

**THE REMARKABLE  
WITNESS OF THE  
JEWS  
TO THE TRUTH OF  
BIBLE PROPHECY**

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## THE REMARKABLE WITNESS OF THE JEWS TO THE TRUTH OF BIBLE PROPHECY

**M**ost people are interested in the future in one way or another. This is illustrated in a story about a person who was invited to a barbecue. When he arrived, the steaks were sizzling on the grill and an appetizing aroma was in the air, but no one was around. He couldn't see anyone anywhere. They were all inside, crushed around a fortune teller - a palm reader, oblivious to the food outside, being more interested in what the future held for them.

And so it has been throughout history. People are keen to know what tomorrow will bring and what fortunes or misfortunes might occur. From time immemorial, man has pondered the question: Is planet earth spinning, uncontrolled through space, going round and round getting nowhere? Is history hurtling ahead aimlessly and uncontrollably without any purpose into an unknown future? Or is some grand goal in store?

In ancient times people consulted astrologers, mediums and soothsayers etc to try and ascertain the future, and it is not very different today. In fact, there has been an upsurge of interest in astrology, witchcraft and the occult. Pamphlets and books have been popping up everywhere. You can hardly pick up a newspaper or magazine that doesn't contain a horoscope in which an attempt is made to read the future by the stars. There are even astrology machines into which a coin can be inserted to get a prediction for the day! Computer programmes have also been set up for the same purpose. The future has become big business, and many are jumping on the bandwagon to capitalize on it by exploiting the naive and gullible.

Since the second half of the twentieth century, the world has been more concerned about the future than ever before. People's hopes, plans and ambitions have been permeated with a subconscious fear that there may not be much of a future for our planet's population to look forward to, due to the nuclear threat. Never, in the whole of human history, has the future been threatened like it has since man learned how to split the atom and make atomic bombs. The days have well and truly gone when nations only had canon balls to throw at each other! The weapons in the past were like firecrackers compared to what is available today.

In spite of non-proliferation treaties and banning of nuclear testing, nuclear war-heads remain stock piled around the world, ready to be released at the push of a button. Being the war-monger that man is, as

history in every century amply testifies, it is natural for people to feel apprehensive for the future and feel that it is uncertain.

Familiarity may breed contempt in some minds, but the reality is that man has the ability to exterminate all life on earth. Initially, only the super powers had the bomb, and could be relied upon to exercise responsibility and restraint. But of great concern is the inevitability of unstable, less responsible nations, not to mention terrorist organisations with leaders of a Hitler-type mentality, acquiring them and having no compunction about using them, thrusting the world into nuclear war.

It is not surprising therefore that many are genuinely concerned about such prospects, fearing that it will be the ultimate folly of man. There are cases of young teenagers mainlining heroin because they believed their generation was born under a mushroom cloud. On T.V. a university student entered a competition for a world trip. When asked why he wanted the trip, his answer was that he wanted to see the world before man destroyed it all.

Many today are subconsciously immersing themselves in all sorts of pleasures, pursuits and pre-occupations, to “drug themselves,” so to speak, into an unawareness of the appalling realities confronting and threatening mankind. Many have adopted the philosophy: “Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we might die.” And so the stops are pulled out resulting in all the restraints of order and decency disappearing.

### **A MORE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY**

**M**any are seeking answers and reassurance, and many voices are offering solutions. But I believe that the most authentic voice of all is the voice of Bible prophecy. The apostle Peter refers to it as “a more sure Word of prophecy to which you would do well to pay attention, as you would to a light that shines in a dark place ...” He goes on to say that it is important to “know this, that no prophecy in Scripture (the Bible) was thought up or contrived by the prophet himself. It was by the inspiration of the Spirit of God that these men were able to predict the future” (2 Pet. 1:19-21).

Peter says here that future predictions (prophecy) may purport to come from many different sources, but Bible prophecy is more sure, i.e. more certain of fulfilment. Why? Because he believed it was inspired by God. In the words of the apostle Paul: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for teaching” (2 Tim. 3:16).

It is a foregone conclusion of course that the Bible, in claiming to be

a direct revelation from God, affirms that God exists and that He is the creator and sustainer of all things. The Bible claims to be His message to mankind, revealing who He is and what His purpose is.

Well, it is not difficult to make claims. The question is: How valid are they? Can they be substantiated and vindicated? Is there some indisputable, incontestable sign, witness or evidence to validate the claim? Or is believing the Bible just a matter of blind faith?

There are a number of lines of evidence which reveal that the Bible is a special and unique book, accurate and reliable, but the Word of prophecy stands out above them all, and a very large proportion of the Bible relates to it. About two thirds in fact focuses on the subject. Constantly throughout the writings, God predicts future events to prove He is God, and that His message is divinely inspired, and therefore infallible and reliable.

The principle or premise upon which this operates works like this: If there is a God and He is omniscient (all-knowing), He must know everything. And if He knows everything, He must know the future. His ability therefore to give a revelation of the future would lay a basis upon which it could be believed that He is indeed God. This argument is often applied in the Scriptures. See Isaiah 41 and the following chapters.

For this reason, prophecy is the hallmark of the Bible; the divine seal of authentication - the most notable distinguishing mark which sets the Bible over and above all other writings; be it the writings of Buddha, Confucius, Plato, Socrates, or Mohammed. The prophetic content of the Bible gives it a ring of truth not possessed by these other writings. These other writings do not predict future events like the Bible's predictions by which they can be tested and proved to be divinely inspired.

## **ISRAEL IS THE PRIME WITNESS**

**B**ible prophecy produces many witnesses to testify to its truth. It predicts the future of many nations, mentioning them by name, such as Turkey, Syria, Iran, Lebanon, Jordan, Gaza Strip (Palestinians), Arabia, Egypt, Libya, Ethiopia etc.

But the prime witness is unquestionably the Jewish nation of Israel. It is recorded in Isa. 43:10 that God, through the prophet, referred to Israel as "My witnesses." He said: "you are My witnesses."

A "witness" is one who provides evidence to prove a claim, and this is the sense in which the Bible claims Israel is God's witness. The proposition is that the nation of Israel provides evidence of God's

existence, and presents proof positive that the Bible is divinely inspired and reliable. As we investigate this, we discover that God specially formed Israel to be a “signpost” to all nations.

In what way do the Jews witness to the truth of the Bible? The answer is that long before it happened or showed any signs of happening, the Bible foretold the history of the Jews - all 3,500 years of it! In fact, about four fifths of Bible prophecy relates to Israel. The Jewish people are the focal centre. (The name “Israel” occurs over 2,500 times in the Bible and “Jew” or “Jews” about 300 times).

In Bible prophecy, specific patterns of Jewish history, including persecution, along with other major events, were predicted centuries before they took place, so that when they finally did take place, they became a witness or testimony to the Bible’s incredible foresight.

