade, but all to no avail:

“What Johnson knew, thanks to highly classified CIA and armed-forces intelligence reports, was that U.S. defense experts were predicting a swift Israeli victory in the event of war. General Earle Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, would later recall: ‘I told (Johnson) that our best estimate was that if there was a war, that the Israelis would win it in five to seven days. He asked me to go back and check this out and talk to him again. I did, and I came back and told him exactly the same thing—that there’s just no question; that the way the two sides lined up in the air and on the ground, the Israelis would win.” That War is now history—but the after-effects remain and we see today the Jews gathered out of many people and dwelling upon the mountains of Israel.

A Situation Created

After the war Johnson resisted international calls to pressure Israel into relinquishing the territory it had captured—he refused to force unilateral concessions on Israel.

An article in The Jerusalem Post (Sept. 9/2008) stated: “The crafting of UN Resolution 242 in November 1967 was done under Johnson’s scrutiny. The call for “secure and recognized boundaries” was critical. The American and British drafters of the resolution opposed Israel returning all the territories captured in the war. In September 1968, Johnson explained, ‘We are not the ones to say where other nations should draw lines between them that will assure each the greatest security. It is clear, however, that a return to the
situation of 4 June 1967 will not bring peace. There must be secure and there must be recognized borders. Some such lines must be agreed to by the neighbors involved.”

The full extent to which Christadelphian teaching, and especially Dr. Thomas’ *Elpis Israel*, may have influenced the thinking of President Johnson will never be known. What we do know is that there was almost a Christadelphian in the White House—not President Johnson himself, but his aunt Jessie Hatcher, for he invited her to live with Ladybird and himself at the Presidential home. Apparently she refused the offer, preferring that at the coming of Christ he would not discover her among the world’s mighty ones. Nonetheless this reveals just how close the President’s relationship was with his aunt Jessie—and perhaps just how great her Christadelphian influence was.

In a different book written by John Thomas, a gathering of Jews on the mountains of Israel (the West Bank, in the terminology of today’s media) was clearly indicated. In *Eureka* Vol. 3 (1868) he wrote:

> “There will have been a considerable gathering of Israelites upon the mountains of Israel before the invasion of the country by Gog, and his capture of Jerusalem.”

A century later, by 1968, that gathering of Israelites was a reality—and the hostility of the Gentile world began to rise, and will yet culminate in the great ‘controversy of Zion’ predicted in the Scriptures. Christadelphians do not rejoice over the prospect of all nations coming into the valley of Jehoshaphat, but they will come for judgement—because they scattered the holy nation and are bent upon parting God’s Land (Joel 3:1,2). Israel itself must be purged of its current corrupt rulership—and this will be the result of all nations coming against Jerusalem to do battle (Zechariah 14:1,2).

These events are necessary in order to cleanse the nation. In Jeremiah 30:7-9 the prophet has left on record:

> “Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.”

**A Righteous Nation**

True Christadelphians—those who still adhere to the Truth; to the Hope of Israel as arising out of the covenants made by God with Abraham and David—and renewed in promise to the Prophets. True Christadelphians who hold fast to the one Gospel—which is the Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ (correctly understood), continue as it were “Watchmen upon thy wall, O Jerusalem—and shall never hold their peace day nor night. They keep not silent and will give the

**Photographs originally appeared in The Testimony magazine (1968)**

L.B. Johnson gives thanks at the meal table, by his side is Aunt Jessie Hatcher

God of Israel no rest until He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth—until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.” They believe what is written and promised in Isaiah 60:21, “Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.”

To the end that they might help forward this great design of the Almighty, they witness to all—to both small and great—of the things spoken of the city of God. In doing so, many Gentile rulers—as with Cyrus of old—have been influenced to view with favour the return and restoration of God’s ancient and beloved people.

**Quotables**

They who teach that Israel will inherit the covenant-land no more make God a liar, for He hath sworn by His own Life that they shall.

**JOHN THOMAS,**

*Mystery of the Covenant of the Holy Land*

A people that do not read, and who neglect the study of Moses and the Prophets, are the sport of every wind that blows, and liable to be ensnared by the cunning craftiness of men, whereby they lie in wait to deceive at any time.

**JOHN THOMAS,**

*Herald of The Kingdom, 1854, page 208*

Roman Catholic superstition was universal, and ensnared the world in moral, intellectual, and religious darkness, so gross as to procure for that period of the world’s history the epithet of “the dark ages.”

**ROBERT ROBERTS,**

*Christendom Astray, written in 1862*

God is now looking on His nation with favour and compassion, after centuries of judgement and punishment, and it is out of those now back in the land, or their children, that the beginning of the righteous nation will come.

**Graham Pearce**

*Do You Understand the New Covenant? published in November 1970*

The general ignorance of the Bible is appalling... It is a matter of reproach that even the ministers do not know their own text-book.

**JOHN CARTER,**

*The Oracles of God, published in 1944*
“Jews For Jesus”
Missionaries of Falsehood & deception

By Paul Billington  BRANTFORD, ON.

When you hear about “Messianic Jews,” “Christian Jews,” “Hebrew Christians” or “Jews for Jesus” try to contain your excitement. This is not—and will never lead to—the mass conversion of Jews that many dream about. This so-called “Christianity” is but another form of effervescent Evangelical emotionalism and is made up of more wind (pneuma) than spirit (ruach). It is neither Judaism or Christianity, but a corruption of both.

This being the case, the movement does much more harm than good—whether for Christians or Jews. These would-be missionaries are deceived in thinking that they are doing (or can do) the Lord’s work; for the Bible—including the New Testament which they claim to believe—makes it abundantly clear that the results they seek to achieve are not according to God’s will. One reason for this is that the “Christian” message they promulgate is a false one—and another reason is that in any case, this is not the time for such a work.

