

21ST CENTURY

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A New Plan for Iran?

by Michael Armstrong

Just as this issue of *WATCH* magazine prepares to go to print, we find ourselves at war with Iran! The United States and Israel launched a joint bombing campaign that has devastated Iran's leadership. The Ayatollah Khamenei is dead! Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian is reportedly still alive at this writing. He is considered a moderate inside the regime though that may be relative to the radical pronouncements we have become accustomed to hearing out of Iran.

Pressure has been building on the Islamic Republic for a long time. Its proxies all over the region have been devastated. It was humiliated in last year's spat with Israel and the US, retaliation was largely symbolic. Facing massive protests, the regime engaged in a brutal crackdown that they admit left thousands dead, with casualty claims by rights groups reaching as high as 30,000. The country imposed a total communications blackout during these actions to stop its opponents from coordinating and prevent the outside world from looking in.

The US steadily built up its forces in the region. Various negotiations yielded no progress. Iran refused to engage about its ballistic missile program, its support for terror proxy groups or address how it has treated its own people. Despite rosy characterizations of serious discussions, it was fairly clear that an impasse had been reached.

The issue is no longer in doubt. While many are decrying "unilateral action," there is little debate about the Iranian regime being a source of evil both at home and abroad. Even Macron of France, while lamenting that the action was not referred to the UN, insisted that current leadership had disqualified itself from having any role in the future of the country.

What that future is remains to be seen. President Trump has encouraged the people of Iran to rise up and take control of their government after the bombing campaign is over. There is no indication

how long it might last at this point.

Statements from people on the ground vary. Naturally, some are fearful. Others are ecstatic, thrilled to see an end to nearly 50 years of brutality and repression. Expatriates around the world have been out in the streets celebrating.

The bombing is still currently in full swing. Israel and the United States hit nearly 1,000 targets in the first hours of conflict. Even with its leadership crippled, Iran has managed to strike back. US military bases all over the region have been targeted. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and Jordan have all faced attacks against bases in their territory, angering their governments. A friendly fire incident saw US fighters accidentally downed by Kuwait, though the pilots were able to escape.

So far, 4 US service members have been killed. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff spoke today, indicating it would likely take some time for all of their current military objectives to be met and that more casualties are to be expected. Sadly, a number of Israeli civilians have been killed as well. The leadership of Iran knows it is in a fight for its survival and seems determined to inflict as much damage as possible on the way out. Hezbollah and the Houthis have been expected to join the fray. Israel has already moved against Hezbollah, striking cells throughout Lebanon.

The real question is what comes next? What kind of government is going to emerge once the dust settles? However it develops, it is going to be a massive change in Middle Eastern affairs. Iran has been a regional powerhouse, the primary counterweight to Saudi Arabia.

Additionally, they are the only nation dominated by Shia Islam. The majority of the Muslim world is Sunni, though Iraq has a significant Shia population and there are large minorities in other places such as Pakistan and Lebanon. The split

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U.S. Sailors taxi aircraft to a staging point on the flight deck of Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) in support of Operation Epic Fury (U.S. Navy photo). February 28, 2026 saw a joint United States and Israeli assault of Iran's nuclear operations and military infrastructure. The targeted strikes resulted in the death of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and many top government officials of Iran.

Photo courtesy of U.S. Department of Defense. The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoW) visual information does not imply or constitute DoW endorsement.



Is It Always Persecution?

by Garner Ted Armstrong

Image: Shutterstock

Religious persecution is one of the oldest and most persistent manifestations of egocentric human nature.

From the records of dimmest antiquity come atrocious horror stories of the dedicated viciousness with which one racial or religious group pursued its goal of exterminating or “converting” members of a different group.

Most of the wars in history have started directly or indirectly as a result of religious zeal.

Ancient Babylonians, heathen worshipers of Baal, sought to exterminate the Israelites, who were worshipers of Jehovah.

Centuries later, a torrent of fervent Moslems, screaming *jihad* (holy war) soaked the land from the sands of the Arabian peninsula to the gates of Vienna with the blood of “infidels” who refused to acknowledge “Allah.”

Trying to overthrow Islamic power in the region, British and Northern Europeans launched a decades-long series of “crusades” in which “professing Christians” met scimitar with Sheffield steel, wielded with two hands and shaped like a cross.

From the days of the ancient Roman emperors to the time of the Spanish Inquisition, countless millions of human beings from one end of the earth to the other had been stabbed, bludgeoned, skinned alive, burnt at the stake, cudged, boiled in oil, impaled, thrown to lions, skewered, dashed to bits, torn asunder, starved to death, shot with arrows and subjected to every conceivable fiendish form of torture devised by perverted human minds.

All this, of course, in the name of “religion.”

CHRIST FORETOLD PERSECUTION

The birth of God’s true church revolved entirely around persecution. The central figure of the Bible is Jesus Christ of Nazareth; His birth, life and ministry — the gospel message He brought, His betrayal, illegal murder and resurrection.

Thus, the Church of God found its birth in the joyous good news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, following a hideous nightmare of bloody violence!

Soon, the early apostles found themselves in similar circumstances. James, John’s brother and the son of Zebedee, was murdered. Stephen was stoned to death.

Saul of Tarsus, a participant in Stephen’s death, was armed with letters of authority allowing him to haul men and women alike into prison, and was a self-admitted torturer of these hapless souls. Saul was struck down on the road to Damascus, became deeply converted and went on to become the best known apostle of all time, one who wrote 14 books of the New Testament.

Tradition says Peter was crucified upside down.

True to Jesus Christ’s own predictions, the early new Testament church suffered horrifying persecutions of every description.

Jesus had said they would be whipped “in the synagogues,” and would be driven from one city to another. The book of Acts is largely an account of the sufferings and tribulations of the struggling New Testament church as it endured untold persecutions.

But why persecution?

Jesus assured them that if He, the Son of God and the Son of Man, had suffered persecution, so

would His Disciples — so would anyone who would follow exactly in His footsteps!

Peter wrote, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

“If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified.

“But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters.

“Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (I Peter 4:12-16).

The entire thrust of this passage of Scripture is concerned with the true Christian being persecuted for the sake of his belief, for the sake of the name of Christ, and not for the remotest hint of any wrongdoing on his part!

The clearest example of this brand of persecution is seen in the New Testament itself!

The early apostles and men such as Stephen who were martyred for the cause of Jesus Christ were not hauled before magistrates on various civil or criminal charges! Rather, they were beset upon by screaming religious mobs, or directly persecuted at the behest of a puppet religious government.

By the time of the infamous persecutions of Emperor Nero, the scene had changed.

There is strong reason to suspect that many of the suffering Christians of Rome brought their sufferings upon themselves by a contemptuous attitude toward others in society; that some may have adopted the attitude of those in the 1960s in America who would gleefully clap their hands together and shout, “Burn, baby, burn!” as conflagrations set by arsonists devoured whole neighborhoods!

If this was, indeed, the manner in which these early Christians greeted the burning of Rome, there may be reason to suspect the terrible persecutions heaped upon them were caused, in part, by their own ill-advised action.

God’s Word is very clear that the true Christian

is to be persecuted for one reason only! That reason is his deep, personal, spiritual commitment to Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and his fervent determination to live the way of life taught by Jesus!

Jesus Christ Himself made it very clear that when one runs afoul of civil authority, he will suffer the consequences for his actions!

He taught, “Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing” (Matthew 5:25, 26).

Obviously, Jesus shows that the adversary has a point. If the Christian has actually committed some offense which could bring about arrest, trial and imprisonment, then Christ’s advice is to somehow make restitution, beg forgiveness, make amends — and settle the matter before this “adversary” causes the arrest!

If the Christian fails in this regard, Jesus clearly states his punishable offense will in no wise be mitigated by Christian forgiveness. It is completely separate from the whole subject of forgiveness of sin!

Therefore, Jesus showed that, even though the offending person might cry out to God for forgiveness spiritually, he will nevertheless remain in prison until he has “paid the uttermost farthing,” meaning paid whatever penalty is prescribed by law!

Unfortunately, many who claim “persecution” are hiding behind this charge in order to cover up evil!

Jim Jones screamed persecution when he took his band of loyal followers to Guyana, and eventually to their deaths! He ranted and raved that he could not live free from persecution inside the United States.

Subsequent events have proved there was great cause for constituted officials to look into Jim Jones’ organization.

The clear message of Jesus Christ to the true Christian is this: It is true you can expect persecution. Just make sure whatever persecution comes your way is never precipitated by you, and that you always take it humbly and endure it to the very end, knowing that if it is for the sake of Jesus Christ and His work you will receive a great blessing! □

The Media is Trying to Turn Us Against Trump

by Mark Armstrong

The President's efforts to get immigration under control are hitting Democrats where they live. Unbelievably, they seem to want our invasion. Talk about being on the wrong side of everything! Efforts in Minnesota have been called off, don't ask me why. I've been following all the fake children's centers. Everywhere they've gone, no kids. The centers have been empty of children, and I guess they're using our sensibilities against us.

The mainstream is freaking out over deportations. They feel sorry for the immigrants that sought to change our nation. But I, and you, love this country, and don't want it to become like the Middle East. Get them out before something else happens. They think they can hide in plain sight, but how's that going? If there's anyplace we don't want America to resemble, it's the Middle East.

Suddenly trannies are shooting up the place. How many mass shootings are we supposed to absorb before we realize that sex can't be changed without horrific consequences? But this goes beyond consequences to the person, this means everybody. Is the term I used not politically correct? It's not in my spell check, and it's as if it's not a word. But I'm going to use it anyway. It used to be okay to offend people. Not anymore. The worst among us have become so self-righteous, what are we to do?

The news is trying to tell us that Texas is in play in the mid-term vote. I don't think so. If you read the internet, Trump is losing bigly. But I live in the real world, and I think they're projecting. If you read the mainstream, they're so sure Trump is in trouble, they think if they write it enough it'll come true. I think they're full of beans.

They're all concerned that Trump is breaking the law, that the organizations that are supposed to be watching out for us may be coming for us. The mainstream is bound and determined to turn us against Trump. Several "news organizations" are committed to just that. I don't know if they're having any luck, but I doubt it. They're trying to tell us that Texas is in play for the mid-term elections. I don't buy it, and I live here. Nobody wants to go back to living in fear, and we're not.

Europe is getting close to being a lost cause. They're still trying to convince us that global warming is real. I don't care what anybody says, I don't think so. Everything bad is Trump's fault according to the media. I hate to see what's going to happen to them. In the mean time it looks like God is blessing this nation. The sooner everybody figures that out, the better. □



WARNING: CONTENTS UNDER EXTREME PRESSURE HANDLE WITH CARE

by Michael Armstrong

For all their complexity, world affairs at this time could be summed up with a single word: PRESSURE! Everywhere there is the feeling of simmering tension. Great powers find their agendas at odds, internal strife rattles the foundation of civilization. The past, the present and the path forward are everywhere the subject of contentious debate. One gets the impression of a soda that has been dropped or shaken. How can the pressure be released without making a tremendous mess?

Of enduring interest are the Epstein files. They are continuing to add to an already staggering list of high-profile resignations or at least humiliations. The arrest of the former Prince, Andrew (or “the Andrew formerly known as Prince” if you’re the right age for that reference) was shocking if not entirely unexpected from his long and documented relationship. The UK Ambassador to the US, Mandelson, was arrested in the days following and both are facing scrutiny for alleged abuse of public office at the very least.

But the list goes on and on. Resignations include: A

former US Treasury Secretary and President of Harvard. Goldman-Sachs’ chief legal officer. The President of the World Economic Forum. The Chairman of Hyatt Hotels. We could fill the page with them. Bill Gates has even had to publicly admit to affairs with multiple Russian women and apologize profusely to save face at his foundation. The effects are rippling around the world as many other countries see executives and government officials bow out of important roles after their names appeared in the files.

The real fallout is in trust. The governmental systems and large corporations that underpin the world order as we know it today are reeling from this. And in no way is this a plea for the status quo. Let justice be served in every circumstance. From a prophetic viewpoint it is the potential for change that is of primary interest. What shifts the current establishment towards the final scenario? When the population as a whole begins to regard those who hold the levers of power as not only self interested or corrupt, but evil and guilty of some of the most

heinous crimes imaginable, the odds of dramatic change increase exponentially. Already there are mobs crying for blood in a sense. Demanding the cancellation of contracts, firings, prosecutions and so on. But the mob’s appetite, once whetted, is not easy to satiate.

By no means is that the only issue contributing to the tremendous pressure in world affairs today. Since the last publication of this magazine we have seen the daring raid that plucked Nicolas Maduro from the Presidency of Venezuela. The audacious action was not only a display of military prowess but a slap in face to Venezuelan allies like China and Russia, who spent enormous amounts of time and money cultivating influence in the country.

