

C. Hutchinson

THE MUDDLE OF THE MIDDLE EAST

By C. HUTCHINSON
Principal, Berean Bible College



Berean Bible College ——— Calgary, Alberta, Canada

“The Muddle of the Middle East”

OR

Important Bible Prophecies Concerning Israel, Egypt, the Arabs and the Suez Canal

By C. HUTCHINSON
Principal, Berean Bible College

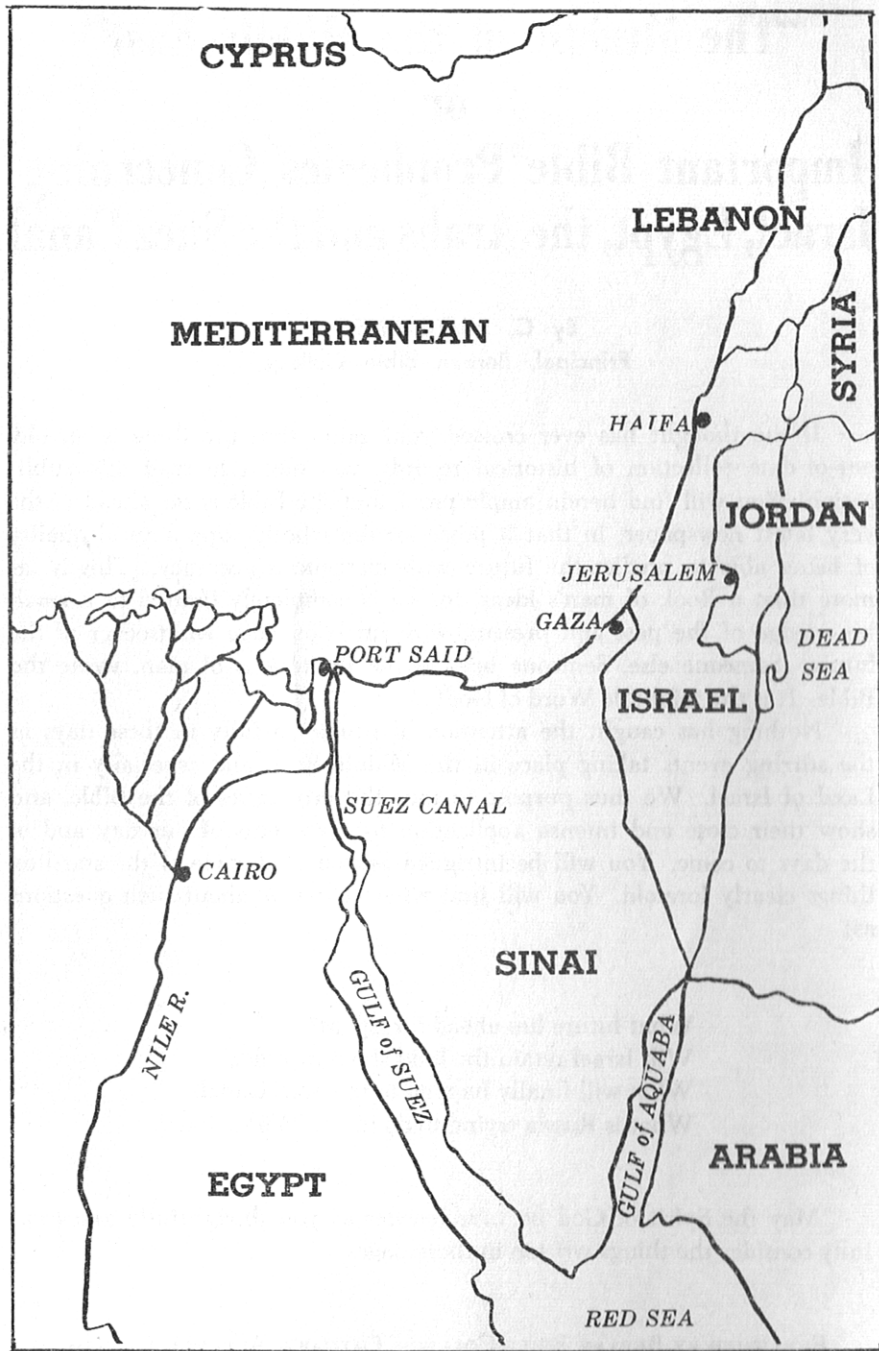
If the thought has ever crossed your mind that the Bible is an old, out-of-date collection of historical records, you ought to read this publication! You will find herein ample proof that the Bible is far ahead of the very latest newspaper, in that it possesses the wholly supernatural quality of being able to predict the future with meticulous accuracy. This is far more than a Book of man's ideas, for he is completely limited to a small knowledge of the past and present, with no knowledge whatsoever of the future. Someone else, Someone beyond the limitations of man, wrote the Bible. It is the infallible Word of God!