For example, about 1,200 AD, King Frederick the Great of Prussia asked his Christian physician why he believed the Scriptures. His answer was: “The Jews your majesty.” In his day, 2,700 years had passed since the early prophecies pertaining to Israel had been given, and many had been fulfilled, giving the physician confidence in the Scriptures which recorded them.

It is also on record that King Frederick himself once said: “If one wants to know the time on the clock of world history, let him observe the Jews.” There is a lot more truth in this than what is often appreciated as we shall see. King Frederick clearly saw the Jews as a sign people. In view of the many references to them in the Bible and the large amount of space taken up recounting their history, it is not surprising that they have been referred to as “The people of the Book.”

We really owe the Bible to them, as we read in Rom. 3:1-2: “What advantage then, has the Jew? ... Much every way, but chiefly because the oracles (inspired messages) of God were committed to them.” The nation of Israel was singled out by God to be the recipient and custodian of His oracles. Sixty four of the sixty six books in the Bible were written by Israelites inspired by God. Ps. 147:19-20 puts it in a nutshell: “God revealed His Word and gave His laws and decrees to Israel. He has not done so with any other nation.”

Many of course do not like the Jews. God Himself has disliked them during many phases of their history due to their bad attitudes towards Him and His Word, and He has plainly and openly declared this many times in the Word He gave them and punished them for it. In some prophecies where they are promised future blessings, God makes it clear that they do not deserve it and will only receive it due to His holy Name's sake, which

involves mercy and grace (Ezk. 36).

Whether we like them or not is irrelevant. We cannot deny they exist and it is their existence, under very unusual circumstances, and in spite of enormous odds that have been stacked up against them during their long history, that is under the spotlight at the moment. To appreciate this, let us, for a moment, go back to the beginning.

## **BACK TO THE ROOTS**

**T**he Jewish race is one of the few that can trace its origin back to a specific individual, namely: Abraham. We are told in the book of Genesis that Abraham originally lived in a city called Ur, in a country called Mesopotamia, known as Iraq today. (Archaeologists have found ancient cuneiform tablets in Iraq bearing the name “Ur”).

According to Genesis, God spoke to Abraham and told him to migrate to the land of Canaan which He promised to give to his descendants who He would develop into His own special nation. The land of Canaan was divinely chosen to be the stage or platform on which this divine purpose would be carried out. This land became the geographical centre of Bible history and Bible prophecy.

It is made clear in the Bible that it had to be this land and no other, even though it required Abraham to walk hundreds of kilometres to get there. This land of course ultimately became the land of Israel - an unquestionably special land in the divine purpose. Because it is the focal centre of Bible history and Bible prophecy, it is called: “The land of the Book.” But in relation to God, the Bible refers to the land distinctively as “His land.” Every land is His of course, but this land in particular due to it being chosen by Him to be the centre stage of His plans and purposes for the earth. The special position that this land occupied in God’s purpose was indicated back in Moses’ day when Israel was told that it was: “A land which the Lord thy God cares for; His eyes are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end” (Deut. 11:11-12).

The land of Israel is the bridge-head of Africa, Asia and Europe. It has been described as the centre of the earth. As such, it is a very strategic centre - an ideal location for the headquarters of a world-wide government.

All the great men and women of the Bible either lived in that land or were from it, and considerable archaeological evidence has been found in Israel and other Middle east countries which proves Israel did indeed occupy the land in Biblical times. It was there that Jesus was born,

ministered, died, was buried, resurrected and ascended, and Christianity was born there. Because Jesus was conceived and given birth to by a Jewess (Mary), and brought salvation, he said: “Salvation is of the Jews” (Jn. 4:22). So, not only had God not used any other nation besides Israel to be the channel of the revelation of His Word, neither did He use any other nation to be the channel of salvation!

As the land of Israel was the geographical centre of the first coming of Christ, so shall it also be of the second coming. In Acts 1 we read that Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and angels present at the time declared to the apostles that he would return in the same manner. Five hundred years prior to this, a prophecy in Zech. 14 declared that his feet will touch down on the same mount when he returns. At that time he will engage in the battle of Armageddon, destroy the anti-Israel armies that will have invaded the land, establish his kingdom and rule the world from the new Jerusalem.

Coming back to Abraham: His wife Sarah gave birth to Isaac who became heir of the promises, not Ishmael who was born to Hagar, a slave from Egypt. Isaac’s son Jacob was next in line and then Jacob’s twelve sons from whom came the twelve tribes of Israel. As a result of famine, Jacob and his twelve sons, along with their wives and families, went to Egypt to join Joseph who had been taken there previously as a slave, but later, due to the grace of God, became the Prime Minister.

Israel ended up staying in Egypt for several centuries, towards the end of which the Egyptians changed their attitude towards them and persecuted them, but God delivered them by Moses. This is when the Exodus took place, around 1,500 B.C.

On their way to the promised land, they stopped at Mount Sinai where God put a proposition to them. He wanted to make a covenant with them. He said: “If you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, you will be my own people. The whole earth is mine, but you will be my chosen people. You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19).

God revealed Himself to be a gentleman in this matter. Even though He had delivered them from Egypt with mighty signs and wonders, He would not force Himself on them and try to compel them to enter into covenant relationship with Him. He gave them the choice and let them exercise their own free will to decide. He put the ball in their court. And they responded by saying: “Whatever the Lord says we will do.”

## VERY INTERESTING PREDICTIONS

**N**ow, while Israel was encamped at Sinai, some very interesting predictions were presented to them, in which the Lord made it clear to them what would happen in the future if they obeyed Him, and what would happen if they disobeyed. In fact, the next 3,500 years of their history was mapped out in incredible detail. And today we are in the unique position to check it out, having the advantage of hindsight.

As we in the 21st century look back on Israel's history, we see that the predictions have come to pass exactly as foretold. It is an amazing witness to the truth of Bible prophecy. For example, Deu. 28 records a list of blessings that God promised Israel if they remained faithful to Him, and a list of curses if they became unfaithful. The blessings involved victory for the nation over all enemies, resulting in peace and prosperity; being able to lend to other nations and not having to borrow. They were promised that they would be a leader of nations. This was fulfilled in king Solomon's day when the nation reached the peak of its power and prosperity.

The curses that were predicted in the event of unfaithfulness were invasion by the enemy, defeat, oppression and persecution so severe that they would be driven mad by what they had to witness and experience. This is how it is expressed in Deu. 28:

“The Lord shall take you and your king away to a foreign land, where neither you nor your fathers ever lived before, and there you will serve gods made of wood and stone. In the countries to which the Lord will scatter you, people will make fun of you, call you names, humiliate, ridicule and reproach you. Your name shall become a proverb and a byword” (v36-37).

“The Lord will bring against you a nation from the ends of the earth whose language you will not understand. They will swoop down on you swiftly like an eagle. They will be ruthless and show no mercy to anyone, young or old. They will eat your cattle and your crops. They will not leave you any corn, wine, olive oil, cattle or sheep, and you will die. They will attack every town in the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and the high fortified walls in which you trust will fall. When your enemies are besieging your towns, you will become so desperate for food, that you will even eat your own children” (v49-53).