Jewish Reactions

As far as Jews themselves are concerned, these missionary activities are an understandable annoyance. The Jew readily recognizes nonsense when he hears it, so when some young bright-eyed and smiling evangelist starts talking about having the “holy spirit” in his heart, he is not too impressed. You see, the Jew (if he knows his Tanakh) is already aware of the holy spirit and can read about it in such Scriptures as Exodus 35:31; Psalm 51:11 and Isaiah 63:10,11. When a man had the Holy Spirit or Spirit of God there was obvious evidence of the fact—usually a lot more than the smiling missionary can produce. And should the zealous missionary feel moved to explain this “Jesus” as one who existed before he was born, or who is the Second Person in a so-called “Trinity,” it becomes necessary for the poor Jew to take leave of his senses so that he might fathom what on earth his would-be proselytizer is talking about! If God is One how can he be three?

A short while ago some Jews in Israel got so fed up with these missionary insults to their intelligence that they made a bonfire of some copies of the New Testament. Not a nice thing to do we agree, but we must remember that Catholics did the same thing when they burnt William Tyndale’s English translation of the New Testament in 1525. History has shown that burning holy books accomplishes nothing. Far more damage has been done to the Christian religion by its pretended followers—especially textual critics whose theories (and they are theories) call into question the genuineness and inspiration of the New Testament.

The Spirit of Error

The Holy Spirit referred to in the Old and New Testaments is something quite rational—it is quite simply the Truth and this is plainly stated in John 14:16, 17; John 16:13 and 1 John 5:6. The apostle Peter tells us that this is what inspired holy men of God when they delivered prophecy (2 Peter 1:21), and an illustration of it at work is given in the case of David as recorded in 2 Samuel 23:2.

John says that there is a spirit of truth, and a spirit of error (or delusion)—1 John 4:6; The spirit of truth is of God, whereas the spirit of error is a product of the natural and fleshly mind. In the days of the apostles, miraculous evidence was provided in order to confirm the word of truth spoken (Mark 16:20), but even then it was necessary to “search the Scriptures daily” in order to verify what was said (Acts 17:11). This was essential, for as Jesus had warned his followers:

“...there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before” (Matt. 24:24, 25).

So it was to be expected that false Christs (or Messiahs) and teachers would arise—and they did so.

In 2 Corinthians 11:4 the apostle refers to those who would teach of “another Jesus, whom we have not preached.” These false teachers promoted the concept of a Jesus Christ who had not come in the flesh (1 John 4:1-3), and on to that fiction they attached many absurd doctrines which were subservient of the Truth.

It is this false and counterfeit Christianity that the world of today has inherited—as the apostle John has written:

“They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them” (1 John 4:5).

Let anyone read through the New Testament with an open and honest mind, and he will find that the dominant and recurring prophecy contained therein predicts the corruption of the original Christian message. Paul wrote to Timothy saying:

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;” (1 Tim. 4:1).

And again:

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned...
unto fables” (2 Tim. 4:3, 4).

This perversion of New Testament teaching has produced many brands of the Christian apostasy, and the Messianic variety known as Jews for Jesus or similar brand-names, is just one more specimen of the abomination. The words of the real Jesus are “Take heed that ye be not deceived…” (Luke 21:8).

**Repentance in Jacob**

Both Testaments teach us that those in Jacob will turn from transgression. Isaiah 59:20 says it as does Romans 11:26, and passages could be multiplied. But this is not the work of self-appointed missionaries.

In an 1855 magazine article John Thomas wrote about this as follows:

“…all Israel shall be saved” from all their enemies, and those that hate them; as it is written, ‘there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them when I shall take away their sins.’ We cannot here forbear the expression of our astonishment at the ignorance and presumption of pious Gentiles who undertake to convert the Jews to the faith of Jesus. God only can accomplish it after the manner we are expounding. Gentile machinery may convert Jews into Gentiles; but it can never turn the seed of Abraham after the flesh into the seed of Abraham after the spirit. They may persuade a few Jews to forsake the little of Moses they still adhere to, and to confess that Jesus is Christ and join a church; but to ‘turn away ungodliness from Jacob’ is a work beyond their knowledge and ability. It is an honor reserved for the Deliverer, who when he returns to Zion will execute his mission as becomes a God.”

The Deliverer will accomplish his work through chosen instruments who will teach the Jewish people—as we read for example in Jeremiah 3:15; 23:4; Ezekiel 34:13, 14 etc. This is not the work of intrusive missionaries who desire to be teachers of the Law, but understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm (c/p 1 Timothy 1:7)—it is the work of Him who declares: “I the LORD (Yahweh) am thy Saviour and thy Deliverer, the Mighty One of Jacob” (Isaiah 60:16). No one who understands this Truth would be so arrogant as to take upon himself the work that is reserved for the Redeemer Himself. The very fact that “Jews for Jesus” and similar organizations engage themselves in trying to proselytize the people of Israel, is proof enough of their false and spurious religion.

The true Christian mission to the nation of Israel was suspended in the days of the Apostles (see Acts 13:46, 47), and it cannot be successfully revived until their Redeemer comes to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob by taking heed to the words of Malachi 4:4, where it is written:

“Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.”

This must happen before their hearts can be turned to the ways and spirit of the fathers—for whose sake they are beloved. The Jews for Jesus movement, in common with virtually all others who claim to be Christians, cannot comprehend this because they do not understand the Scriptures.

The **Lord’s Anointed**

The word, or rather title of “Christ” is of course a Greek word that translates the Hebrew Moshiach (Messiah). It literally means Anointed, such as Israel’s kings who were anointed with oil (e.g. 1 Samuel 16:13). A king of Israel was to be “anointed” in another sense also—in Deuteronomy 17:18,19 it is written:

“And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them.”

Where the process of this New Covenant is being lived out—termed in 1 John 1:7 walking in the light—God says “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:34; Heb. 8:12; 10:17).

**God’s Righteousness**

Much more could be said on this subject and that would take us into another area—one which “Jews for Jesus” and their kindred missionaries have no conception of. Let us simply say this—that when God condemned Adam (and consequently those who were of his nature) to return to dust (Genesis 3:19), it was right to do so. It was a nature that could not be saved—and the real Messiah (Christ) who took part of this, declared the righteousness of God by being obedient unto death. He “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” says Hebrews 9:26. That is to say, he destroyed the very nature that was capable of sin (Hebrews 2:14); the nature condemned by God in the beginning. Those who recognize the justice and righteousness of God, as the real Christ did, recognizing their own condition as being worthy of death likewise, are thus endorsing the work of the Biblical Jesus who can therefore grant the Royal pardon under the terms of the New Covenant, whilst upholding God’s righteousness.

