JUDGMENT TO COME

“He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness” Psalm 96:13; Acts 17:13.
"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." John 17:17
EDITORIAL

“For the Time is Come…”

If the first epistle of Peter was written in about AD 60 as many chronologies suggest (e.g., see the Companion Bible or the AV margin proposing AD 62), then the persecutions of Nero as well as the events of AD 70 were close at hand. There is considerable evidence for this within the epistle itself which was written to “strangers” (foreigners) scattered throughout the Gentile world of that time.

Nero occupied the throne from AD 54 to AD 68. He was followed by four emperors (Gallio, Otho and Vitellius who ruled in turn) until Vespasian ascended the throne in AD 69. The “manifold temptations” or trials (chapter 1:6) and “the trial of your faith... with fire” (verse 7) doubtless refers to the persecutions brought by Nero—as does that of chapter 4:12. These fiery trials were the forerunner to what was to come upon those who had not obeyed the Gospel. Peter writes:

“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17-18).

By “the house of God,” readers would understand the household of Faith (the believers, compare ch. 2:5). If the judgments of those days were beginning with the believers, “what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (1 Peter 4:17-18).

In many ways we can expect the end of Gentile times to be similar to those days which brought the Jewish commonwealth to its end. Believers (the household of Faith) will be tried, “... now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:6-7 RSV).

Peter says that the trials may be manifold or various (Strong: various in character). It may not require a Nero or a Hitler to be on the throne to try or test the faith of believers, but the purpose of the trial will be to prove whether our faith is genuine. Peter says that judgment must begin at the house of God. The word “judgment” here is the Greek krima, which according to Vine means “the process of judgment leading to a decision.” This is what the various trials accomplish, and so a verdict is arrived at—a judgment. And speaking of the believers Peter says:

“And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (ch. 4:18).

Over the past 2,000 years or so the Gospel has been proclaimed throughout Europe—and in more recent centuries to many other parts of the globe. It has not always been fully understood and it has not always been faithfully presented—but it has had sufficient exposure to ensure that the opportunity was there for those who sought diligently for it. Jesus declared:

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matthew 24:14).

So the Gospel was preached in all the Roman world (Greek: oikoumene, see Strong 3625 and Vine) before the end came in AD 70, and also before the end of the pagan Roman world came in AD 312 with the victory of Constantine.

Today, as we approach the end of this age, we must expect a similar pattern of events to unfold, both in the household of God and in the world. Peter’s message to those believers who were scattered throughout the Gentile world of his day is appropriate for those of us who are living at the end of this age. He wrote:

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.” (1 Peter 5:10-11).
“Woe unto the world,” said Jesus, “because of offences!” and “Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!” See, then, my disciples, that ye be not the cause of these. This was the application of the discourse. The offenders then, were the contemporaries of our Lord, and living citizens of the then existing commonwealth of Israel. “Woe to Israel because of offences!” Jesus once wept over their city, because of the woes to come upon them. “Fill up,” said he, to its rulers, “the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye progeny of poisonous serpents! How can ye escape THE JUDGMENT OF GEHENNA?—poos phugeetes apo tees KRISOEOS TEES GEENEES? Upon another occasion, he inquired of these same men, “When the Lord of the vineyard cometh, what will he do with those husbandmen?” And they pronounced sentence upon themselves, saying, “He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.” And in the same discourse, he informed them by another parable, that this miserable destruction would be effected by the King, who would “send forth his armies, and destroy those murderers, and burn up their city” (Matt. 22:7).

The krisis tees geenees, or JUDGMENT OF GEHENNA, was that to which Jesus referred when he said, “He (the Holy Spirit) shall argue with the world conclusively (elegxei ton kosmon) concerning judgment; because the ruling power of this Cosmos (the Jewish Commonwealth as constituted by the Law of Moses) hath been sentenced”—John 16:11; and again he says, alluding to this Judgment,

GEHENNA, was that to which Jesus referred when he said, “He (the Holy Spirit) shall argue with the world conclusively (elegxei ton kosmon) concerning judgment; because the ruling power of this Kosmos (the Jewish Commonwealth as constituted by the Law of Moses) hath been sentenced”—John 16:11;
The judgment of Gehenna has reference to a specific location of judgment, both past and future.

John Thomas wrote an article on this subject in 1860. We reproduce a short extract from it here.

“these be days of retributive justice (ekdikeseeos) that all things which are written may be fulfilled”—Luke 21:22; parallel with which is Matt. 23:34-36: “Wherefore, behold, I send unto you,” says Jesus, “prophets and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye will kill and crucify, and some ye will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the land, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye shall have then slain (ephoneusate) between the Temple and the Altar. Verily, I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation;” that is upon you Pharisees—v. 35.

The time, then, when the Judgment of Gehenna was to happen, was at the period of the murder of Zacharias between the Sanctuary and the Altar. Several of the prophets have written concerning it. “The Lord shall bring,” says Moses, “a nation against thee from far (Italy), from the end of the earth, as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favor to the young: and he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy flocks...And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the sword of thine enemies shall destroy;...” (Num. 21:11-35; Deut. 28:35-49). Jehovah, thine Elohim, hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee; so that the man that is tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil towards his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall have: so that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat: because he hath nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land...And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the sword of thine enemies shall destroy;...” (Num. 21:11-35; Deut. 28:35-49).
The Destiny of the Wicked

The whole teaching of the Bible in regard to the destiny of the wicked is summed up in four words from the 37th Psalm, verse 20, “The wicked shall perish.” Paul gives the explanation of this in Rom. 6:23: “The wages of sin is death.” Death, the extinction of being, is the pre-determined issue of a sinful course. “He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption” (Gal. 6:8). That reaping corruption is equivalent to death, is evident from Rom. 8:13: “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.” Corruption results in death, so that the one is equal to the other.

We read in Malachi 4:1:—

“Behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.”

Again, in 2 Thess. 1:9:—

“They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”

The Spirit of God by Solomon in the Proverbs uses the following language:—

“As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation” (Prov. 10:25).

And again, Prov. 2:22:—

“The wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.”

The teaching of these testimonies is self-evident; it is expressed with an earnestness of language that leaves no room for comment. It is the doctrine expressed by Solomon when he says: “the name of the wicked shall rot” (Prov. 10:7). The wicked, who are an offence to God, and an afflication to themselves, and of no use to anyone, will ultimately be consigned to oblivion, in which their very name will be forgotten.

The original word (“hell”) has no affinity with its modern use... It will be seen that hell is synonymous with the grave. This is proved, so far at least as the Old Testament is concerned. The original word is sheol, which, in the abstract, means nothing more than concealed or covered place. It is, therefore, an appropriate designation for the grave, in which a man is for ever concealed from view. Every use of the word “hell” in the Old Testament, will fall under this general explanation. As regards the New Testament, there is the same simplicity and absence of difficulty. The original word is, of course, different, being Greek instead of Hebrew; it is in nearly all cases, hades. That hades is equal to the Hebrew word sheol is shown by its employment as an equivalent for it in the Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Hebrew Scriptures; and also in its use by the writers of the New Testament when they quote verses from the Old Testament where sheol occurs in the Hebrew. For instance, in David’s prophecy of the resurrection of Christ, cited by Peter on the day of Pentecost (“Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell,” c.v.), the word in Hebrew is sheol, and in Greek hades. In this instance, hell simply and literally means the grave, in view of which, we see the point of Peter’s argument. Understood as the orthodox hell, there is no point in it at all.

Another word translated hell, does not mean the grave, but which at the same time affords as little countenance to orthodox belief as hades. That word is Gehenna. The word ought not to be translated at all. It is a proper name, and like all other proper names, should only have been transliterated. It is a Greek compound signifying the valley of the Son of Hinnom.

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The political basis upon which the modern State of Israel was built and upon which it exists today, should not deflect us from a recognition of the fact that the restoration of the Jews to their ancient Land is God’s work. He says through the prophet Ezekiel:

"...I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country" (Ezekiel 34:13).

The restoration of Israel is a process and it is a process that cannot be frustrated by human policy. God has spoken. The Jewish people have returned and are returning to the Land. No power on earth can stop this migration. They will inhabit the Land little by little as in the days of old. Scripture declares:

"I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee... I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land. And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee" (Exodus 23:27-31).

The same thing is seen from Deuteronomy ch. 7. This leads us to the inevitable conclusion that the Arabs were displaced in the purpose of God!

The Truth is...
Several readers of this magazine will be familiar with the words of John Thomas written in 1849 when he said:

"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..." He continued to say that:

"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-adventual 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 ultimately establishing their commonwealth..."

In less than 50 years after John Thomas published those words in his book *Elpis Israel* (The Hope of Israel), political Zionism was founded by Theodor Herzl. The Jewish Virtual Library says:

“Political Zionism stressed the importance of political action and deemed the attainment of political rights in Palestine a prerequisite for the fulfillment of the Zionist enterprise. Political Zionism is linked to the name of Theodor Herzl, who considered the Jewish problem a political one that should be solved by overt action in the international arena. His aim was to obtain a charter, recognized by the world leadership, granting the Jews sovereignty in a Jewish owned territory. The Basel Program, drawn up in accordance with these principles, states that Zionism aims to establish “a secure haven, under public law, for the Jewish people in the Land of Israel.”

It was about another 50 years to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948; a development that was the result of the political ambitions of men like Chaim Weizmann and David Ben-Gurion. It was also the result of earlier British policy as expressed in the Balfour Declaration of 1917. So it was that Jews emigrated to Palestine “in unbelief of the Messiahship of Jesus, and of the Truth as it is in him.” It was established as a secular state, and in its early form a socialist state. Many religious Jews wanted no part of it. However, while recognising the political basis for the modern nation we should not overlook the fact that its existence today fulfills Bible prophecy — while modern Israel may be the result of political circumstances, it is also fulfilling Bible prophecy — while modern Israel is also fulfilling the declared purpose of the prophets. For example:

> "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea" (Isaiah 11:11).

**God's Hand in Politics**

We must recognise that it is the God of Heaven that controls the political world, and so the prophet Daniel blessed the God of Heaven in these words:

> "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him" (Daniel 2:20-22).

This Truth was revealed directly to the King of Babylon as we are informed in Daniel 4;

> "...the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men” (Verse 17).

The same principle is stated again in Daniel 5:21, and it is endorsed in the New Testament thus:

> “For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God” — Romans 13:1.

So it may be that while men delude themselves into thinking that the modern world is controlled through the ballot box, or by force of arms, the reality is that God controls everything — and knowing this to be so the true believer is very interested in politics because he knows that God works out His purposes through the kingdoms of men, placing in power those individuals who will accomplish that which He pleases. This is no less so in the modern age of democracy than it was when kingdoms were founded by the sword — by war or by revolution.

That God’s Hand was involved in the establishment of modern Israel is a certainty — but that does not mean that He approves everything the Government of Israel does — yet He is controlling the nation in order to accomplish His purpose. This was well expressed by John Thomas in *Elpis Israel* where he wrote:

> “...Paul says every power is of God; and the powers that be are ordained of Him, This is a matter of great consolation and rejoicing to his saints; for, though the tyrants may propose, it is God only that disposes events. The saints who understand the will keep aloof from politics. None are more interested in them than they; but they will mix themselves up neither with one party nor another; for God regulates them all: therefore to be found in any such strife would be to contend in some way or other against Him. The servant of the Lord must not strive, except "for the faith once delivered to the saints."

**The Situation Today**

So the restoration of Israel is God’s declared purpose, and we understand therefore that its existence is not dependent upon the support of world powers. God may have used Britain and may have providentially controlled the United Nations in November 1947 in order to facilitate the restoration of the Jews to their ancient homeland — but this was merely the mechanism through which the Almighty chose to work out His purpose. In recent years God has used the United States to protect the Jewish State, but if the Americans...
default God will provide a deliverer from some other place.

The Arab-Israeli conflict has been permitted to continue over the years and may yet serve the wider purpose of drawing all nations into “the controversy of Zion” (Isaiah 34:8). The prophet Jeremiah has this to say of the nations:

“For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the LORD of hosts. Therefore prophesy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 25:29-31).

Another prophet has this to say:

“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).

And again in Revelation 16:16,

“And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.”

This is where events today are leading: the restoration of Israel is to coincide with God’s judgment of the nations. The nations of the world have a lot to answer for because of their cruelty and persecution of God’s people down the long centuries (both of the Jewish people and of those who have been His faithful witnesses). This is what “Armageddon” is all about—gathering the nations into the valley of judgment. The fact that the partial and primary restoration of Israel has been on purely political principles has allowed the situation to develop according to God’s design.

The Arab Spring?

It is important to notice that Scripture does not focus upon an Arab-Israeli conflict, but rather on a much wider one involving all nations. The Arab-Israeli standoff has continued over the years and ever since the days of the British Mandate, but the Arab attempt to dislodge the Jewish homeland has never succeeded—witness Arab defeats in the War of Independence (1948), the Sinai campaign (1956), the Six-Days War of 1967 and the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

Some interpretations of prophecy (especially during the 1960′s, 1970′s and early 80′s) envisioned Israel being over-run by Arab forces, but that never materialized. One writer in 1964 provided a sequence of events which he based on Ezekiel 35 when he wrote:

“A careful consideration of these words shows that certain events are clearly implied:

a. The annexation of Israel by Arab foes.

b. A divine judgement on these boastful enemies to be followed immediately by

c. The manifestation of divine glory among the Jews.

“Almost every verse in the chapter reinforces these conclusions. “Ezekiel 36 is, if anything, even more emphatic. There Edom is pictured as gloating over a recent triumph: “Aha, even the ancient high places are ours in possession” (v. 2). For this, divine judgement is pronounced “against all Edom, which have appointed my land into their possession with the joy of all their heart” (v. 5).”

Then again in 1971, the same writer proposed the following:

“...the main ideas derived from fairly copious Bible evidence include these:

a. The return of Jews to the Land of their Fathers.

b. Arab hostility.

c. Ultimate Arab conquest of Israel.

d. A final Jewish captivity.

A Jewish explanation of the Image of Daniel 2
from: www.betemunah.org/edom.html

According to Jewish tradition we are presently in the diaspora of Edom, the last of the four diasporas, the one immediately preceding the arrival of the Mashiach. The Torah tells us that Esau is synonymous with Edom. And these are the descendants of Esau, he is Edom (Bereshit 38:1). This diaspora is also known as the Roman Diaspora. It began with the destruction of the second temple by the Romans, and the cultural/spiritual basis of the Western world, the broader venue of this entire Diaspora was the Holy Roman Empire. The destruction of the second Temple is also coincident with the birth and rise of Christianity, the cornerstone of Western morality and ethics.

Jewish tradition gives us the following formula:

Esau = Edom = Rome = Christianity

Thus we see that the Mashiach will come at the end of the galut Edom. The present exile is seen as an extension of the Roman exile (Edom is Rome), since culturally and legally, Western civilization share the values and worldview of ancient Rome. A subset of this exile is that of Ishmael, the Arabs, who are seen as an antithesis of Roman civilization and values, and who will rule over the Jewish people for a time concurrently with the exile of Rome. The exile of Ishmael and the exile of Edom are represented by the legs in the vision interpreted by Daniel.

Editor’s Note: Ishmael, understood here as the Arabs, did rule over the Jewish Land and people concurrently with Roman Christendom during the days of the Ottoman Empire.
Edom, Ezekiel 35:9 is decisive:

Gomorrah (verses 17 & 18). Concerning (Jeremiah 49:13) and like Sodom and (Jeremiah 48:47; Ammon: Jer. 49:6; Elam: Jer. 49:39), Edom was to be “perpetual wastes” (Revelation chapter 17) and this is the understanding that many Jews place upon Edom as seen in the Jewish representation of Esau as the “House of Jacob”. The difficult political situation today is inextricably bound up with this, and many of the present day arguments are totally unjust and misleading. The truth is that other world powers themselves may show themselves as belonging to “the house of Esau” along with other nations. The children of Edom are equated with the daughter of Babylon in Psalm 137:7,8; “Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof. O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us,” the daughter of Babylon is Rome (Revelation chapter 17) and this is the understanding that many Jews place upon Edom as seen in the Jewish representation of Daniel 2.

The truth is that other world powers (Russia, Europe and their allies) will intervene in order to impose a solution upon the disputed territory of the West Bank (the mountains of Israel—Ezekiel 38:8).