“The Lord will scatter (deport) you among all the nations, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you will serve gods made of wood and stone; gods that neither you nor your fathers have ever known or

worshipped before. And among these nations you shall find no ease or peace, and will not feel at home. You will have there a trembling heart, and be overwhelmed with anxiety, hopelessness and despair. Your life will always be in danger and hang in doubt before you. Day and night you will be filled with fear and terror, and you will live in constant fear of death. Your hearts will pound with fear at everything you see. Every morning you will wish for evening; every evening you will wish for morning. And the Lord will send you back to Egypt in ships ... and there you will be sold to your enemies as slaves until there is no one left to buy you” (v64-68).

## A SIGN

**N**ow, it is interesting to note that in the same context of these prophecies, it is stated that all these terrible things will be a “sign” (v46) i.e. they will be a signal, like a flag or beacon on a hill, drawing attention or testifying to something, like a sign post. This brings us back to the concept of Israel being a “witness” or sign-people.

The crux of the matter is this: Every time the predicted disasters overtook Israel, terrible as they would be, they would nevertheless act as evidence - a sign or witness to the truth of the Word of prophecy which predicted them, and therefore vindicate the One who inspired them.

People often say: “Give us a sign so that we can believe the Bible.” Well, such a sign can be found in the Jewish people and their history. To those who are looking for signs, we say: “Watch Israel with a Bible in your hand.”

The dispersion, persecution and suffering of the Jews during their history has been signalling a message to all nations, declaring that the Bible is a trustworthy record inspired by God. Whether in times of fortune or misfortune, the Jews have been a living witness to both the goodness and severity of God, witnessing to the fact that obedience brings blessing and disobedience brings cursing. Many reliefs and carvings found by archaeologists in the ruins of ancient cities where Jews were taken as captives, testify to the truth of this.

All those awful predictions recorded in Deu. 28 came to pass exactly as foretold. Jewish history witnesses to the precise and tragic fulfilment with terrible literalness. Between the eighth and fifth centuries B.C. the Assyrians and Babylonians invaded Israel, killing many of the Israelites and taking survivors away as captives, causing much tribulation and suffering.

In A.D. 70 the Roman legions swept down on Israel resulting in a

terrible siege of Jerusalem taking place. The historian Josephus who lived at that time, records the conditions and the effects on the Jews. His record reads as if it was taken straight out of the prophecy in Deu. 28. It was literally fulfilled in every detail.

Some of the details in the prophecy are quite remarkable. For example: In v48-49 it says that the nation which would swoop down on Israel would “put a yoke of iron” upon them; “be swift as an eagle” and “speak a language” not known to them.

Significantly enough, the eagle was the Roman insignia, iron was the metal referred to by the historians to signify and represent the Roman power, and the Latin language was more foreign to the idiom of the Hebrew language spoken by the Jews, than any other language with which they had come in contact.

The Romans of course in A.D. 70 destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple. Thirty seven years before this took place, Jesus predicted it as recorded in Matt. 24 and Lk. 21. One and a half million Jews perished in the land and over one million were taken away captive. Ship loads were taken to Egypt, and the slave markets became so glutted that there was nobody left to buy them, just as the prophecy given 1,500 years earlier in Deu. 28 said would happen.

Jesus, in his prophecy of these events as recorded in Lk. 21 said: “Jerusalem shall be surrounded by armies” and he warned that the city would be destroyed, causing great distress in the land. He said that many Jews would “fall by the sword and be taken away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles (non-Jewish nations) until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”

History has proved the words of Jesus to be true. The Romans exiled the Jews that survived the siege and they were forbidden on pain of death to return to Palestine. A prophecy in Micah 3:12 said that “Zion shall be ploughed as a field and Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins.” This was literally fulfilled and evidence of it could be seen by travellers for centuries.

During the centuries that followed after the A.D. 70 siege, right up to 1967, Jerusalem was, as Jesus predicted, occupied and controlled (trodden down) by Gentiles. After the Romans, came other non-Jewish nations such as the Muslims, Crusaders, Mamelukes from Egypt, Ottoman Turks, Arabs and also the British.

## WORLD-WIDE DISPERSION

**R**egarding the prophecies that predicted the dispersion of the Jews from their land, it is significant to note that reference is made to it being a world-wide dispersion. For example, Jesus said they would be “led captive into all nations.” And the prophecy in Deu. 28:64 said they would be “scattered among all people, from one end of the earth to the other.” This, precisely, is what happened. The world-wide universal scattering of the Jews is an undeniable historical fact.

One report made several decades ago said this: “In the populous centres of Australia; in the newly developed states of South America; in the fashionable suburbs of Paris, London, Vienna or New York; in the ancient cities of Damascus, Rome and Alexandria; in the modern cities of Johannesburg, Montreal and Melbourne; on the banks of the Rhine and the Ganges; on the mountains of the Alps, the Andes or the Himalayas - in all of these diverse centres of civilization, old and new, great and small, refined and crude, scattered over the face of the earth, we find the Jewish people.”

## RIDICULED AND REPROACHED

**D**eu. 28:37 predicted that the Jews would be made fun of, ridiculed and reproached; their name would become a proverb and a byword among all the nations where they were dispersed, causing people to be shocked at what happened to them. How true this turned out to be! The name “Jew” became a contemptible word, and the Jews became the world’s most hated, unloved, unwanted people, persecuted wherever they went. An example of this was seen in Nazi propaganda posters which publicly portrayed crude caricatures of Jews, and also in the forcing of prominent wealthy Jews to publicly get down on their knees and scrub the city streets while those passing by jeered at them.

Moses certainly could not have foreseen this when he was inspired to utter the prophecy in Deu. 28. In his day, Israel was riding high, having escaped from Egypt, the super-power of the day, as a result of the unleashing of the mighty judgmental power of God. All the nations at the time knew that Egypt had been humbled and they stood in awe of Israel. Yet, in spite of this, the word of prophecy through Moses warned Israel that if they turned away from God, tremendous changes would take place and they would be hated, despised and treated with contempt.

Jews throughout the world for century after century have borne the

brunt of satire, ridicule and reproach. Many who have persecuted the Jews have done so purely out of blind prejudice, caused by anti-Semitic propaganda, which has been motivated by envy and jealousy of Jewish success in business and the affluence produced by it.

Not only have Jews had to put up with the name “Jew” being scrawled with contempt upon the doors of their houses and on their shop windows, but also with the windows being smashed and their shops and houses being vandalized. A mass vandalism took place on 9 November 1938 caused by Nazi propaganda. It was known as “The night of broken glass.” The same night also saw the destruction of 191 synagogues throughout Germany.