We must leave the matter there having we believe made our point: The Jews for Jesus movement has nothing to offer the Jewish people, for the “Jesus” they promote has no basis in reality, and cannot therefore lead them to salvation from either sin or its resultant death. Yes, several passages may appear to support other views concerning the Trinity, the Law and the nature and sacrifice of Christ, but that is because minds of men are conditioned by a false Christendom.
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. Instead of the Jewish “elders,” there are now the “Early Fathers” of what we would refer to as the Christian apostasy. This may appear a harsh, unkind and uncharitable way to speak of those highly venerated individuals. Their writings appear to be given the deference second only to Holy Writ, if not received with equal or even greater authority. This is closely associated with the doctrine of apostolic succession, which accepts the claim that the Holy Spirit has continued to guide and inspire the words of church leaders. But what do we learn of these Early Fathers of the Christian church, called so in opposition to the command of Jesus, “call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven” (Matthew 23:9)?

Justin Martyr was originally a worshipper of the pagan gods, but he was willing to listen to what Christians had to say. He was told that the human mind is infested by demonic powers which distort and confuse his thinking. He must receive the Divine Spirit to illuminate his mind. But first he would have to undergo exorcism. Having requested baptism, Justin was first asked if he was willing to “renounce the devil and his angels,” which included the gods, whom he now saw as evil spirits. He was then informed that he must receive the Divine Spirit, a power to illuminate his mind. The celebrant then invoked the Spirit to descend on him. As a new Christian, Justin now saw the entire universe as a battleground where cosmic powers clash. While he was a pagan he had seen himself subject to various human and divine forces. Now he saw all trouble to be demonic. He ascribes to the Christians the power of exorcising demons. “But he produces no particular instance of an exercise of miraculous power, and therefore affords us no opportunity of applying those tests by which the credibility of miracles must be tried.”

Tatian told the pagans that all the supernatural powers they worshipped were evil beings who were holding them captive. He said that all the powers they worshipped were nothing more than the continuing fallout of a primordial cosmic rebellion. He said that originally all supernatural beings were free, but he explains, drawing on Jewish accounts of the angels’ fall— “the firstborn of these rebelled against God and became a demon...and those who imitate him...and his illusions, became an army of demons.” This swarm of demons, enraged when punished for their apostasy, are nevertheless too weak to retaliate against God. Restrained from totally destroying the universe, they turned all their energies towards enslaving humanity. “It was demons,” Tatian explained, “the offspring of fallen angels who invented destiny.” Tatian openly defied the authority of the pagan rulers. He said that allegiance to God freed “the believer from innumerable demonic tyrants and simultaneously from all the thousands of human rulers whom they secretly control.”

Origen went further than Tatian. After seeing his father killed by the pagan authorities, he resolved to be a warrior on God’s side against the forces of Satan. He became the first Christian to argue publicly that people have an innate moral right to assassinate tyrants. He wrote, “...Christians when tyrannized ... by the Devil, from associations contrary to the Devil’s laws ... to revolt against a government which is barbaric and despotic.” He characterized all laws and persons hostile to Christians as demon inspired. This attitude towards governments runs opposite to Paul the apostle—

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation ... Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake” (Romans 13:1-7).

Origen said that Jesus died “to destroy a great demon ... in fact the ruler of the demons, who held in subjection the souls of humanity”. Incidentally, as further indication of his lack of Bible knowledge, he affirmed “with confidence” that Jerusalem which was destroyed in AD 70 “never will be restored to its former condition.” But he continues, concerning his understanding of the origin of evil, that many instances of human evil, and even natural catastrophes, like floods, are instigated “by evil demons and evil angels.” This view was at the root of much human suffering at the hands of the church in medieval Europe, as we shall see.

During the second century church leaders who promoted “apostolic succession” widely copied and circulated various writings of men who they called “the apostolic fathers of the church.” All of these tended to emphasize the growing authority of the clergy. Among the writings of these “apostolic fathers” was the letter of Barnabas, in which a Christian’s life is portrayed as God’s spirit contending against Satan. He urges believers to moral vigilance, so that “the Devil may have no opportunity to
enter” the church. He specifically warns them against Jewish ways, who he says, “transgressed because an evil angel led them into error.” Scripture is silent about this.

Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, claimed the authority of apostolic succession. In his five-volume attack on those who opposed the official church teaching, Against Heresies, he called heretics “secret agents of Satan.” He said that the heretic’s doctrines were inspired by Satan.

Tertullian advised church members against all arguments over Scriptural interpretation—which discussion “upsets the stomach or brain.” How do heretics come up with such ingenious and persuasive arguments from Scripture? Their inspiration comes, says Tertullian, “from the Devil of course, to whom belong the wiles that distort the truth.”

Gnostic Christians shared the common belief in evil spirits. Valentinus says that, apart from God’s grace, the human heart is a “dwelling place for many demons.” In a Gnostic book, Gospel of Truth is instruction to Gnostic Christians, “...do not become a dwelling place for the devil, for you have already destroyed him.” By the end of the third century, Warfield notes that not one single writer claimed himself to have cast out any demon, or ascribed such to any known name in the church, and without a single instance being recorded in detail.

Having investigated the extra-Biblical origins of the personal Devil concept, there is yet more to be seen about him. This mythical super-fiend carries a barrow-full of baggage. That is, he does not stand alone in the mythology. In his heyday the personal Devil was surrounded by a number of associates and fellow-travellers who were very much on people’s minds. Times have changed since then. Some of these associates are spoken of in the Christian churches occasionally, some rarely, others hardly at all.

The Devil is still thought by some to be attended by myriads of demons. These are regarded as lesser evil spirits which delight in bringing trouble and misfortune on mankind. Reference to demons among the Protestant churches is somewhat varied in modern times. A famous Pentecostal preacher and faith healer, in his autobiography refers to demons once in his book as only one of several causes of human misfortune and illness.