Two Stages

As John Thomas proposed in 1849, there is to be two stages in the restoration of Israel, and between those two stages there will be the battle of Armageddon. In other words the first stage—that is the “partial and primary” restoration that we see today—will allow the hostility of the world to mature against the Jews and their national homeland. Arabs have been, and are to be involved in this hostility, but they cannot overcome Israel on their own. Scripture reveals that they will be supported by the nations of Christendom, and especially by the Roman Church. But even this by no means indicates the complete demolishing of Israel, for if the prophecies be read carefully it will be seen that although Israel may be invaded by an overwhelming force it will not be annihilated as it was in AD 70. It is the time of Israel’s deliverance: “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” (Jeremiah 30:7).

Following the deliverance of Israel from the multinational invader led by Gog, there will be a period of transition during which the State of Israel must become the kingdom of Christ. John Thomas wrote:

“The Lord Jesus Christ at his appearing in his kingdom finds Judah inhabiting the land. Not all the Jews, but a goodly number of them.”

The difficult political situation today has a purpose in preparing the character of the people. They have yet to be cleansed of their filthiness—seen today in the secular section of the nation with its “gay” parades and leftwing politics. That has to be eliminated and the people must learn to trust in their God and walk in His ways. The Armageddon experience together with the instruction of Elijah the prophet (Malachi 4) will accomplish that. The deliverance from Gog’s multinational force will evoke a tremendous response from the people of Israel; they will at last be constrained by the love of Christ their saviour on God’s behalf. At this stage the kingdom will be established in Judah:

“So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord God; this is the day whereof I have spoken... So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward. And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions have I done unto them, and hid my face from them. Therefore thus saith the Lord God: Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name: After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid” (Ezekiel 39:7-8, 22-26).

This we believe to be the correct understanding of Scripture. It is a process that will take considerable time—many years in fact.
Daniel Luria is the Executive Director of Ateret Cohanim centered in the heart of Jerusalem. The organization works to strengthen Jewish roots in the City. Bible Magazine editor, Paul Billington asked him: “Is there a spiritual development taking place in the Land of Israel today, or are we in a quagmire? Are we stuck?"

Reply by Daniel Luria:

I don’t think we’re ever stuck. I think the messianic donkey, even though he may be slow from time to time, and he may take a breather, he’s still moving forward. We are living in messianic times. Some would call it the footsteps of the Messiah. Some would call it the unfolding redemption process. We don’t even see it sometimes. Sometimes we have taken a step back, it seems with Gush Katif, where ten thousand lives were destroyed and cemeteries were pulled up and synagogues were destroyed. This is something which is incomprehensible; a tragedy for the Jewish people. Sometimes maybe we needed that in order to wake up. I think many in Israel woke up. For many it was a “we told you so.” As a result of that we’ve got missiles landing in regular cities. Hopefully the same mistakes won’t be made with Judea and Samaria.

There is an awakening politically. I think many people are asking the questions. “What is it that we really want here? What does it mean to be a Jewish state for Jewish people? Not just another multicultural, democratic society. We are a Jewish state for Jewish people. That means also Jewish values. What is it that we’re here for? What are we doing here? What have we come back to?"

So I think, there was a time in history for Zionism to unfold, and maybe even Zionism without religion. Even though religious Zionists were always coming back. But now that we’ve built the physical state. Now the other questions are being asked. Who are we as a people? Where are we going? What are the Jewish values we want to live by? And there was a huge awakening. The religious, the Teshuva movement, the Repentance movement, is huge in this country. We are seeing it with different groups that have gone to Eilat and Tel Aviv and Lod and Ramle and areas that were the bastions (of the secular State); even Kibbutzim today. I know of certain Kibbutzim that were anti-religious. Not just non-religious but anti-religious and today they are asking questions. Today they have some semblance of religion—and are celebrating religious festivals. In some kibbutzim there’s even synagogues being built. Who would have even considered that thirty or forty years ago? Or the foundation of the State? So, at some point, once you build the house you need to ask yourself, how do we want to fill the house?"

Bible Magazine editor: So, you’re here. Now the question in my mind is, what does God expect of you? Now He’s given you the Land. In fact, He’s given you the Land. In fact, He’s given you the city. What does He expect of you?

Daniel Luria: I don’t have a direct link to God.

B.M. editor: Yes, you do. Through the Torah...

Daniel Luria: We are located in the holiest land in this world. This is the place you feel the closest to God. Of that there is no question. We are at the centre of the fire. What exactly He wants from us I don’t know. I can only tell you what He tells us via the...
Bible. Now via the Bible things are very clear. We have to live in accordance to His Law. If we live in accordance to His Law, and follow His path and walk in His ways, then we'll be okay. If not, then we can be thrown out. This Land can spew us out as the Bible says. If we don't live in accordance (with His laws).

We believe of course that we’ve now come back for the final time here. We were kicked out in previous times. We’ve now returned for the building of the final temple which will be rebuilt by God in some fashion, but that’s in God’s will. Our job today is to return to godly ways. To be a moral people; to be a shining light for the world and to be a shining light for ourselves. That involves many, many different things.

I don’t know what’s more or less important. I can’t say that keeping the Sabbath is more or less important than being a moral person or not speaking gossip or not murdering. There’s a gamete of 613 laws there. It doesn’t say after each law, this is worth x number of points. All we know is, there’s a path to follow. There are laws between man and God and there are laws between man and man. We just now celebrated yesterday the festival of receiving the Bible (Shavout). Now receiving the Bible is more than just a festival of agriculture. It was recognising that because of God’s blessing we have fruits. We have vegetables. We have everything under the sun. We have seen the trees grow once again. But it is more than that. It is acceptance of the Bible itself that was given on the 6th or 7th of Sivan. The early time of Sivan thousands of years ago.

If we are to keep this Land, if we are to go along the redemption process then we also have to recognise that we have to live like Jews. This has to be not just a Jewish state for Jewish people but a Jewish state for Jewish people living according to a Jewish law. And that is the law that we’ve been given, that we’ve lived by for thousands of years, albeit in little ghettos; in various exiles. Today we’re back in the Land of Israel and the last thing that we should be doing is trying to mimic the world. The last thing that we should be doing is to be scared of the world or to act in accordance to what the world dictates.

Comment: Once again we see evidence of a Bible-based culture forming in Israel today. We are reminded of the words of Malachi 4:4,

“Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.”

Compare article on page 45

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**2013 PROPHECY DAYS**

**SOUTH WEST WALES PROPHECY DAY**

Saturday November 2nd, 2013. Doors open 10 a.m.

**THEME: NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECY FOR TODAY**

That Man of sin, the son of perdition — Stephen Whitehouse
A Woman sat upon a scarlet coloured beast — Stephen Whitehouse
All Israel Shall be saved — John Owen

**THE PRINCESS ROYAL THEATRE - PORT TALBOT**

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**Northern Prophecy Day 2013**

Q. What do these countries have in common?

A. Their news shows us the truth of Bible prophecy

3 talks on the role of these countries in fulfilling Bible prophecy under the theme...

- 'At the Time of the End'
  - Nott Davies
  - Jonathon Bowen
  - Nottingham Forest Rd
  - Brantford Ontario

- 'Britain’s role in drying up the Euphrates'
  - ‘The King of the South shall push at him’

- ‘Russia’s pending invasion of Turkey’
  - Russia’s invasion of Israel and the intervention of Christ
  - ‘The shall enter into the glorious land’

2pm Saturday 26th October God Willing

Castleford Ecclesial Hall

To view the talks live, please email Brother Pete Barrett on Pete@TheBarretts.co.uk before the day to obtain details and instructions to view.
s we consider the world today, and the direction in which events are leading, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that civilization is on the path to a frightful disaster—one in which millions are to perish. When we take this conclusion to the light of Scripture, it becomes inevitable and certain. There is to be a final day of reckoning, a judgment upon mankind resulting from the widespread wickedness seen in all spheres of life both today and in recent history. As Jesus told his generation: “How shall ye escape the judgment of hell (Gehenna)” — Matthew 23:33 (See Revised Version). The same could be said to the contemporary age—one that has turned its back upon God, the Truth of His word, and the principles of good behaviour and living.

The Spirit of Truth

It can be said: “... they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?” (Jeremiah 8:9). In the days of the prophet Jeremiah this brought terrible consequences, as it did also in the days of Jesus, but as always God “left not Himself without witness.” There is always warning and opportunity to repent, and so it was in the first century: Luke records:

“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Luke 3:1-3).

John, in the wilderness of Judea, was a witness to that age, and he was followed by Jesus who promised that he would send the spirit of truth as a helper or assistant (KJV a “comforter”) and that it would teach the disciples all things (John 14:16-17). This “comforter” is the holy spirit (see John 14:26), and this “holy spirit” or “comforter” is...
therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire” (ch. 3:7-9).

It was a warning of judgment to come—a warning which Jesus also issued to the religious leaders, both in his teaching and in parables.

**Hard words**

The apostle Peter says of Jesus that he “suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1 Peter 2:22-23).

His teaching was (Matthew 5:39-41), “But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain” (Matthew 5:39-41).

But Jesus was not a “wet”! Neither does he teach his followers to be spineless and flaccid. Imagine the scene described in John’s gospel:

“And the Jews’ passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise” (John 2:13-16).

Mark adds this in his account: “And the scribes and chief priests heard it,
Jeremiah also: “Woe be to the shepherds of Israel…” (34:2). So the words of Jesus—“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites…” (Matthew 23) should not surprise us, and the same condemnation could be made of most Christian organisations and their leaders in our day. Consequences are bound to follow.

The Predictions of Christ

That Jesus had been a student of the prophesy of Daniel appears from his words in Matthew 24:15 (and Mark 13:14). He clearly had in mind Daniel 8:11 and 13 when he told his disciples about the end of that age: “There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Matthew 24:2-3). This was to be accomplished by the Roman power, called by Daniel “a little horn” (8:9) and “a king of fierce countenance and understanding dark sentences” (verse 23). This was the power that would “give both the sanctuary (temple) and the host (army) to be trodden under foot,” so that “the place of his sanctuary (temple) was cast down” (Daniel 8:11); literally “the daily offering was removed and the foundation of His sanctuary was thrown down” (Stone’s Tanach).

The explanation of this given by Jesus, and recorded for us by Luke was as follows: “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.” (Luke 21:20-24).

There was nothing in any of this to rejoice over; there was no room for self-righteous indignation. The frame of mind that Jesus had toward this is seen in the words of Luke 19:41-44, “And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”

Jesus knew that judgment was inevitable. There would be a terrible time ahead for Jerusalem because of the treatment of those who came to plead with that generation—and so the parable declares that there would be destruction and the city burned (Matthew 22:7).

Flavius Josephus (AD 37-101)

There are several points at which the works of the Jewish historian Josephus support the New Testament and illustrate the dreadful scene which fulfilled these things. Josephus’ work is genuine because it is quoted by other writers during the first few centuries after the lifetime of Josephus himself. The most well-known passage is in Antiquities of the Jews Book 18, chapter 3, section 3 (translated by Whiston) and reads: “Now, there was about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works,—a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was (the) Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.”

And another mention of Jesus in Book 20, chap. 9/1: “Ananias... assembled the Sanhedrim of the judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others.
HOLocaust a.d.70

The terrible massacre of Jews in the temple

Crawling into spaces like this many hoped in vain to escape

Seeking to escape many sought refuge in water channels beneath the street

Huge stones cast down by the Romans still lie in place

Temple treasures looted by Roman forces
of Jerusalem and the terrible time that came in Book 5 of the Wars (chap. 10/5):

“It is therefore impossible to go distinctly over every instance of these men’s iniquity. I shall therefore speak my mind here at once briefly:—That neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries, nor did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was, from the beginning of the world. Finally, they brought the Hebrew nation into contempt, comparatively less impious with regard to strangers...”

Josephus continues to describe the siege of Jerusalem and the terrible time that came upon the city:

“So all hope of escaping was now cut off from the Jews, together with their liberty of going out of the city. Then did the famine widen its progress, and devoured the people by whole houses and families: the upper rooms were full of women and children that were dying by famine; and the lanes of the city were full of the dead bodies of the aged; the children also and the young men wandered about the market-places like shadows, all swelled with famine, and fell down dead wheresoever their misery seized them” (Wars 6, chap. 12/3).

The heading for Wars 6, Chap. 4 reads:

“WHEN THE BANKS WERE COMPLETED, AND THE BATTERING-RAMS BROUGHT, AND COULD DO NOTHING, TITUS GAVE ORDERS TO SET FIRE TO THE GATES OF THE TEMPLE; IN NO LONG TIME AFTER WHICH THE HOLY HOUSE ITSELF WAS BURNED DOWN, EVEN AGAINST HIS CONSENT.”

So chapter 5 gives us a glimpse of the burning of the temple:

“WHILE the holy house was on fire, everything was plundered that came to hand, and ten thousand of those that were caught were slain; nor was there a commiseration of any age, or any reverence of gravity; but children, and old men, and profane persons, and priests, were all slain in the same manner; so that this war went round all sorts of men, and brought them to destruction, and as well those that made supplication for their lives, as those that defended themselves by fighting. The flame was also carried a long way, and made an echo, together with the groans of those that were slain; and because this hill was high, and the works at the temple were very great, one would have thought that the whole city had been on fire.”

Josephus continues (Book 6/8/5):

“But when they went in numbers into the lanes of the city with their swords drawn, they slew those whom they overtook without mercy, and set fire to the houses whither the Jews were fled, and burnt every soul in them, and laid waste a great many of the rest; and when they were come to the houses to plunder them, they found in them entire families of dead men, and the upper rooms full of dead corpses, that is of such as died by the famine; they then stood in a horror at this sight, and went out without touching any thing. But although they had this commiseration for such as were destroyed in that manner, yet had they not the same for those that were still alive, but they ran every one through whom they met with, and obstructed the

The Acts of the Apostles, written by Luke to Theophilus, records many appeals that were made to the leaders and to the people. Peter declared:

“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him” (Acts 5:30-32).

Stephen was another witness whose wisdom and spirit the council was not able to resist. He confronted them with the Truth:

“Ye stiffecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it” (ch. 7:51-53).

This incident made a deep impression upon Saul, who became known as Paul. He took the message of salvation to both Jews and Gentiles—even to the rulers of the Gentiles. The testimony of Paul before Felix who had “more perfect knowledge of that way,” is a case to the point, for in Acts 24:24-25 Luke records:

“And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Gentile, Paul reasoned with Felix as concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”

The judgment to come of which Paul reasoned with Felix would certainly have involved the coming events of AD 70. That was the judgment impending at the time—and as Felix was married to a Jewess, he would soon see the import of Paul’s reasoning—“righteousness, temperance (self-control) and the coming crisis.” The context of the times demands that this view be taken into account—whatever other application may be made of it.

Paul was told by an angel that “thou must be brought before Caesar” (Acts 27:24), so the testimony to the Truth would have commenced with John Baptist (Luke 3:1-2), would have been delivered to the rulers of Judea, and then to Roman officials—and finally to Caesar: They were all served notice and were informed of the judgment that was coming to pass. Thus Paul wrote to the brethren at Ephesus:
Discovering Jerusalem
by Nahman Avigad (1983)—A book worth reading

EXTRACT FROM NAHMAN AVIGAD

The picture was clear to any trained eye. There was only one phase of occupation, and its composition was unambiguous: the building had been destroyed by fire, and the walls and ceiling had collapsed along with the burning beams, sealing over the various objects in the rooms. When did this occur? The pottery indicated that it was sometime in the 1st century A.D.

This stirred our imagination. Was the destruction of this building, so close to the Temple Enclosure, connected with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70? We seemed to have before us a unique picture—of a house sacked by the Roman legions, burying all the household effects and leaving everything just as it had been, undisturbed by later activities. I could not call to mind any similar discovery in earlier excavations in Jerusalem...

Among the debris filling the rooms was a mixture of ash and soot, and large quantities of charred wood.

A Huge Fire

Soot reigned over all, clinging to everything. It covered the plastered walls, and even the faces of our workmen turned black. There was no doubt that the fire had rampaged here, apparently fed by some highly inflammable material contained in the rooms. It may well have been some oil, which would account for the abundance of soot. The traces were so vivid that one could almost feel the heat and the smell of the fire. So at least some of our visitors maintained.

When we reached the floor level, objects began appearing, scattered about or in heaps: pottery, stone vessels, broken glass, iron nails, and the like. The known types of pottery gave us a general dating in the 1st century A.D. for the destruction of the building. But the many coins strewn over the floors—partly of the Roman Procurators of Judea and mostly from the First Jewish Revolt against Rome—permitted a more precise dating. The coins of the revolt bear the legends “Year Two/The Freedom of Zion,” “Year Three/The Freedom of Zion,” and “Year Four/The Redemption of Zion.” The latest of them, of the fourth year of the revolt, are from A.D. 69.