The repercussions have been even worse for Cuba. That country now teeters on the brink of collapse. Venezuela was traditionally their main supplier of oil, which they burn to generate electricity, and it has been completely cut off in line with US embargoes. Mexico, the next largest, has been pressured by the US to stop deliveries as well. Fuel shortages,

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power outages and a want of other necessities are testing the resilience of the communist regime.

Mexico has also caved to US calls for taking action against the cartels, notorious for the production of drugs, smuggling and human trafficking. A raid was carried out against “El Mencho,” leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, that saw him killed in the process. But bloodier still were the repercussions that followed. It is estimated that over 70 people have been killed as of this writing, a third of which were military or law enforcement. They have been targeted and ambushed in retribution. Further, roads were blocked and businesses burned in over half the country as the cartel flexed its muscle, attempting to intimidate the authorities and deter future action.

We will see if more is being contemplated. The problem is obviously far from solved. Mexico has resisted direct US involvement as insulting to their sovereignty, but the military has provided intelligence to facilitate operations. A crackdown on cartel leadership may set off power struggles that actually result in an increase in violence, as has been seen in Ecuador over the past couple of years. We can only guess at how deep the corruption goes as well. That may have a detrimental effect on seeing these elaborate and powerful criminal operations completely eradicated.

Gaza also finds itself at a bit of an impasse. Hamas theoretically agreed to disarm once an acceptable international force was in place and other steps towards



(Above) Aerial view of fires in Puerto Vallarta as violence and panic spread across Mexico following the killing of drug lord “El Mencho.” *Photo: Ernesto Mastrascusa/EPA/Shutterstock*

(Below) Garbage piles up and power is uncertain in Havana, Cuba due to fuel shortages. *Gerardo Santillan/EPA/Shutterstock*



sovereignty had been taken. No international force has been forthcoming. Indonesia was the first to agree to participate, a development that came about during trade negotiations with President Trump. Turkey had indicated a willingness, but Israel did not want to be put into direct military confrontation with them due to their mutually contentious history.

Therein lies the danger from which Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country, is not exempt. Any nation that participates risks putting their forces into an extremely volatile situation and opens up the potential for conflict with Israel. Nor can they be sure their soldiers don't harbor any personal animosity that might be acted upon if an opportunity presented itself. Hatred for Israel runs deep throughout the region. Most Arab countries want no part of a peacekeeping mission under such tense circumstances, let alone the prospect of being drawn into a wider war. Prophetically, Christ said Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies prior to the last days (Luke 21:20-22), making this region especially important to WATCH!

Iran has just boiled over at this writing. Israel and the United States are currently conducting strikes all over the country. The Ayatollah has been killed and the regime's senior leadership has been decimated. No one knows how long the strikes will continue. The people have been encouraged to rise up and take control of their government in the aftermath. Iran has long received support from Russia and China in an "enemy

of my enemy" sort of way. It has been an export market for Russia in the face of Western sanctions and a cheap supplier of oil to China for the same reason. With the discount likely to evaporate on Venezuelan crude, China may resent a similar fate befalling its allies in Iran. Time will tell. China and the US are currently playing nice ahead of a summit between Trump and Xi.

Four years later, the war in Ukraine grinds on. It has revolutionized battlefield tactics with the use of drones. Russia has demanded more territory than it currently controls as a prerequisite to peace, something Ukraine is not willing to accept. Russia continues to advance, but the advance is extremely slow and the cost in lives and equipment is extremely high. Small squads are sent to quickly penetrate the front lines, but they are often driven back by an onslaught of drones that is difficult to defend against. The conflict is currently one of attrition, each side hoping to wear the other out.

Most of Europe remains vociferous about the threat from Russia. But not uniformly. Hungary vetoed two measures recently, one was a loan for Ukraine and the other was a new round of sanctions on Russia. It is a poignant illustration of the divergent interests that exist across the bloc and adds internal drama to external pressure. Another would be Spain offering blanket amnesty to migrants, providing an easy way into the Schengen Zone when most members are tightening their restrictions. Many of these nations are the literal and prophetic heirs

of the old Roman Empire and many of the fault lines between the Catholic West and Orthodox East can still be clearly seen. The current EU lumps all that together and more, but it is an imperfect union that will not stand the test of time in its current form.

The United States is facing internal difficulties of its own. Immigration enforcement, particularly the deployment of ICE in ideologically opposed cities, resulted in many protests and a couple of high-profile deaths. The narrative that gets reported around these incidents differs wildly depending on the outlet. The issue has almost become one of emotion rather than reason or propriety when dealing with law enforcement, as if protesting somehow allows you to act with impunity. Thankfully, much of the clamor around this has died down. Polls have shown the country is still broadly in favor of enforcing our immigration laws, including deportations. Yet that support slips for the actions necessary to carry it out, essentially wanting the job done but not wanting to do it. Deportations continue, including incentivized self-deportations, and illegal border crossings have dropped to virtually zero.

The Supreme Court's long awaited ruling on Trump's tariffs was finally handed down, and not in his favor. That decision temporarily injected uncertainty back into the trade situation but it has largely stabilized. Even critics do not doubt Trump's ability to reset tariffs to the agreed upon levels via different, though slower, methods than the emergency power he

had enacted them under. The vast majority of deals negotiated show no signs of breaking, and much of the foreign investment that was set to be approved will continue even as the legal framework is rebuilt. Trump claims he has secured upwards of \$18 Trillion in foreign investment since taking office.

The re-assertiveness with which the US has pursued its agenda is an over-arching factor in many of the pressurized situations we have discussed. For years there has been talk of

a “multipolar world.” The era of American dominance, as the only superpower after the collapse of the Soviet Union, had been read its last rites. That notion has been completely turned upside down.

Enemies and allies alike have taken notice. There is no substitute for American military power, market access or leadership. It is not a boast or an egotistical delusion to say so. It is a cold, hard assessment of actions taken and the subsequent international reactions. The world has no

replacement as of yet. That fact alone places us at the center of a great deal of volatility.

Tension and pressure are building in many places and in many ways. It remains to be seen how much of it will be managed. Can it be dispersed incrementally? Will it explode suddenly into war and tribulation of Biblical proportions? We can only remain vigilant, devoted to the calling and example of our Lord Jesus Christ, and faithful to His instruction to WATCH and PRAY! ☐

A New Plan For Iran?

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between Shia and Sunni practitioners dates back to a dispute in the succession of leaders following Mohammad.

The divide is often bitter. Sometimes when you read of terrorist attacks, Mosques being hit by suicide bombers, it is due to this difference in practice. Pakistan and Afghanistan are also currently at war over attacks such as this and accusations that the Taliban allows terrorists to operate with impunity, striking into Pakistan and retreating.

Without a theocratic Iran there will be no major Shia power. Iran has bolstered its image in

the Islamic world by being the most outspoken against the US and Israel. As we all know, they have committed serious time and resources to recruiting, training and supplying proxy groups. It has propaganda value by portraying them as on the front lines of the conflict with the West. Whatever transpires with the future government of Iran, it is unlikely that this will be allowed to continue.

Some have spoken of Iran as a potential “King of the South” that is prophesied to be a factor in world affairs at the end time. You can see this in chapters 10, 11 and 12 of the book of Daniel. There are historical fulfillments for much of what is mentioned, but this does not negate a future occurrence. Many prophecies are dual.



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This one particularly gives the time frame for its ultimate fulfillment, “Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days” (Dan. 10:14). As with the Abomination of Desolation, which Daniel spoke of and Christ referenced as a sign of the end, Antiochus’ desecration of the temple almost 200 years before Christ did not negate the end-time recurrence He spoke of.

Iran is not the King of the South and given the current circumstances I doubt there are many who would make that claim today. The problem is territory though. We look for the resurrection of Rome and the “ten kings” that “shall make war with the Lamb” among the peoples and nations that Rome controlled (Rev. 17:12-14). Where else would you look? It is clear from Daniel 2 that it is a continuation of that same system that persists to the very end.

The same logic applies to the King of the South. Historically it was centered in Egypt. Daniel 11:42-43 mentions Egypt, Libya and Ethiopia. Iran has been a factor in the region but not to the extent of some of the Gulf kingdoms. They have supplied Sudan, which is between Egypt and Ethiopia, with drones and other armaments during their bloody and unresolved civil war.

Those days are over however. The single greatest change from the fall of Iran will be the loss of their influence. Without the religious, regional rivalry Iran represented, we could see a great many changes in the Middle East. Many of the other powers have their own contentions but Iran was a major impediment to even nominal unity in the region. Without them in the mix, there is going to be a major re-calibration of priorities.

It is worth noting that Egypt is largely kept afloat by foreign investment and aid from the Gulf Kingdoms. Libya has been split into two competing governments ever since the fall of Qaddafi. Sudan’s civil war has dragged on for years. Ethiopia is not exactly stable but is not in the same state of open conflict as some of its neighbors. Without Iran sapping time and resources, attention could turn towards these regions.

Prophecy indicates enough unity to act against their northern rival. “And at the time of the



Image: Maureen McLean/Shutterstock

end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over” (Daniel 11:40). There is no unity today. Whether these nations are truly united or if they are more a confederation acting in concert like their northern rival, we will have to wait and see.

At some point the region is going to change and the fall of Iran is a step along the way. It is one of the most important developments in years. We certainly pray for the future of Iran as well as the safety and prosperity of the citizens who wish to live in peace. After all, they are the first and primary victims of the Ayatollahs. It is a momentous occurrence. The scenes of celebration from many of those who have fled over the years say a lot. One photo was of an elderly man, crying. You can imagine those who got out during the 1979 revolution, watching that regime develop from afar and knowing the kind of brutality, degradation and oppression that was being imposed on your friends, neighbors or even family. Hopefully the coming years will be better than the last decades. Whatever happens, we will be watching! □

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

Image: Shutterstock

AI IN EVERYTHING

Because it's so great, right? Maybe not always... A number of medical devices have rolled out "AI enhancements" on products previously released. Some boast anatomical identification for use during surgery. Unfortunately, accuracy is debatable. Cases are currently in court where doctors lost track of where their minute instruments were, particularly inside the skull, which resulted in terrible injuries. AI has not been definitively at fault, but legal action is underway to hold companies responsible if their technology is in fact to blame.

AVAST Y' SCURVY CUR

No, not pirates or any other malnourished sailors, but users of revolutionary new GLP-1 medications for weight loss. They do in fact work, but there is a new debate on whether eating less is necessarily healthier. Much of it has to do with diet and activity level. Some who have embraced the rapid weight-loss trend are simply eating less overall and, without planning and caution, are now suffering from diseases generally thought to belong to another age. A balanced diet is essential to health, and it's important to remember that less isn't always more.

SOUTH AMERICA TURNS RIGHT

The region has long been a bastion of socialist influence. The preference of the current administration of the United States is abundantly clear in the actions against Nicolas Maduro of Venezuela and the ongoing pressure against the Cuban regime. Yet the trend was already underway. Bolivia's Presidency changed hands after 20+ years of socialism. Chile also saw an ascension of conservatism

in the face of crime and immigration. Peru closed their border after a flood of undocumented individuals who feared deportation after Chile's election. Whether the trend will hold remains to be seen, but it is in line with recent elections in both Central and South America and is poised to benefit from renewed US interest in the Western Hemisphere.

TRANS

It remains among the most volatile of social issues. The recent school shooting in British Columbia brought the violent aspect of this to the fore again, following attacks on a church in Minnesota, a Nashville school, and of course the assassination of Charlie Kirk. We talk of "mental health issues" while officials fall all over themselves in the pursuit of pronouns while serious issues over rationale or the efficacy of treatment are sidelined. Taboo even. The Supreme Court has yet to decide the fate of a nationwide ban on conversion therapy. Various locales have tried to prohibit therapists from encouraging children to be comfortable with their sex at birth. While initiatives to make such designations mandatory in sports or on official documents have been successful, a radical faction continues to push the fiction that gender is malleable. A BBC news anchor was even reprimanded for swapping the scripted phrase "pregnant people" to "women." Contrariwise, a young woman has been awarded damages after suing over being pressured into transitioning (a double mastectomy) while still a teenager. Her mother testified that the doctors pushing the procedure said her daughter would kill herself if they didn't go through with it. The girl has since de-transitioned and regrets that physical intervention is often prioritized over therapy.

MISSILE TREATIES

Limitations on the stockpiles of nuclear weapons possessed by the US and Russia have expired. Nor has the US expressed any interest in renewing them without the inclusion of China. This mirrors the end of similar intermediate range missile treaties that this publication has previously reported on, where the US felt at a disadvantage, being bound by a treaty with one power that a third was not party to. While China currently has a fraction of the nuclear weapons (about 600, compared to over 5,000 each) maintained by the US and Russia, they are expanding their stock rapidly and are a top tier contender in many of the most innovative delivery technologies. We shall see if Russia or the US move to increase their stockpiles. Meanwhile, direct military communications that were halted over the war in Ukraine have been restored. This limits any chance of escalation over miscommunication or other peripheral issues.