In a published summary of Protestant doctrine demons are mentioned. Satan is said to be “prince of the demons.” citing Matthew 12:24. This is quite evidently an acceptance of Pharisee theology, for they are the ones who stated this, not Jesus. And we know how Jesus rejected their doctrines. But in this Protestant Summary there is so great an inconsistency in the concept of demons, that it is a wonder how the author or any of his fellows could cling to it. First he says that demons work with Satan to oppose God. Then, further down the same page he says that sometimes God uses demons in carrying out his plans, concluding that even these creatures are under the complete and constant control of the Almighty. In fact, this belief in demons is in perfect accord with the “doctrine of the Pharisees” against which Jesus warned his disciples (Matthew 16:12). Instead of agreeing with the Pharisee story about Beelzebub, Jesus argued against it—“Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?” (Matthew 12:25-26).

First, Jesus shows, it was ludicrous to claim that he was in league with the “prince” of those that he was “casting out”! But the argument of Jesus about a kingdom divided against itself applies just as much to this divided function of demons, expressed in the Protestant Summary. Really, He states that each Christian is possessed of the Holy Spirit, and therefore he cannot at the same time be demon possessed. Possibly to anticipate a question about Evangelical Christians who have mental, emotional or similar illnesses, he says that “a Christian can be affected seriously by demon activity.” A fine point indeed that calls for explanation, but none is offered. Neither is any explanation offered, how modern medicine is able to treat disease, which people, ignorant of medical science, formerly attributed to evil spirits.

It has been more than once observed that with the rise of Christianity in Europe, all the gods and spirits of the pagan world were condemned as evil, and to be in league with the Devil. Warfield quotes Harnack, The Expansion of Early Christianity, “The whole world and the circumambient atmosphere were filled with devils, not merely idolatry, but every phase and form of life was ruled by them; they sat on thrones, they hovered over cradles; the earth was literally a hell.” This belief was in direct contradiction of Paul the apostle—“We know that an idol is nothing (a non-entity) in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many). But to us there is but one God, the Father” (1 Cor. 8:4-6).

Notwithstanding this, Origen, Augustine and the Early Fathers in general were convinced that magicians were in league with the Devil and his demons in a great struggle against the good. Believing itself to be challenged by an organized movement of heretics who practised necromancy (communication with the dead) the church desired its own office of exorcism. Spells, sometimes containing the magical names of particular spirits, were employed to ward off attacks of demons.

And so exorcism became a ceremony in the Christian church, used to expel demons from persons having come under their power. But there was more than one occasion for performing exorcism in the church. About AD 250 exorcism became one of the ceremonies performed before new members were baptized. It has remained an integral part of the Roman Catholic baptismal service—not to drive out demons, but to remove perceived impediments to “grace” resulting from the effects of “original sin” and the power of Satan over fallen human nature. In addition, inanimate things like water, salt and oil, which are to be used in religious service, receive exorcism before being blessed or consecrated.

It is remarkable that at a time when there is very little indication of belief in “evil spirits” among ordinary people in the western world, the
Vatican is showing a renewed interest in the subject. In 1999 it updated the Rite of Exorcism for the first time since 1614. In 2005 the Vatican launched a new course at Rome’s prestigious Athenaeum Pontificium Regina Apostolorum College. Reserved for priests and theology students, the course is aimed to “prepare them to distinguish real cases of diabolical possession from mental problems so they can be referred to exorcists.” Many of those taking the course either wanted to become or were exorcists, of which there are 400 in Italy. On the same news story, another news service added the following comment by Francesco Bamonte, a noted exorcist in Rome. He said that “several hundred” people approach his team each year, thinking they are possessed. After counselling, he said, “I do maybe twenty exorcisms each year.” As far as the experts are concerned, “85% - 90% of these people are not possessed or ever attacked by the devil.” Consideration is being given to re-introducing a prayer during mass to St Michael the Archangel, believed to be the prime protector against evil. This practice directly contradicts the apostle Paul’s injunction, “Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshy mind” (Colossians 2:18).

The Polish Daily Gazeta Wyborcza reported December 2007 that the country’s Catholic Church had approved plans for an Exorcism Centre in the town of Poczernin. In what appears to be damage control in the wake of some bad press about this in Germany, the regional coordinator of Polish exorcists stated that Poland definitely needs more exorcists. He refused a request for an interview with the German media, perhaps fed up with their fascination in what is basically a fairly common phenomenon in Poland. So common, in fact, that in July 2007, Poland was host to the fourth International Exorcists’ Congress, welcoming some 330 practising exorcists from 29 countries. The spokesman stated that it is the view of his church that the healings by Jesus and the apostles were exorcism. Further, because exorcism was used in New Testament times, is an appropriate practice today. This is because the defeat of the Devil is a fundamental part of Christian theology. “The Devil and evil spirits are mythological entities but are nevertheless ‘real’—just as ‘Adam’ is a reality in Christian theology”—a telling indication of where the Scriptures stand in their theology.

Another story by SMH News International, began, “Sharing your home with ghosts and not sure who to call? Try the Anglican Church.” The Very Reverend Graeme Lawrence, Dean of Newcastle (Australia) said he recently blessed the home of a young couple who believed items of furniture had been moved in their house. He said the church had a long history of providing rites and ceremonies for blessings or exorcisms, and the church in Britain often appointed a senior priest as resident exorcist. Bishop of South Sydney Robert Forsythe said exorcisms were rare but they did happen.

Now if we look back at the history of demons, demon-possession and exorcism, it is clear that a great change has occurred in the last few centuries. The Devil and his demons have become far less successful in their efforts to possess people than in former times. Are they losing interest in their fiendish pastime and seeking other activities? Are people more devout and religiously minded and better able to resist possession of evil spirits now? Or could it be that instead of all mental illnesses having an unknown cause, only 10%-15% are now in that category?

But really, the utterly pagan origin of the belief in demons and evil spirits is beyond under his direction many lesser demons. Zoroaster did not invent the idea of demons, which have much more ancient origins in the demonology of Mesopotamia. The terrible Anunnaki were the jailers in hell. Belief in lesser evil spirits can be seen in the various national mythologies radiating out of the cradle of civilization.