The Burning of the City

It was now quite clear that this building was razed by the Romans in 70 ce, during the destruction of Jerusalem. For the first time in the history of excavations in the city, vivid and clear archaeological evidence of the burning of the city had come to light. We refrained from publicizing this fact immediately, in order to keep from being disturbed in our work by visitors. But word of the discovery soon spread and people began thronging to the site to see the finds on the spot. The already considerable excitement upon seeing the scorched objects being recovered from the ashes increased with the discovery of a spear leaning against the corner of a room, and it reached a crescendo when the bones of a human arm were revealed.

Beyond the image of the destruction, each of us pictured in his mind the scene so vividly described by Josephus; the Roman soldiers spreading out over the upper City, looting and setting the houses ablaze as they slaughtered all in their path. The owner of this house, or one of its inhabitants, had managed to prepare his spear; another member of the household did not manage to escape from the house, and died in the flames. The tangible evidence, surprising in its freshness and shocking in its realism, gave us the feeling that it had all happened only yesterday.
“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Eph. 6:10-15).

But we know that many in Ephesus would fail, seeking leadership roles and control of the flock—Acts 20:29-30.

**Conquerors Conquered!**

The Roman power had overwhelmed and conquered Judea under the command of Titus—the well-known date is AD 70—but long before that Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had removed the ancient kingdom of Judah—so we see a pattern repeated. In the earlier overthrow of the Jews God had declared through the prophet Jeremiah that the king of Babylon would only dominate the nations for a time. Jeremiah 27:6-7 says (Quoting from the New King James Version for clarity);

“And now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant; and the beasts of the field I have also given him to serve him. So all nations shall serve him and his son and his son’s son, until the time of his land comes: and then many nations and great kings shall make him serve them.”

The principle would also apply to the Roman power in due course. The pagan constitution of Rome would be taken out of the way by Constantine, and he would set up a new system: Christian (or rather Catholic) Rome. This development was foretold in 2 Thessalonians ch. 2.

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped: so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming” (Verses 3-8).

The sense of this passage becomes clearer if we compare another version—the RV, NKJV or RSV can all be helpful. The power that was restraining the development of Christianity—and therefore the Christian apostasy—was the pagan Roman authority. It is the historian Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) who details the Christian apostasy.

Around AD 193, says Edward Gibbon (above), “the praetorian bands, whose licentious fury was the first symptom and cause of the decline of the Roman empire” murdered the emperor Pertinax (below).

“Conquerors Conquered!”

Thus as the pagan government and religion of Rome declined, the power of a pseudo Christianity continued to grow until its champion—Constantine the Great—established “Christendom.” As one historian has described it:

“The conversion of Constantine is generally hailed as the final victory of the new faith. It may equally be regarded as the triumph of totalitarianism.

“The Church no doubt won not only tolerance and relief from persecution, but also wealth and the right to persecute. The price was clerical endorsement of the existing order on earth. The Emperor is indeed no longer ‘Master and God’, but he has become the ‘Orthodox and Apostolic Emperor’. His rule was an earthly counterpart and representative of the Sovereignty of the Divine Word. In the ‘Sacred Palace’ at Istanbul the ‘Divine household’ abode and issued ‘Celestial Commands’” (Gordon Childe: *What Happened in History* Penguin edtn. 1964).

**The Great Whore**

The Christian apostasy that developed into the eastern orthodox church of
Constantine (above) defeated pagan Rome at the Battle of Milvian bridge (top left). Rome was later sacked by Barbarians (below & left).
Byzantium—re-named Constantinople—had its counterpart in the western catholic church of Rome. Gibbon’s description is revealing:

“The sublime and simple theology of the primitive Christians was gradually corrupted; and the MONARCHY of heaven, already clouded by metaphysical subtleties, was degraded by the introduction of a popular mythology which tended to restore the reign of polytheism. “

“As the objects of religion were gradually reduced to the standard of the imagination, the rites and ceremonies were introduced that seemed most powerfully to affect the senses of the vulgar. If, in the beginning of the fifth century, Tertullian, or Lactantius, had been suddenly raised from the dead, to assist at the festival of some popular saint or martyr, they would have gazed with astonishment and indignation on the profane spectacle which had succeeded to the pure and spiritual worship of a Christian congregation. As soon as the doors of the church were thrown open, they must have been offended by the smoke of incense, the perfume of flowers, and the glare of lamps and tapers, which diffused, at noon-day, a gaudy, superfluous, and, in their opinion, a sacrilegious light. If they approached the balustrade of the altar, they made their way through the prostrate crowd, consisting, for the most part, of strangers and pilgrims, who resorted to the city on the vigil of the feast; and who already felt the strong intoxication of fanaticism, and, perhaps of wine. Their devout kisses were imprinted on the walls and pavement of the sacred edifice; and their fervent prayers were directed, whatever might be the language of their church, to the bones, the blood, or the ashes of the saint, which were usually concealed, by a linen or silken veil, from the eyes of the vulgar. The Christians frequented the tombs of the martyrs, in the hope of obtaining, from their powerful intercession, every sort of spiritual, but more especially of temporal, blessings.”

“... but it must ingenuously be confessed” says Gibbon, “that the ministers of the catholic church imitated the profane model which they were impatient to destroy. The most respectable bishops had persuaded themselves that the ignorant rustics would more cheerfully renounce the superstitions of Paganism, if they found some resemblance, some compensation, in the

Prayers and offerings are directed to the mummified body of Pius X which lies in a glass coffin in St. Peter’s Church in Rome—A resemblance of paganism!
bosom of Christianity. The religion of Constantine achieved, in less than a century, the final conquest of the Roman empire; but the victors themselves were insensibly subdued by the arts of their vanquished rivals.

This truly is ‘the whore of Babylon.’ What a system! If Israel and Judah were judged for their apostasy and waywardness, what could we think of this system which has made a mockery of the teachings of Jesus and his apostles.

In Romans chapter 11 the apostle to the Gentiles warned, “For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off” (Verses 21-22).

The Roman and orthodox Churches, together with their “daughters” are not Christian and should never be thought of as being in any way associated with the religion of Christ. They are imposters and blasphemers who believe lies and practice idolatry “whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

Infested Europe

The Bible—the complete Bible—Old and New Testaments, has been circulating in Europe for some 2,000 years. It has been a witness and has provided documentary evidence testifying to “the goodness and severity of God” (Rom. 11:22) during many centuries. In addition to that there has been a living witness in small communities who have upheld the Truth of the Bible, even in the face of brutal persecution and death.

The Apocalypse (the book of Revelation) is sometimes considered by some to be beyond the normal scope of Bible study, but it is in fact (like the book of Daniel) a communication in symbolic terms. When the New Testament closed with the epistles of John the early (pure) Christian communities were spreading into Europe, but there was still some 2,000 years of history in the future. The Revelation was given as a guiding light to all those who would understand the Truth during the long dark centuries. It is perfectly reasonable to expect that the long years of waiting would be provided for—and so the Apocalypse is concerned largely with the future development of Christ’s witnesses in Europe as they waited for the kingdom to be restored again to Israel.

It is Jesus who points out a certain city in Revelation 17:18, and there is only one possible answer as to its identity. This was referred to by the writer and lecturer Robert Roberts in 1897 when he said:

“Now, no man, understanding the Apocalypse, is in danger of being trapped by Rome; all others are...

“Rome has been the destroyer of God’s friends from the beginning, destroying the Christ—Roman nails that went through His hands; by Roman authority He was crucified, dishonoured and abhorred of all men; and Rome was the killer of all the apostles, and all the unnumbered crowds of believers that have since been stewed to perdition in Roman dungeons and on Roman scaffolds and roasted in Roman fires—astonishing that people have forgotten all this! They would not forget if they were daily readers of the Bible.”

Robert Roberts then said that the Revelation “proceeds to indicate certain other things that would come as tokens of the approach of the doom from the Lord of glory, and the Destroyer of all churches. That is a new title in reference to Christ, “the Destroyer of churches”; but it is a fact. He is the Great Iconoclast.”

That is the meaning of Revelation 17:1, “And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”

The end of the Roman power is depicted in Revelation 18:20-21, “Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her. And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.”

“And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth” (V. 24).
When Dr. Steven Collins says “I think I have found Sodom!” (Biblical Archaeology Review March/April 2013), he is introducing us to a controversy that many in today’s world will dismiss as being irrelevant and unworthy of their serious consideration. He is suggesting of course that the Biblical accounts and warnings of Divine judgment and fiery destruction of the wicked, could just be true! But it is easy to dismiss and ridicule a matter that you have not examined; it might also be very foolish. It seems that this was the case when Lot tried to warn his relatives about the impending judgment upon the cities of the plain:

“And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law” (Genesis 19:14).

There have been those like the late journalist, writer and broadcaster Magnus Magnuson, who will insist that the story of Sodom and Gomorrah is a fictitious myth. Magnuson wrote:

“Despite strenuous efforts by archaeologists and romantics alike, no trace at all has ever been found of the biblical cities of the Vale of Siddim, either in the ground or under the waters of the Dead Sea. Sodom and Gomorrah and Lot’s wife in her pillar of salt remain for ever petrified in the realm of legend” (B.B.C. Archaeology of the Bible Lands).

If Sodom is only a legend, then it isn’t the only one of course. The apostle Peter refers to the great flood which destroyed “the world that then was” (2 Peter ch. 3), but he says that certain scoffers were willingly ignorant of that event. In other words they chose not to know. To them it was no more than an old fable. That is what many think of Sodom and Gomorrah. Jesus puts these two events in the same category and he obviously believed that these things actually happened. His words were:

“And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until
the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed” (Luke 17:26-30).

Jesus used the incidents as the basis for a sober lesson, and so also did Jude in his epistle (verse 7).

“Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

Jude is telling us that it was an immoral society, so much so that even the daughters of Lot were willing to engage in incest when it suited their desire for children.

**How Time Tells!**

There was a time when it was said that the ancient city of Babylon was a legend—that is until the city was discovered under the sands of the Middle East. It then became fashionable to deny the existence of King Nebuchadnezzar—a mythical king of Bible legend. But then they found bricks with his name clearly visible on them—one of them is on display in the British Museum in London.

Having dropped that brick, scholars were still determined to discredit the Bible. In the mid-nineteenth century the book of Daniel was put into the critics den and especially the account of Daniel chapter 5 about King Belshazzar. A leading scholar of the time, Dean Farrar (1831-1903) confidently declared that “there was no King Belshazzar.” A German critic, Ferdinand Hitzig, said in 1850 “Belshazzar was obviously a figment of the author’s imagination.” Then (whoops!) someone bothered to decipher and read a clay cylinder that had been stored for some years in the basement of the British Museum. Guess whose name was on the cylinder?—Belshazzar had existed after all! It pays to be cautious when arguing from archaeological silence—you never know what will turn up next!

Was “Belshazzar” another case of willing ignorance? A choice not to believe?

**Sodom Sidelined**

On January 9th, 1977 The Sunday Telegraph reported the discovery of thousands of clay tablets in northern Syria. The paper said: “One tablet proved that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah really existed and met a tragic end.”

Further, in December 1978 the National Geographic magazine ran an article under the heading: “Ebla Splendor of an Unknown Empire!” The article referred to the work of epigraphist Giovanni Pettinato (who died in May 2011) and who said that the tablets mentioned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (page 733). The discovery and the claims that were made created a storm—not just because of the reference to Sodom, but also because the early date of the Ebla tablets completely undermined basic textual theories—the “Documentary Hypothesis,” also called the Developmental Hypothesis— are advanced to explain the origins of the Old Testament.

The implication of this evidence was so far reaching that it would have demolished virtually the entire edifice built up by modern scholarship and upon which orthodox belief patterns are based. The position adopted and popularized by Magnus Magnusson was threatened with annihilation! Reputations were at stake!

Professor David Freedman editor of The Biblical Archaeologist referred to the Ebla Tablets saying:

“This record precedes the great catastrophe (i.e. of Sodom) which many scholars, especially of more recent vintage, have regarded as entirely fictional.” A heated debate ensued over the tablets and over the work of Giovanni Pettinato who was ultimately forced to resign. The whole debate became shrouded in a scholastic fog, and one suspects that there were political reasons for this. Dr. Clifford Wilson in his book Ebla Tablets; Secrets of a Forgotten City says:

“After the initial claims to the early Bible records, there has been a chorus of voices raised to suggest that there should be more caution. It is entirely possible that this is more politic than scholarly as such, and Professor Freedman has been the subject of attack as to his supposed overreadiness to relate the finds to the early Bible records.”

The scholars directly concerned with the discovery—Pettinato, Matthiae, and Dahood—then attempted to minimize the relevance of the Ebla texts to the Scriptures—and it has been suggested that this was due to pressure from various sources, including the Syrian Government. Wilson quotes Biblical Archaeology Review for Sept/Oct 1978, “The Syrian government, however, would like to
play down, if not suppress this (biblical) aspect of the tablets.” The Syrians, apparently, did not want any evidence that might be construed as support for Israel’s ancient claim to the land of Palestine.

**Sodom actually Found?**

If Dr. Collins has found Sodom, he faces the challenge of placing his evidence for it before an unbelieving, sceptical and (as will be seen) hostile world. The world in general will choose not to know about it. But for those who are willing to lay aside their prejudice Dr. Collins has provided solid evidence and reason to cast doubts aside. Readers of his book will find it somewhat technical in parts, especially if they have scant knowledge of archaeology—as is the case with this present writer. But that being understood, there is sufficient information here that can be clearly understood, especially by those who engage in regular personal Bible study.

The evidence given in this book for the geographical location for Sodom is Bible-based and it seems, reasonably conclusive. Dr. Collins understands Sodom and the cities of the plain as having been located just north of the Dead Sea (and not at its southern end as has been assumed by many).

The key passage is found in Genesis 13:10.

> “And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.”

The KJV margin, RV margin offers the word “circle” instead of plain. Strong (3603) informs us that the Hebrew word is kikkar meaning a circle. Dr. Collins says in his book “The kikkar of the Jordan, the breadbasket of the Jordan valley, lies just north of the Dead Sea.”

As Genesis chapter 13 makes clear, when “Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld the plain (kikkar) of Jordan, that it was well watered every where” he was in the region of Bethel and Hai, and to get from there to the kikkar of the Jordan we are told that “Lot journeyed east” (verse 11). The photograph of the Jordan kikkar (page 26) is taken from the Bethel Hai location and would have been Lot’s view of the kikkar of the Jordan. Then we see this connection made:

“And though we don’t yet have writings from this metropolis, we know from thousands of clay cuneiform tablets found in a similar city, Ebla in northern Syria, all about the detailed workings of an Early Bronze Age “merchant empire” such as Sodom certainly was.

“Soon the Levant, the biblical land of Canaan, had products that faraway countries such as king Sargon’s empire of Akkad and the pyramid builders of Egypt prized: the oil from its olive trees and the wine from its vineyards. International trade began. And Sodom sat at the intersection of international trade routes.”

**A Terrible Destruction**

Here in the kikkar of Jordan, in the right place geographically and at the right time (the time of Abraham) had been a thriving and prosperous city—a city that had been suddenly destroyed. In layers of ash Dr. Collins found human remains:

“What we see are bodies wrenched around in a facedown position, as if they were thrown down in the process of turning
away from something—in an unconscious reaction, as if protecting themselves.

“Some of their joints are hyperextended or twisted apart unnaturally, not in any normal or burial position. One is charred off at mid-femur. Their condition at death attests to “extreme trauma.” This is terminology from our osteologists as they observed and documented the condition of the bones in situ...

“The destruction matrix lay undisturbed since the event that caused it. This is the terminal destruction layer—the big, bad one that ended the life of the city and the entire surrounding area for the next six or seven centuries.

“All the materials in the matrix were laid down together with the humans in the mix, an unspeakable concrete. It was violent, probably instantaneous.

“All these human remains, these skeletons, aren’t from just any layer in the dig. They’re from MB2, the time of Abraham. They’re surrounded by a thick layer of architectural debris—parts of buildings—and voluminous, bitter ash.

“This is a grisly scene. It is destruction, literally, of biblical proportions. And the meaning of this find can’t be casually brushed aside: this is quite possibly but one death scene, with bodies and body parts still examinable, for an event described in Scripture.”

This book provides the reader with satisfying detail and brings him to experience some of the drama connected with “discovering the city of Sodom.” Its publication now is also timely, just when churches and governments are giving sodomy their blessing. If the civilization of Sodom ended in an almighty fireball—and there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that it did, then we must ask where is society today heading?