SPEECH AND GOVERNMENT OVERREACH

The shooting at Bondi beach, targeting those celebrating the beginning of Hanukkah, brought a rash of tougher “hate speech” laws from the government of Australia. Still, the president of Israel received a tremendous booning when he visited in sympathy with the victims. The UK, in the same vein, recently tried to ban the protest group Palestine Action. Beyond just speech, the group did advocate for and practice direct action, which devolved into the sabotage of military equipment. That ban was ruled unconstitutional however, and the formal “terrorist” designation dropped. The bigger picture illustrates that the underlying problem is an incompatibility of ideas and values. No amount of banning words or groups will fix it. Meanwhile, a meme could get you thrown in jail.

CHINA’S OUTLAY

The Belt and Road initiative brought infrastructure projects to far flung corners of the world that debt and stability concerns precluded from Western finance. Now, however, the bills are catching up. Reports indicate that more money is flowing to China in the form of interest than is being put back into places that embraced their projects, like

Africa. Domestic economic concerns, like abysmal population growth that has seen high taxes imposed on contraceptives, a property sector in disarray, and shifting, uncertain export markets, has limited investment, even to areas considered critical to trade expansion. They have faced further difficulties in places like Pakistan, where their presence is resented by separatists in Balochistan and their nationals have been intentionally targeted in terrorist attacks claiming many lives. Pressure from the United States has led Canada, the UK, the EU and others to make deals with China but there is no real substitute for the world’s largest market, despite protectionist concessions on all sides. There are hints of a thaw however. Some speculate that the US may try to separate the interests of China and Russia, leveraging economic incentives for Sino pressure to end the war in Ukraine. But it is hard to project with any certainty amidst the vagaries of geopolitics.

EUROPEAN REARMAMENT...

A real trend? The talk is tough but the reality progresses very slowly. Years are required to even approach current NATO spending targets of 5% of GDP. Spain flat refuses to spend more than 2%. Projects such as bridges or spending on forestry services are allowed to be included in these goals under the guise of internal preparation. Initiatives such as the “drone wall” to protect the EU’s eastern flank are talked up but resisted by Western countries who argue the threat applies equally to them. Only under extreme duress (and threats of annexation) has NATO begun to take security around Greenland seriously, despite its importance being stressed universally among sober defense assessments. The threats may be real, and the rhetoric may be effusive and convincing, but the reality is that all these initiatives cost money and require approval across a number of States with divergent interests. There is talk of a “2 speed Europe,” promoted by the Finance Minister of Germany, that would include most of the continent’s major economies. While not exactly the “10 kings” anticipated in Bible prophecy (Daniel 7/Revelation 13), it illustrates the frustration with bureaucracy and debate, and objections by partners perceived as less important by the true economic and military powers of Europe.

Continued next page

The Olympics!

Not the Winter Olympics — the House Keeping Olympics! Few places have a hospitality industry large enough to spawn such a competition, but Las Vegas has managed to pull it off for the last few decades. Competition was fierce among the housekeeping staffs of various large hotels. Activities such as mopping and making the bed regularly go unappreciated. Outraged critics complained that the activities were demeaning. Since when has it been wrong to take pride in your work or want to do the absolute, verifiable best at whatever it is you do? We might cite the cliché “any job worth doing is worth doing well,” but it may be more appropriate to quote Solomon, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might” (Ecclesiastes 9:10). There is never any shame in laboring to support yourself or your family! Shame is reserved for those who lack humility and belittle necessity.

MIGRATION

Migrants and illegal entries continue to be a problem for the EU. As favored routes are suppressed, new ones seem to spring up. It remains a major European social debate on how to best deal with the problem, and those who campaign on doing something about it continue to benefit politically. This has forced even more sympathetic regimes to take measures to address the issue. Germany, facing a host of asylum claims from Afghans who fled to Pakistan from the Taliban, is offering to pay them not to come. Italy is trying to pass a Bill that would impose a full naval blockade of its shores, making it illegal for charitable endeavors that intercept migrants to operate. It is unlikely to pass. As long as the issue continues unresolved it will benefit the factions advocating for action. Spain’s socialist government is taking the opposite tack. They are rolling out a major amnesty program.

BRICS AND MONEY

They have stopped short of anything as controversial as issuing their own currency. Yet, the “Global South” still seeks monetary alternatives to the Western aligned status quo. An avenue that is being seriously pursued is an exchange system

that would circumvent SWIFT, taking dollars (and with them sanctions) out of the equation. It is based on Central Bank Digital Currencies. While still in development, the idea is that digital standards will align and allow for seamless conversions without the necessity of passing through an intermediary currency like the US dollar. Not only that, transactions would accrue monthly, and only the difference would actually have to be transferred at the end of each period. Logistically it makes a lot of sense, but practically there is much work to be done and tremendous pressure not to allow any alternative to the dollar.

DISCOMBOBULATOR

Next level weapons technology was deployed during the US action to seize Nicolas Maduro of Venezuela. President Trump referred to one such weapon as the “discombobulator.” Venezuelan troops reported feeling like they were on fire, total confusion and indecision, collapse, bleeding from the head and vomiting. In other words, being totally and completely incapacitated while under its effects, and yet recovering completely afterwards. How exactly it works is being kept secret.

MEGIDDO

The site has been of archaeological interest since the early 1900’s. It has yielded many discoveries that bear upon the Biblical narrative. It was fortified by Solomon for his chariots (1 Kings 9:15). It is the site where King Josiah was killed after intercepting Pharaoh Necho, as recorded in 2 Kings 23:29. Remnants from Pharaoh Necho’s expedition are thought to have been found! A large cache of Greek pottery, in combination with Egyptian wares, has been uncovered at the site. It is estimated to date to 7th century BC, the very time their encounter would have taken place, and is the largest of its kind ever to be uncovered in the region. The reference to Lydians in Jeremiah 46:9 is taken to imply that the Egyptians employed Greeks in their army. Taken with the date, it is thought that the pottery is left over from the well documented expedition against Assyria. □

Image: Shutterstock

THE MYSTERIOUS SUKKIIM

by Craig M. White, FriendsOfSabbath.org

The Bible is a fascinating book, full of mysteries and surprises. I encourage readers to discover its many gems.

This writer uncovered one of these gems in the 1970s and 1980s when he undertook a vast study into the origin of the nations based on the Table of Nations (Genesis 10). During this study the following Scripture was especially intriguing:

“In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, because they had been unfaithful to the Lord, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem with 1,200 chariots and 60,000 horsemen. And the people were without number who came with him from Egypt—Libyans, Sukkiim, and Ethiopians.” (II Chron 12:2-3) [compare II Chron 14:9; 16:8]

Who were the Sukkiim? I wondered.

The *iim* in Sukkiim denotes plural for Suk or Suka. In other words, these are the peoples of the Suk.

Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance demonstrated that this is the only place in the Bible where these people are referred to, adding to the mystery:

“H5525 סֻכְּיָי:

“sûkkîy, sook-kee’

“Patrial from an unknown name (perhaps H5520); a Sukkite, or inhabitant of some place near Egypt (that is, hut dwellers): - Sukkiims.”

While the Libyans (Heb. = Lubim or the Lub, descendants of the Lehabim) and Ethiopians (Heb. = Cushites, descendants of Cush) are traceable to their current African locations, what of the peoples of Suk?

First of all, given the context of the Scripture it seems obvious that the Sukkim came from the same region as the other peoples mentioned—north-east Africa—and therefore are descendants of Ham, probably Cushites.

Secondly, given the historical record, traditions, and DNA research, we know that the various nations and tribes of Africa have progressively been pushed south and in turn have forced other nations and tribes ever southward. This would mean that the Sukkiim must be further south of Egypt and Ethiopia today than they were in the days of King Rehoboam.

In addition, as most African

movement has been from west to east and north to south, it is highly unlikely that these people ended up in west Africa or stayed in north-east Africa. Nor can people with a similar name be found in South Africa or Zimbabwe. To me, logically they would therefore probably be found in east Africa and the search was begun.

Were my assumptions correct? Was the logic a possibility? Let us undertake a quest for the modern location of these people and find out.

CUSHITE MIGRATIONS

To try and locate the Sukkiim, we should determine where the peoples of Cush are located today.

From the Table of Nations, we learn that Noah fathered Ham who fathered Cush, Mizraim, Phut, Canaan. Cush in turn fathered:

- Seba
- Havilah
- Sabtah
- Raamah (father of Sheba and Dedan)
- Sabtechah
- Nimrod

But note that the Sukkim are not listed and so must be

Continued next page

a people descended from one of the grandsons of Cush. But which one?

In my book *In Search of ... the Origin of Nations*, I identified most of the peoples of East Africa as the descendants of Raamah. This would place the Sukkiim in that region today. Given this, we should undertake a short exploration of the peoples of Cush in the first instance.

We should be mindful, of course, that in history, the meaning of a name (in this case tribal names) may change over the centuries. Also, the name of a tribe may transfer to another; or a name which was once used for an entire nation may reduce to only a single tribe. Regardless of all this, a tribal name still provides a trace for the national origin of peoples.

About 740 BC, the Nubians conquered Egypt for almost a

century, establishing the 25th dynasty during which time they are pictured as black pharaohs. They were ousted by the Assyrians about 656 BC and during the succeeding centuries ruled from Meroe, near the town of Saba, over their subjects. David Rohl in *A Test of Time. The Bible — From Myth to History*, reveals that “The brutal Assyrian assault crushes all resistance. The Kushites flee south, never to be seen again in the Black Land”. (p. 22)

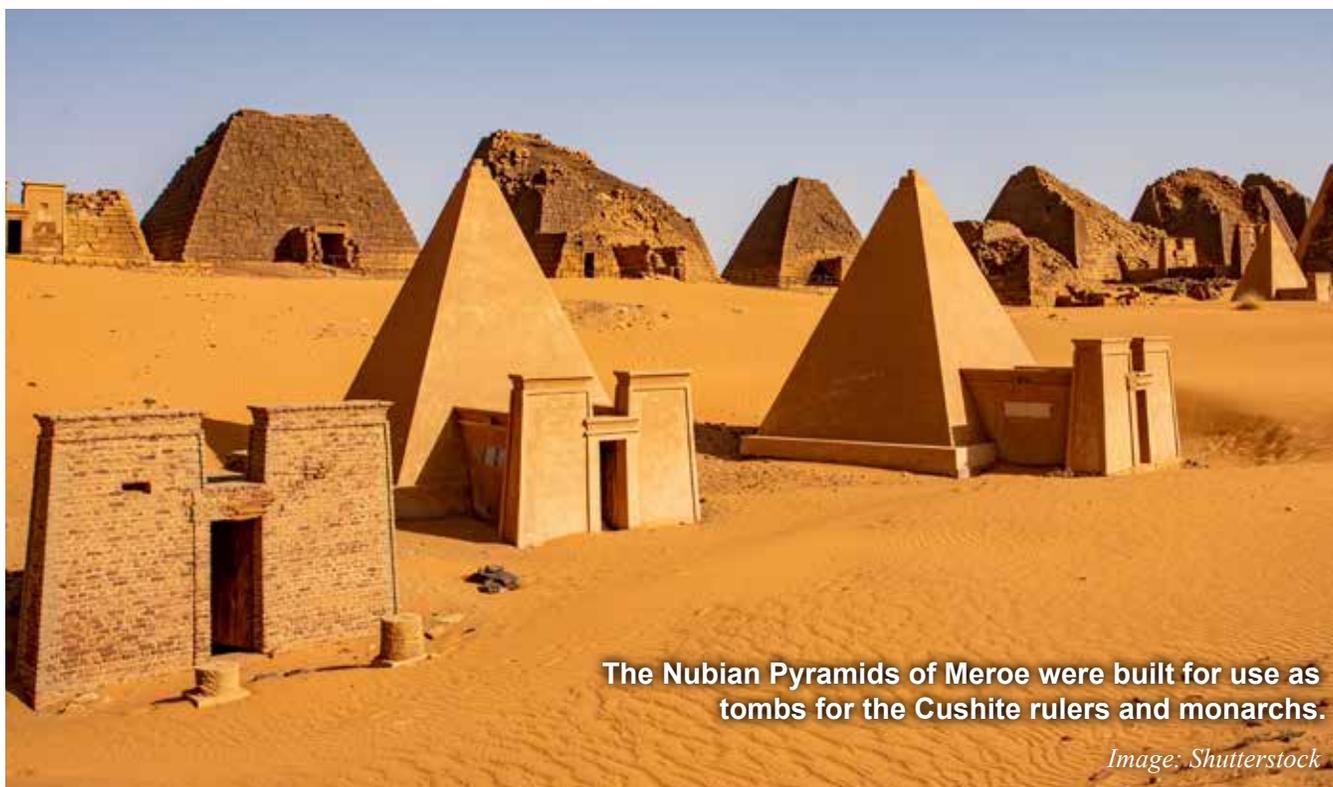
Mighty Assyrian emperor Esarhaddon described Egypt/Sudan as “Muzri, Patursu and Kush” (i.e., Mizraim, Put, Cush) which fits exactly the Biblical origin of these lands and peoples.