We all know about the distinctive yellow star of David that the Nazis forced Jews in many countries to wear. The purpose was for identification, to make them stand out among others and stigmatize them as an inferior race. It was a smearing and demeaning tactic designed to humiliate and demoralize those who wore them, making them feel like rejects. They had to endure much ridicule and reproach as a result.

Man’s inhumanity to man reached its depths of degradation and despair in the diabolical treatment of the Jews during the centuries of persecution. But barbaric acts that have been committed are by no means confined to the dark ages. Most of us are aware of the barbaric acts committed in the twentieth century by the Nazis, like selecting criminals and turning them loose with iron bars to club to death Polish Jews while the German guards stood by watching. Or, the familiar scene seen on film or in photos of Jews being forced to dig their own graves while German soldiers stood above and around them, waiting to shoot and bury them. It mattered not to the Nazis if the men were old, infirm, husbands or fathers. They had no respect for anyone who was a Jew, believing that they were all scum of the earth and should be dead. And it was no different for the Jewish women, many of whom had to suffer the indignity of taking off their clothes in front of Nazi soldiers and stand in front of them, some holding on to their naked babies in freezing temperatures, waiting to be shot. Others of course were put into gas chambers. It is hard to believe that this all happened in the twentieth century, but it did and much film footage and many photos testify to the truth of it.

### **NO EASE OR PEACE**

**D**eut. 28:65 predicted that while the Jews were in dispersion among the nations, they would find no ease or peace, and not feel at home;

they would have a trembling heart and be overwhelmed with anxiety, hopelessness and despair.

How true these words have proved to be over the centuries during Jewish persecution. We have certainly seen how true this would have been during the terror of Nazi rule. Jews by the thousands crouched with fear in homes, hiding places, ghettos and concentration camps.

Deut. 28:66 goes on to say: “And your life will always be in danger and hang in doubt before you. Day and night you will be filled with fear and terror, and you will live in constant fear of death. Your hearts will pound with fear at everything you see. In the morning you will wish for evening, and in the evening you will wish for morning.”

During Nazi rule, a knock on the door of a Jewish home could mean an end of all hope. Jewish communities lived in fear, day and night, as their life continually hung in the balance.

Over the centuries of Jewish history, the Jews have suffered similar deportation, persecution and suffering to what the Nazis inflicted, and each time it has been a “sign” witnessing to the truth of Bible prophecy. It was probably this which caused king Frederick’s Christian physician to say: “The Jews your majesty” when asked why he believed the Bible.

## THE LAND LEFT IN RUINS

**F**or a moment we will turn our attention away from the people of Israel to the land of Israel. Moses was inspired to predict this: “You will be scattered among the nations and the sword will be unleashed after you. Your land shall be deserted and desolate, and your cities left in ruins. Then the land will enjoy its Sabbath rests which you would not give it, while you are in exile in the land of your enemies” (Lev. 26:33-35).

At the time when this prophecy was given, the land promised to Israel was described as “a land of milk and honey, ... the glory of all lands.” This being the case, you would expect an invading nation to occupy it and care for it, maintaining its productivity and fruitfulness for profit. This would be a natural expectation. But the Word of prophecy said “No!” And so, contrary to all human expectation, the land of milk and honey became barren and desolate. Over the centuries of neglect, large parts of it became sandy wastes and malarial swamps.

The condition of the land therefore, along with the people, constituted a double sign or witness to the truth of Bible prophecy. Other prophecies taught that the land would not be restored until the “latter years” when the Jews returned (Ezk. 38:8). The land did indeed remain

desolate until that time.

## **NATIONAL IDENTITY PRESERVED**

**U**nder normal circumstances, when a nation as small as Israel is violently uprooted from her land, scattered throughout the world and persistently persecuted, you would expect the people to be gradually absorbed and assimilated by the much larger nations among whom they were dispersed. You would expect that over a period of centuries in hostile countries, the people would intermarry and lose their national identity. In fact, in view of the way they were so hated and harassed, you would expect intermarriage and assimilation to be desired and attempted.

There are in fact many examples in history of nations losing all trace of their original nationality. This has happened to nations living contemporary with the nation of Israel in Biblical times, some of which were much larger and stronger than Israel - superpowers at the time which actually invaded and conquered Israel. For example: the Assyrians and the Babylonians. There were also lesser powers like the Hittites, Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites and Philistines etc.

These nations and many others are referred to in history as existing at the same time as Israel, but where are they today? Who today can say "I'm an Assyrian" or "I'm a Babylonian." All these nations have vanished and disappeared. All have been absorbed and assimilated during the centuries of time by other nations.

But the Jews have survived and remained recognizable in all countries. Contrary to all expectation, their national identity has been preserved. In spite of exile and persecution, this race is still with us today, just as distinctly Jewish as ever and larger than life. This is also another remarkable fulfilment of Bible prophecy and witness to the truth of it. There are a number of prophecies that affirmed the Jewish race would be preserved:

Lev. 26:43-45: "When they (Israel) are in the land of their enemies, I (God) will not cast them away ... or completely destroy them ..."

Jer. 30:11: "I am with you says the Lord, to save you. Though I completely destroy all the nations where I have scattered you, yet I will never completely destroy you. But I will discipline you in measure and not let you go unpunished."

The words: "I will never completely destroy you" are a divine challenge to eternity, declaring that no matter how long history continues, and no matter what anti-semitic nation or nations set out to exterminate

the Jews, they will survive.

Jer. 31:35-37 is an inspired message from God declaring that if the divinely fixed order of day and night ceases, or if the heavens can be measured by man, and if the foundations of the earth can be explored; only then would God totally reject Israel and never allow them to be a nation again. In other words, the preservation of the Jewish nationality and identity is as sure and certain as man's inability to measure space and penetrate the core of the earth! Nothing could therefore be more certain, because space is endless and cannot be measured, not even with the rule of "light years." And any attempt on man's part to dig his way to the core of the earth is as impossible as digging enough graves to swallow up the Jewish race!

In order to appreciate how remarkable these prophecies of Israel's preservation are, imagine when Babylon was at the peak of its power, being the super power of the day, having conquered all nations, including the Jewish nation, having destroyed their cities and taken survivors captive - imagine a Jew going up to the great king and saying: "O king, according to our Scriptures, your kingdom will be destroyed and disappear but the Jews will live on and their nation will be restored."

Imagine when the Roman empire was in full swing, when Caesar was a powerful dictator and all nations were under his power - imagine a Jewish captive going up and saying to him: "O Caesar, according to our Scriptures, your empire will decline and fall, but the Jews will rise up and rebuild and be re-established as a nation."