As we are brought face to face with the mangled bones and destruction at Tall-el-Hammam, and as we consider the molten glass-like specimens that were produced by the fiery catastrophe that struck the kikkar, it is surely time to listen again to the message of the Bible—for it is no “legend;” it is Truth!

Revelation 11:8 speaks of a society that “spiritually is called Sodom...” and is it not apparent in the world today? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

The book reviewed here, and published in 2013 by Howard Books, has many useful maps and charts. It is well illustrated with black and white photographs showing the discoveries that have been made.

“Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven” Genesis 19:24

“Come out from among them and be ye separate”

Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD: And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace. And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.
THE DESTRUCTION THE CITIES OF THE PLAIN—Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim—is proverbial. The events described in Genesis 19 are so well-known that anyone with a minimum knowledge of the Bible is familiar with the dreadful destruction of fire and brimstone, which God brought on these “sin cities.” Paintings have been made of Sodom’s overthrow, books written, and movies made.

When, in 2009, Dr. Steven Collins asked me to help him with the recording of the architectural remains of a site that he believed to be Sodom, I was very sceptical about the possibility of finding any vestiges of this city of infamy. A key-verse in the New Testament, Jude 7, indicated that the destruction of the Cities of the Plain was an example of annihilation by eternal fire. So—my reasoning went—how could one expect to find any traces of them?

There was no shortage of theories as to the location of these cities, but in my view, none of them held water, particularly the one that associated their destruction with the formation of the Dead Sea! It is clear from the text of Genesis 14, where “slimepits” or sink holes are mentioned, that the Dead Sea already existed before the destruction of these cities that was witnessed by Abraham from afar. These sink holes appear when the water level of the Dead Sea is very low, as it is today. These areas, where the ground has collapsed, were seen for the first time in 2009 and they are getting larger every year.

Geological research has shown that today’s low level of the Dead Sea is comparable with what it was at the time of Abraham. Most of these sink holes are found in the area of Qumran, the likely location of the Vale of Siddim. It was in similar sink holes that the kings of the Cities of the Plain fell.

Much of nineteenth Century scholarship put these cities to the northeast of the Dead Sea, while later researchers proposed a southern or eastern location. Bab edh-Dhra and Numeira are sites on the east side of the Dead Sea that have tentatively been identified.
with Sodom and Gomorrah, although the communities that lived in these sites, excavated in the 60s and 70s, never existed simultaneously. And the search goes on!

Even as recently as 2011, a Russian-Jordanian team mooted a proposal to search the bottom of the Dead Sea with a submarine for these doomed cities!

Hearing Dr. Collins’ explanation of Genesis 13:1-12 and visiting the site of Tall el-Hammam forced me to rethink the whole question of the location of Sodom and Gomorrah. This chapter makes it quite clear that the Cities of the Plain, the Cities of the Kikkar—the vast circular expanse at the southern end of the River Jordan—must have been located east of Bethel/Ai, i.e. northeast of the Dead Sea. The eastern part of the Kikkar can clearly be seen from this location.

As the Jordan Valley has long been a military zone, archaeological research has been severely restricted up to a few years ago. After the signing of the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan in 1994, Dr. Collins used this newly created opportunity to explore the Kikkar and search for archaeological sites that may correspond to the Biblical description of the Cities of the Plain. What he found was astounding! In this archaeological terra incognita, more than a dozen Bronze Age sites were identified, the largest of which, Tall el-Hammam, is being excavated by Dr. Collins and his team.
Not only is Tall el-Hammam one of the largest Bronze Age sites in the whole of the Middle East, but nowhere else have I seen such a thick layer of destruction with collapsed walls, burnt debris and dramatic skeletal remains, all inside a meter thick layer of ash. The destruction of this ancient city was complete, and interestingly, other adjacent Bronze Age sites have a similar archaeological profile, showing that they suffered a similar fate.

After this total overthrow in the Middle Bronze Age, Tall el-Hammam was never rebuilt as a city, although there is evidence of later building activities during the Iron Age. The archaeological remains therefore are not buried beneath many layers of civilisation, but were found immediately below the surface. This year, in 2012, the remains of a large gate were uncovered. As this book describes so poignantly, finding the Gate of Sodom, described in Genesis 19.1, was at the top of Dr. Collins’ wish list. Undoubtedly, the main and only gate of Tall el-Hammam has been found. If indeed Tall el-Hammam is Sodom, then this is the place where: “Lot sat in the gate.”

Dr. Collins is well aware of the difficulties involved in identifying this site with Sodom. Many will agree with the location, but the date of the final destruction is still problematic. Typically, Dr. Collins does not shrink to deal with this problem and confronts it with his characteristic forthrightness. He believes that his site is in the right place and in the right time. As I see it, the location of Tall el-Hammam corresponds indeed to the Biblical location of Sodom. The identification of Tall el-Hammam with Sodom ticks all the required boxes, but one, the time of its destruction. Instead of rejecting the identification of this singular site with Sodom on this point only, I suggest that this unticked box of the accepted chronology needs closer examination.

This book is the intriguing account of Dr. Collins’ personal research into the location of the Cities of the Kikkar, particularly that of Sodom. Even if you still have some reservations, as I have, it is a compelling story of the discovery of a site that, more than any other, corresponds to that in which the cataclysm described in the early chapters of Genesis took place.

The above is reproduced from the foreword, written by Leen Ritmeyer to Dr. Steven Collins’ book Discovering the City of Sodom published by Howard Books, 2013.

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The Middle East in Turmoil as both Syria and Egypt become increasingly unstable.

By Don Pearce RUGBY, U.K.

Here we are half way through another year! One item that has consistently been hitting the headlines for many, many months has been the situation in Syria. The civil war continues to result in a mounting death toll, now put at over 100,000, with millions having fled their homes, many living in make-shift camps over the Syrian borders.

The conflict is pitching the great powers against each other. Russia continues to support Syria whilst America and Britain are giving their support to the “rebels.” Once again it is focusing the world’s attention on the Middle East and highlights that the main cause of conflict here does not centre around Israel and the Palestinians but on the Arab dictators.

Syria is important in Bible prophecy as this was part of the territory of Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. She will be part of the latter-day King of the North, and the soon-to-stand-on-its-feet Nebuchadnezzar’s image and as such forms part of the prophetic jigsaw, whose pieces are steadily dropping into place.

Russia’s Support of Assad

Whoever might take Assad’s place, if he fell, could be much worse. The anti-Assad fighters are a mix of Sunni fighters with Al-Qaida militants. Neither Putin nor Israel want to see Al-Qaida gaining a foothold in this region. Having suffered from the Chechnya militants who are mainly Sunni, neither does Putin want these in power. Another reason that Russia wants to retain Assad in power is that he allows Russia the use of the Tartus port, at the moment Russia’s only relatively deep-water port in the Mediterranean. She is looking at other sites in the Eastern Mediterranean regions in case they lose control of Tartus, but more of that later.

A third reason revolves around energy. Putin is heavily reliant on Gazprom’s growth in the energy markets as a source of government tax revenue as we saw in the previous update and Russia eyes Syria as a useful potential source of energy.

With the mounting death toll in Syria, the West wants to intervene, but is fearful of the consequences. Russia threatens to supply her superior air defence system—the S300—to Assad, if the West steps up their support for the opposition. This would be a game changer, as probably only Israel has the ability to thwart this multi-missile system.

President Obama has shown America’s weakness by his unwillingness to get American troops involved. In spite of
promises to help the “rebels.” He seems unwilling to commit to implementing a no-fly zone or supplying weapons.

After months of losses, the tide has turned in Assad’s favour as Hezbollah throw in their lot with Assad’s men, giving them a welcome boost in manpower and firepower. There are widespread reports that chemical weapons have been used on a small scale. In spite of this being one of Obama’s “red lines,” President Assad has tested the waters and found Obama’s threats ring hollow. At the end of June there were reports that Russia had evacuated all but essential Israeli troops out of Syria through the Tartus Port. Is Russia expecting a greater use of chemical weapons as the battle for the retaking of Aleppo gets ever closer and is taking the precaution of putting her citizens out of harm’s way?

Longer term many see the probable outcome will be that Syria fragments into 3 areas, with Assad, Al-Qaida and the Sunnis taking their share. This would leave a weakened Syria, ready for the latter-day Gog to swallow her up on his move southward.

It is an interesting situation for Israel. Hezbollah’s efforts are being directed to supporting Assad and much of her vast arsenal of weapons stocked for use against Israel, is now being redirected against the opposition forces. At the same time Hamas is weakening. Once good friends with Hezbollah, they have fallen out, and Hamas finds herself with few friends. With a further launch of rockets against Israel thought to be by a rival group seeking to gain power in Gaza, there is talk of Israel going back into Gaza to continue where she left off in the 8-day conflict Operation Pillar of Cloud. Egypt continues to shut down smuggling tunnels linking Gaza to Egypt and the crossing at Rafah has been severely curtailed with long waiting times for those wanting to cross the border. Not that this receives anywhere near the same world press attention as when Israel closes a crossing, or dismantles a tunnel! Hamas face being very isolated as Egypt once more faces the uncertainty of rioters filling Egypt’s squares and demanding President Hosni’s resignation. Egypt’s military have no wish for Hamas to become involved in the power struggles and seem to be taking steps to keep them corralled within Gaza by sending tanks to the Gaza border.

A ring of steel

Israel is pushing ahead to define her borders with advanced security fencing. The fencing around the so-called “West Bank” has been underway for many years. This security fence is often described as a wall in the western press, although only some 4% consists of concrete walling. The concrete wall parts have only been installed where there has been a long history of weapons being fired at Israeli vehicles on the other side of the barrier. It has proved very successful in reducing terrorist attacks, so much so that its completion has been slowed right down, as the most critical areas have been completed. A further 30% remains to be built to finish it.

Israel has long had a substantial fence on her northern border with Lebanon which is constantly patrolled. However her fence on her eastern border with Syria has sections that were of such a poor quality that it is said that a goat would be capable of jumping over it! Faced with the mounting threat of trouble from Syria and Lebanon, the Israeli government has pushed ahead with replacing the old fence with a high-tech “smart” fence, which is due to be completed by the end of the year.

In the south, the Gaza Strip border has long been fenced and in 2011 Israel commenced fencing the Egyptian border across Sinai which is now virtually sealed off with a “smart” fence. What is now being planned is to build a fence south of the Dead Sea all the way to Eilat. This would complete the encirclement of Israel’s land border with sophisticated fencing. Security cameras would pick up any attempts to cross Israel’s borders illegally and direct patrols to incursion threats.

Such a fence is certainly proving effective and has boosted Israel’s security. It cannot of course prevent rockets from being fired over them. It is a far cry from the security that God will provide in the Kingdom Age when all nations will live in harmony and weapons of war will be turned into agricultural implements. This time has not yet come, and Israel takes steps to implement her own defences, and feels confident in the many measures she is taking to be secure. We know from scripture that this is misplaced; they will not save her from her enemies in the time of her final trials. She has to be humbled so that she realises that there is only one true source of power.

Consider these verses in Isaiah chapter 2 which must be speaking of the time just prior to their saving at the hands of Christ. As is so typical of Bible prophecies it opens with a wonderful Kingdom picture in the first 5 verses. The rest of the chapter explains how we arrive at this state, and so we see these verses as describing the situation prior to this change.

“Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers. Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots: Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made” (Isaiah 2:6-8).

Here is a picture we recognise of modern, prosperous Israel, with the modern equivalent of war horses and chariots, trusting in what they have designed and made, rather in their God. Their defensive weapons are their idols that they look to save them. They are associating with the east—Sheba and Dedan—and please themselves with children of strangers, people not of their nation. This phrase is translated in other versions as: are friends with; ally
cutting off of the gas imports from Egypt following numerous attacks on the pipeline. Israel is now more than self-sufficient, with Tamar expected to be able to deliver 7.5bnM3 of gas a year and capable of eventually being increased by another 50%. Israel’s gas consumption is rising rapidly and is set to expand from its present figure of 7bnM3 to double this in the next 10 years, as it is cheaper and cleaner than oil. A major infrastructure project is underway to increase the gas distribution network throughout Israel. The Israeli government has come to a decision to limit the amount of gas she allows to be exported. It is a fine balancing act—does one just extract what one needs, leaving the rest in the ground as a long-term continuing source of energy, or does one extract more gas and export it to provide short-term revenues? Gas wells are not inexhaustible. The Mari-B field has lasted about 8 years and is virtually exhausted. The problem is that gas wells cost enormous sums to explore, drill and develop. Most governments, Israeli included, leave all this to private companies to fund out of potential future revenues. These exploration companies are not interested in extracting the minimum amount of gas (or oil) to ensure continuity of supply over decades. This won’t give them the profits that they need and expect. So the amount that the government allows to be exported is of vital interest. The Israeli government set up an advisory panel, the Zemach Committee, in October 2011 to give their assessment of what was practical. They gave their findings in September 2012, recommending that larger fields (over 200bnM3) such as Tamar and Leviathan should be allowed to export 50% of the gas, medium fields (over 100bnM3) 40% and small fields (over 25bnM3) 25%. This would allow Israel to retain 450bnM3 for its own consumption, based on current discoveries. This was in line with the exploratory companies’ expectations and so development work proceeded. The Israeli government has been mulling this report for many months, held up in part over the new elections and the long time to form a new government. It has only in June 2013 given its ruling which reduces the amounts for exporting considerably; larger fields can only export 40% and 540bnM3 is to be retained for domestic consumption. This has caused concerns regarding the development of the Leviathan field which is due to be developed at enormous costs.

“The U.S.-Israeli consortium developing Israel’s Leviathan natural gas field estimates it will cost $4.5 billion to develop the offshore well, not including infrastructure for exports” (Reuters 05-Jun-13).

The development of LNG (Liquid Natural Gas) facilities for gas exports could easily double that figure. Woodside Petroleum who had agreed to take a 30% stake in the consortium developing Leviathan is currently assessing the changed situation. Probably Leviathan is so big that the prize will be worthwhile. How this will affect the Gazprom deal with the export of gas from Tamar also awaits a decision by Gazprom. Again Russia is keen to have a foothold in the Israeli finds and so the deal will probably go ahead.

Israel and Jordan

Israel is looking to supply gas to Jordan; who also were very dependent on Egyptian gas and it makes good sense to extend pipelines to Jordan.

“Connecting Israel’s emerging gas grid to Jordan—especially in the south—is a relatively inexpensive and simple endeavour.”

“Yet the potential supply of Israeli gas at a rate of 2-3bnM3 per annum would completely negate Amman’s vulnerability and stymie Iran’s potential inroad. It appears that talks have already been underway to have Israel’s gas exported to Jordan. Two Israeli papers, Ha’aretz and Globes, reported in February 2013 that partners in the Tamar gas field conducted secret talks to deliver gas through the Israeli gas pipeline which supplies gas from Yam Tethys (Mari-B) to Israel Chemicals’ Dead Sea Works plant in Sodom, and then extend the pipeline to reach potash works in Jordan. On February 17, 2013, the Jordanian Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources issued a statement confirming that contacts are currently underway between the Arab Potash Company and its counterpart in Israel through a U.S. company on the possibility of importing natural gas from the Dead Sea area” (Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs 04-Apr-13).

“A deal would offer Jordan a cheap energy source and relieve a painful energy crisis. Two years of supply shortages from Egypt’s pipeline to Jordan have spurred price increases, domestic unrest and has the government weighing brownouts. “It would also mark a major tightening of Israeli-Jordanian relations two decades after they signed a peace accord. But a deal with the Jewish state also risks exposing the monarchy to criticism in the Arab world over the normalization of ties” (Wall Street Journal 25-Jun-13).
Suez canal as a major European-Asian transit route. These officials see a cross-Israel natural gas pipeline as an additional anchor for transforming Israel into a major trans-ocean passage way connecting the Mediterranean and Red Seas and reasserting the Land of Israel as a major trade and transport route as an alternative to Suez. They view the development of the Eilat area, and Israel by extension, as Europe’s portal to Asia, thus enhancing the strategic value of Israel to the West.

“This expanding role of positioning Israel as the gateway to Asia from Europe will involve strategic challenges that will encourage Israel not only to reinforce its naval cooperation with the U.S. (and perhaps some European navies as well). It will also require Israel to establish and expand a Red Sea fleet with a blue water capability and significant convoy capabilities. This will become all the more important as U.S. naval power recedes globally over the next decade” (Jerusalem. Center for Public Affairs 04-Apr-13).