This period is known as the Kingdom of Kush, which was free from Egyptian influence. In the second century BC powerful queens ruled the nation and, apparently, supplied Hannibal

with the elephants which were used against the Romans. By the 6th century AD most of the Kushite Nubians had converted to Christianity and maintained their religion for centuries. It was not until about 1400 AD that they turned to Islam most and have remained Islamic since.

Their major cities included Kerma, Meroe, Saba (also spelt Soba), the latter probably derived from Seba, a son of Cush; or Sheba, son of Raamah. It is now recognised that Kerma and the surrounding civilization fit the place and the date of the Cushite peoples mentioned in Scripture — once again Scripture is found to be so accurate that there can be little doubt that it is indeed an inspired document.

Large pyramids, temples and other structures have been found and further excavations, it is believed, will reveal more



The Nubian Pyramids of Meroe were built for use as tombs for the Cushite rulers and monarchs.

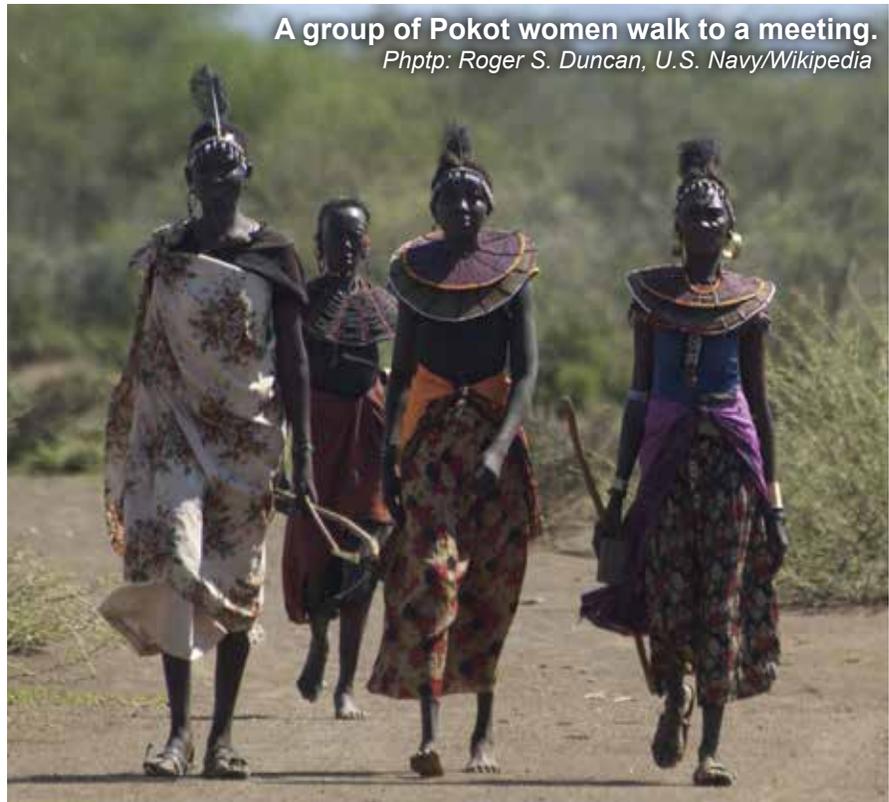
Image: Shutterstock

exciting finds such as treasures, cult goddesses, kingly sceptres, remains of priests and such like. Their pottery, jewelry, statues, ritual glasses and stele reveal an important culture and people which has only recently been fully recognised. In fact, the region contains more pyramids than Egypt. All historians and archaeologists admit that this area was known in the Bible as Kush, to the Romans as Nubia and to the Egyptians as Aethiopia.

These descendants of Sheba and Dedan are called “Nilo-Hamites” by anthropologists, which consist of tribes including the Masai, Nanda (comprising the **Suk** or Pokot, Keyo or Elgeyo, Kipsigis or Lumbwa, Nandi, Barabaig and Dorobo), and the Teso (comprising the Teso, Kuman, Karamojong, Turkana and Toposa) (refer to Alan Barnard, *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, p. 15; and Kim de Vries, *Identity Strategies of the Agro-Pastoral Pokot*).

They can be traced all the way to Egypt, which fits the Biblical narrative:

“Most Pokot scholars, including Pat Robbins and Harold Schneider, hypothesize that the Pokot, as part of the larger Kalenjin group, **migrated from various parts of Africa, including but not limited to Egypt**, Lake Turkana, southeastern Sudan, and Ethiopia.” (Jennifer Fleischman, *Beads of Empowerment: The Role of Body Art in Challenging Pokot Gender Identities*, p. 6) [emphasis mine]



A group of Pokot women walk to a meeting.

Phptp: Roger S. Duncan, U.S. Navy/Wikipedia

One tribe, the Dinka, dwell in southern Sudan south of the White Nile, numbering about five million. It is their custom to take the leader of a cattle herd (which is called a *majok* and may derive from *maj* or *mage* = wise one and *ok* = ox) and train their horns to appear in a circle or into one like a unicorn or even the antlers of a stag. This does not hurt the animal as they have a deep affection for their *majoks*.

The Suk or Pokot dwell mainly in the western districts of Kenya and a small eastern district of Uganda. Being Cushitic, their language group belongs to the southern Nilotic language group and their numbers are around 10 million.

“The Suk appear to be unanimous in tracing their origin to two tribes called Chok (or Chuk) and **Seker**, who lived on the Elgeyo escarpment. At present

they call themselves Pokwut, and **Suk** appears to be the name given them by the Masai, and derived from the above-mentioned Chok or Chuk of doubtful meaning.” (Mervyn Beech, *The Suk. Their Language and Folklore*, p. xii) [emphasis mine]

The literature is replete that nowadays they call themselves Pokoto or Pokoot, not Suk. However, others have supposedly given them that name and all sorts of theories abound as to its origin and true meaning. It is likely they continued this appellation for many centuries when they resided in northern Africa.

“The people whom we know as the Suk do not recognize this name for their tribe, but style themselves Pokwut, the singular number of which word, signifying a single Suk person, is Pechon, the on being one of the ordinary singular suffixes employed

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to denote a single member of a tribe. Suk is said to be the Masai name for the tribe. (Mervyn Beech, *The Suk. Their Language and Folklore*, p. 1)

The Nandi referred to above are basically a cattle herding people and, much like the Indian Dravidian Kurumba, have an adoration for cattle which reflects their ancient pagan worship. To them milk is so sacred that they take precautions to prevent the mixing of meat with milk in the stomach (Charles Seligman,

Races of Africa, p. 105). And to the Suk tribe, cattle are so important that in their language, if an adjective stands by itself, the noun it qualifies is always understood to be a cow.

Amongst many of these East African tribes, "Cattle were used in place of money, especially in purchase of wives ... [many] will not kill their cattle, neither do they taste meat unless an animal dies ... [they practice] cattle-worship". (John Baker, *Race*, p. 360)

All anthropologists write how the Cushitic tribes of East Africa, especially the Wahim or Bahima of Uganda, Watussi of Rwanda and Burindi, and the Masai of Tanzania, are very tall, amongst the tallest peoples in the world. The Sabaean, comprising Sheba (son of Raama), are said to be "men of stature" in Isaiah 45:14, which is interesting because Herodotus wrote (c. 484-420 BC) how the Ethiopians of his day were said to be the tallest people in the world (Herodotus, *The Histories*, 3.20, 114) One side interest: is there a connection between the Anak peoples of Num. 13:22-33; Deut. 9:1-2; Joshua 15:13 with the Anuak or Anyuak Nilotic tribe of south-west Ethiopia and south-east Sudan, relatives to the other tall peoples of eastern Africa?

THE SUKKIIM IN EAST AFRICA

As we have seen, the only direct mention of the Sukkiim in the Bible is recorded in II Chronicles (c. 923 BC):

"In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, because they had been unfaithful to the LORD, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem with 1,200 chariots and 60,000 horsemen. And the people were without number who came with him from Egypt—Libyans, **Sukkiim**, and Ethiopians." (II Chron. 12:2-3)

In II Chronicles 16:8 we are told that the "huge host" poured into the Middle East.

The Sukkiim originally dwelt on the east coast of Africa (Ethelbert Bullinger, *The Companion Bible*, p. 581. Note on II Chronicles 12:3). Josephus'

rendition of I Kings 10:22 as “ivory, Ethiopians, and apes” suggests that the Hebrew was *Sukkiyyim* or “black people,” rather than *Tukkiyyim*, or peacocks, which some think (Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 8. 10. 2). Even if Josephus is wrong, at least his statement shows that the Sukkiim were understood to be black peoples.

There might therefore be something to the reference to the “Lubim and Put” in Nahum 3:9 and the “Lubim and Sukkim” in II Chronicles 12:3, given that both are similar in fashion and that this indicates that there were a people descended from Put amongst the Sukkim, and not Cushites alone.

Speaking of Shishak, King of Egypt, Josephus writes: “concerning whom Herodotus was mistaken, and applied his actions to Sesostrius; [who came] with many ten thousand men ... they were the greatest part of them Libyans and Ethiopians” (ibid, 8. 10. 2).

“Herodotus of Halicarnassus mentions this expedition having only mistaken the King’s name; ... He says withal that the Ethiopians learned to circumcise ... from the Egyptians; with this addition, that the Phoenicians and Syrians that live in Palestine confess that they learned it of the Egyptians.” (ibid, 8. 10. 3).

Before continuing our tracing the movements of the Sukkiim into the Sinai and Palestine and into Asia Minor, let us notice how the name is recalled in Africa.

Firstly, there was a city

called Sakkara in lower Egypt (Michael Grant, *Ancient History Atlas*. 1700 BC To AD 565, p. 3). The modern Suwakim, a town on the Red Sea in the Sudan was originally known as Suakim. Again, one cannot positively identify that with Sukkiim, but it is a possibility. Also, I might mention that the African goddess, Hathor, was anciently known as Seket or Sakti which may be connected to the Sukkim (Ayyaswami Kalyanaraman, *Aryatarangini. The Saga of the Indo-Aryans* (Vol. 1), p. 21).

Another tribe called the **Suku** dwell in the southwestern Democratic Republic of Congo. The area of Sakania, in the Congo, bordering on Zambia is probably named after them. They are very centralised with a monarchy and number just 200,000 but are West African, not Nilo-Cushite. They are, however, shorter in stature than other tribes in the region, measuring a mean of 5 feet 2 inches (Igor Kopytoff, “The Suku of Southwestern Congo” in James Gibbs (ed), *Peoples of Africa*, p. 444). It is likely, however, that their name was adopted from nearby Cushitic tribes.

In Tanzania dwell the Sukuma, a different tribe to the Suku, which carries a meaning of northerners. They refer to themselves as Wasukuma (plural) and Msukuma (singular) and together with related tribes, are classified as southern Nilotes (formerly known as Nilo-Hamites by anthropologists) and number about eleven million and represent the largest ethnic group in Tanzania (John Mackenzie, (ed) *Peoples,*

Nations and Cultures, p. 260). Their threshing and growing of Sorghum is almost identical to that of the central highlands of Ethiopia, observers inform us (see Hugh Doggett, “A suggested history of the crops common to Ethiopia and India” in *Late Prehistory of the Nile Basin and the Sahara*, pp. 27-47).

DID THE SUKUMA

MIGRATE SOUTH VIA ETHIOPIA?

Tribes in proximity to them are of the same stock, though are not called Sukuma (Anthony Makwaia (et al), “ABC of the Sukuma Calendar”, *International Journal of Theoretical and Applied Mathematics*, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 127.)

Yet another tribe, the **Suk**, are found in Kenya, north of Lake Baring. They are noted for farming cattle, sheep, goats, and they also keep camels (Thayer Willis, *A History of Discovery and Exploration*, p. 151). They are not West African but Nilo-Hamite (Cushitic) and like so many Cushites, they have an adoration of cattle, having established a cattle cult. To them milk is sacred (Charles Seligman, *Races of Africa*, p. 105) and in this connection some anthropologists have pointed out the similarities between the cattle cults of East Africa and southern India as we have seen. They cannot fathom out how this could be. Taylor puzzles over the many similarities, for example, between the Kurumba Dravidians and the Ethiopians (Thomas Taylor, *Environment, Race and Migration*, p. 210; See

Continued next page

also Carlton Coon, *Living Races of Mankind*, p. 403).