Imagine when Hitler's war machine was in top gear and Jews by the millions were being killed - imagine a Jew going up to Hitler and saying: "Nazi Germany will be defeated and collapse, but the Jews will survive, revive and the nation will be resurrected and restored." Hitler and his henchmen would have regarded such a person as being insane. Such a prospect would have seemed impossible at the time, requiring a miracle for it to be fulfilled. Babylon, Rome and Nazi Germany are just a few of the nations in history who have tried to exterminate the Jews, but the Jews continue to live on. They always end up standing at the graveside of their persecutors! Ps. 129:1-2 gives expression to this: "Many times have other nations afflicted us, but they have not prevailed against us." This has always been Israel's final shout of triumph. History is a testimony to the truth of a prophecy in Num. 24:9 which says that the nations who bless Israel will be blessed, and those who curse her will be cursed.

Years ago Bishop lightfoot wrote these words: "You may deny if you will, every successful miracle in the Bible, but this miracle - the

preservation of Israel, is more convincing than them all.”

And Leo Tolstoy wrote: “The Jew is the emblem of eternity. He whom neither slaughter nor torture could destroy; he whom neither fire nor sword, nor inquisition was able to wipe off the face of the earth; he who was first to produce the oracles of God; he who for so long has been the guardian of prophecy, and who has transmitted it to the rest of the world - his nation cannot be destroyed. The Jew is as everlasting as eternity itself.”

Yes, the bush has burned but it has not been consumed. And, as in the case of the burning bush before which Moses stood at Mount Sinai, a message has been coming forth from all the failures to burn up and consume the Jewish identity. The message is: The Jewish race is indestructible.

Mark Twain once asked the pertinent question: “What is the secret of the Jew’s immortality?” Well there is no secret. It was promised by God and predicted in His Word of prophecy. He said: “I will never completely destroy you.” What a witness to the truth of the Bible!

## THE REGATHERING

**N**ow, if God has preserved the Jewish race, He must surely have done so for a purpose. He is not like some humans who preserve and hoard things for which they have no purpose and with which they clutter up the attic!

Bible prophecy makes it clear that God’s ultimate purpose has been to regather the Jews to their land and restore them as a nation. This is a recurring theme in the Word of prophecy.

In Jer. 33:23-26 we read that at one stage in history when the Jews had been exiled from their land, one of the neighbouring nations wrote them off, saying that God had finished with them and they would never be a nation again. In reply to this, God said through the prophet: “Such people have despised my people. If day and night ceases, then, and only then, will I cast them away, and not place one of David’s descendants over them as ruler. Thus says the Lord: I will cause their exile to be reversed and have mercy on them.”

Again in Jer. 31:8-10 God says: “I will bring them from the north and gather them from the ends of the earth. The blind and the lame shall come with them, pregnant women and those about to give birth. A great company shall return to the land ... Hear the Word of the Lord all ye nations, and proclaim this message to the far-off shores. Let everyone

know that He who scattered Israel will gather him, and guard him as a shepherd does his flock.”

These words stress that the regathering of the Jews to their homeland is so important to God that He wants all nations to know about it. He wants it to be known that He scattered them, causing them to be dispersed into all nations, and that He will regather them from all nations. The return of the Jews to their land was therefore not to be a chance happening or a lucky coincidence. It was to be divinely arranged and manipulated by the One who has the whole world in His hands and who can control the movements and destinies of nations like a champion chess player.

The return was to be a demonstration of divine mercy rejoicing against judgement. The land was divinely bequeathed to Israel and God's intention was for them to possess it. And it is implied in the Word of prophecy that the return to the land would not be fulfilled merely by the Jews using their ingenuity to squeeze history into the mould of Bible prophecy. No such conspiracy was involved. Most of the Jews didn't believe in God, let alone the Bible. Although their natural forces were involved, they would not have been successful in achieving the objective had a higher hand not prepared the way and removed the obstacles.

When all the facts are taken into account, it clearly required much more than just chance and coincidence for the Jews to repossess their land and become a nation again. From a human point of view the obstacles seemed insurmountable, requiring a miracle to overcome.

Think about it: Prior to returning, whether by boat or plane, the Jewish nation had been violently uprooted by the Romans, and for almost 2,000 years had been scattered into thousands of isolated communities in over 100 countries. After changing hands many times, their land ended up in the hands of the Ottoman Turks who, for centuries, had a very powerful empire of which even the European nations stood in fear. Being scattered throughout the world, in so many different communities, all speaking different languages, the Jews were not united in a single body. They were certainly not a military unit. They had no organized army, navy, or airforce and neither did they have the weapons required to wage war. So how could they possibly return to their land from all over the world, fight and defeat the Turks and take the land off them? Such a thought was unthinkable and such an attempt would have been insane and suicidal.

## LAND AND LANGUAGE PROBLEMS

**N**ot only that, but the land was arid and desolate as a result of centuries of abuse and neglect, totally incapable of supporting a Jewish nation. Years of hard work and an astronomical amount of money would be required in developing it before it could support and sustain a nation.

A large percentage of Jews, especially in Britain, Europe, Canada and the USA were very settled and comfortable. Many were affluent, having established their own businesses, and others had secure places of employment. They also had access to schools, universities, hospitals, bus and rail services, and all the mod-cons of an advanced society. At the time it was hard to imagine such people giving it all up to go to an arid desolate land, which would require years of hard work and deprivation before establishing the same standard of living, to which they were accustomed.

On the other hand, there were many less fortunate Jews in the world who were poor and in bondage to anti-Semitic powers. They couldn't afford to pay the migration fee, and even if they could, the powers which held them wouldn't give them permission to go or issue them with exit visas.

Consider also the language problem. Imagine Jews from over 100 countries, speaking different languages and having different cultures and customs which had become deeply ingrained and embedded over the centuries. How could such a multi-lingual race unify and co-operate in war, rebuilding and restoring, when lacking a common language? Communication is a basic necessity in any successful enterprise.

So impossible did the return of the Jews to their homeland seem to be in the past, that even many Bible scholars couldn't believe it and concluded it would never happen. They explained the prophecies away. Some of them applied the prophecies to Britain, or America. Others applied them to the church. They conveniently picked out of the prophecies the promised blessings of restoration and prosperity for themselves, but applied the curses to the Jews.

Even as late as the end of the nineteenth century, when Theodor Herzl convened the first Zionist congress in Switzerland, at which he advocated an independent Jewish state in Palestine, he was resisted and ridiculed by many of his fellow Jews. He died in 1904 of a broken heart - he thought his mission had failed.

In passing, it should be pointed out that Zionism is not a religious movement. Many in the movement did not, and still do not, believe in

God, let alone the Word of God. So their desire to return to the land was not inspired by the Scriptures, neither was it an attempt to fulfil them. This, I believe, makes the fulfilment of the prophecies in the Scriptures all the more remarkable.

Even as late as 1905, when Dr Abraham Kyper, while Prime Minister of the Netherlands, visited Palestine, noting that Baron De Rothschild had assisted a few Jewish settlers from Russia who were trying to redeem the land, passed this comment: “The Jews have come on a vain mission. Here, in this land, where the voice of God has once been heard, man’s voice will never be heard again. Only God can check the blight of the in-rushing desert. Only a miracle can save the holy land.”