Finally, it has been shown that exorcism has been practised from time immemorial. It should be recognized that many of the cases of possession were in reality of psychopathological origin. An “unbiased review of witchcraft, sorcery, possession and cognate phenomena, and appraisal of the extant evidence would seem to show that almost all the cases indiscriminately due to morbid and hysterical mental conditions provoked among the superstitious and ill-educated by a pervading atmosphere of terror, mystery and suspicion.”

And so, magic, witchcraft and sorcery are very much intertwined in the story of the Devil. Origen, Augustine and the Early Fathers in general were convinced that magicians were in league with the Devil and his demons in a great struggle against the good. “Magicians therefore ought to be destroyed and not merely dismissed as hypocrates or charlatans.” The connection of the Devil with magic acquired for the practice a sinister significance. Magic came to be associated with witchcraft and sorcery—the use of spells or the illicit obtaining of predictions, and necromancy (conversing with the dead)—are terms that have acquired a similar meaning. This magic is not to be confused with the form of theatrical entertainment, which is properly called conjuring. Black magic and the fear of it did not die out with the Middle Ages. In England an act of parliament in 1542 made witchcraft, sorcery and enchantment punishable by death. A new law passed in 1563 remained in force until 1763.

But the attempt to deflect the powers of evil by quasi-magical constraint and compulsion readily gave place to methods of persuasion, which in turn led to making a bargain or pact with the Devil.

To be continued

Footnotes
1. Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield was an American adherent of Calvinism. A conservative Presbyterian theologian, he stoutly defended the Scripture as the wholly inspired word of God against rationalist and modernist ideas being disseminated around him. In his series of lectures, later published in the book, Counterfeit Miracles (published 1918), he forcefully argued that the age of miracles had ceased. He discussed many of the fraudulent “miracles” that various religious organizations have claimed over the years.
4. Professor J.B. Noss, Man’s Religions
7. CNS, the Catholic News Service

Demons at work creating Antichrist

question. It is true that in Rabbinical literature from New Testament times, demons are represented as spirit beings who have been given permission by the Lord to tempt men, or to do them bodily harm for the punishment of their sins. But the observation cannot be denied that there was no fear of such among the early Hebrews. But when the Hebrews became acquainted with Zoroastrian conceptions of the spirit world, especially during the Babylonian exile, they came to believe that God had an “adversary”, an arch-demon, Satan who had
If you wonder how long it will be before Messiah comes, take note of current happenings in Israel and in the world. Growing hostility towards Israel together with calls for her to be eliminated must indicate that Israel will very soon require a Mighty Deliverer. While terror stalks the earth and corrupt political leaders manipulate the so-called “democratic process” (aided by an equally corrupt and biased media), and while a power-hungry false Christendom no longer even pretends to believe the Bible—what hope is there for Israel or the world?

A World Issue

While you digest those sorry facts, note that Israel is in one way or another connected to all of it. Islamic terror, corrupt government, media bias and false religion effect most nations, but Israel is the centre-piece of it all. And at the heart of Israel’s failures there is the territory “occupied” in 1967 and known to the world as the West Bank.

The British Prime Minister Gordon Brown—in preparing himself for the reign of President Hussein Obama—recently repeated what others have been saying, that Jewish settlement in the West Bank is the obstacle to peace in that region. If, for convenience sake we ignore Iranian intentions, there is an outstanding question that Mr. Brown and his pals have not addressed: If the real obstacle to peace was Israel’s “occupation” and settlement of the West Bank—why didn’t peace exist before 1967?

It may well be a generation ago since the events of 1967, but some of us are old enough to remember the situation that led up to that six-days war and how the entire Arab world joined forces with the stated intention of destroying the State of Israel. Jordan (who then ruled over the old city of Jerusalem and the whole of their West Bank) was, we remember, asked by Israel not to enter the war—and only joined in with the Arabs when they thought that Israel was being crushed. It was a mistake! Israel’s “occupation” of Jordan’s West Bank occurred as an act of self-defense. The fact that Israel has insisted on defending itself ever since 1948 is the real obstacle to peace!

If only she would allow her enemies to destroy her the issue would vanish with her!

What we need to understand is this: the situation that exists in the West Bank today is in God’s purpose. What the world calls “the West Bank” is the Biblical “mountains of Israel.” It includes the “Judah and Jerusalem” of Joel chapter 3, verse 1.

The Importance of 1967

What happened in 1967 created the situation which has become so contentious today. This is exactly as the prophet Joel said it would be:

“For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land” (Joel 3:1-2).

It is worth spelling out what Joel is telling us here—that when the return of the captivity to Judah and Jerusalem occurs, there will follow a gathering of the nations for judgement because of what they have done to the Jewish people and their land.

Twelve years before the June war of 1967 one Christadelphian writer had written: “Because Jerusalem (i.e. old Jerusalem) must be possessed by the Jews prior to Christ’s return, so that he might manifest himself to them as their deliverer and Saviour, the ejection of Hashemite Jordan from there is a foregone conclusion. We can look then for developments which will result in Israel’s getting possession of the whole city, and for a dreadful conflagration kindled by that spark throughout the Middle East” (Apocalypse and Gospels F. Bilton, 1955).

The “conflagration” did not result immediately it is true, but “that spark” of 1967 did mark the beginning of anti-Zionist sentiment and agitation which was stirred up among the nations. There has been a constant political onslaught aimed at forcing Israel to withdraw from the West Bank ever since.

Reasons for this international fury over Israel’s settlements in the territory of Judah and the mountains of Israel (the ancient Biblical heartland) may appear almost irrational. Arab hostility to it is perhaps open to some explanation for it is they who lost the war that they initiated when they closed off Israel’s shipping routes and massed their armies against her. But why European countries, Britain and other western nations should get so excited about the Jewish return to their ancient homeland is not quite so reasonable. After all, the world accepts the annexation of Hawaii by the United States in 1898 and its subsequent inclusion into U.S. territory in 1900. The world accepts Britain’s “occupation” of Gibraltar or the Falkland Islands. Russia’s recent occupation of Georgian territory doesn’t appear to be causing too much concern in the international community—so why is Israel pilloried for allowing her people to settle in the Promised Land?