But let us return now to the story flow. Two quotes may help to further illuminate a complex study. *A Gazetteer of the Old and New Testaments* states: “Sukkim ... were ancient tribes who dwelt in caves in various parts of Palestine, Arabia, the coast of the Red Sea, Egypt.” (p. 455)

The *Bible Dictionary* has this to add of the Sukkiim: “the Greek and Latin versions call them ‘troglodytes’, or dwellers in caves; but if the word is Hebrew, it rather means ‘dwellers in tents’, or Scenites... Fürst thinks the Sukkim were dwellers in Sok, a mountain region near the Red Sea, where Pliny fixes the troglodyte city of Suche; and he thinks the modern Nubian name *Suakim*

may be connected with the same district” (*The Bible Dictionary*, p. 1051). [emphasis mine]

Another view can be found in the *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, which states that the Sukkiim were probably from Libya (refer to Thomas Taylor, *Environment, Race and Migration*, p. 206).

RESETTLEMENT IN THE COLCHIS

When Egypt was defeated by the Assyrians, many of the Cushites were taken by them and resettled near the Colchis by the Black Sea as Isaiah foretold in this prophecy:

“And the Lord said, ‘like as My servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and a wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia;

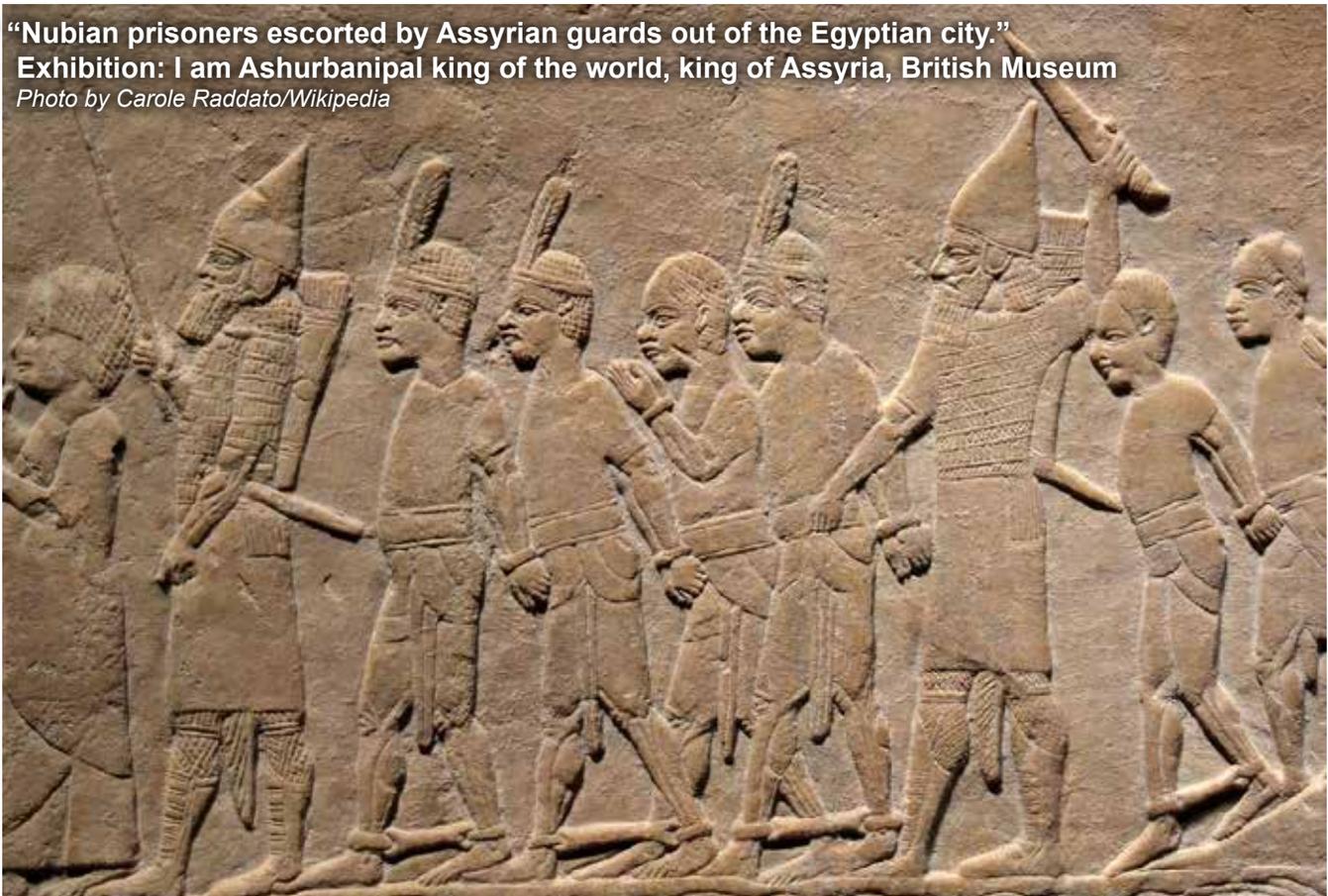
“So shall the King of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, even with their buttocks uncovered to the shame of Egypt.

“And they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory.

“And the inhabitant of this isle [Heb. “coastland”] shall say in that day, ‘Behold, such is our expectation, whither we flee for help to be delivered from the King of Assyria; and how shall we escape?’” (Isaiah 20:3-6)

The Assyrians (Isaiah 19:4) enslaved these peoples from the Red Sea coast who were in the Egyptian army, and then sent many of them on to the Colchis. Others may have been brought to

“Nubian prisoners escorted by Assyrian guards out of the Egyptian city.”
Exhibition: I am Ashurbanipal king of the world, king of Assyria, British Museum
Photo by Carole Raddato/Wikipedia



the area later. The black peoples in that area were written about in an article in the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*: “Near Sukhumi in Abkhazia, in almost the same district where Herodotus talked to the black-skinned and woolly-haired Colchians some twenty-two centuries ago, John Gunther noted the existence of a small Negro community; he was told that its members were descended from slaves imported from Africa many centuries ago by Georgian princes”. (Patrick English, “Cushites, Colchians and Khazars” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Jan. 1959, p. 49)

Although the article is rather short, just 5 pages, it contains vital information for our research. For example: “Long after Herodotus’ time, the inhabitants of Colchis seem to have been still of the same physical type as he found there. P. H. Larcher states that ‘St. Jerome and Sophronius, cited by Bochart, call Colchis the second Ethiopia; and Sophronius, in his Life of St. Andrew, informs us that towards the mouth of the Apsarus, and on the banks of the Phasis, there were Ethiopians.’” (ibid, p. 53) [emphasis mine]

Another fascinating article on these people appeared in 1973: “... ancient Greek scholars [such] as Herodotus, Callimachus, Diodoris of Cicely, Strabo, Dionyslus and Eustapus who maintained that the Colchi had come from Egypt. [Researcher Dimitri Gulia] draws a parallel between Abkhazian and Abysso-Egyptian geographical names, names of deities, proper names, as well as manners, customs and

beliefs.” (Slava Tynes, “When did Africans get to Soviet Union?” *The Afro-American*, 3 Feb. 1973)

This article was the first of three in a series which contains a plethora of information worth reading, given all the fascinating detail contained therein. The articles refer to what the author believes is the more “recent” transplanting of Africans to the Colchis area which would mean that they were settled near or with the more ancient black settlement in the area.

“Others, of course, may have migrated there at a later date, joining up with these people” (Allison Blakely, “The Negro in Imperial Russia” *The Journal of Negro History*, October 1976, p. 354).

THE SUKULUMBE AND SAKALAVA TRIBES

There are at least two more tribes with names similar to Suk.

First of all, there is the **Sukulumbe** (or Suku Lumba or Shukulumbe or Baile) — tribes that broke away from the Sukuma and others, finding their way into Zambia and Malawi. When the Bemba (now the majority tribe) from the Congo region moved into Zambia centuries ago, they found Sukuma pockets had already settled in the region.

Of interest to us is that the Sukulumbe language includes some north African loan words, providing a link to their origins in the north.

This means that they could well have formed a part of the army mentioned in II Chronicles 12:2-3. These people are the, “most prominent of a cluster of

Bantu-speaking peoples inhabiting the Southern Province west of Lusaka, capital of Zambia.” (John Mackenzie, (ed) *Peoples, Nations and Cultures*, p. 207)

Another tribe, originating from the African coast, were brought into Madagascar. They live today on the west coast of the island and are known as the **Sakalava** (*A History of Discovery and Exploration: 1973*, p. 151) and speak a language of that name (Harold Fullard, *Philips College Atlas*, p. 9). They have mixed considerably with the Arab, Indian and Indonesian elements there (James Sibree, *The Great African Island. Chapters on Madagascar*, pp. 109-110). But the African element now dominates (Mervyn Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered*, p. 20).

A MYSTERY SOLVED?

It seems clear that the Sukkiim mentioned in ancient Scripture are resident today in east Africa among the peoples descended from Cush.

The number of tribes resident in east Africa with the name of Suk or similar cannot be a coincidence, viz the Suk, Suku, Sukulumbe, Sukuma, Sakalava. There is even a tribe called Seba (either a descendant of Cush’s son Seba or of Sheba, son of Raama) in Zambia to this day.

The coincidences are too much to ignore, but further work needs to be undertaken on the likely identity of these people.

I hope the reader has found this bit of detective work of interest. It seems that another Bible mystery has been solved! □

BIBLE STUDY*by Dr. James Ricks & Natalie Ricks, M.A.*


PROPAGANDA, SPIN, & THE DISTORTION OF TRUTH

Image: Shutterstock

SATAN THE DEVIL IS THE FATHER OF LIES

When the Devil speaks his native language, it is comprised of lies. The 20th century was the century of genocides and propaganda by evil governments and their media lackeys. The communists killed 100 million of their own citizens in deadly purges. Huge propaganda campaigns facilitated these genocides and other evils.

John 8:44-45, “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.” (NKJV)

Satan is the author of all lies and has been lying to mankind from the very beginning. He convinced Eve that she would not die if she disobeyed God. See Genesis 3:4.

Revelation 16:13, “And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.”

1 Kings 22:22, “The LORD said to him, ‘In what way?’ So he said, ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And the

LORD said, ‘You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.’”

God will allow lying spirits to deceive the clerics and opinion leaders to lead the disobedient into disastrous decisions. The majority of mankind still believes that our fate is to spend eternity either in heaven or an ever-burning hell. Most know nothing of the resurrections of the dead or the second death (Rev. 20:6). However, Christ said in John 3:16 that either one gains salvation through Him or their ultimate fate is to perish. (See also 1 Tim. 6:16)

John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Truthfulness is part of the “way of life” for Christians. Truth is important to God. Every word of God is pure and true. See Proverbs 30:5, John 17:17 and Numbers 23:19. God expects truth to permeate our lives and thereby protect our relationships with God and fellow man.

THE TRUTH WILL BECOME HARDER TO FIND

Hiding information from the public is vital to deception. Politicians are proud of their ability

BIBLE STUDY

to spin the truth. This is a new age, where truth is fallen in the streets and few even care. Successful misdirection and outright deceit are celebrated in this society!

Isaiah 59:9-11, “Therefore justice is far from us, Nor does righteousness overtake us; We look for light, but there is darkness! For brightness, but we walk in blackness! We grope for the wall like the blind, And we grope as if we had no eyes; We stumble at noonday as at twilight ... We look for justice, but there is none... it is far from us.”

People are blind to truth and live in darkness, taken in by lies and deceptive propaganda.

Isaiah 59:14, “And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.” (KJV)

Full truth will come soon with the reign of the Sons of God.

Isaiah 11:9, “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.”

DISHONESTY DESTROYS RELATIONSHIPS, BOTH PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL

Dishonesty undermines our relationship with God and fellow man. This is why it is one of the things God hates most. See Proverbs 6:16-17 and 12:22. Lying, in some regards, is worse than stealing. Lying accompanies AND FACILITATES other sins like an evil ointment. Stealing just takes material things while a liar creates injustices and misery, destroying trust and reputations. The liar also destroys himself spiritually with God. God set strong penalties in His law for lying witnesses. See Deut. 19:15 & 19-21. The perjurer suffered the penalty he intended for the innocent victim of his lie. Sadly, these days lying to prosecutors or in court is often not prosecuted.

Proverbs 19:5, “A false witness will not go unpunished, And he who speaks lies will not escape.”

God has automatic penalties for lying. However, justice is often perverted by biases based upon the powerful or majority feelings, influences and bribes (which are forbidden by God’s Law). Lies destroy justice. Lies destroy marriages, friendships and trust.