Hugh Trevor-Roper, in his Oxford valedictory address in 1980 said this: “A century ago, geopoliticians could have foreseen the continued colonization by Russia and the United States of the empty lands to the east and west; but who could have foreseen that far more astounding colonisation in the eastern Mediterranean - the creation of the state of Israel? ... We may like it or not; we may admire it as the realisation of a romantic dream, a victory of human will-power over the obstinate realities which are thought to limit it, or we may deplore it as the last western crusade, the latest venture of imperialism, seeking, not trade, but settlement, and in fact, surely it is both these things.

But we cannot deny that it is an extraordinary historical achievement. How little the British statesmen who listened to its early advocates, foresaw the present consequences: the replacement of a Jewish “national home” by a “national state” - the consequent transformation of the Middle East; the inflammation of the whole Muslim world; great powers, even superpowers, held to ransom by Islamic fundamentalists ... But then who, at that time, could have foreseen the terrible holocaust in Europe which made it all possible?”

And so, in spite of all the difficulties and obstacles that seemed to make the return of the Jews to their land look impossible, the prophecies which predicted their return were fulfilled. The first world war drove the Turks out of Palestine, and the holocaust of the second world war drove the Jews back. And, as a result of their return, they overcame the language problem by reviving the ancient Hebrew language, making it their national language. No other nation has ever done this! They have checked the blight of the inrushing desert. They have pushed the desert back, drained the swamps, planted millions of trees and harvested all manner of crops. Over the past decades the land has blossomed and been totally transformed. At the beginning, Israel had to import everything, but soon

developed an export trade worth billions.

## ON THE MAP AGAIN

**Y**es, Israel is on the map again as a free independent nation with her own government, after having ceased to be a nation for almost 2,000 years. She has her own very efficient army, navy and airforce, and manufactures her own military hardware and weapons.

Israel has been engaged in four major wars since her nation was reborn. These four wars occurred in 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973. In these wars she was attacked from all sides by the confederated forces of her Moslem neighbours who initiated all of the attacks and grossly outnumbered Israel, but she managed to repel them and win the wars.

These attacks and invasions were a repetition of Bible history, for there are references in the Bible to neighbouring nations of Israel forming alliances and attacking her with the intention of exterminating the Jews and taking over their land. Some of the names of those nations have changed, but the attitudes and events have been very similar.

The 1967 conflict was the most memorable. Even the secular newspapers referred to it as a “miracle.” Inspired and incited by the then president of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser, who was extremely anti-Israel, all the Moslem nations around Israel made a concerted attack with the intention of annihilating the Jews and destroying their nation. But in spite of being grossly outnumbered, Israel won the war in less than a week, and it has gone down in history as “The Six Day War.”

As soon as Israel received word of the planned attack, she sent her planes in low under the radar screen and bombed the Egyptian’s fighter planes on the runway before they had time to take off. Pictures of the devastating effect of the Israeli airstrikes on the airfields were circulated around the world by the press at the time.

It was during the 1967 war of course, that Israel recaptured and repossessed her ancient Biblical capital city of Jerusalem and have made it her capital again since. Three thousand years before, in the time of king David, as recorded in the Bible, God appointed Jerusalem to be the capital city of Israel. So David set up his palace and throne there and his son Solomon built the temple there where a Moslem mosque now temporarily usurps the site. Ultimately when Jesus returns, it will be “the city of the great king” (Matt. 5:35) - “the throne of the Lord” (Jer. 3:17).

As we have seen, Jesus prophesied that Jerusalem would be trodden down by the Gentiles but only until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

(The word “until” defines a limit to Gentile occupation of the city). This was fulfilled by the occupation of Jerusalem by various non-Jewish nations up until 1967. Various other prophecies in the Bible clearly taught that not only would the Jews return to their land and become a nation again, but that they would also repossess Jerusalem. The repossession of this city and the conflict it has created between Israel and the Moslem world was anticipated in Bible prophecy where it is referred to as “the controversy over Zion” (Isa. 34:8). This conflict will be one of the catalysts for the battle of Armageddon, at which time the Lord will resolve the issue of ownership and make it clear once and for all that the city belongs to Israel. Zech. 12 prophesied that Jerusalem would become “a burdensome stone for all people,” resulting in many being injured and killed who meddle with it and attempt to shift it from Israel’s control.

The anti-Israel policy of the neighbouring Moslem nations is still much the same today, and according to Bible prophecy, will get worse in the end time. So Israel has had to keep a high defence profile. She has designed and builds her own tanks and has also developed her own aeroplane industry.

Israel is of course a member of the U.N.O. as a result of becoming a nation. Her flag, depicting the six-sided star of David, has been flying among the flags of member nations at the U.N. headquarters since May 12 1949. She maintains relations with the majority of nations, except for those Islamic countries which refuse to recognize her and refuse to acknowledge Jerusalem as her capital city. Israel has been the focus of many agendas in the Security Council in the past, and there will probably be more in the future.

Prior to the official declaration of the establishment of the state of Israel in May 1948 by the then Prime Minister David Ben Gurion, many names for the new state had been suggested. Some didn’t want it to be called “Israel.” And so, with bated breath, everyone waited to hear what it would be called. All the end time Bible prophecies called it “Israel,” so it was not surprising that this was the name chosen. Newspapers throughout the world advertised this unique historical event, bringing much joy especially to students of the prophetic Word. The providential hand of God was no doubt behind the choice of the name.

Modern cities have sprouted up in the land, with schools, universities, hospitals and technological institutes which have produced some brilliant scientists. An atomic research laboratory was set up and although Israel has never formally or publicly acknowledged it, many believe she belongs to the nuclear club and has “the bomb.”

Israel has her own philharmonic orchestra which is of world wide renown, and has produced some brilliant musicians and conductors who became world famous. For example: Yehudi Menuhin, was one of the world's greatest violinists, and Daniel Barenboim, a child prodigy and brilliant pianist and conductor, along with others.

Yes, Israel is well and truly back in her land again. In terms of historic time, it has happened very quickly and constitutes an amazing fulfilment of Bible prophecy. Prophecies that lay dormant in the Bible for centuries which many critics and sceptics said could never happen, finally burst into life in the sight of all nations with incredible accuracy.

## NATIONAL RESURRECTION

**S**ometimes people say: "Show me a miracle so that I can believe in the Bible and God; let me see the dead raised and restored to life."

Well, Israel's revival to life as a nation and her restoration is like that. It is a national resurrection. For almost 2,000 years the nation was dead. It was not on the world map because it was non-existent. But the nation has stood up again. It has been resurrected.

In fact, a prophecy recorded in the Bible over 2,500 years ago, referred to Israel's revival in resurrection terms. The prophecy is in Ezk. 37 and is one of the most significant and dramatic prophecies in the Bible relating to Israel's revival.