Herein lies the real objection: this is the
Land promised by God to Abraham and his multitudinous seed (For example Genesis 13: 14-17; 17: 7-8). Not only that, but the Jewish people back in the Land of their forefathers is a testimony to the fulfillment of Bible prophecy—and that means that Scripture is the word of the Living and True God (the God of Israel, no less).

This conclusion has wide ramifications, for it exposes many so-called ‘Christian’ churches as being fake. Consider the following item taken from the Associated Press newswire (December 12, 2008):

“National Council of Churches denounces Christian Zionism

“The National Council of Churches has released a pamphlet denouncing Christian Zionism, which treats modern Israel as a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy.”

“The council calls Christian Zionism ‘a dangerous movement that distorts the teachings of the Church, fosters fear and hatred of Muslims and non-Western Christians, and has negative consequences for Middle East Peace.”

“Christian Zionists, including many American evangelicals, are among Israel’s strongest supporters.

“But the church council says they misinterpret Scripture to support ‘destructive directions in U.S. foreign policy with regard to the Middle East.’”

The council, and those who participate in its ecumenical programmes make up the vast majority of those congregations who call themselves Christian.

Now ask yourself whether these religious bodies want to see Jews returning and establishing settlements in the ancient Biblical Lands? Do they want to see Jews gathered out of the nations and dwelling upon the mountains of Israel— in Judah and Jerusalem—in Hebron, in Beit El, in Shiloh or upon Mount Gerizim? The very presence of Jewish people in these places demonstrates the truth of the Scripture, and at the same time exposes the falsehood of those who blaspheme the word of God by denying it.

1967, and what has developed since, is a direct challenge to the false Christian Church.

Widespread Unbelief

Not only are the major churches stone blind to the truth of Scripture, but political leaders being obsessed with the philosophy of Humanism are walking in darkness—they know not at what they stumble. Educated men ought to know the truth of the word of God spoken by the prophet when he wrote:

“And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it” (Zech. 12: 3).

The theory of human evolution, the theories of textual criticism and the gross ignorance of Bible teaching has brought the world to its present state of depravity and perplexity. Unbelief is the dominant characteristic of our times—and where faith in the word of God shows any sign of life it is despised and held in abhorrence by the powers that be. And, sad to say, this is true for many of the nation of Israel as well.

When, over 150 years ago, John Thomas wrote in his book Elpis Israel that “The pre-adventual colonization of Palestine will be on purely political principles; and the Jewish colonists will return in unbelief of the Messialship of Jesus,” it was an accurate prediction of what came to pass. In fact, Prime Minister Olmert—and Sharon before him—as well as Netanyahu who may follow, do everything that they can to oppose any Messianic expectations among Jews in the Land. Jews would not expect Jesus to be their Messiah in any case (for they have no knowledge of the real manifestation foretold in the Mosaic testament, and recorded in the writings of the apostles).

Israel’s political leaders today do not even believe in the coming of a literal Hebrew Moshiach, and if anything fear the consequences of such a belief should it gain popular support. The prospect of a Jewish theocracy would only stir up the enmity of Christendom to the point where it would be thought necessary to eliminate Israel by force. Having little or no belief in the Scriptures, yet realizing the obvious dangers should a religious messianism take root in Israel, the political establishment would come under unbearable international pressure to eradicate it—and would feel itself obliged to do so.

There can be no doubt that in the years since 1967 there has been a growing movement among West Bank settlers which does look for the Biblical redemption. Together with this it is expected that Moshiach will come, build the Third Temple and establish the theocratic kingdom in the Holy Land. The ancient kingdom of David began in Hebron—a fact that is not lost on today’s settlers. So the very development feared by the outside world as well as by the Israeli Establishment is becoming a fearful reality.

The West Bank

This really Judea and Samaria; the mountains of Israel. It is the Land spoken of in Ezekiel chapters 34, 36 and 38; the prophecies of the restoration.

In chapter 34:13,14 the scattered sheep are brought out of the countries of dispersion “to their own land.” This only became possible after 1948 when they possessed their own land. The prophecy then goes on to say that the sheep are to be fed upon the mountains of Israel. This only became possible after 1967 because prior to that the mountains of Israel were not inhabited by Jews—it was Jordanian territory. The emphasis on the mountains of Israel here cannot be ignored—this is where the sheep are to be fed with knowledge and with understanding—compare Jeremiah 3:15.

Ezekiel chapter 36 then gives us a broader picture of how God will restore Israel. Again we see (verse 8) the mountains of Israel as branches shooting forth, and an increasing population. Then, God says in verse 9 “I am for you, and I will turn unto you.” So events move forward to the full restoration of Israel (verse 10); involving “all the house of Israel, even all of it.” The chapter continues to speak of the spiritual and moral regeneration of the nation.

Again in Ezekiel 36:24 we see the same pattern as in chapter 34:13-14. First the people
are brought out of the countries into their own land, and this is then followed by a spiritual development. The words are:

“For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.”

Although this spiritual development involves the whole house of Israel and will take several years to accomplish, the Scriptural evidence before us suggests that it commences with those who are living upon the mountains of Israel—the West Bank. This area began to be settled by Jews following the 1967 war, and by 2007 there were some 270,000 of them there—many with very strong religious leanings. A recent study by the University Centre in Ariel places the current population growth rate at 5% per year. This certainly meets the requirement of Ezekiel 36:10 where God says of the mountains of Israel “I will multiply men upon you.”

All this is leading up to a serious ideological clash within the nation of Israel.

Ezekiel Chapter 37

It is a common mistake to view these restoration prophecies by taking the chapters in chronological sequence. This is not a correct construction of them. The chapters run concurrently, with each one emphasizing a particular aspect of the restoration. The general pattern is as we have described—first the people are brought out of the countries of their dispersion into the Land. They populate the mountains of Israel, and are then infused with the spirit of the Truth by the good shepherd and his co-workers.