LIES FACILITATE GREAT EVIL, EVEN GENOCIDE

On a more apocalyptic scale, “The broad mass of a nation...will more easily fall victim to a big lie rather than to a small one.” These are the words of Adolph Hitler. He blamed the Jews for the German loss in WWI. This was a big lie. He knew people were anti-Semitic and would love to have someone to blame. This lie led Germany into total disaster.

Jeremiah 9:3-4, “‘And like their bow they have bent their tongues for lies. They are not valiant for the truth on the earth. For they proceed from evil to evil, And they do not know Me,’ says the LORD... ‘And every neighbor will walk with slanderers.’”

The sad thing is that similar lies are still being propagated on low information populations around the world presently. Few know the real history of the state of Israel or any accurate world history today. Does it pay to be completely honest in politics? No! Remember, propaganda can also consist of what you *prevent* people from hearing and knowing. People are often persecuted for telling unwanted truths.

Isaiah 59:15, “So truth fails, And he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. Then the LORD saw it, and it displeased Him That there was no justice.”

God’s word defines truth and righteous standards. Anticipate deceptive propaganda to gain in strength as we approach the era of the beast and false prophet. □

PETER'S INCREDIBLE ESCAPE!

by Doris Wunner

Thankfully, the majority of us know nothing about being thrown into prison for our beliefs. Yet that is precisely what had happened to Peter. And it was not only a prison, but a high security situation as well. King Herod had assigned no less than SIXTEEN soldiers to guard this “dangerous” fellow! You can follow the story in Acts chapter 12.

A “quaternion” was a set of four soldiers. Commentaries point out that this amounts to 24 hour surveillance, with a set of four soldiers serving during each of the four night watches. A remarkable security measure for the time and yet, just to make sure, Peter was also kept CHAINED. This in addition to the regular keepers of the prison. That is a lot of Roman soldiers doing duty over this unarmed man.

Herod Agrippa had a fearsome reputation. He had already “killed James the brother of John” (v. 2) and, seeing the positive reaction from the Jews, decided to target Peter next. He wanted to

gain popularity and favor with the Jewish leadership, the Sadducees and Pharisees.

He planned to hold a public trial and execution of Peter after the Passover (Acts 12:4). This is mistranslated as “Easter” in the KJV, but the majority of English translations render it correctly. Further, the entire 7 days of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:5-8) is implied. Jerusalem would still be crowded from the festival, a great opportunity for Herod to flex his power and gain favor.

But then there is another, GREATER source of POWER. Of Peter we are told, “PRAYER was made without ceasing of the church UNTO GOD for him” (v. 5). On the VERY NIGHT of Herod’s plan, “the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up saying, ‘Arise up quickly.’ And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, ‘Gird thy self, and bind on thy sandals.’ And so he did. And he saith unto

him ‘Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.’ And he went out and followed him...” (verses 7-9).

Wake up, get dressed, let’s go! The story is so authentic in its details. How would you rouse a sleeping man and make him move in a hurry? The angel “smote” him (gave him a whack to wake him up), helped him to his feet and urged him on! Decisive action for a divine messenger.

And how many miracles occurred to help Peter escape? Not only did an angel speak to him, and get him up and going, but he saw a bright light. Likely quite a shock to eyes that had been resting and adjusted to the dark. Furthermore, the chains fell from his hands.

At this point, Peter’s mind hadn’t caught up to the action. He must have wondered, “What is going on here?” Verse 9 says he “wist not that it was true” and “thought he saw a vision.” He didn’t think he was actually getting out of prison!

Yet on they went. They

walked out of the cell, past the other wards, miracle after miracle. And when they came to the main iron gate that led to the city, IT OPENED TO THEM OF ITS OWN ACCORD! Not exactly a desirable feature in a prison gate. The man who had assigned so many guards, going to such great lengths to keep Peter locked up, was not going to be happy!

Once outside, Peter finally began to realize what was happening (v. 11). His eyes weren't lying to him, it was not a dream or a vision, God had delivered him from Herod and those who would rejoice at his death! Truly, it was miraculous.

He had seen a bright light, all the more astounding in the days of oil lamps and torches. The iron chains had simply fallen from his hands. The gate opened before his eyes. As the reality of it all sank in, Peter knew exactly where the great power to accomplish all this had originated.

But Peter wasn't the only one who was going to have difficulty processing these overwhelming, sudden and unprecedented acts of God! Like all of us, when something wonderful happens we want to tell our family and those we are close to. In this case, Peter went to those in the church, "where many were gathered together praying" (v. 12).

When he arrived, he knocked on the door. We are told a damsel named Rhoda came to see who it was and recognized his voice. But then the obvious did not happen — she did not let Peter in! Instead she ran to tell the others. Did they rush to see him, rejoic-

ing over their answered prayers, thanking God and singing hymns of praise? No! Instead they said, "You're mad!"

Is it crazy to think God had heard their requests and granted them? It did say "prayer was made without ceasing" in verse 5, and verse 12 indicates Peter pretty much interrupted it when he knocked on the door.

Rhoda stuck to her story though; "She constantly affirmed that it was even so" (v. 15). How long did they bicker? Someone came up with a reasonable explanation: it's not Peter — it's his angel. Anything other than Peter actually being delivered from Herod and from prison, the very thing they had prayed for. That just CAN'T BE!

Thankfully Peter didn't give up. He settled the matter for them. "But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished" (v. 16).

It is a classic tale of UNBELIEF. Peter, at first, is not sure that what he sees is actually happening. Once he is free, the whole group who had been faithfully praying for him somehow failed to believe God had heard and provided for Peter's safety.

There were some that didn't doubt Peter's escape. When morning came, "there was no small stir among the soldiers" (v. 18). Herod even got personally involved. He had a look around for Peter himself, to no avail, and "examined the keepers and commanded that they should be put to death" (v. 19).

A humiliating result after

all his precautions, all the soldiers he had detailed to make sure Peter wouldn't escape. Herod left town and soon met a hideous fate after allowing himself to be praised as if he was God (v. 22-23).

Where are the lessons in this tale for us? It is a testimony to the power of God over every wicked device of man. Imprisoned for the truth and set to be executed, all to gratify a vain ruler and a corrupt religious establishment, Peter had the full power of civil authority against him. Every precaution was taken to keep him locked up. Yet Peter walked straight out under the protection of the Almighty.

"Thine, O Lord is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all" (1 Chronicles 29:11).

And He is on the side of the righteous. It is to Him that the church prayed for Peter's life and, despite their incredulity, those prayers were answered. When we beseech Him, when there is no human way around a problem, why do we doubt that He will both hear and answer?

Christ said, "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:22). This is true no matter the obstacle we face. Herod had great power and authority, but when he persecuted the truth and blasphemed God the result was catastrophic. Be comforted by this story of deliverance, and don't be surprised when the mountain tumbles into the sea. □

There are many Herods mentioned in the Bible. It is a family name, and multiple members served at the pleasure of Rome.

The Herod in Acts 12 is Herod Agrippa I. He was the grandson of Herod the King, mentioned in Matthew 2, that tried to kill Christ as a child. Herod the King also executed his own son, Agrippa's father, Aristobulus. Afterwards, Agrippa was sent to Rome. A very young child at the time, Agrippa grew up among the Imperial family and was personally close to future Emperors Caligula and Claudius.

His uncle was Herod Antipas, called Herod the tetrarch in Luke 3:1, and is the one who was involved in the execution of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. Herod Agrippa intrigued against his uncle, but was eventually imprisoned for voicing a desire that Tiberius would die so Caligula could become Emperor. When that eventually occurred, Caligula released him, granted him the title of King and gave him many of the territories over which his family had ruled. Claudius later increased his territory further.

Josephus discusses many of these events in detail. At his death, his son, Herod Agrippa II, was only 17 years old. He was eventually made a tetrarch and then King. This is the King Agrippa that Paul spoke to in Acts 25 and 26.

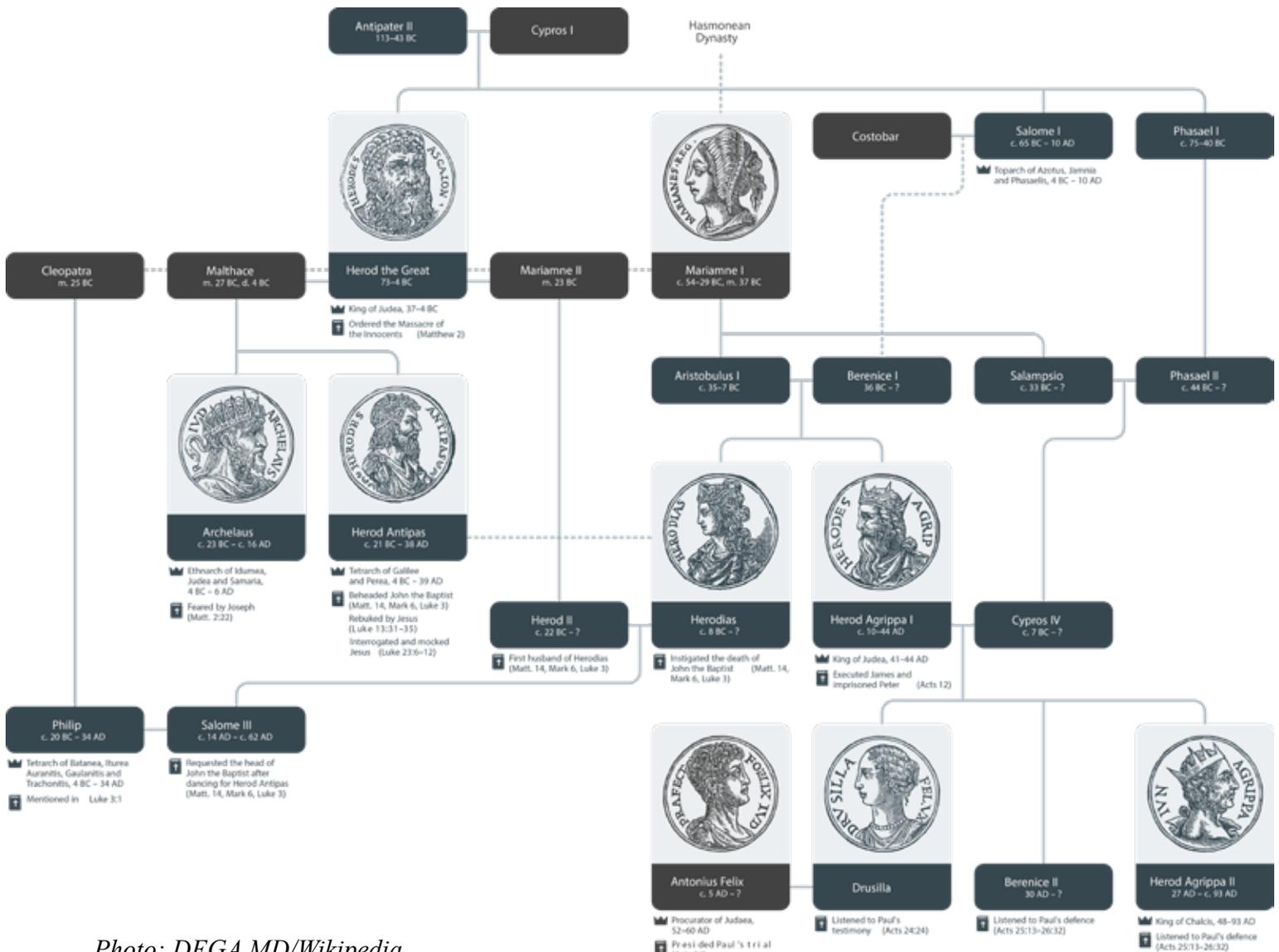
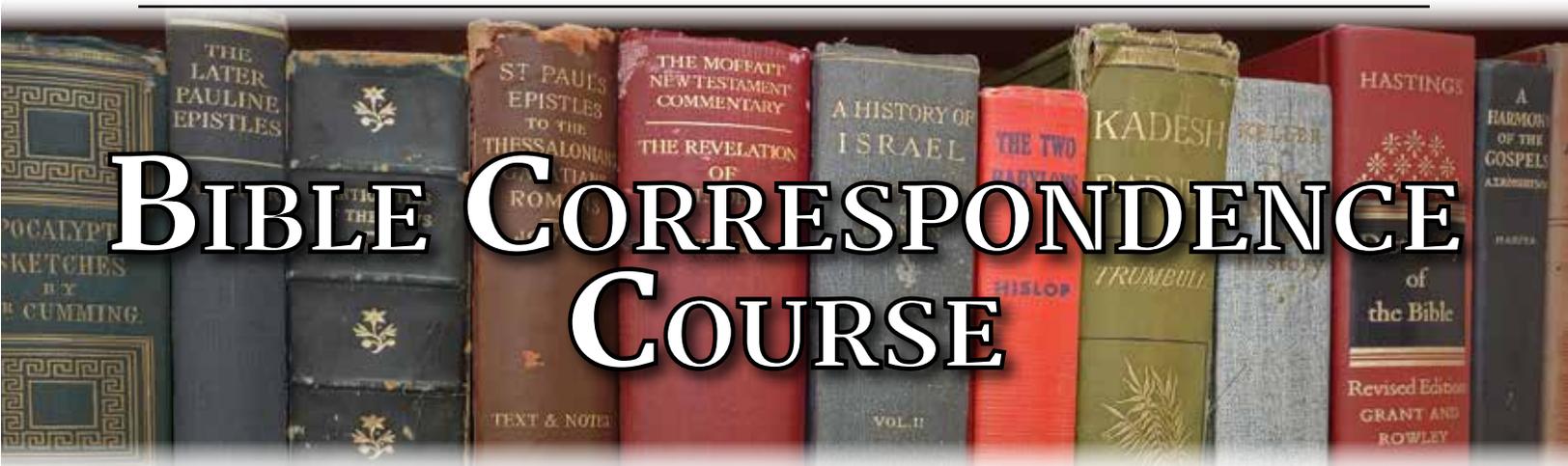


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BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

LESSON TWENTY-TWO: PROPHECY

Biblical prophecy is a historical and contemporary vehicle by which God demonstrates His power over the events of human history. The primary function of predictive prophecy is to show the sequence of events culminating in the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. The process by which this comes about is outlined in many passages of the Old and New Testaments.