In this prophecy, the prophet Ezekiel was shown a vision of a valley full of human bones, and he was told they represented the nation of Israel which had been destroyed. Many of the Jews had been killed and their bodies left out in the open to rot. Those who survived and who went into exile as captives were saying: "Our hope is lost; we have no future." This was their cry of agony and despair. They concluded that there was no hope of them ever returning to their land or of their nation reviving and being restored again.

Who can read about this valley full of bones in Ezk. 37 and the cry of agony and despair of the captive Jews who were afraid of extinction, and not be reminded of how literally and painfully true the prophecy became during the Holocaust of the second world war when millions of Jews were put to death by the Nazis? Many have no doubt seen movies or photos of the large trenches, like valleys, full of bodies and bones, being used as mass graves for many of the Jews who died in concentration camps or were killed by the enemy. Many will also be aware of the agonizing cries and despair of the captives in concentration camps who were convinced

that all hope was lost and there was no future for Israel.

Who, in such a dark hour could have believed that in just a few years time, Nazi Germany would go down and be destroyed, and Israel would rise up and be restored?! No astrologers or the Koran or the writings of Buddha or Confucius made such predictions, but the Bible did. And herein lies the difference between the Bible and all other writings.

Astrology predicts predictable things - things of a general nature which could happen sooner or later to anyone. But Bible prophecy is in the big time league, predicting the movement and destinies of nations long before there is any sign of the predicted events happening. Astrology is a "lucky dip, hit and miss" affair. You win some and you lose some! Bible prophecy is one hundred percent accurate; it never fails.

### **GOD'S WITNESSES: IT IS TRUTH**

**W**hat a witness to the truth of the Bible this is! This is evidence which demands a verdict, which brings us back to where we started, to the statement in Isa. 43:10 where God, addressing the Jewish people said: "You are my witnesses."

The context of the statement is particularly interesting. In v5 the Lord promises to regather the Jews to their land from the four corners of the earth. Then in v8 He issues a challenge to all who do not believe in Him or His Word and to those who believe in other gods or powers or influences by which they claim to be able to predict the future. They are challenged to justify their position by foretelling the future like God has in relation to Israel. He challenges them to bring forth examples and witnesses to prove that they can match His prophecies concerning the nation of Israel being regathered, revived and restored. "If you can't" He says, "then listen to My Word of prophecy and say it is truth." He then turns to Israel and says: "You are my witnesses, that men may know and believe in me and understand that I alone am God."

This is the crux of the matter. The Jews are God's witnesses testifying to the truth of His Word of prophecy due to fulfilling it in all of its details in a remarkable way. Believing the Bible is not therefore a blind faith. There are very sound reasons for believing. There is no ground or excuse for not believing other than pride or prejudice. You don't have to have faith to read the Bible. Faith comes by reading it!

Talking about truth: It is recorded in the gospel of John (Jn. 18:38) that in response to Jesus saying he came to bear witness to the truth, Pontius Pilate said: "What is truth?" But Jesus had previously answered

that question when he declared that God's Word (the Scriptures) is the truth (Jn. 17:17). That same Word is still with us today in the Bible, and its truth, if believed, can set us free from the power of sin and death, because it leads us to Jesus who is "the way, the truth and the life." He is the Word of truth made flesh and has been given the power and authority to give eternal life to all who are prepared to follow him and his way.

And if anyone requires evidence for Jesus being the promised Messiah and Saviour, send for the booklet "Only Jesus Fits the Messianic Mould." This booklet draws attention to the many prophecies given centuries before his birth, predicting when, where and how he would come; what he would do, as well as when, where and how he would die and be raised from the dead. The prophecies paint a full and complete portrait of him, making it abundantly clear that he was divinely foreordained.

### **PROPHECY IS NOT AN END IN ITSELF**

**I**t is important to understand that Bible prophecy is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end. Many find prophecy, especially of end time events, a fascinating and intriguing subject. Looking into the future has always been a challenging and stimulating exercise. But knowledge of future events, no matter how deep and extensive, doesn't qualify anyone for God's salvation or make them a candidate for His kingdom. Bible prophecy hasn't been given to us just to play mind games with. It should not be a mere ear tickling, academic exercise or intellectual buzz, like a hobby or some other source of entertainment. The main objective of Bible prophecy is to prove that the One who inspired the prophecies in the Bible is indeed God and to provide ground for believing in Him and a motivation to read His Word and take it seriously, with a desire to be obedient to His requirements, entering into a personal relationship with Him in order to qualify for His kingdom and share the promised glorious eternity with Him.

The real purpose of the Scriptures (and this includes the prophetic Scriptures) is made clear in 2 Tim. 3:15: "The holy Scriptures are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Nothing could be sadder or more futile than a person who shows a lot of interest and spends a lot of time and energy committing himself to reading and studying prophecies, but who has no interest in committing his life to Christ in order to be ready and acceptable to him at his coming.

Rest assured: Jesus is coming again! There are more prophecies in

the prophetic Word relating to the return of Christ to earth than there are prophecies of the Jews returning to their land. And just as the prophecies concerning the return of the Jews have been accurately fulfilled, so also shall the prophecies concerning the return of Christ!

And, as the land of Israel was the land to which the Jews returned, the return of Christ will also be to the same land. As was pointed out earlier: “His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives which is east of Jerusalem” (Zech. 14:4).

The verses leading up to this verse in Zech. 14 reveal that an invasion of the land of Israel by enemy forces will precipitate the return of Christ. He returns to do battle with the enemy and deliver the Jews. This battle is referred to in Rev. 16:16 as occurring “in a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.” This confirms that the battle takes place in the land of the Hebrews which is the land of Israel.

There are a number of prophecies in Scripture relating to this theme and they all agree that invasion of the land of Israel by enemy forces will be the catalyst for Christ’s return. Some of the prophecies reveal that Moslem nations in particular will be anti-Israel in the end time and deeply involved in the invasion. It is clear from this that before Christ would return, the Jews had to return to their land and be surrounded by anti-Israel nations who would eventually confederate and invade with the intention of destroying the nation of Israel and taking possession of the land for themselves.

Looking at the scene today of the Jews having returned and restored the nation of Israel, and of the growing anti-Israel attitude of Moslems, along with their claims that the land belongs to them, not to mention their four attempts in the past to wage war to seize it, one does not have to be a rocket scientist to see how accurate Bible prophecy is and how close we must be to the second coming of Christ.

A simple sequence of events in Ezk. 37:21-22 confirms what has been said about the signs of Christ’s coming: “Thus says the Lord God; behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and will gather them from every direction, and bring them back into their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king over them all ...”

In this sequence of events, three major stages are presented. First: The Jews will be regathered to their land from all nations. Second: They will be formed into a nation again. Third: A king shall reign over them. This king is Jesus of course (see Lk. 1:31-33), and for him to reign over Israel requires his return.

The prophecy in Ezk. 37 therefore clearly teaches that before Jesus will return and reign as king, the Jews had to be regathered to their land and become a nation again. The first and second stages of the sequence have been fulfilled, leaving no doubt that the third and final stage will also be fulfilled!