A detail in chapter 37 indicates that the work of teaching—of breathing spiritual life into the national body of Israel—will be carried out by the Lord’s holy ones, the saints. In verse 7 Ezekiel is told to prophesy (that is, teach), and as a man of sign he represents those who will instruct the people. Ezekiel himself will doubtless be one of the teachers—which means that he (and others) will be raised up from the death state. So these are not mortal teachers, they are those of whom Daniel the prophet speaks when he says:

“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Daniel 12:2-3).

It will be a thrilling time when this happens. Ezekiel says that as he prophesied (37:7) “there was a noise.” The Hebrew word has the sense of a voice or sound (see Strong’s # 6963) and the result of it is a “shaking” or “an earthquake” (RV). So we can expect that the sounding of the Truth will bring about a tremendous change in the nation—the idea is that of a revolution.

All Apparently Natural

The development that we are describing here will appear to be a natural development. The world at large will not be aware of the risen saints at work—any more than they are aware of the angels (the Mighty Ones) today. There is an interesting rendering of Zechariah 14:6 in the Revised Version margin which reads “the bright ones shall contract themselves.” In other words, just as the angels can appear as ordinary men, so the saints will have the ability to withhold their glory. Thus Psalm 83:3 speaks of “thy hidden ones” (the Septuagint version translates this as “thy saints”).

It is to be expected that there must be a much more faithful adherence to the Law of Moses as a first step in spiritual revival. This is suggested by Deuteronomy 4:30; 31; 30:1-14; Malachi 4:4. This is the Law of the nation, so there must be a recognition of this. Even today there are those amongst the religious settlers who want what they call a “Torah based society.” And it is this development that antagonizes the humanistic left-wing political leaders. They are frightened of it, and for reasons already stated.

This was demonstrated recently in the Likud primaries when Benjamin Netanyahu was faced with having to work with religious Zionists like Moshe Feiglin. Feiglin won enough votes in the party to ensure his seat in the Knesset, should Likud win the election in February. Netanyahu reacted sharply to this result and manipulated the list in order to get Feiglin demoted. This is what the establishment does for one whose platform is “to provide Jewish leadership for Israel,” Jewish values—and seeks its connection to God. The following appears on his website under the heading The Ultimate Objection: Redemption.

“Since the Nation of Israel was born, its ultimate aspiration has been the coming of Mashiach and the complete and final redemption. Unlike the very partial goals of modern Zionism (safe-haven, peace, international recognition, etc.) the goal of redemption is all-inclusive and redefines the motivation for the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel. It illuminates the life of the nation with a new light, content and consciousness—for the individual and for the whole.”

To the unbelieving world (whether Jew or Gentile) true Zionism will only appear to be a modified extension of this kind of ideology. The doctrine of the Gospel (Good News) of the kingdom as taught by the real Jesus and his apostles in the first century was not all that different from what these Jews are looking for today. The Gospel of the Kingdom when seen as a political reality—a Hebrew theocracy with its king ruling in true righteousness—and with “a rod of iron,” will enrage the world.

The Scene is Set

When we now view the overall picture of events, seeing these developments in the Land (and especially in the Biblical heartland), we must surely conclude that we stand on the very threshold of Messiah’s advent. The actual identity of Messiah will not be revealed until he appears to his people—and when that happens he will come as the Redeemer to Zion “and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob” (Isaiah 59:21). So when the nations are gathered against Israel—as Joel 3 and Ezekiel 38 predict—Messiah will appear as “the Deliverer” and turn away ungodliness from Jacob, bringing them into the New Covenant which will “take away their sins” (Romans 11:26-27).

If you wonder how long it will be before Messiah comes, take note of these happenings in Israel and in the world. If you do this with the Bible as your guide, then you will know that it is time to prepare to meet the King of Israel—the personal manifestation of the Truth.

Moshe Feiglin the controversial Zionist who respects the Biblical promises.
The Persians in the Land

By Ken Loveridge  PRINCE GEORGE B.C.

The Assyrians and the Babylonians

Jerusalem was not the only city in Israel destroyed by the Babylonians. Throughout the country, the armies of Nebuchadnezzar deliberately destroyed, burned and robbed all the settlements they occupied. Those who were not killed were deported to Babylon. In this way they imitated the Assyrians who had gone before. But the Assyrians shortly after their destructive period had done an about face. The archaeological record indicates that the Assyrians returned to rebuild almost every town they had destroyed, and to repopulate the country both with locals and with people brought in from other lands of the empire. There is no sign that the Babylonians actually built anything in Israel during the period of their domination. The country was reduced to poverty. International trade appears to have been brought to a halt. Almost no material finds remain in Israel to indicate that there was a Babylonian period. The population was small and most of the towns and villages had been destroyed. The Land of Israel was indeed at rest. Jeremiah, in describing the state of things after the destruction of the city in the Book of Lamentations, would have seen very few signs of improvement in the seventy year period of exile. The Persians did not conquer the land, and they did not inherit a prosperous area.

The Coming of Cyrus and the Persians

The collapse of one empire and the beginning of another is not usually an overnight event, but scripture tells us that this was the case in 539 BC. The city and empire of Babylon were taken by Cyrus, the King of Persia. For just over 200 years, the Persians were in control of the province of Judah, or Yehud. This is when the children of Israel came to be known as Jews.

Nebuchadnezzar, the Chaldean who ruled Babylon, took Jerusalem in 586 BC. Jeremiah (chapter 52) tells us of the waves of invasion and captivity during his reign, but he came to take captives even before he became king. Daniel appears to have been taken with other royal captives as hostages in the year that Nebuchadnezzar came to the throne, while Ezekiel was taken with King Jehoiachin and the Queen mother several years later. Those who went into captivity, Jeremiah called the “very good figs,” while those who remained were referred to as “the evil, very evil.” The captives prospered in Babylon, while their country lay in ruins.

Jeremiah had prophesied of a seventy year period of captivity, which Daniel had come to understand, but there was another prophecy of the individual who was to be responsible for the dramatic end of captivity for the Jews. In Isaiah 44:28-45:3 he wrote,

“That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.”