Is this an opening for Britain’s new “east of Suez” strategy to help Israel?

**Russia eyeing Cyprus bases**

“Russia appears to be inching closer to gaining a long-coveted military foothold in Cyprus, as the future of their naval port in Syria looks increasingly shaky.

“The past fortnight has seen a surge in diplomatic activity between Nicosia and Moscow over Russian requests for military use of the Andreas Papandreou airbase in Paphos and Limassol port” (Cyprus Mail 30-Jun-13).

Several Russian warships have called in at Limassol in recent weeks. Russia helped Cyprus with a loan last year and this year renegotiated the repayments to help Cyprus. There has long been a Russian interest in this island, not only as a holiday destination, but as a tax haven for rich Russians seeking to put their wealth out of reach of the Russian tax authorities!

Russia too has decided to re-establish a permanent Russian Mediterranean Fleet, as it had in the Soviet era.

“The navy’s Mediterranean presence, becoming permanent for first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union more than two decades ago, will be modelled on the Soviet fleet stationed in the region during the Cold War to balance U.S. deployment, according to the defense ministry. The force will draw on Russia’s Black Sea, Baltic and North Sea fleets” (Bloomberg 06-Jun-13).

The Russian navy had been in long decline, but under Mr Putin, Russia is aiming to rebuild her navy. Gone are the days when a country needed a large quantity of vessels to ensure supremacy, today’s ships are much more sophisticated and one ship can carry the firepower of many WWII warships. Russia is aiming however at building a large number of boats, each one takes several years construction.

“All blue prints for large warships left over from the Soviet Era have been scrapped and new design boards commissioned to design modern cruisers, destroyers and aircraft carriers along with full development of the carrier battle group concept which the Soviet Navy attempted but, largely failed to achieve before the Soviet collapse.

“These naval plans are the most ambitious Russia has embarked on since the end of the Cold War and time will tell whether they can actually be carried out” (Examiner.com 23-Mar-13).

The description in Daniel ch. 11:40 is of the Northern invader coming with many ships on the way to take Egypt and Israel, showing us that the latter-day invader is to have a strong naval presence. Also the more obscure prophecy of Balaam concludes with his vision of the time when:

“Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city” (Num. 24:19).

He sees a time of trouble for the world “And he took up his parable, and said, Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!” (Num. 24:23).

Amalek, the great enemy of Israel is to be destroyed.

“Amalek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever.”

At this time “ships shall come from the coast of Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber, and he also shall perish for ever” (Num. 24:24).

It would seem that Gog, as the latter-day Amalekite, launches his attack against the Iraq region (Asshur) from Cyprus (Chittim) implying that he has taken control of it and from there traverses Syria to reach Iraq. He also comes against Israel (Eber). His object is to have dominion and to rule this region, but his plans will be cut short by the one whom God has appointed—the offspring promised of Jacob’s line that has been promised the dominion by his Heavenly Father!

Israel too is building her links to Cyprus. **Delek, Noble Energy sign Cypriot LNG Plant MOU**

“Delek Group Ltd, and Noble Energy Inc. have signed a memorandum of understand with the Cypriot government to build a liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant at Vasilikos on the island’s southern coast. The companies are partners in Israeli offshore fields Tamar and Leviathan and in Cyprus’s Block 12.

“The companies’ objective is to reach a final agreement by the end of 2013 to establish a joint special-purpose vehicle which will seek investors for the €7.8 billion LNG plant. ‘On this basis, it is planned that the first LNG cargo would be delivered from the Vasilikos plant to international markets in late 2019, early 2020,’ said an official statement” (Globes 26-Jun-13).

The Aphrodite field in Cyprus’ economic zone is comparatively close to the Leviathan field and as both are being developed by the same consortium it makes sense to link them by pipeline to Cyprus. From here Cyprus could export onwards to Europe.

**Rioting in Egypt again**

Egypt had hoped that with the overthrow of President Mubarak she could rebuild to be a strong regional power. But the words of the prophet Ezekiel declared of Egypt that:

“IT shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations; for I will diminish them, which they shall no more rule over the nations” (Ezek. 29:15).

As we write these words Egypt is seeing a massive uprising of government protestors flooding the squares of the main cities, seeking that President Morsi, the leader they...
elected a year ago, should stand down. The numbers who have taken to the streets are considerably more than during the height of the Mubarak protests in early 2011.

“The demonstrations across the country were, by consensus estimates, 7 to 10 times larger than the biggest anti-Mubarak crowds in early 2011. They dwarfed street rebellions such other those in Iran in 1979 or Peking in 1989. Simply put, they were probably the largest political demonstration in human history” (Daniel Pipes 01-Jul-13).

The “clay” of the people is once again raising its voice. The Egyptians have seen their already shaky economy fall apart. Currency reserves have almost run out and living conditions have deteriorated sharply. At the moment the protestors have been well behaved. The army which holds the key to power has indicated that it supports the calls of the protestors for Morsi to go, indeed they have just issued an ultimatum; that the President starts a dialogue within 48 hours or the army will step in and impose a “political roadmap” on all parties. Later that day President Morsi rejected the call for his resignation, but 6 members of his cabinet handed in their resignations by the next day. The situation is tense.

Running through the midst of Egypt runs the Nile River and the Suez Canal. Both waterways are vital to her economy and both are under threat—the Nile from pressures from countries upstream and the Suez from terrorist attacks. Militants in Sinai have been testing missiles, some of which landed last week on the banks of the Suez Canal. Should shipping be attacked from Sinai, this could bring this vital passageway to the world’s shipping to a halt, causing chaos as ships would have to traverse round Africa. Would America intervene? Probably under Obama the answer would be no. Britain and France might join forces as Europe is more dependent upon the Suez than is America. As we hinted earlier, it would fit with Britain’s new East of Suez policy—David Cameron has indicated that troops no longer needed in Afghanistan should be deployed to the Middle East. We await developments with interest as from a scriptural perspective we have long looked for Britain to continue to play a role in Middle East affairs as she did in the past.

**Ethiopia challenges Egypt’s water Supplies**

“Under Britain’s direction in 1929, the waters of the Nile were allocated for the use of Sudan and Egypt where Britain was dependent upon the cotton grown in this region to supply her cotton mills. Sudan could extract 4bnM3 and Egypt 48bnM3 from the Nile each year. This was revised in 1959 when the river flow was more accurately measured. The River runs through 10 countries and Ethiopia, not then being a cotton growing area, wasn’t allocated any of the water at the time but is now demanding her share. Ethiopia’s population is rapidly growing and will soon match that of Egypt and overtake it. Ethiopia has completed 11 hydroelectric dams, four of which use water from the Blue Nile or its tributaries. Currently under construction is Africa’s largest reservoir whose power output is greater than all Ethiopia’s other dams put together! Now renamed the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, it is due for completion in 2018, although it is planned to start generating electricity before then. It too is on the Blue Nile, which is the largest source of the Nile’s water. The filling of this reservoir will affect the flow of water to Egypt, which is greatly alarmed. The reservoir will be so big that the losses through evaporation will be considerable. The precise impact of the dam on the downstream countries is not known. Egypt and Sudan fear a temporary reduction of water availability due to the filling of the dam and a permanent reduction because of evaporation from the reservoir. The reservoir volume is about equivalent to the annual flow of the Nile at the Sudanese-Egyptian border (65.5 billion cubic meter). This loss to downstream countries would most likely be spread over several years.” (Wikipedia Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam).

The upstream countries have signed a water distribution agreement among themselves. Egypt is threatening to go to war if the Nile flow is diminished. However, at the moment she is in no position to do this, nor is Ethiopia.

“Ethiopia, however, is not eager for war either, but it could be that it feels that the current crises battering Egypt are rendering its military threats empty, and that Cairo will have no choice but to accept the new distribution of the Nile’s water. Perhaps they are correct, perhaps not. “There is another matter to consider as well: If the Ethiopian initiative takes off, it will cause geopolitical aftershocks in the entire region that will shift the center of power from Egypt to Ethiopia, which will also have diplomatic consequences (My emphasis—DP).

“Israel also finds itself in a dilemma: The agreements and ties with Egypt are the foundation of its diplomatic and security policy, but its growing and strengthening ties with Ethiopia are also an important part of its considerations” (Israel Hayom 24-Jun-13).

Both America and Israel have links to Ethiopia as well as Egypt. Although the Peace Agreement which Israel and Egypt signed in 1979 has been a very cold one, it has not yet been torn up. Egypt still would prefer Israel as a sleeping peace partner rather than an enemy. Israel and Ethiopia have had diplomatic relations since 1992 with an embassy and an Ambassador in each other’s country. We know in the latter-days that Ethiopia and Libya will be working with Gog as he sweeps down to take Egypt and Israel (Ezek. 38:5).

**American spying Scandal upsets Europe**

We turn now to Europe and the growing tide of anti-American feeling as more details of the extent of America’s spying on Europe is revealed by the former U.S. spy agency contractor, Edward Snowden. Currently holed up at a Moscow airport he is desperately trying to find a country that will give him asylum. The US is equally desperately trying to muzzle his revealing any more damaging features of America’s intercepting of emails and phones as well as planting bugging devices in the Foreign Embassies of European countries in America. “US intelligence services are spying on the European Union mission in New York and its embassy in Washington, according to the latest top secret US National Security Agency documents leaked by the whistle-blower Edward Snowden.

“One document lists 38 embassies and missions, describing them as ‘targets.’ It details an extraordinary range of spying methods used against each target, from bugs implanted in electronic communications gear to taps into cables to the collection of transmissions with specialised antennae.

“Along with traditional ideological adversaries and sensitive Middle Eastern countries, the list of targets includes the EU missions and the French, Italian and Greek embassies, as well as a number of other American allies, including Japan, Mexico, South Korea, India and Turkey. The list in the September 2010 document does not mention the UK, Germany or other western European states.

“One of the bugging methods mentioned is codenamed Drompire, which, according to a 2007 document, is ‘implanted on the
Edward Snowden

Cryptofax at the EU embassy, DC—an apparent reference to a bug placed in a commercially available encrypted fax machine used at the mission. The NSA documents note the machine is used to send cables back to foreign affairs ministries in European capitals.

“The documents suggest the aim of the bugging exercise against the EU embassy in central Washington is to gather inside knowledge of policy disagreements on global issues and other rifts between member states” (The Guardian 30-Jun-13).

Shortly afterwards it was revealed that Germany was targeted and indeed seems to be a chief target according to an article in Der Spiegel as reported in EurActiv.com (02-Jul-13).

“The magazine followed up on Sunday with a report that the US agency taps half a billion phone calls, emails and text messages in Germany in a typical month, much more than any other European peer and similar to the data tapped in China or Iraq.”

Edward Snowden

The Institute for the Works of Religion as the Vatican Bank is properly called was founded in 1942 by absorbing the Administration of the Works of Religion which was set up in 1887. It is supposed to operate at arms-length from the Vatican and its role is to be a channel for donations from around the world and the funding of various “good works.” It has been associated with many scandals including the handling of Ustasha gold accumulated by Yugoslavia from the many Jews, gypsies and others it murdered in World War II, which was then smuggled out of the country to Rome and used to finance the escape of many wanted war criminals to South America. In the 1970’s and 80’s it was involved with money laundering1 for Sicilian Mafia groups. It was indicted for the spectacular $3.5 billion collapse of Banco Ambrosiano, one of the major post-war financial scandals, linked to Archbishop Marcinkus’ time in control and with the death of Roberto Calvi, the Banco Ambrosiano’s chairman who was found hanging from Blackfriars Bridge in London. In recent years it has been under further investigation for money laundering. In May 2012 its head, Ettore Gotti Tedeschi, was ejected from its governing board and is currently under investigation for money laundering. One of Benedict’s last acts as Pope was to appoint a German banker, Ernst von Freyberg, as President. In mid-June, Pope Francis appointed Monsignor Battista Mario Salvatore Ricca, as Secretary to the Board to have close control of the day to day running of the Bank. A few days later Francis set up a commission to investigate matters urgently.

“Pope Francis set up a special commission of inquiry on Wednesday to reform the Vatican bank, his boldest move yet to get to grips with an institution that has embarrassed the Catholic Church for decades.”

The high-powered, five-member panel, which includes four prelates and a female Harvard law professor, will report directly to him, bypassing the Vatican bureaucracy that itself has sometimes been hit by allegations of scandal and corruption” (Reuters 26-Jun-13).

It was swiftly followed by another scandal involving the attempted bringing in of $26 million from Switzerland in a private plane to avoid customs. The Italian authorities arrested Monsignor Nunzio Scarano, an accountant in another Vatican department that deals with financial administration, on suspicion of money laundering. He is popularly known as “Monsignor 500,” earned for his penchant for showing off a wallet full of 500 euro notes, each worth $650.

“It reads like the opening chapter of a Dan Brown thriller—a Catholic priest working inside the Vatican recruits a secret service agent and a shadowy financier to smuggle 20 million euros ($26 million) in cash from Switzerland to Italy aboard a private plane” (Christian Science Monitor 01-Jul-13).

This prompted the Bank director and his deputy to resign and Freyberg, its President, will serve as its interim director according to the BBC (01-Jul-13).

“The bank has assets of $7.1 billion under management and profits of 86.6 million euros ($114 million), used to support Catholic activities around the world. It does not lend money” (Reuters 26-Jun-13).

The U.K. Becomes a Shale Gas Player

This was today’s headline from a Stratfor report (02-Jul-13) that Britain instead of sitting on shale gas reserves of some 28bnM3 is now thought to have massive reserves of 1,800bnM3!

“If these estimates prove accurate, the United Kingdom would be among the world’s most promising shale gas producers outside North America.”

Not that all this would necessarily be recoverable, but it does suggest a bonanza far greater than North Sea oil!

How situations can change in a short period of time. Who would have thought at the beginning of this year that Assad would still be in power? That Egypt would be facing revolution? That there would be a new Pope and a Jesuit? That Britain, like Israel, might be at the start of an energy revolution?

How exciting it is to live at this end-time which is seeing the realignment of nations in preparation for the standing up of Nebuchadnezzar’s image on its iron-clay feet for a brief time in defiance of Israel’s God. Come quickly Lord Jesus and bring that time of blessing when Israel will be exalted and all righteous and the nations will acknowledge that Israel’s God is the only True and Living God.

Footnote

1. Money laundering is the process of concealing sources of money. Money which is evidently the proceeds of crime is referred to as “dirty” money, and money which has been “laundered” to appear legitimate is referred to as “clean” money (Wikipedia).
The New Testament has been labeled as being the root cause of the suffering and persecution of Jewish people over almost 2000 years. In Daniel Jonah Goldhagen’s book, “A Moral Reckoning. The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair,” many excellent points and analysis of the events surrounding the Holocaust are considered, and Daniel Goldhagen does not shy away from what he believes to be the truth. Yet while he believes the New Testament is part of the problem, the truth is that it could be a guide for better relations and attitudes for many Christians towards the Jewish people—if only they would take the time to consider and get to the root of its message.

In regard to the New Testament, Daniel Goldhagen claims that: “Its foundational text is the source of, and consecrating authority for, the most damaging antisemitism.” (page 207). He says that this is the Catholic Church’s Bible problem. Yet anyone acquainted with the Catholic Church will know that Catholics are not encouraged to read the Bible and certainly not to interpret its message for themselves. They are encouraged to be subject to the institution of the Church which (in their belief) supersedes the Bible. Whereas Christians who are well acquainted with the New Testament are much more likely to support the Jewish people and Jesus and the resurrection. It is clear that the New Testament claims that the events which were to transpire in AD 70 were judgments from God on those who had rejected Jesus Christ and the teaching of the apostles. Some may suggest that this is antisemitic; but it must be remembered that the Jewish people themselves count the same events as Judgments from God, but for different reasons. Further, a similar sequence of events transpired in the Old Testament, the Jewish people rejected the God of Israel and persecuted the prophets, rejecting their word and so were carried captive to Babylon. It is noteworthy that God’s rejection and anger with the Jewish people at that time, did not give their enemies license to persecute, or for other nations to ill-treat them. After the exiled Jews had returned, the prophet Zechariah comments in his first chapter: “Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction. Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies...” The nations furthered the affliction and therefore God was angry with them.

The Creator did not change His mind between the Old and New Testaments. Any who “helped forward the affliction” of God’s people, the Jews, have made the LORD of hosts sore displeased!
“For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Malachi 3:6).

“His Blood be Upon Us”

Probably the most cited example of antisemitism in the New Testament is the record in Matthew’s Gospel where the Jewish leaders take responsibility upon themselves for the death of Christ:

“Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matthew 27:25).