## THE FIG TREE

**T**owards the end of his ministry Jesus was asked what the signs of his coming would be. He gave a list of signs and finished by giving a parable of a fig tree. He said: “Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when the leaves spring forth (revive) you know summer is near. You likewise will know that my coming is near when you see all these things. Verily I say to you, this generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled” (Matt. 24:32-35).

Now Jesus hardly gave this example of the leaves of a fig tree springing forth merely to illustrate the certainty of his prophetic signs springing into life at their proper time and season. Such a view would be a rather limited and superficial interpretation. Why would he need to give such assurance to his apostles who knew he spoke the truth and that everything he promised or predicted would be fulfilled at their proper time? No! His words about the fig tree go deeper than that. It is important to note that what Jesus said about the fig tree was a “parable,” and a parable was usually a story relating to nature but which had a hidden deeper spiritual meaning or significance. For example, in the parable of the sower and the seed, the seed had a parabolic significance. It did not refer to literal seed but spiritual seed, namely: the Word of God. Likewise in the parable of the fig tree. The fig tree does not refer to a literal tree. If it is taken literally it does not have a parabolic significance, and ceases to be a parable with a spiritual meaning.

Elsewhere in Scripture the fig tree is singled out as a symbol or emblem of Israel (Joel 1:7. Jer. 24. 29:17). Jesus himself used a fig tree to illustrate a spiritual lesson concerning Israel (Mk. 11:12-14). And in Lk. 13:6 we read that Jesus spoke another parable about a fig tree which in this case clearly referred to Israel. Knowing this to be the case, why would Jesus use the fig tree in the parable in Matt. 24 if he did not intend to convey something in relation to Israel? He had many varieties of trees from which to choose, so why pick this one when he knew that those who were spiritually enlightened would immediately link it with Israel? Why, in fact, use the example of a tree at all if he only wanted to convey the

certainty of the fulfilment of his predictions? Many different examples could be chosen to do this. For example: “Behold the parable of the sun: when it puts forth its light at dawn, you know a new day is near ...”

It is therefore not surprising that many among the spiritually enlightened interpret the parable of the springing forth of the leaves of the fig tree to signify the revival of the nation of Israel. In view of the many other prophecies that predict the revival of the nation as a major sign of Christ’s coming, it would certainly not be surprising if Jesus included this sign among the signs he gave of his coming. It would in fact be expected.

So then, when Jesus said: “You will know my coming is near when you see all these things,” he included the parable of the fig tree among the signs referred to as “all these things.” The parable of the fig tree was the last sign in the list! If so, this would mean that the generation which witnesses the revival of the nation of Israel will witness the second coming of Christ! This puts the second coming into our epoch of history.

### **THE EXTERMINATION OF ALL LIFE**

**I**n the list of signs given by Jesus of his second coming, he included this one: “There shall be great tribulation far more terrible than ever before since the beginning of the world. Nor will there ever be anything like it again. Unless God cut those days short (i.e. terminate them by the second coming) no living thing would survive” (Matt. 24:21-22).

This prophecy teaches that prior to the return of Christ, man would be threatened with extermination of all life on earth. Without divine intervention, no human being would survive. It is interesting that it was during the same decade that Israel became a nation, that the atomic bomb was created and detonated. And since that time, as the nation of Israel has grown and increased, so have nuclear war heads throughout the earth, resulting in man having the ability to destroy all life.

The revival of Israel as a nation and the ability of man to destroy himself, is a double sign that we are living in the epoch of the second coming. Other events involving other nations such as the Moslems and their anti-Israel attitude, along with other world conditions that were also prophesied in the Bible are also signs of the second coming. It is quite amazing and significant that they are all happening in the same era of history. Such uncanny synchronising of so many unrelated events is no coincidence.

“To everything (that God does) there is an appointed time - a proper time for every purpose under heaven” (Ecc. 3:1). There is a set time for

the return of Christ and the end of human government. “He has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness ...” (Acts 17:31). No one knows the day (Matt. 24:36) and some unfortunately have set dates which failed, incurring scorn and reproach from the unbelievers.

The Word of prophecy in 2 Pet. 3 warned that in the last days many would ridicule and scoff at the prospect of the second coming of Christ, arguing that men have been preaching it for generations and it still hasn't happened and is never going to happen. In reply to this, Peter says that those who argue this way are ignorant of the fact that one thousand years is only as one day to the Lord. Being eternal, God is in an entirely different time zone or dimension from man. Even if several thousand years have passed since the coming of Christ was first proclaimed, it is only like a few days to God! Peter then affirms: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night ...” i.e. unexpectedly to the unbelievers and scoffers who don't expect him to come. But to those who are expecting him, we are told that they “are not in darkness (ignorance) that that day should overtake them as a thief” (1 Thes. 5:4).

### AS IT WAS IN NOAH'S DAY

**J**esus taught that conditions in the world prior to his coming will be similar to what they were in Noah's day prior to the flood (Matt. 24:37). We read in Gen. 6 that at that time every imagination of the thoughts of man were evil continually, resulting in violence and wickedness filling the earth, and God's way was corrupted. Life continued without a care in the world or any thought toward God, right up until the day that Noah entered into the ark. In spite of Noah's warning they scoffed and preferred to remain ignorant until the flood came and took them all away. So shall it be at the coming of Christ (Matt. 24:38-39).

But the coming of Christ is good news for those who are grieved at the rapid decline of divine standards and decency and the increase of evil and violence. For those who are looking for a holy and righteous world, the coming of Christ and the kingdom he will establish will fulfil such desires. When he comes, God's kingdom will come and His will shall be done on earth even as it is in heaven. Heaven is coming to earth! This is what those words in the Lord's prayer are all about. “The Lord shall become king over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord, and His name one” (Zech. 14:9. Rev. 11:15). All wars will cease (Isa. 2). All crime, violence, famine, pestilence, poverty and injustice will be eliminated. Paradise will truly be restored!

Winston Churchill once said: “Unless some effective world super government can be brought into action, the prospects for peace and human progress are dark and doubtful.” Other world leaders have expressed themselves in similar terms. There are too many fallible leaders with conflicting philosophies and ideologies. The world needs one infallible, righteous leader with dictatorial powers to enforce justice and equity - one central government and authority. No man on earth qualifies, but one in heaven does, and he’s coming soon to reign. And His promise to all who believe in him and make him Lord and master of their life, diligently walking in his footsteps, is that they will be given eternal life and the authority to reign with him. (Rev. 2:26-27. 5:9-10. 2 Tim. 2:12).

How can we be sure about such promises made in the Bible? Remember the answer of King Frederick’s physician: “The Jews your majesty.” Remember also what King Frederick said: “If one wants to know the time on the clock of world history, let him observe the Jews.”

Truly, the Jews are a remarkable witness to the truth of the Bible, and a sign of the second coming of Christ!