DOCTRINAL OVERVIEW

Central to the understanding of biblical prophecy is the recognition that God is Governor and Supreme Ruler, not only of the nations on earth, but of the times and seasons as well. God portrays Himself as the real author of human experience, the one who has formulated a master plan that shall culminate in the establishment of His government on earth and with the vast majority of mankind qualifying to participate in it as spirit-born sons of God.

One aspect of prophecy is that it proves God's existence. No man or other mortal could predict the future and then bring it to pass (Isaiah 41:22 ff). But one need not wait until the future to prove God's existence through prophecy. He can look as well to the many Old Testament prophecies telling of Christ's first coming — prophecies that have already been completely fulfilled in their letter and intent. Looking further, the numerous biblical prophecies pointing toward Jesus Christ's return to earth as King of kings and Lord of lords are so powerful and so specific that they shall forever eliminate agnosticism and skepticism, once they have been fulfilled.

Prophecy is history written in advance. It is in keeping with the principle, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto

His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). Thus God has not left man totally in the dark about the general course of future world events.

The term "prophecy" is most often used today to mean "prediction of the future." The original prophets of ancient Israel had a role somewhat different from this. They did predict what would happen in the future, but this was usually in the context of the sins of the nation and the penalties their country would reap if their people did not turn from their evil ways. Sometimes, fairly specific sequences of future events were laid down. Normally, however, prophecy was rather general, outlining where the people had gone wrong and what would happen if they did not repent. At various times prophecies or oracles were pronounced against some of Israel's neighbors such as Assyria and Babylon. Prophecy and its spokesmen (prophets) have played a significant role from virtually the beginning of man's existence (Luke 1:70; Acts 3:21). This role has not been solely to declare futuristic developments, but to affect the behavior of individuals and nations in respect to divine laws and God's master plan.

This relationship between prophecy and morality is clearly and consistently interwoven throughout the Old and New Testaments. As a matter of biblical fact, Jeremiah records this

Continued next page

relationship as affecting the future of every nation on earth (Jeremiah 18:7-10).

The vast spectrum of biblical prophecy is varied in form. Some prophecies were written down as a result of dreams or visions, others by direct communication with heavenly beings. The prophetic words are at times clear and to the point; in other instances the statements are vague and ambiguous.

There are several principles and keys (such as symbolism and duality) that govern the correct understanding of prophecy. These must be used consistently with the right methods and proper understanding of the background to arrive at the sought-for answers.

A symbol is something used to represent something else. An example of symbolism in the Bible is the use of the word “mountain” to mean a large nation (Micah 4:14). The Bible in general interprets its own symbols, although many times in verses somewhat removed from the symbolic statement. Duality is the term used when a prophecy has more than one fulfillment. An example of a dual prophecy would be Matthew 24:12-20, which describes both the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and events to occur just before the return of Jesus Christ. (The terms “type” and “antitype” can also be used to describe the original reality and the later understanding of biblical events, ceremonies, persons, or the like.)

The breadth and scope of prophecy has ranged from individuals to nations to the entire earth and beyond. In some cases it is evident that prophecies were announced and fulfilled and no longer have relevance in our day except as examples and lessons. But most major prophecies are yet to be fulfilled. And there is no doubt that this major part is focused on the return of Jesus Christ. It is the one major thread that binds Old and New Testament prophecy together.

In the same way that the prophetic Kingdom of God is the focal point of the gospel, so also is Christ Himself the focal point of all prophecy throughout the Bible in both testaments. The Old Testament is the story of Christ’s genealogy, and the prophecies of His first and second comings. Indeed the whole thrust of the Old Testament — including the Levitical sacrificial system which included

many symbolic acts typifying Christ and His sacrifice to pay the penalty for humanity’s sins. The New Testament is the story of His life and teachings and the detailed prophecies of His coming Kingdom.

No prophecy is an end to itself. Any prophecy only has lasting importance in the final analysis, because it adds to our knowledge of Christ, His family, His way of life, His return, His coming Kingdom, and the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the setting up of that Kingdom. If one forgets this simple truth, he may find himself wandering from obscure prophecy to obscure prophecy, restricted to learning about relatively unimportant technicalities while missing the overall thrust and importance of the basic prophecies of Christ’s second coming.

It is paradoxical that often the more uncertain points of prophecy tend to receive the most attention. It sometimes seems that these hard-to-decipher prophecies attract interest in direct proportion to how little about them is overtly stated in the Bible. There is nothing wrong with the study of obscure prophecies — indeed, it is quite understandable — so long as the relative importance of prophecies is kept clear, and the prophecies about Jesus Christ are kept clearest. God designed the human mind to enjoy the intellectual “high” which the probing of prophetic secrets affords. “It is the glory of God to conceal things: but the glory of kings to search things out” (Proverbs 25:2).

But there is a definite reason why God inspired the clear and obvious prophecies of the Bible to be clear and obvious. He wanted no one to miss the primary point of all prophecy: that Jesus Christ is to return and set up His Kingdom on earth. For one to properly understand prophecy, he must realize that all future prophecies must relate to Christ and His Kingdom, and that for any specific prophecy to be properly understood, it must be seen against the context of Christ’s second coming.

Most of the prophecies of the Bible focus on the “end time” (either primarily or dualistically), a time period of colossal, momentous worldwide problems culminating in total human destruction if Christ would not intervene to stop it. This present age is the best candidate for the “time of the end” that history has ever seen. No other previous time has paralleled the present capacity for man to wipe

all human life from the earth. The multiple possible methods of human self-annihilation now extant — whether quickly through nuclear, chemical or biological warfare, or more slowly through famine, pollution or disease — fit the biblical pattern. Certainly, the key scripture of Matthew 24:22, “no human being would be saved” (RSV); “not a mortal could survive” (Berkeley); “not a soul would be saved alive” (Moffatt) could only be literally possible in the age of thermonuclear overkill and global mega-problems.

The commission to the Church of God is to preach the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God to all nations (Matthew 24:14). In addition to the message of Christ’s death — forgiveness and salvation — the message Christ preached is both a warning and a witness; a warning about mankind’s plunge toward annihilation and a witness about what God will do to stop it. This message is a prophetic announcement of Christ’s second coming and the government He will set up at His return, and it is indeed the primary reason for the Church’s existence at this time.

As stated, the focal point of all but a few specific historical prophecies is the “end time,” culminating in the return of Jesus Christ. In a number of instances, the end time is specifically tied into historical prophecies which have already been fulfilled in a certain degree or type, for example, the long and intricate prophecy of Daniel 11 and 12 leaves known history at a certain point and definitely envisions the resurrection and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Similarly, Matthew 24 describes the fall of Jerusalem in a way which did not differ from its fall in A.D. 70, yet these scriptures also project forward to the “consummation of the age.”

Thus there is often a duality in prophecy. Events of history will be paralleled by events immediately preceding the time of the end. Yet the general outline of end time events is repeated from prophecy to prophecy with little deviation in basic structure. These may be summarized as follows:

Immediately preceding the intervention of Jesus Christ is a time of unprecedented worldwide trouble. This is expressed in various ways by language which is both literal and metaphorical. However, a consistent theme is “a time such as never has

been nor ever shall be,” a time when “no flesh shall be saved” from destruction if God did not put a stop to the calamitous course of human events.

A specific sequence of tumultuous geopolitical developments shall focus on the Middle East, and Jerusalem shall be the central spot in and around which these major prophetic events shall take place. The major and minor prophetic books are replete with descriptions about, and admonitions to, Jerusalem in the end time. Great international contention is seen brewing over Jerusalem, which shall move the city even further onto the center stage, as world events rush toward their climax. Indeed, two of the key signs that Christ gave to His disciples was that the fulfillment of all biblical prophecy and the subsequent establishment of the Kingdom of God would be at hand “when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies” (Luke 21:20) and when you “shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place” (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14). Furthermore, the two witnesses of Revelation 11, who shall preach and prophesy against the entire earth, shall apparently center their activities near the site of the temple in Jerusalem.

God said He would make Jerusalem “a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it” (Zechariah 12:3). Though treacherous times are yet ahead for Jerusalem (e.g., Zechariah 14:2), God states that He shall go forth into battle against, and shall utterly destroy, all those nations that shall have gathered against Jerusalem (ch. 14:3, 12; 12:9), “and the Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first” (Zechariah 12:7) when Jesus Christ returns. In these incredible (and forthcoming) days, God shall greatly strengthen the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:8); He shall pour out His spirit of grace and supplication on them (v. 10); He shall change the geography of the city when Christ’s feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4), and when living waters shall flow forth from Jerusalem nourishing the whole earth (Zechariah 14:8). “In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, Let us go with you, for we have heard that

God is with you” (Zechariah 8:23). “Strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and pray before the Lord” (Zechariah 8:22), “and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain” (Zechariah 8:3). (Much uncertainty remains, however, even about that which seems sure, as there is difficulty determining the precise time frame of many verses. Zephaniah 2:7, for example, has been applied to both the modern state of Israel in the Middle East and to the future millennial state: “And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: ... for the Lord their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity.”)

A pivotal set of verses regarding the crucial geopolitical sequence of events in the Middle East is Daniel 11:40 ff. These verses describe a “king of the north” who, in response to being “pushed at” by the “king of the south” shall come against the king of the south “like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.” Verse 41 goes on to add that “He [the king of the north] shall enter also into the glorious land [holy land], and many countries shall be overthrown.” The specific delineation of nations — the Holy Land, Egypt, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Libya, Ethiopia — leads to fascinating speculations as one watches the international scene.

Daniel 2, together with Revelation 13 and 17, expands our understanding of this “king of the north.” This kingdom shall be a composite or union of “ten kings” (states or groups of states), which shall constitute a resurrection of the Roman Empire in an economic, political, military and religious confederation that shall figure prominently in the various end time prophetic geopolitical encounters.

It is clear that the political union of Revelation 13 and 17 is described in terms which people of the first century Mediterranean world would have recognized. Readers would have seen a scantily veiled representation of the Roman Empire with its military might, its political intrigues and its rule over much of the known world. Indeed, the harlot of chapter 17 is called “the great city which has dominion over the kings of the earth” (v. 18),

a reference which many would have immediately taken as meaning Rome itself.

This illustrates that prophecy is often given in symbols which would have been directly meaningful to the time and situation in which the prophecy was originally given. This makes the interpretation of prophecy that much more easy and difficult at the same time. The end time “Babylon” or “Roman Empire” will certainly have characteristics in common with its ancient counterpart. On the other hand, it will also have differences which prevent an exact correspondence with the historical “type” or symbol. Thus, while one may look at the contemporary scene and make identifications which seem plausible, there is no guarantee that one’s speculations are perfectly on target. After all, many of the “prophecy charts,” time schemes, reconstructions and the like of the past two millennia have been internally consistent and externally cogent. There was only one real flaw: they were wrong. So, the only worthwhile test of any prophetic presentation is ultimately quite obvious — will it, or will it not, actually occur in reality?

Whatever the prophetic specifics in fact turn out to be, the outlines are now surely clear: There shall be swirling currents of international alliances and confederations vying for world power through economic, political, military and religious control; and the focus of their attention shall be the Middle East in general and Jerusalem in particular.