Nothing has caught the attention of people so fully in these days as the stirring events taking place in the Middle East, and especially in the Land of Israel. We thus purpose to take the prophecies of the Bible, and show their close and intense application to the events of our day and of the days to come. You will be intrigued as you read some of the startling things clearly foretold. You will find what God says about such questions as:

What future lies ahead for Egypt?
Will Israel retain the land she now holds?
What will finally happen to the Suez Canal?
What is Russia trying to do in the Middle East?

May the Spirit of God be your teacher as you thoughtfully and carefully consider the things written in these pages!

PUBLISHED BY BEREAN BIBLE COLLEGE, CALGARY, ALBERTA, CANADA.



“The Muddle of the Middle East” or Important Bible Prophecies Concerning Israel, Egypt, the Arabs and the Suez Canal

The Twentieth Century has already been marked as the most significant period of human time since the centuries parted at the birth of Christ. No other period has ever equalled it in the advance of technical knowledge, in sociological changes, in rampant nationalism which has produced two world wars and threatens a third one even now, or in such gigantic ideological struggles. But far beyond all these immense and significant events, the sudden renaissance of the nations of the Middle East, (or Near East, as it is often called), stands out as the most important matter of them all. The easy-going, sun-drenched eastern shore of the Mediterranean has suddenly become the boundary of a crisis area, a land of struggle and bitter conflict. In a miraculous, breath-taking manner, the ancient nation of Israel has been literally “born in a day,” and since that birth, has found herself beset all around with enemies who have vowed to throw her into the sea. And all this has focussed the eyes of the world on that little strip of disputed territory.

Many are the speculations that are being made concerning the future outcome of all these conflicts, and so confused and contradictory are the issues that “your guess is as good as mine.” But let’s not guess. “We have a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.” (II Peter 1: 19). God has given us the Bible that we might clearly understand what lies ahead, for the Book has this wonderful, supernatural quality, shared by no other writing on earth, in its exact foretelling of that which yet lies beyond all human knowledge. This is a time as never before when everyone ought to read the Bible, for knowledge, for instruction, and for the great lessons of life found in its pages. Follow with us, then, as we see what God says about these countries that lie in the strife-torn areas east of the Mediterranean; Israel, Egypt, the Arabs and their neighbours. First of all:

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE PROPHECY ABOUT EGYPT?

Egypt is a land of ancient civilizations. In July of 1955 it was my privilege to gaze on the great pyramids and the mighty Sphinx, standing on the edge of the desert, just outside the city of Cairo. I went into the Great Pyramid of Cheops, that enigma in stone, carved and built with mathematical and astronomical exactitude. It was no mean civilization, no ignorant nomad tribe that erected that enormous structure with such evident wisdom and precision. For millenniums people have lived along the fertile strip of the Nile valley, and thrived or endured famine as that life-giving stream flowed or failed.

Egypt is mentioned some 737 times in the Bible, so at once we know that it figures large in the affairs of the human race. The first mention of Egypt is found in Genesis 12:10, the story of Abraham going "down into Egypt." Now the Law of First Mention is an important one in Bible analysis. This Law is simply that the first mention or use of a word in the Bible usually sets the meaning of it, and gives us the general "tone" of its common usage. This mention of the word "Egypt" gives us the clue to what Egypt means to God. Going to Egypt is always "down" for His people. They have never found peace there. And so in a spiritual sense Egypt speaks of the world, with all its pomp and pride and glory, and with all its wickedness, its temptations, its folly and its shame.

The term "Out of Egypt" is used hundreds of times in the Bible. When Joseph died there, he was concerned that even his bones should not remain in that land, but commanded the people of Israel to carry them out of Egypt when they returned to the Promised Land. The remains of both Jacob and Joseph lie today in Palestine, as they have for so many centuries. I saw the graves of both these men. They are "out of Egypt" men!

Parts of Egypt are described in the Bible as very beautiful, (Gen. 13: 10), but these lovely scenes played a part in tempting Lot to choose the plains of Sodom, because they reminded him of the fertility and wealth and beauty of Egypt. Beautiful things and places are not necessarily holy and spiritually profitable! Egypt was once a very powerful nation, but when the dynasty of the Pharaohs fell, it sank into comparative obscurity, a desert settlement of the children of Ham, until on November 17th, 1869 De Lesseps completed the Suez canal, and ocean traffic began to move through the land, bringing the world's commerce to the very doors. It is interesting to read in the prophecy of Hosea these words, "Oil is carried into Egypt" (Hos. 12: 1).