This is cited as an example of antisemitism because it has been used as an excuse to perform antisemitic actions—the idea that the Jewish people are under some kind of curse for “killing God.” Seeing that the majority of Churches today believe that Jesus is part of a trinity and ‘very God’ it elevates the crime of killing Jesus to the impossible level of killing God!

Daniel Goldhagen gives an example of a German priest who expressed approval of the mass murder of Jews by Nazi Germany in scriptural terms, saying: “There is a curse on this people ever since the crucifixion of Jesus when they cried: ‘Let his blood be on our heads and on the heads of our children’” (Page 62).

However, this completely wrests the passage from Matthew’s intent. Matthew does not say that the blood of Jesus would be irrevocably upon them and their children for generations. Matthew simply writes what these particular Jews said on that occasion. Nowhere does Matthew say that the blood of Christ would rest upon the Jewish people for all time; the very idea that a sin can be passed irrevocably upon them and their children for all time, is simply false and not at all supported by the New Testament. Jesus is recorded as saying: “Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation” (Matthew 23:36). So the punishment for rejecting him would come upon that generation which was contemporaneous with him, not on subsequent generations of Jews. Later generations would be affected by the mistake of their forefathers, but were not held accountable.

According to God’s Law, and the law of the Jewish people at that time, it was not possible for the blood of Christ to be on them and their children. Further, the New Testament records that after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, some of these very people were forgiven for this sin. On the day of Pentecost the apostle Peter has a blessing to extend to the Jews of Jerusalem, rather than a curse—Acts 2:36–39.

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

So the claim that the text about “His blood be on us, and on our children” — applies to all Jews for all time, is simply false and not at all supported by the New Testament. Jesus is recorded as saying: “Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation” (Matthew 23:36). So the punishment for rejecting him would come upon that generation which was contemporaneous with him, not on subsequent generations of Jews. Later generations would be affected by the mistake of their forefathers, but were not held accountable.

Some may have difficulty with ascribing guilt to even that generation for the death of Jesus Christ, yet even the Jews themselves claim that God was angry with them and destroyed the temple because of the sin of infighting amongst themselves—Jew fighting Jew. Isn’t this exactly the same as with Jesus Christ? Was he not their brother?

Above: Statue reputed to be that of Pontius Pilate. Below: Coin of the Governor Pilate.

One of their own? The Jewish Chabad website puts it this way:

“While the First Temple was destroyed due to idol worship, illicit relationships and murder, our Sages attribute the destruction of the Second Temple to the baseless hatred that prevailed among the Jews. If the Jews had been united, they would have merited G-d’s protection. They would have withstood the Romans.

“It was the factionalism among Jews that ultimately brought about the destruction of the Second Temple.”

Does the New Testament record whitewash Pilate?

It is claimed that the New Testament record whitewashes Pilate and makes him into a good man, while placing all the blame on the Jews. This is not a thorough approach. Pilate was a leader in a position of power and had the power to release Jesus or condemn him to death. In Pilate’s own words he: “...went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?”

If we think this through it makes Pilate into more of a monster. Had he mistakenly believed, or been deceived into thinking that Jesus had committed a crime worthy of death and condemned him to death, it would be a tragic mistake. But to knowingly condemn a righteous man to a torturous death for political maneuvering or to protect his own self-interest is an unspeakable crime. This was Pilate. The play act of washing his hands in front of the people could not remove his responsibility—“...knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?” It was Pilate who condemned Jesus to death on the cross. It was his choice, his responsibility and he knew that Jesus was righteous, unworthy of death or stripes. The record does not make Pilate into a good man, but presents a realistic picture of a weak politician, who knowingly sent a righteous man to a horrific death.

Philio-semitism and antisemitism.

To say that the New Testament is the source of antisemitism may seem a reasonable conclusion when considering some churches, such as the Catholic Church and large protestant churches (e.g. the Lutheran Church), but there is a major problem with this. While these churches have been the major source of antisemitism historically, and now embrace the new antisemitism—directing criticism against Israel (the Jewish state); there are other Christian groups which have been the anti-
thesis of this, Christian groups that have identified with the Jewish people down the centuries and suffered with them at the hands of the same persecutors. These Christian groups have supported the Jewish people in their suffering, and also in their return to the land of Israel. This philo-semitism or love of the Jewish people, dates back centuries. In the book, Jewish Influence on Christian Reform Movements, by Louis Israel Newman, many associations are noted between the Jews and early Christian separatist groups who stood against the activities and beliefs of the Catholic Church.

On page 234 under the heading, "Waldensian "Identity" with "Ancient Israel," Newman writes:

"...evidence of Waldensian dependence upon the Old Testament is found in the movement's progress after its rise in medieval France. More and more the dissenters came to regard themselves as the true "Israel" allied in spirit and experience with ancient historic "Israel." This view was formulated and cultivated by historians of the Waldensian movement, who thereby merely gave voice to a long-cherished opinion on the

part of its adherents. Thus Muston speaks of The Israel of the Alps...

These ancient separated Christians learned Hebrew from Jewish Rabbis so that they could translate scripture from the original Hebrew manuscripts and they identified with ancient Israel in their suffering. It becomes quite obvious that they must have sympathized with the Jews of their age who suffered in like manner at the hands of the same persecutors. Under the heading, "Heretics and Jews Expelled Together" on page 314, Newman comments:

"Further evidence that Jews were suspected of association with heretics and gave aid to them in their activities is found in the fact that the punishments meted out to both groups were oftentimes identical. For the most part, secular and ecclesiastical leaders sought to punish only those Jews immediately within their jurisdiction, particularly "Rejudaizers" or heretics, who once having accepted baptism, returned to Judaism. In some instances, however, Jews as such were persecuted and punished in common with heretics."

Michael Servetus was a reformer who lived in the early 1500’s and held anti-trinitarian views. He was also against infant baptism. Servetus was eventually burned at the stake for his beliefs. Louis Newman makes an interesting comment about Michael Servetus’ work in a print shop on page 523:

"Thus during this time, he found opportunity to improve his knowledge of the Biblical tongue, which even before this time had been sufficient to enable him to quote from the text of the Bible and from Rabbinical literature. The numerous Hebrew citations in the later writings of Servetus testify to his unceasing study and reading in the realm of Jewish learning."

On page 562 of the same book, there is an interesting snippet quoting from Servetus regarding his opinion of the Pope as a leader. Servetus saw the pope as leading away from the foundations of Christianity which were largely Jewish.

"The Pope in truth leads us away from the Jews back to the Egyptians and to earlier abominations of the heathens when we turn in prayer to the East," is an index to Servetus’ resentment at the infusion of pagan customs and ceremonies into the Church; hence, he believed the age needed a ‘restitution of Christianity’ to its pristine foundations, which by implication and open statement, were largely Jewish."

Across the channel in Puritan England there developed a sympathy for the Jewish people and a great interest in the Hebrew language. This resulted from the open study of the Bible, made possible by the work of William Tyndale and the subsequent translations made available to the English public, such as the Geneva Bible and the King James Version. It took some time for the old antisemitism of Catholic England to be purged, but purged it was and many in
England felt an affinity with the Jewish people. It is worthwhile to note that where open study of the Bible was practiced in the 16th century, the people were more sympathetic to the Jewish people. Contrariwise, where the Catholic Church had the rule, where their beliefs were propagated, and the common people were discouraged from reading the Bible for themselves, antisemitism was rampant. As Newman states, a Hebraic revival followed the reformation—Page 632.

“Puritan England also shared in the Hebraic revival which accompanied and followed the Reformaion. From 1600 to 1650, the reign of James I to the Restoration, the study of Hebrew literature flourished greatly: ‘during no period of equal length since the Revival of Letters has the knowledge of the Hebrew language apparently been so much diffused throughout the literary world as this’” (Hallam, Literature of Europe3 pg. 444.)

The open study of Bible Prophecy made possible by free access to the Bible, brought about an understanding that the Jews had to return to their own land again. Again, Newman’s comment this time from page 633:

“Puritan England shared also in the Messianic wave sweeping over the Orient and Europe... they preached the belief that before the advent of the Monarchy of the Messiah, the Jews would be restored to the Holy Land, the Ten Tribes would be found, and the Jewish Messiah, an offspring of the house of Jesse, would appear, in accordance with Biblical prophecies... Thus in outlook of life, scholarship, social, religious and political institutions, Puritan England had many points in common with the Jews.”

Finally, early America followed in the same path as England. The Puritans brought their Bibles with them across the ocean. Newman writes about this on page 634:

“The Old Testament tradition manifested itself most clearly in the life of American Pilgrims and Puritans. They were indefatigable readers of the Jewish Scriptures, and drew from their spiritual sustenance ‘the same ethical impulse,’ says Fiske, ‘which animates the glowing pages of Hebrew poets and prophets, and which has given to the history and literature of Israel, their commanding influence in the world.’ The first settlers felt a sense of complete identity with the ancient Israelites...”

Where open access to the Bible was available and read by the common people something closer to the attitude of the Apostle Paul to the Jewish people developed, rather than the antisemitism of a narrow and distorted view of the teaching of the New Testament.

“For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Romans 9:3).

Seeing that the New Testament has produced groups that have both loved and hated the Jewish people, it must be asked if it is plausible to point the finger at the text itself, as the cause of antisemitism. Do the groups which have produced antisemitism have beliefs which are a true representation of the message of the New Testament?

The New Testament Predicts that its Message Would be Corrupted

It is noteworthy that the very text of the New Testament itself, predicted that its message would be corrupted. For instance, 1 Timothy 4:1-3 speaks of those that would depart from the true faith:

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.”

The passage predicts that those who would depart from the faith would have a characteristic of forbidding to marry like the Catholic Church. A characteristic of abstaining from meats, such as a Eucharistic Fast or fasting on Ash Wednesday and Fridays of Lent, like the Catholic Church.

Timothy writes of doctrines of demons which is a reference to the belief of departed souls in an evil state, the belief of saints being complimentary, both held by the Catholic Church.

The letter to the Thessalonians in chapter 2 predicts that there would be a falling away from the true message of the New Testament.

“No man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”

In the book of Revelation, prophesying of the time of the second coming, when Jesus Christ would return, it predicts that there would be a false prophet whose teachings would bring the nations to a battle, called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

Revelation predicts that the antisemitic teachings coming from this false prophet would gather the nations against Israel in the great battle of Armageddon. Here the New Testament is saying there would be a false prophet whose teachings would go out into all the world to gather the nations against the Jewish people, picking up the theme of the great battle of the last days from the Old Testament prophecies, such as Ezekiel 38, Joel 3 and many others.

The New Testament itself says that its message would be corrupted and there would be false prophets and teachers, ultimately bringing the nations of the world against the Jewish people. In this way the New Testament disassociates itself from anti-semitic groups that claim to believe the New Testament, but are in reality “false prophets”.

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**Public notice issued by the Puritans banning the observation of Christmas which was “deemed sacrilege.”**

A fine was imposed upon offenders of five shillings.
Are the Jews of the Devil?

“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44).

There are several problems with using this passage to support antisemitic views for it requires applying it to the Jewish people in general.

First in John 8, Jesus is speaking to two groups of Jews; a group who believed in him and his message and a group that did not — see verses 30 to 33. Therefore Jesus is not speaking of the Jewish people as a whole. We also must understand how John uses the phrase “the Jews” in this Gospel. Again in John 8 verse 3, we are told that the scribes and Pharisees came to Jesus with a difficult question. Here they are called the “scribes and Pharisees,” which were leaders of two groups in the Jewish nation at that time. In other places in John 8 these groups are called “the Jews.” From these passages in John we can see that the phrase “the Jews” refers to the upper classes who held the leadership of the nation. It is this leadership that largely rejected Jesus and who were condemned by him. In the passage we are considering he says “ye are of your father the Devil.” This phrase was never intended by the New Testament text to include the whole Jewish nation.

Another important question here is what Jesus meant by “the Devil.” Devil here is not a proper name, but rather a Greek word meaning “slanderer” or “false accuser.” Jesus is actually referring to an early Old Testament text that they would have been familiar with. Jesus says “he was a murderer from the beginning.” So we are to look for an incident at the beginning of the Bible. The slanderer which Jesus says was their father had no truth in him and was a liar and the father of lies. Jesus is speaking of the serpent in Genesis, an animal that had the ability to talk and was very observant. However, it was an amoral creature and had faulty reasoning. Many Christians think that the serpent was possessed by a supernatural evil being called the devil, however there is nothing in the text that suggests this, in fact the opposite.

The serpent does fit Jesus’ description. He was a the father of lies, as he told the first lie to Eve, “thou shalt not surely die.” His lie, which was the result of amorality, faulty animal reasoning — there was no truth in him— caused Eve to sin and so brought death into the world — thus making the serpent into a murderer. Genesis 3 divides mankind into two classes; the seed of the woman who followed God and the seed of the serpent who had no truth in them. Jesus’ point to the Jewish leaders is straightforward and logical. In order to be the children of Abraham as they claimed, they had to do the works of Abraham. If they did they would be the seed of the woman. On the other hand if they did the works of the serpent; faulty reasoning, lying (slander and false accusations), they were figuratively his children. This passage in no way teaches that the Jewish people were descended from some supernatural evil being! Jesus himself taught that evil thoughts came from the heart of man. Those who hold faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour” (Matthew 15:24–28).

Here in the text Jesus clearly states that his mission was firstly to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This links back to the words of the angel in Matthew 1:21, where Gabriel said: “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.”

“He is people” are the Jewish people. Yes, the New Testament teaches that the Gentiles are called into the hope. But here the Jewish people are referred to first and foremost. This is easily proven and affirmed when we keep reading into Matthew chapter 2. Matthew goes on to quote from the prophet Micah in verse 6. Yet when he makes the quotation, the phrase “my people” is added in—“my people Israel.” This connects in thought with “his people” in Matthew 1:21, showing us that they are his people, even Israel. This is further confirmed by the words of Gabriel as recorded in the gospel of Luke 1:33 where Gabriel says, “He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever”.

In the book of the Acts, the Apostles are still teaching the same message, that Jesus was a promised saviour for the nation of Israel—the Jewish people.

“. . . he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. Of this man’s seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus” (Acts 13:22–23).

The writer John Thomas considers the vital role of the Jewish people in his work Elpis Israel (The hope of Israel) published in 1850.

“The restoration of Israel is a most important feature in the divine economy. It is indispensable to the setting up of the kingdom of God; for they are the kingdom, having been constituted such by a covenant of Sinai, as it is written, ‘Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation’ (Exodus 19:6). The apostles understood this well enough, and so do all who understand the gospel of the kingdom.”

When one studies the New Testament with an open mind and considers the message independent of preconceived ideas, we must conclude that the New Testament is a message of salvation and redemption for the Jewish people; the very opposite in fact, to an antisemitic text.

“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Romans 11:26).
The message recorded by the Old Testament prophets contains material unlike any other historical record. Not only did the Hebrew prophets catalogue events that had already happened, interwoven throughout their message are details which have not yet occurred. This alone provides evidence that the Bible is a unique book and written by the finger of God. However some might be tempted to treat as coincidence the writings of one Old Testament prophet and convince themselves that he simply fabricated future events and blended them into the historical record. But when approximately forty writers of various backgrounds, over a period of nearly 1,500 years, wrote of future events still not fulfilled, all of which fit perfectly together, there can be only one explanation: “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21).

As a simple yet fascinating exercise we want to consider a section of prophecy contained in the book of the prophet Isaiah. Not only will the exercise provide valuable evidence of the accuracy of the Biblical record, it will be a revelation of God’s purpose soon to become apparent in the earth.

Chapter 24 through to chapter 27 of the prophecy of Isaiah form a group of prophecies which commence with a picture of complete desolation in the land of Israel; they conclude with a glorious picture of the people of Israel occupying a prominent position in the Middle East, with Jerusalem as the spiritual heart beat of the nation. Yet from today’s vantage point this appears a most unlikely scenario.

The nation is anything but desolate, out of a list of 200 countries Israel is among the top 40 for gross domestic productivity. In September 2010 Israel was invited to join the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development) and today has signed free trade agreements with the European Union, the United States, Canada, Turkey, Egypt and Jordan, to name but a few. Israel is also a leading country in high-tech industries and has been described as the “Silicon Wadi.” Recently in a report by the Boston Consulting Group, Israel was identified as being in the top ten in the world for millionaires per capita. Also, while it may be true to describe Jerusalem as a religious centre, being the focus of three major religions in the world—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—it certainly could not be described as the spiritual centre for all Israeli people. Israel is among the top 19 countries to have the highest percentage of Atheists and secularism in Israel is in the majority.