As the intertwined tangle of world events hurtle toward their awesome conclusion, a complex series of seals, woes, trumpet blasts and plagues are unveiled with ever-increasing regularity, tension, and fury. (The book of Revelation describes these futuristic events in first century language.) At the climax of everything, with mankind literally on the brink of total self-annihilation, Jesus Christ shall return to the earth, accompanied by a spectacular series of heavenly signs (Joel 2:31; Matthew 24:29-31; Revelation 12-17). At His return, the dead in Christ shall be resurrected, and the elect still living shall be changed to spirit to rule with Christ.

“For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who

have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord" (I Thessalonians 4:15-17).

This shall be the most majestic moment in universal history, the focal point of the Bible, the time to which prophecy has primarily projected.

"When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 15:54-57, ESV).

Christ and the saints shall be opposed initially by a system called "Babylon," and leaders referred to as "the Beast" and the "antichrist." These shall all have characteristics of persons and institutions of past history, even though they shall have a unique existence at the end time. They shall be destroyed and Satan, who has incited the rebellion against Christ, shall be cast into a place of spiritual restraint (Revelation 20:1-3).

Then begins the millennial rule of Christ and the saints over the earth. After some continuing confrontations and battles (described in Ezekiel 38 and 39), God's Kingdom shall be set up over all peoples; and Jesus Christ shall teach them God's laws, the way of happiness and eventually of eternal salvation. This 1,000-year period shall be followed by the Great White Throne Judgment and finally the new heaven and the new earth, both of which are descriptively hazy, as the Bible does not reveal much information about either.

Whenever God has chosen to intervene in human history, major current events were always involved: the course of nations, the role of governments, the fate of kings, and the destinies of peoples. God's direct interaction with, and control over, the kings and governments of Babylon and Persia (Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus) are two prominent

Old Testament cases where the nations so involved were the world rulers at the time. The prophecies against Egypt and Assyria are two other examples.

We know of at least one biblical prophecy that "failed" not because God erred, but because the people fully responded en masse to God's warning and unitedly repented. Jonah was sent to Nineveh to predict its fall in forty days. This was a prophecy of God; it did not take place. This example illustrates the fact that much specific prophecy is contingent upon the actions of the parties involved (Ezekiel 33:7-16). The implications for today are obvious; the responsibilities of God's "watchmen" are enormous.

Bible prophecy has a continuing and critical relevance to the course of modern nations and to the destinies of contemporary peoples. The identity of certain 21st century nations in terms of their ancient names is important in the understanding of current and future events. Some nations such as Egypt retain their exact original names. Other names, though somewhat changed, are easily traceable; for example, Judah (or the House of Judah) represents the Jewish people in the modern state of Israel, and Moab and Ammon would seem to represent the Arab peoples in the modern area of Jordan.

The modern identification of the "House of Israel" as the United States and British Commonwealth is an important part of the Church's prophetic understanding. While the United States is said to be specifically represented as "Manasseh" and the British Commonwealth as "Ephraim," the identity of the remainder of the original Israelite tribes is uncertain (though some evaluations have been made, such as equating France with Reuben.) The identification of the United States and British Commonwealth as the House of Israel leads to serious and momentous prophetic implications for the future. The time of the end is also called "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7), because the modern descendants of the House of Israel shall be taken captive by "strangers" and severely oppressed. It shall take the return of Jesus Christ to free modern descendants of the patriarch Jacob from national humiliation and restore them to the knowledge of God. This event shall be of such

enormous magnitude that Israel's original exodus from Egypt shall be forgotten by comparison (Jeremiah 23:7-8).

God has given us a general overview of the Church itself in prophecy, with its main commission being to prepare the way for Christ's return by preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world as a witness (Matthew 24:14). The admonition to the "watchman" of Ezekiel 33 applies as well:

"...if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes, and takes any one of them; that man is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand" (Ezekiel 33:6).

Although enormous numbers of incredibly detailed prophetic schemes have been deduced from the Bible, the success record of correctly predicting future events and dates has been rather meager. Hindsight has always been more successful than foresight in determining the reality of prophecy. Certainly the injunction to "watch at all times" (Luke 21:36) must be heeded, but the Bible does not give any major examples of people acquiring specific predictive knowledge of the future from the written prophecies alone. Yet, as mankind's history approaches "the time of the end," a generation when "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased," prophecy in general and the book of Daniel in particular shall become progressively more understandable (Daniel 12:4).

Shall there come a time when God will directly inspire some of His servants to literally prophesy about imminent world events? Biblical indications and precedents would suggest so. Joel 2:28, "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions," was applied by Peter on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. But the context of Joel 2 is clearly just "before the great and terrible day of the Lord" (v. 30-31), indicating that the primary fulfillment of Joel 2:28 is yet ahead.

What is abundantly clear from the Bible is that the absolute fact of the return of Jesus Christ

to this earth to set up the world-ruling government of God shall be in a time of great human turmoil and disaster. Also emphasized in the Bible is the sequence of events immediately surrounding Christ's return (primarily before, but after as well), not the long history of centuries between New Testament times and the end time.

But nowhere does the Bible encourage speculation to the point of predicting specific dates when a prophecy is to be fulfilled, and then predicating one's life around what is supposed to happen on or by such a date. To the contrary, we are told, "But of that day and hour no one knows" (Matthew 24:36). We are admonished that "the faithful and wise servant" shall be aggressively and persistently doing God's work at the return of Christ, and shall not have shrunk back from life's responsibilities because of his (real or imagined) interpretations of prophecy (Matthew 24:36 ff).

Though prophecy has always been intriguing and exciting to human beings who have constantly sought to know the future, Paul's strong admonition is that "if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, but have not love, I am nothing" (I Cor.13:2). Love, then, is the essential characteristic of the Christian. It is the clearest stamp of God's Spirit in action. Interestingly enough, Paul continues his contrast of love and prophecy in this chapter. "Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away [fail, KJV] ... For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away" (I Cor.13:8-10).

The study of prophecy can be an interesting and rewarding experience. It is indeed placed in scripture to be analyzed and appreciated in a Christian's relationship to God. However, it is yet unfolding and we must be careful to let events in the real world guide our understanding of the times and seasons, rather than leaping ahead with speculations not grounded on events. As we draw nearer to the climax of mankind's civilization, we will see the convergence of major prophetic developments. They shall no doubt take sharper focus and point us more precisely to the surest and most important prophecy of all — the return of Jesus Christ. □

SUMMARY: Read these scriptures in your own Bible:

- **Isaiah 41:22 - No man can predict the future and then make it come to pass.**
- **Amos 3:7 - God reveals what He will do on earth through His prophets.**
- **Luke 1:70; Acts 3:21 - Prophecy plays a significant role in man's history.**
- **Jeremiah 18:7-10 - Relationship between prophecy and morality regarding all nations on earth.**
- **Matthew 24:22 - Prophecy that man would reach the point of no flesh being left alive.**
- **Matthew 24:14 - Gospel will be preached in all nations.**
- **Luke 21:20 - Prophecy about armies surrounding Jerusalem in the end time.**
- **Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14 - Abomination of Desolation.**
- **Daniel 11 - Kings of the North and South.**
- **Daniel 2; Revelation 13, 17 - Resurrection of the Roman Empire.**
- **Joel 2:31; Matthew 24:29-31; Revelation 12-17 - Christ's return with heavenly signs.**
- **1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 - Resurrection of the dead at Christ's return.**
- **1 Corinthians 15:54-57 - Death to be swallowed up in victory.**
- **Revelation 20:1-3 - Satan put in place of restraint at return of Christ.**
- **Ezekiel 33:7-16 - Much specific prophecy is contingent upon the actions of the parties involved.**
- **Jeremiah 30:7 - Time of Jacob's trouble.**
- **Luke 21:36 - Watch at all times.**
- **Daniel 12:4 - Prophecy will be clearer as it unfolds.**
- **Matthew 24:36 - But the day and hour no one knows, but God, the Father.**
- **1 Corinthians 13:2 - Love is more important than knowledge of prophecy.**
- **1 Corinthians 13:8-10 - When the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away.**

QUESTIONS (ANSWERS BELOW):

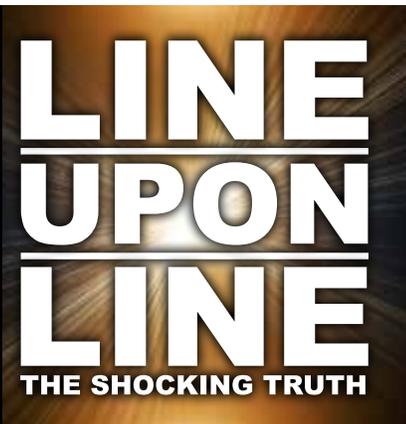
1. God has no power over human events. Rather He just watches what unfolds. True or False?
2. The primary function of predictive prophecy is to show the sequence of events culminating in the return of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth. True or False?
3. God is the Governor over the nations of Earth. True or False?
4. Prophecy proves God's existence. True or False?
5. God has left mankind in the dark regarding what He has planned. True or False?
6. Jeremiah 18:7-10 shows...
 - a) the relationship between prophecy and morality
 - b) that it is God who establishes and builds countries and kingdoms
 - c) that God can destroy a nation if He so wills
 - d) that God will repent of the evil He has decreed against a nation if they repent
 - e) that God can bring evil against a nation He has established
 - f) that nations can repent of their evil
 - g) all of the above

-
7. Prophecies can be...
- a) visions or dreams b) direct communications with heavenly beings c) clear and to the point
d) vague and ambiguous e) all of the above
8. Some Bible prophecies have already been fulfilled. True or False?
9. The focal point of both Old and New Testament prophecies is...
- a) God, the Father b) the nation of Israel c) Jesus Christ d) the Kingdom of God
10. For any specific prophecy to be properly understood, it must be seen against the context of Christ's second coming. True or False?
11. According to Matthew 24:22, just before Christ returns, world conditions will be such that...
- a) many nations will be at war b) millions will be killed c) all life would end
12. As to location, most end time prophecies focus on...
- a) the Middle East and Jerusalem b) the United States c) China and Japan d) Europe
13. Daniel 11 speaks to a future event when the king of the _____ will push at the king of the _____.
14. Prophecy tells us the king of the _____ will attack into the Middle East and Israel like a whirlwind.
- a) South b) North c) East d) West
15. Daniel 2 and Revelation 13 and 17 speak to the resurrection of the Roman Empire. True or False?
16. The only worthwhile test of prophecy is "will it or will it not take place." True or False?
17. As world events come to an awesome conclusion, a complex series of seals, woes, trumpet blasts and plagues are unveiled. True or False?
18. The seals, woes, trumpet blasts and plagues culminate in Christ's return, at which time the dead in Christ will be resurrected and changed to spirit to rule with Christ. True or False?
19. At the return of Christ, He will be opposed by a system called "Babylon" and its leaders called "the Beast" and the "antichrist". True or False?
20. No biblical prophecy has ever failed. True or False?
21. The identity of certain 21st century nations in terms of their ancient names is important in the understanding of current and future events. True or False?
22. In prophecy, the tribe of Israel, known as Manasseh is today...
- a) the British Commonwealth b) the United States c) France d) China
23. The tribe of Israel, known as Ephraim is...
- a) the British Commonwealth b) the United States c) France d) China
24. According to Jeremiah 30:7, the time of the end is also known as "the time of _____ trouble."
-

25. In the end time trouble, the House of Israel will be attacked and taken captive. True or False?
26. The success record of correctly predicting future events and dates is quite good. True or False?
27. Luke 21:36 tells us to “_____ therefore, and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”
28. The design of prophecy is that it be understandable...
 - a) by reading it in the Word of God
 - b) by diligent study
 - c) as it unfolds
29. It is prophesied that some of God’s servants will prophesy in the end time. True or False?
30. The Bible strongly encourages the prediction of dates regarding prophetic events. True or False?
31. According to 1 Corinthians 13:2, the most important element in the Salvation Process is...
 - a) knowledge and understanding of prophecy
 - b) strong faith
 - c) love
32. Prophecy is placed in scripture to be analyzed and appreciated in a Christian’s relationship to God. True or False?
33. The best approach in analyzing prophecy is to...
 - a) let prophecy guide you to understanding of current events
 - b) let current events guide you to understanding of prophecy
34. The most important prophecy of all is the return of Christ. True or False?

LESSON TWENTY-TWO — ANSWERS:

- | | | | | |
|-------------|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 29. (true) | 22. (b) | 15. (true) | 8. (true) | 1. (false) |
| 30. (false) | 23. (a) | 16. (true) | 9. (c) | 2. (true) |
| 31. (c) | 24. (Jacob's) | 17. (true) | 10. (true) | 3. (true) |
| 32. (true) | 25. (true) | 18. (true) | 11. (c) | 4. (true) |
| 33. (b) | 26. (false) | 19. (true) | 12. (a) | 5. (false) |
| 34. (true) | 27. (watch) | 20. (False-Nineveh) | 13. (South, North) | 6. (g) |
| | 28. (c) | 21. (true) | 14. (b) | 7. (e) |



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