Now what does the Bible indicate concerning the future of Egypt? Is she now rising to power? I have examined literally hundreds of Bible prophecies concerning Egypt, and have found nothing ahead of this nation of good or blessing from God, apart from their association with Israel. It is impossible to present more than a fraction of the Bible statements made, but here are some of them. One that is keenly up to date, in these days of Egypt's recurring provocations against Israel, is that found in Joel 3: 19, "Egypt shall be a desolation . . . for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land." We should never forget that in Zechariah 2: 8 Judah is said to be the apple of God's eye. He is extremely sensitive to any hurt that comes to His people.

Again, in Daniel 11: 42 we have an ominous statement concerning Egypt. When the coming antichrist begins his march out of the north, this Scripture clearly foretells the fact that Egypt will come under his domination, apparently with little difficulty. It is thus easy to understand why Russia is so anxious to gain a foothold in the Near East. The conflict over the control of the Suez Canal has been for her a glorious opportunity, and she has siezed it swiftly, sending in pilots to replace those withdrawn by the western nations. Egypt is but another pawn in the moves of the Communists, and she will some day fall to them.

21 32
But perhaps the greatest body of prophecy concerning Egypt is to be found in three chapters of the Old Testament which are almost entirely devoted to the subject. They are Ezekiel 29 and 30, and Isaiah 19. Let me suggest that these be read carefully by anyone who would study the future of Egypt. Let me pick out a few verses that are of great importance. In Ezekiel 29: 3 we read: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt . . . which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself." Here we find two important statements; first that God says He is against Egypt. God does take sides in national affairs. He is always on the side of righteousness. The second fact here stated is that Egypt is characterized by a self-exalting and possessive nature. This statement, "The river is mine," probably refers primarily to the Nile, and tells us of Egypt's boasting against God, but the same spirit is manifested regarding that other famous "river," the Suez Canal.

Read on through this 29th chapter of Ezekiel. In verses 9 and 10 we read that desolation from end to end is promised to this land, because of its boastfulness. In verses 14 and 15 we read that the land will be "diminished," to become the "basest of kingdoms." Then in Ezekiel 30: 12 we read: "I will make the rivers dry." A dreadful "drying up" of her rivers, with subsequent death and desolation, is promised to the land of Egypt.

Now turn over to Isaiah 19, for in this chapter we read what is perhaps the most complete denunciation of Egypt to be found in the whole Bible. In verse 1 we are given the subject of the chapter, "The burden of Egypt," and the nature of what is to be said, "The heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it." Read this chapter carefully, and as you do this, keep four essential points in mind. First of all read verse 2. This is a surprising prophecy! Civil war is forecast for Egypt! "I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians." That statement is unmistakable in meaning. The ruler of Egypt is not so securely in the seat of authority as he may think. This is characteristic of countries ruled by dictators, who rise to power as rebels, and fall the same way. Secondly, in verse 5, we find another prophecy about the waters of this land, a double prophecy in fact. One part says, "The river shall be wasted and dried up." What a statement that is, concerning the great river Nile! I saw its broad waters flowing through the city of Cairo, a formidable river indeed. But God says some day it will dry up! The other part of this prophecy will receive our attention a little later. Thirdly, in verse 14 we read about a "perverse spirit" that will cause Egypt to "err in every work." Egypt is going to be characterized by error after error. She will do everything wrong, making mistake after mistake, because of her perverse spirit. She will act like a spoilt child that rebels against the instruction of its parents, and thus gets into every imaginable difficulty. And fourthly, in verse 15 we are told of another impending calamity. "Neither shall there be any work for Egypt, which the head or tail, branch or rush, may do." The spectre of widespread unemployment will come upon Egypt, in all levels of society and occupation. We know something of what an ominous sound is carried by the words "No work"! How near that is to Egypt at this present writing! The Canal that brought such gain to the land is in danger of losing all its

trade. Even now the spectre begins to walk through the land! Let the Canal fail completely, and Egypt will be by-passed and ruined.

Certainly God has spoken clearly. He is against Egypt! Why? For two reasons. First, because Egypt is against His ancient people Israel. God said: "I will curse them that curse thee." He promised that to Abraham and his seed. Secondly, Egypt is a type and picture of the godless world-systems in which we live. And God is against all of them. We who name the name of Christ must learn to live as a separated people, a peculiar people, a "come ye out from among them" people!

N.B. ISA 19:17

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE PROPHECY ABOUT THE SUEZ CANAL?

Some folk may say at once: "Now that's going a bit too far. What has the Bible to do with a modern engineering feat like that?" Before coming to such a conclusion, let me suggest time for careful investigation. First of all, why should God not speak about the Canal? Is He not the One who knows the end from the beginning? Has He not spoken about the nations of the last days? Certainly He has. And if the Canal is to play an important part in the conflicts at the close of this Age, we can expect God to say something about the matter. Search the Scriptures with me!