The prophet Isaiah is describing...
conditions yet to come, notwithstanding the details are based upon events that have already happened.

**Historical background**

Isaiah prophesied during the days of “Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah kings of Judah” (Isaiah 1:1). While we may identify the early chapters with the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham and Ahaz, a large portion of the prophecy fits into the time frame of king Hezekiah; in fact four chapters are devoted to the historical events of his reign (see chapters 36-39). It will be helpful to outline some of the key events that occurred during the reign of Hezekiah.

1. Hezekiah began his reign in the 3rd year of Hoshea, king of Israel (2 Kings 18:1) at the age of 25 years. His reign began with the purging of the idolatry installed by his father Ahaz: “he removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves...” (2 Kings 18:4).

2. During the early period of Hezekiah’s reign there appears to have been great prosperity throughout the land as a result of Yahweh’s blessings (2 Chronicles 31:5, 10).

3. In the 6th year of Hezekiah the northern kingdom of Israel (Samaria), under the ruler-ship of Hoshea, was removed into captivity by the Assyrians (2 Kings 18:16). Nothing more is mentioned of Hezekiah until the 14th year of his reign, when Sennacherib, king of Assyria invaded the land of Judah (2 Kings 18:13).

4. The record indicates that Hezekiah attempted to “buy-off” the Assyrian king (2 Kings 18:15), but this failed and consequently Jerusalem was besieged (2 Kings 18:17; 2 Chron. 32:2).

5. We are told that Hezekiah appealed to Yahweh for help (2 Kings 19:1-5), who responded by promising to “defend this city” (2 Kings 19:34). That night Yahweh sent His angel into the camp of the Assyrians and slew 185,000 soldiers (2 Kings 19:35).

6. This setback for the Assyrians resulted in Sennacherib withdrawing his remaining armies and returning to Nineveh where he was eventually murdered by his sons in the temple of Nisroch (2 Kings 19:37).

7. The faith and contriteness of Hezekiah during this difficult period was rewarded with further blessings following the invasion (2 Kings 19:29). The record of the blessings is described in 2 Chron. 32:27-29.

Archaeology provides some helpful support for the revision of the Biblical record. The invasion of the land of Judah by Sennacherib king of Assyria was documented in Assyrian records for that period, thus providing valuable evidence for the Bible’s accuracy. In 1830 a six-sided clay prism was discovered at the Assyrian capital of Nineveh by Colonel R. Taylor. Amongst other things Taylor’s prism, as it became known, records events related to Sennacherib’s third campaign in which he invaded the land of Judah. The prism refers to Hezekiah’s payment to the king: “Fear of my greatness terrified Hezekiah. He sent to me tribute: 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, precious stones, ivory, and all sorts of gifts, including women from his palace.” This provides a link with 2 Kings 18:15. The prism continues by commenting upon the invasion referred to in 2 Kings 18:13, “As for the king of Judah, Hezekiah, who had not submitted to my authority, I besieged and captured forty-six of his fortified cities, along with many smaller towns, taken in battle with my battering rams... I took as plunder 200,150 people, both small and great, male and female...” Another comment contained in the prism is a reference to the siege of Jerusalem, we read, “As for Hezekiah, I shut him up like a caged bird in his royal city of Jerusalem. I then constructed a series of fortresses around him, and I did not allow anyone to come out of the city gates. His towns which I captured I gave to the kings of Ashdod, Ekron, and Gaza.” It is significant that Sennacherib makes no mention of capturing Jerusalem, even though he documents other cities being taken; the reason for this is found in the scriptures referred to above, God destroyed the Assyrian army in one night.

**Isaiah’s Prophecies in Context**

It isn’t difficult to see how the history of this period blends with the information provided in Isaiah chapters 24 through 27.

1. Chapter 24 describes in graphic language the devastation caused by the Assyrian invasion: “The LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste” (verse 1), again in verse 4, “The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish.” In this instance the word ‘earth’ has reference to the land of Judah, and is so translated from the
same Hebrew word in verses 3, 11, and 13.

2. Chapter 25 expresses the joy experienced by the inhabitants of Jerusalem following the victory over the Assyrian: “thou hast made a city a heap... a palace of strangers to be no city” (verse 2). In verse 6 there is a reference to the blessings poured out by God upon the people of Judah. “And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.”

3. Chapter 26 speaks of a song being sung “in that day” (verse 1). Through the hand of God Jerusalem had succeeded in foiling the aggression of the Assyrian: “We have a strong city: salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks” (verse 1). Verse 13-14 offers a reflection by Judah as they peer over the walls and witness the dead bodies of the Assyrian army: “they are dead, they shall not live... therefore thou hast visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish”.

4. Chapter 27 continues to describe the circumstances which will occur “in that day” (verse 1, see also verses 2, 12, 13). The picture in this chapter is that of a nation restored to God’s favour. No longer will the vineyard of Israel produce “wild grapes” (Isaiah 5:2); no longer will the land produce “briers and thorns” (Isaiah 5:6), in that day the vine of Israel will be “a vineyard of red wine” (verse 2); she shall “blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit” (verse 6), and Israel will “worship the LORD in the holy mountain at Jerusalem” (verse 13). The parallel between the prophet’s comments and the historical record is unmistakable. Notwithstanding there are comments within these four chapters which cannot apply to the time of the Assyrian invasion but can only be completely fulfilled at the time of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. We read in chapter 25:8 “He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces...” Again, this is another comment which can only have application to the future. The first part of this verse is quoted by the apostle Paul in the context of the resurrection of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:54), an event that will take place at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:22-23). The reference to wiping away tears is also quoted in the New Testament and describes the time following the establishment of a new heavens and earth (Revelation 21:4); it concerns the time when a “great multitude which no man can number” will stand before God’s throne when God will “dwell among them” (see Revelation 7:9, 15, 17). Another reference to the resurrection is found in chapter 26, where again the prophet refers to “in that day” (verse 1). We read in verse 19, “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead”. All these references point forward to events future to the prophets time period and indeed future to our own time period.

What this indicates is that while the prophet’s message was based upon real historical circumstances, these serve as a pattern for future events yet to unfold. Our next step therefore is to establish links between the historical record and the message of the prophets regarding Israel’s future. In order to do this we will broaden the scope of the references identifying the Assyrian in the historical record, thus providing a more comprehensive link with latter day prophecies.

The Prophet’s future Message

The fact that scripture can recount events and at the same time place them in a context that has latter day implications illustrates that God is in control of human affairs. The prophet Daniel confirms this saying, “... the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men” (Daniel 4:17). This becomes evident in the case of the Assyrian invasion; on that occasion scripture records God as saying (speaking to the Assyrian), “I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest” (2 Kings 19:28). For this reason God speaks of the invader as “O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger” (Isaiah 10:5). But the language reflects a latter day application. The prophet Ezekiel describes an invasion of the land of Israel “in the latter years” (38:8), which will occur when Israel has resettled in the land of Israel, having been “brought back from the word, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel” (38:8). Once again the prophecy demonstrates that God is in control, for Ezekiel says, “I will turn thee back, and put hooks in thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth...” (38:4).

When the Assyrian armies entered the land Hezekiah described the threat as, “...A day of trouble, and rebuke, and blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not enough strength to bring forth” (2 Kings 19:3). These words provide a link with our first latter day reference. The prophet Jeremiah makes reference to a future restoration of the nation of Israel (Jeremiah 30:3), yet in describing this event he says that it will be preceded by “the time of Jacob’s trouble...” (Jeremiah 30:7). So devastating will this period be in Israel’s history that Jeremiah likens it to a man attempting to give birth to a child (verse 6). Here is our first connection between the historical record and Israel’s future prospects. However despite the terribleness of these future events the prophet also says, “but he (Israel) shall be saved out of it” (Jeremiah 30:7) and “Jacob shall return, and be in rest, and quiet, and none shall make him afraid” (Jeremiah 30:10).

We are told that Assyria’s purpose for invading the land of Israel was to “to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire in the streets” (Isaiah 10:6). The corresponding latter day prophecy is found in Ezekiel 38 (already noted). This
details a military invasion led by one named “Gog of the land of Magog” that will come from the north of the land of Israel (verse 15), which will descend upon the land of Israel like a storm and a cloud to cover the land (verse 9), with the purpose of taking “a spoil, and to take a prey” (verse 12). A similar picture is painted by the prophet Daniel in chapter 11; again a king of the north will descend into the Middle East “at the time of the end” (verse 40) and pour into the land of Israel “like a whirlwind” (verse 40); this “king” shall seize the “treasures of gold and silver” in that region (verse 43) and occupy the “holy mountain” in Jerusalem (verse 45). Both prophets describe a military campaign with strategic gain. It is in this future context that Isaiah 24 will eventually be completely fulfilled.

The Assyrian power is typical of the latter day power described by Ezekiel, Daniel and other prophets, and the result of the invasion will be devastating for the people of Israel and the land shall be made desolate. But as we have already pointed out Isaiah also described the destruction of the Assyrian and the elevation of the nation of Israel to glory and spiritual heights. Isaiah speaks of the “the palace of strangers” becoming a ruin (Isaiah 25:2) and Israel witnessing the demise of its enemy (Isaiah 26:13-14). Mark Twain once observed “The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then passed away. The Greek and the Roman followed. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was... All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?” Jeremiah provides the answer, speaking of the nation of Israel he writes, “though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished” (30:11).

Once again these details compliment other prophecies. For example at some point after Gog invades Israel Ezekiel says that God’s “fury shall come up in my face” (38:18), the result being that Gog will be buried in the land of Israel (39:11). Daniel informs us that when the king of the north shall “plant his tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain (Zion)” he will be brought to an end (11:45). And again, in Zechariah 14, when the prophet describes the siege of Jerusalem (verse 1-2) we are told that the Lord, represented by the Lord Jesus Christ will return to defend the Jews, God’s people (verses 3-4); God will destroy all nations that move against Jerusalem (verse 9) and “the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem” (verse 12). Just as the Assyrian was destroyed by the power of God so the latter day invader of the land will come to his end.

Already the scene is being set for these future events. Today Israel is a besieged nation, hated by the majority of her Arab neighbours. Anti-Semitism is on the rise worldwide and the city of Jerusalem remains a major bone of contention. Already we are witnessing Russian involvement in Iran and Syria, and Russia lies directly north of the land of Israel. Ezekiel identifies the drawing card for the northern invader as “the mountains of Israel” (Ezekiel 38:8); today these mountains fall into the territory of the West Bank, another area of contention in that region.

Israel will emerge from the ashes of God’s judgments as a “A vineyard of red wine” (verse 2). God will cause those of Jacob “to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud” (verse 6). A humiliated and repentant nation of Israel is destined for greatness, and as part of God’s purpose to fill this earth with His glory (Numbers 14:21), will become the focal point of a new world order. In speaking of Israel’s restoration the prophet Ezekiel says, “Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all” (Ezekiel 37:21-22). Jesus Christ was born to be the king of the Jews and Jerusalem is destined to become the “city of the great king” (Matthew 2:2; 5:34), and when the throne of Israel was overturned the prophet said that it would remain that way “until he come whose right it is” (Ezekiel 21:27). The disciples of the Lord Jesus were puzzled regarding the timing of this event and before he ascended into heaven asked Jesus, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). This time is soon to be revealed.

In concluding his prophecy Isaiah makes two important points in Isaiah 27. First of all, Isaiah mentions “the great trumpet” (verse 13); undoubtedly this describes the blowing of the shofar trumpet which was blown every jubilee, or every fifty years. The jubilee year, with its celebrated trumpet blowing, coincided with Israel’s Day of Atonement
God is about to restore the ancient kingdom of Israel which will constitute the kingdom of God of the future. The prophet Micah describes Israel as the first dominion of God’s kingdom (Micah 4:8); the blessings from God will ensure an abundance of produce, not only will “the plowman overtake the reaper” (Amos 9:13), but a handful of corn shall grow on the mountain tops (Psalm 72:16). Jerusalem will become the focus of this glorious age (Jeremiah 3:17) and a centre of learning for all peoples; “all nations” or “many peoples” will travel to Jerusalem to learn God’s ways (Isaiah 2:2-3; Zechariah 8:22-23). Isaiah 27 concludes with a picture of Israel’s final glory when those of Israel who were carried away captive by Assyria and later by Babylon will be restored permanently in the land of Israel blessing—“ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel” (verse 12).

But is it really necessary for the nation of Israel, indeed the whole world, to experience such tragedy; and what purpose will the humiliation of Israel accomplish? When God destroyed the world of Noah’s day and later the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah it was because the wickedness of man was great (Genesis 6:5; Genesis 13:13). Jesus said it would be no different when he returns (Luke 17:26-30). God has appointed a day for judgment (Acts 17:31) and Isaiah tells us why, he says, “when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isaiah 26:9). Judgments will first take place upon Israel followed by judgments upon those that have oppressed her, this will have the effect of educating the world; Yahweh says through the prophet, “Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify my self; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord” (Ezekiel 38:23).

We began with a reminder that the scriptures were written down by individuals under the influence of God’s spirit power. We conclude with a message from the same writer reminding us that, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well to take heed” (2 Peter 1:19).

Antisemitism and anti-Zionism is strongly promoted by some who claim to be Christian, as can be seen from the above.

THE POST ADVENTUAL GATHERING AGAINST ISRAEL

In the fourth section of the vial-period (Revelation 16:16) the peoples will associate themselves against Israel, in whose midst Immanuel now is; and, under the fiery flying serpent of Assyria, will rush as the rushing of many waters, and with the sound of the roaring seas, to spoil and scatter them—Isaiah 8:9-10; 14: 25, 29; 17:12-14. They will ascend like a storm-cloud to cover the land in this the day of Yahweh’s vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion.—Isaiah 34:1-8; 63:1-6. He will cause them to come up from the north parts, and bring them upon the mountains of Israel, which are the apocalyptic “Armageddon”—Ezekiel 38:9; 39:2,4. There, under the king of the north, encamped between the seas, even to the mountain of the glory of the holy (Dan. 11:41, 45) will they be gathered against Jerusalem to besiege and take it, and rifle it, and to make captives of its residue—Zech. 14:2. But they will not find therein the King of Israel. By this gathering of all nations against Jerusalem, in tempestuous conflict among themselves for the possession of the holy city, which becomes to them “a cup of trembling,” and “a burdensome stone” (Zech. 12:2-3) the judgments of the Sixth vial are closed. It will have assembled the Laodicean and other heathen in that part of Armageddon called in Joel “the valley of Jehoshaphat;” where Yahweh Elohim, the Spirit incarnate in the Saints, will sit in judgment upon them.

Extract from Eureka Vol.2, page 87
John Thomas
“Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.”

Malachi 4:4.

By Paul Billington Brantford, ON.

Hosea the prophet declared:

“For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days” (chapter 3:4, 5).

This condition of “the children of Israel” without a king, prince, sacrifice etc. “for many days” during their long dispersion is well known by everyone familiar with Jewish history. But afterward says the prophet, they will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. This afterward is “in the latter days.”

We recognize that the full redemption of the whole house of Israel will only come with Messiah (Ezekiel 39:25), but the passage from Hosea strongly suggests a process: First, the Return, then seek and finally fear. That being understood, it should also be recognized that among those in the Land today there are some who are “seeking.”

This began in the aftermath of the six-days war of 1967. That event brought an awakening, and there were those who could see that there had been a miraculous deliverance from the combined forces of the Arab nations who were determined to destroy Israel. After 1967 there was a noticeable shift towards a religious form of Zionism. This movement was given political impetus during the government of Menachem Begin which began the policy of settling Jews in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank).

That watershed brought about a division in Israeli society, some clinging to the old secular view of Zionism and others who saw a Biblical dimension to events in the nation. Many of these are serious students of the Law of Moses (the Torah) and made significant gains in the last national elections (see the article in the last issue of this magazine, page 44).

The word translated “seek” in Hosea 3:5 is the Hebrew bagash, and according to Gesenius it carries the idea of ‘search out, ask, beseech’ and has a wide range of meanings, some of which are equivalent to...
the English concepts ‘to examine, to inquire into, to search into, etc.’ It suggests a spirit of enquiry.

Where might enquiry be made?
Malachi 4:4 suggests an answer:
“Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.”

“When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them.”

Here then is a message for Israel “in the latter days.” Deuteronomy 31:29 also tells us that there will have been a great corruption in the latter days and that evil will befall the nation because of it. This has happened during the long centuries, and so the words of Daniel 9:13 become relevant:
“As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice.”