Cyrus is referred to as a type of the Messiah, who would call for the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. Babylon was taken with little violence as he seems to have been welcomed into the city. Nabonidus, the king, and father of Belshazzar, who had been reigning over Babylon, was not in favour with the priests of the gods of the city; and Cyrus was welcomed when he promised to honour them. In dedicating a new temple soon after his accession, Cyrus deposited a cylinder with his account of the taking of the city, along with his “charter of rights.” Cyrus’s policies toward subjugated nations were certainly different from those of the Assyrians and Babylonians, who had treated subject people harshly; he permitted the resettling of those who had been previously deported and sponsored the reconstruction of religious buildings. He fostered an image of a liberator, and worked to gain the goodwill of the subject peoples.

Later in Isaiah, chapter 61, we read of the role of the Messiah, to which Cyrus was linked:

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound” (Isa 61:1).

“And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of

The Cyrus Cylinder with the decree stating that captive nations are to return to their homelands. Brit. Mus.
many generations” (Isa 61:4).

One of his first acts as king of Babylon, was to proclaim his wishes to the Jews, as well as the other captives throughout his new kingdom.

The Return to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel

The first returnees were organized under Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel, who represented the royal line of David. Both are spoken of as governors, and both may be descendants of Jehoiachin/Jecconiah. It’s possible that they may be different names for the same person. Working with Jeshua the high priest, the temple vessels were regathered with the help of the Persians, and almost fifty thousand set out for Jerusalem. On arrival, the altar was set up, worship was re-established and preparations were made for laying the temple foundations.

Those who returned did not come back to an empty land. Not only were there the “poor of the land” who had been left behind, but also those of the neighbouring nations who had rejoiced at their overthrow. The Samaritans to the north, the Idumeans or Edomites to the south, the Arabs to the east and those from Ashdod and Sidon to the west were opposed to their return, and to their rebuilding work. Complaining to the king in Babylon, the work was ceased by order of Cambyses, and did not recommence for another ten years. Zerubbabel disappears from the record may have been replaced by non-Jewish governors from Samaria.

Ezra 6 tells us that the son of Cambyses, Darius I, made a search for the proclamation of Cyrus, and authorized the work to begin again, and the temple was finished. Life carried on in

The Return under Ezra

The next wave of former captives to return came with Ezra, who appears to have been the next Jewish governor of Yehud. There was great concern that those in the land were intermarrying with the local residents and being absorbed. Ezra embarked on an educational program. Historical records are very scarce for this period, and we have to look to the Greek-Persian Wars for references to Yehud and the Persian province of Abar Nahara, or “Beyond the River.”

It was later in the reign of Artaxerxes that the third and last movement from Babylon took place under Nehemiah. Thirteen years after Ezra, and more than ninety years after the first wave of exiles returned with Zerubbabel, Nehemiah, cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, was commissioned governor of Yehud, and sent off to rebuild the walls of the city which were still broken down. He accomplished his task in fifty-two days, a project described for us in Nehemiah chapter 3. Nehemiah remained governor of the province until the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes, and we find nothing more in the scripture record of the period of rule by the Persians. This is the last date we find in our Old Testament record.

The Persian Empire Begins to Disintegrate

Artaxerxes was not the last of the Persian rulers. His son was Darius II who ruled until 404 BC. Artaxerxes II Memnon ruled during a period when the empire began to disintegrate. The Egyptians began to break free from the Persians, and were able to be independent until 343. Elephantine, or Yeb, the Jewish military colony in Egypt, was attacked and destroyed during this time, as was a similar Arab colony. The land-bridge had armies sweeping back and forth as the Persians sought to deal with the rebels, and although Yehud survived, it was not growing and prospering. While we find a “Babylonian Period” lacking in the archaeological record, the same is not true of the Persians. Important centres such as Megiddo and Hazor in the north, as well as the Philistine and Phoenician areas, all show a period of Persian occupation. Both Ezra and Nehemiah provide lists of place-names within the province, each of which provide information on the settlement and administration of the province under the Persians. Because of the political unrest during the period, many sites along the Mediterranean coast suffered periods of destruction.

The last three of the Persian kings were Artaxerxes III Ochus, Arses, and Darius III Kodomanus. These three ruled for the last quarter-century of the empire, until a young Macedonian arrived with his armies to take it all away. Alexander, the son of Philip of Macedon, or Alexander the Great as he is known to us, in a very few years, defeated the powers of the east and set the stage for a new Greek empire stretching east to India.

The Return to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel

The first returnees were organized under Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel, who represented the royal line of David. Both are spoken of as governors, and both may be descendants of Jehoiachin/Jecconiah. It’s possible that they may be different names for the same person. Working with Jeshua the high priest, the temple vessels were regathered with the help of the Persians, and almost fifty thousand set out for Jerusalem. On arrival, the altar was set up, worship was re-established and preparations were made for laying the temple foundations.

Those who returned did not come back to an empty land. Not only were there the “poor of the land” who had been left behind, but also those of the neighbouring nations who had rejoiced at their overthrow. The Samaritans to the north, the Idumeans or Edomites to the south, the Arabs to the east and those from Ashdod and Sidon to the west were opposed to their return, and to their rebuilding work. Complaining to the king in Babylon, the work was ceased by order of Cambyses, and did not recommence for another ten years. Zerubbabel disappears from the record may have been replaced by non-Jewish governors from Samaria.

Ezra 6 tells us that the son of Cambyses, Darius I, made a search for the proclamation of Cyrus, and authorized the work to begin again, and the temple was finished. Life carried on in

The Return under Ezra

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The Pine Tree Beetle is known for its destructive work upon forests, but how on earth it evolved is a mystery beyond imagination. You see, this little pest brings with it both an assistant and a competitor. The assistant is a fungus that the insect plants inside tunnels in the bark of trees. This renders the bark good to eat for baby beetle. But also there is a hitchhiker on board, and this carries a fungus for feeding its own larvae which also just so happens to be essential for baby beetle when he arrives. Now this second fungus can kill off the assistant, so guess what — the pine beetle harnesses another microorganism to protect its assistant from the competition, and it does so by producing an antibiotic that is new to science. So what happened before antibiotics? Scientists now ask if the antibiotic of some beetles could help humans—to prevent them from pining away! What a design!