So the need is for obedience to the commandments. Malachi says:
“Remember ye the law of Moses my servant... with the statutes and judgments.”

Daniel points out another thing: the need to “understand thy truth.” This requires a teacher. It requires instruction, so Malachi says:
“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”

At the present time and under the Netanyahu government, religious Zionism although growing, is still restrained. As it becomes more powerful it will antagonize the world, and especially the world of Christendom, which is a counterfeit of true Christianity.

We must expect friction to develop between religious Zionists and apostate Christians. Zealous Jewish youths are bound to confront Christian idolatry, for that is what the Law teaches concerning heathen worship.

As Israel becomes more Torah observant it will become less tolerant of falsehood. The “controversy of Zion” (Isaiah 34:8) is bound to escalate and develop into a crisis involving “the false prophet” (Revelation 16:13) which will lead to a Christian crusade against the Hebrew nation at Armageddon bringing God’s judgment upon the nations (Ezekiel 38), when He 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 3:2).

Thus, the prophecy of Isaiah 59:20 will be fulfilled:
“And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression (apostasy) in Jacob, saith the LORD.”

This turning from transgression and “apostasy” (as Josiah Gibbs 1832 edition of Gesenius’ lexicon renders the word) will be the result of Elijah’s work of instruction. He will work together with shepherd kings (see Jeremiah 3:14,15) who come to Zion as the sun of righteousness with healing beams to “prepare the way of the LORD”—Isaiah 40:3. This is part of the process indicated by Revelation 16:12,

“And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.”

So we pray for Israel’s redemption and for the peace of Jerusalem.

Schoolchildren make and wear these badges depicting the giving of the Law at Sinai to celebrate Shavout

Two young boys celebrate the giving of the Law (Shavout) in school at Beit-El and below: Children recite and sing the Ten Commandments in celebration of Shavout

Schoolchildren make and wear these badges depicting the giving of the Law at Sinai to celebrate Shavout

Right: Israelis protest against Christian antsemitism—notice the cross on the word Antisemitism!
John the Baptist and Jesus came to a people “sitting in darkness and the shadow of death.”—Luke 1:77-79; Isaiah 9:2. John was a “burning and a shining light;” Jesus was “the light of the world.” Many who heard and saw, refused to heed the light, and came under condemnation:

“This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil”—John 3:19.

Jesus amplified these words to Nicodemus, in his final discourse with the twelve before he suffered:

“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now they have both seen and hated both me and my father.”—John 15:22, 24.

Thus, as John Thomas says in his book Anastasis, light with divine attestation was the ground of accountability. His actual words are: “The light shining into the darkness and divinely attested, makes sinners accountable and saints responsible.” “Divinely attested,” of course, refers to the miracles which Jesus and his selected disciples did, to establish the word.

At the end of his ministry, Jesus commissioned the twelve to preach the gospel to their brethren scattered abroad throughout the world, as he and they had already done in the cities of Israel. And they were to go forth with the power of miracle to establish their word. Their commission was:

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth (RV) shall be condemned.”—Mark 16:15-16; and the chapter concludes, v. 20, “And they went forth, and preached everywhere the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.”

This preaching of the gospel with the aid of the Holy Spirit brought the same accountability—“He that disbelieveth shall be condemned.”

A little later Paul was commissioned to preach to the Gentiles, as the twelve had been commissioned to preach to the circumcision.

—Acts 9:15; Gal. 2:9. Paul declares that the Gentiles who heard the word and saw the miracles were also accountable. He includes the Gentile with the Jew in his reasoning with the disbelieving Jew in Romans chapter 2.

“A day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his works: To them that by patience in well doing seek for glory and honour and incorruption, eternal life: but unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek.”

Just as there are degrees of light, so there are degrees of accountability: “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more” (Luke 12:48). This principle is true both nationally and individually.

Jesus said that the apostles “shall be condemned.” When would this be? According to his works: To them that by patience in well doing seek for glory and honour and incorruption, eternal life: but unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek.”

These judgments, he declares, will be “in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ” (RV).

In all these cases of accountability, it is important to perceive that it was not necessarily enlightenment, or understanding, that brought accountability, it was disbelief and rejection in the face of divine attestation.

When will they give an Account?

Jesus said that they that disbelieved the apostles “shall be condemned.” When would this be? It may be answered by asking another question, when will he that believeth receive eternal life? One would expect that the two classes would receive their due reward at the same epoch, namely when Jesus returns. If we are inclined to doubt this, the matter is made certain by Paul’s statement at which we have already looked. There is “a day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every
man according to his deeds. There is “a day,” then, when his judgment is “revealed” or made plain, and Paul says that it covers both classes. Those therefore who say that the disbelievers or rejectors of the apostolic era were judged during their lifetime, and will not stand at Jesus’ judgment seat, do not speak according to scripture.

**Judgment in the “Last Day”**

There is another passage of scripture that makes it clear that the rejectors of Jesus’ words and miracles will be condemned at his judgment seat—and must therefore be raised for that purpose. “Jesus cried and said... And if any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”—John 12:44-50.

A writer recently has endeavoured to escape from the implications of this passage. He asserts that “the last day” refers to the end of the Jewish world, and not to the time when Jesus returns. These rejecting of Christ, therefore, were “judged” in their lifetime and will not reappear at Christ’s judgment seat.

In justification of this interpretation of “last day,” the writer refers to John Thomas’s article, “The last days of Judah’s commonwealth.” In his article John Thomas certainly shows that a number of the references to judgment by Jesus and the apostles were fulfilled in the “last days” of the Mosaic economy. The judgment at this time was a national judgment, and in particular the ruling heavens were swept away. It was part of Jesus’ commission to his twelve to speak to Israel “of judgment;” see John 16:8; and he adds “the rulership of this (Jewish) world is condemned” (v. 11). I say the judgment at this time was national, not individual. It was not the time of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God for the rendering to every man according to his deeds.

The “last day” of John ought not to be confused with the “last days” referred to by the apostles. The “last day” of John ch. 12 is the same “last day” as in John ch. 6 and ch. 11. In ch. 6 Jesus says “This is the will of him that hath sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day;” and it is Martha who says in ch. 11 “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” No one would think of placing this “last day” at the end of the Jewish world. The “last day” of John ch. 12 is clearly this last day of resurrection, because of the context. Jesus said that “the word that I have spoken” shall judge him; and he goes on to explain that the word that he had spoken was the commandment from the Father concerning everlasting life. When will men be judged with respect to their attitude to the Father’s gracious commandment of eternal life? We have already had the answer from our consideration of Romans ch. 2, Mark ch. 16. The judgment seat of Christ considers these matters. This is the day of examination of individuals relative to God’s offer of eternal life.

**Caiaphas**

There is one individual who rejected the testimony of Jesus and who was specifically told that he would live again to be condemned and to see Jesus in his glory and who are put to death at the time when the faithful are rewarded, are the Jews living in the land when Jesus returns. Caiaphas is certainly one of these “citizens” who said that they would not have this man to reign over them. But apart from the proof we have in Caiaphas, the parable cannot be applied to the nation of Israel when Jesus returns. “We will not have this man to reign over us,” is descriptive of the nation in the apostles’ time, but not in the time of Jesus’ second coming. He was then the man “whom the nation abhorreth”—Isaiah 49:7,—but when he comes again he is desired: “Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” (Matt. 23:39; Psa. 118:26). “The citizens,” “his enemies,” who are to be slain in the presence of Jesus when he returns must therefore refer to those who saw the wonderful works, and hated Jesus and his Father,—and have no clote for their sin. And as I have also shown, Gentiles also to whom the apostles preached the gospel with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven (1 Peter 1:12) will be included in the same class.

**Accountability Today**

The principle of accountability in the apostolic writings is, as John Thomas says, “light with divine attestation.” This probably may be enlarged to the principle “That men are responsible to the resurrection of condemnation who refuse subjection to the will of God when their circumstances are such as to leave them no excuse for their refusal.” This was Robert Robert’s definition in 1898 (“True Principles and Uncertain Details,” Christadelphian pp. 182-189). But when, in our age, are men in such circumstances? The answer is uncertain and is not a matter of great profit to discuss. The answer is uncertain because the conditions now are so different from those of the first century. Robert Roberts goes on in his article, after stating the “General Principle” as above, to discuss what he calls the “Uncertain Detail.” In this he says that some think it is enough to give accountability if a person attends lectures, while others think that it is not enough unless the hand of God is openly shown in certification of the divinity of the Bible, as in the apostolic age.

Here I will leave the matter, hoping that this brief examination of apostolic times has laid bare the principle that it was not so much a question of how much had been understood, that created accountability, as that the circumstances were such that they ought to have responded to the call of God.
"Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.... Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, Which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?" — Job 38.

In about twenty minutes some 8,000 buildings, including the city hospital, were destroyed by a powerful tornado as it swept through the highly populated area of Joplin. More than 160 people were killed and some 900 injured. Mature men cried and miraculously some, like Christadelphian Matthew Bittinger (left) escaped to tell the story. Viewing the scene a little later one was reminded of Hiroshima and Nagasaki following the atomic bombing in 1945.

What lies ahead? What does Ezekiel 38:19-22 indicate? It is easy to just read over Isaiah 40:24, but a whirlwind (tornado) can be devastating!
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In 1815, several decades before the excavations of Henry Layard, George Gordon, Lord Byron, published his “Hebrew Melodies,” which included the scripturally based poem, “The Destruction of Sennacherib.” Byron describes the intimidating forces of the Assyrian army descending “... like the wolf on the fold” as they surged into the kingdom of Judah, intent on subduing the rebellious nation. Isaiah describes the invasion as a flood—“And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck” (Ch. 8:8). Only Jerusalem, the head, was to survive the onslaught.

Judah had encountered the armies of many nations during her seven centuries in the land of Israel, but the success of the Assyrians showed them that they were an enemy with a difference. Rather than simply calling up their citizens to fight together when needed, the Assyrians had a standing army. Originally a defensive force, it was used to expand the Assyrian sphere of influence, and then to conquer neighbouring nations as provinces were added to the empire. In terms of organization, efficiency and effectiveness, they had no equal prior to the emergence of the Legions of Rome.

Nineveh and Fort Shalmaneser were military forts built around parade grounds and barracks. As well as providing security for the king, and garrisons where needed in the empire, they were the core of a complex well-organized force of professional soldiers. Discipline and organization were the key to their success.

The army of Assyria was not comprised solely of Assyrians. They had no racial prejudice, apparently, and were happy to conscript units and individuals of their subject peoples who had the necessary skills. In most cases, the units retained their identity as they fought together, whether as bowmen, swordsmen, or infantry. The reliefs from the royal palaces show these groups dressed in their distinctive footwear, clothes and headgear. Among these groups are some which can be identified as Israelites. Within their organization, the army had many groups with specialized skills. Chariots were transported in pieces and reassembled when needed, tools were taken along to help in the building of bridges, and rams, and scribes and recorders accompanied the fighting men to record their accomplishments. In addition to being well organized, the Assyrians were the first to properly develop systems for the successful besieging of enemy towns. Not only did they build siege engines and rams; but they incorporated mining procedures to undermine and sap the strength of the defiant city’s walls. We read of their success in Judah;

“Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them” (2 Kings 18:13).

In the face of the overwhelming power of the Assyrian army, the Phoenicians, the Philistines and many smaller states paid homage and became vassals, rather than be destroyed.

Earlier (722 BC), Scripture tells us of the capture of the northern capital of Samaria, and the deportation of 200,000 of her inhabitants to the area of Babylon.

“Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes” (2 Kings 17:5,6).

Inhabitants from these areas were brought in to replace them in the north of the land. These are the people which the New Testament speaks of as Samaritans. From the time of deportation, we are able to find records in Assyria of individuals with Israelitish names. The fenced cities of Judah had served as successful outposts at least

By Ken Loveridge  Vernon, B.C.

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since the days of Uzziah, but now they fell almost overnight to a skilled army. Not all of them were prepared to withstand a siege by a powerful army, and many must have capitulated or abandoned the fight, before a siege was even organized. The Rabshakeh offered the people of Jerusalem equitable terms if they would surrender and leave the city, to be resettled elsewhere, just as he must have done earlier with other cities in Judah—obviously achieving a great deal of success.

**Masters of Intimidation**

The Assyrians were a threat to all of the nations around them. The litany of their conquests given by the Rabshakeh before the walls of Jerusalem were accomplished facts. They were common knowledge, and people were afraid that they might be next.

The Rabshakeh—the cup-bearer to the king—as Nehemiah was to Artaxerxes in later years—was a powerful official who spoke to the Jerusalemites on the walls of the city. He read the letter from Sennacherib, and also gave his own speech, in an attempt to avoid the work of a siege and battle for the city. To the dismay of the king’s officials, he spoke to the people in Hebrew, rather than Aramean, which indicated that he was familiar with the language. The Assyrians also knew of the reforming work of Hezekiah, and that not all of the people were happy with the changes. It seems quite possible that the Rabshakeh was a deportee from Israel, or the son of one.

The Assyrian army also relied on the psychological impact of the army’s sudden appearance after forced marches of great distances, often under poor conditions. Their enemies often felt overwhelmed. Isaiah tells us of the advance of an Assyrian force from the north that came down quickly intending to intimidate and cow the capital city of Jerusalem.

“He is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron; at Michmash he hath laid up his carriages: They are gone over the passage: they have taken up their lodging at Geba: Ramah is afraid; Gibeah of Saul is fled. Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Gallim: cause it to be heard unto Laish, O poor Anathoth. Madmenah is removed; the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee. As yet shall he remain at Nob that day: he shall shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem” (Isaiah 10:28-32).

The reaction of the population is obvious. This was all part of the Assyrian policy of “frightfulness.” But the kings were highly selective in using it. Rebellious subjects were chastised as examples for other rebels. Unnecessary battles were often avoided, because terror could convey a sense of powerlessness to the population.

While the Rabshakeh negotiated for the surrender of Jerusalem, Sennacherib himself was outside the walls of Lachish, the second city of the kingdom. The Lachish Reliefs now lodged in the British Museum tell the story of its siege and destruction. We must remember that these vivid pictures were on display in the reception room of the royal palace where state officials and ambassadors were received by the Assyrian kings. Images of the siege operations, the attacks on the city walls, the torture and killing of the leaders and city officials after their capture, and the people going into exile, were meant to impress on the visitors the might of this nation around them. A policy of resettlement within the empire was used to remove rebellious subjects and replace them with other people who could be expected to be more compliant far from their home base.

An inscription of Sargon II tells us, “Ashur, father of the gods, empowered me to depopulate and repopulate, to make broad the boundary of the land of Assyria.”

In 701 BC, while the process of negotiations continued, a pivotal event occurred outside the walls of Jerusalem.

“Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh” (Isaiah 37: 36-37).

The catastrophe removed the army outside Jerusalem as a threat, and the siege was lifted. Sennacherib left for home.

**A Powerful Presence**

But elements of the Assyrian army were resident in Israel and Judah for many years. They occupied not only the centres of trade and commerce, but strategic towns and cities.

Hoshea, king in Samaria, paid tribute to Tiglath-Pileser after his defeat, and suffered the occupation of his kingdom. Ahaz also, after calling on Assyria for help, had Assyrian soldiers stationed near Jerusalem, probably having access even to the Temple Mount, after Ahaz closed the Temple doors and erected the copy of the Syrian altar from Damascus. It appears that Hezekiah continued to pay tribute to the Assyrians for his lifetime, and we know that his son Manasseh was taken by them to Babylon, before being returned as a tributary.

It was in the days of Josiah that the Assyrian power became very weak, but it was not until 612 BC (almost 90 years later) that the capital, Nineveh, was destroyed by the Babylonians, Medes and Scythians. Some years before, the prophet Nahum spoke of the downfall of the empire:

He concludes: All who hear the news of you clap their hands at your downfall. For who has not felt your unrelenting cruelty (Nahum 3:19).

The Assyrians were used as God’s tool to punish his people for their unfaithfulness, but even the example of the deportation of the northern kingdom, the lengthy persecution of the occupying forces, and the saving of Jerusalem by the hand of Yahweh could not steer them from their self-destructive course. Exile lay in their future.
Leaf Insects come in several different forms & mimic their environ, a green leaf in spring or a dead looking leaf in the Fall, but these creatures are great survivors hiding themselves with ingenious kinds of camouflage. One would think that they designed themselves - but we know that insects are not artists and they are not designers, so whence comes this wisdom and this skill? The logical conclusion is that He who created the leaves created the insects that look so similar to them, but the atheist has to leaf that alone!