Let me begin with that other prophecy found in Isaiah 19: 5. Verses 5 to 9 in this chapter are most significant, in that they pronounce destruction upon ALL the waterways and water-systems of Egypt. This passage forecasts that, because of the waters drying up, the papyrus, or paper-making industry will cease, the fishing business will fail, and even the manufacture of flax and the weaving of nets will come to an end. This will all be part of that coming unemployment we read about. How will it all happen? Partly by what we read in verse 6, "They shall turn the rivers." Something, or rather somebody, will divert the Nile! Even now Britain, controlling the territories around the source of the White Nile, have hinted at such a threat. Of one thing we can be certain. These events are prophetic in nature, for they have not yet taken place. The Nile still flows to the sea through Egypt!

But let us go back to that fifth verse, and particularly pay attention to these important words: "The waters shall fail from the sea." What does that mean? This cannot refer to the ordinary rivers, as their waters go TO the sea. These waters are pictured as coming FROM THE SEA, into the land! In all of Egypt there is only one waterway that comes FROM the sea, and that is the famous Suez Canal. Now God here clearly says: "The waters shall FAIL." He simply states that the Suez Canal will some day dry up! Along with the other waterways, this ditch will be dry and profitless. Perhaps today it is not worth fighting over, for it is eventually going to be useless.

Now this is not an isolated prophecy. Examine the matter further. In Isaiah 11: 15 we find this very significant prophecy concerning the future days: "The LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and . . . shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make man go over dryshod." Here is a startling word, very plainly referring to the river Nile, at its very delta, where it divides into

seven streams as it enters the Mediterranean Sea to the north. God says that the present multiple mouth of the Nile is going to be destroyed, so completely dried up that men shall walk across it dryshod! The river will be "turned" to empty itself in some other place. Now this is most significant, because the Suez Canal emerges into the sea, at its north end, as part of the eastern delta of the Nile! If this delta is to be destroyed, then the northern end of the Canal will be destroyed also, and men go right across dryshod. So specific and detailed is this prophecy, that we can put a finger on the map of this very spot, and see what will happen. No wonder the "waters shall fail from the sea." Where then will be Egypt's commerce and fertility and employment?

But this prophecy tells us one more important thing. It covers more than just the north end of the Suez Canal. Listen to these words again: "The LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea." What is that? The only place that can be so described is the western arm of the Red Sea, the gulf of Suez. This body of water forms the eastern shore of Egypt proper, and has been entirely controlled by that nation for centuries. And it is fittingly called the "tongue", for it is one of the two such "tongues" so characteristic of the northern end of the Red Sea. Once across that "tongue", Israel, under the leadership of Moses, was safely out of the land of Egypt. It is the proper eastern boundary of the country. The root meaning of the name "Red Sea" is actually "Reed Sea." It is not red at all, but a brilliant blue. At least it was from the air, as I flew over this very "tongue." It was named Reed Sea after the papyrus reeds of Egypt, and has always been claimed as belonging to that land. Now note this carefully. That "Tongue," the Gulf of Suez, is the SOUTH ENTRANCE TO THE CANAL! And this prophecy declares that some day, perhaps by some great catastrophe, some upheaval of the earth's crust, through volcanic action or mighty earthquake, this "tongue" will be UTTERLY destroyed. It will be no partial or temporary matter. The whole tongue will go, forever! And that will destroy the south end of the Canal, forever. Thus, in one verse of scripture, God declares the complete destruction of the Suez Canal, at both ends! That is exactly, unequivocally what this scripture means, no more and no less.

What great changes are foretold for this land of Egypt! What will the nations do when there is no longer a navigable canal through that land? Already men's minds are at work on some alternate solution, and one of the latest proposals is that a canal be engineered through territory now held by the nation of Israel. But what a fuss and a jealousy that would provoke! Is such a thing feasible? Apparently the engineers think so, believing it could go from the Mediterranean Sea to the other "tongue" of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aquaba, to which Israel territory leads. This arm of the Red Sea could be left quite free and open, even though the other "tongue" was destroyed.

Will such a thing ever come to pass? Well, the Bible has some very interesting prophecies about the coming geographic changes in the land of Israel, in the last days. First of all, God says there are some staggering upheavals and earthquakes ahead. In Haggai 2: 6 we read, "I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land." Revelation

16: 18-19 foretells the greatest earthquake the earth has yet known. But we are given more specific details about such coming disturbances, and especially as they relate to the land of Palestine. Zechariah 14: 4 tells us that the Mount of Olives is to split down the centre of the range, forming a very great valley running eastward from the walls of Jerusalem. Such a valley will at once lead into the trench down which the Jericho road runs to the valley of the Dead Sea. And then, down that valley will come new, rushing streams of water, pouring like rivers into the sea far below, the "hinder sea" of Zechariah 14:8. On the other side, waters will flow down from Jerusalem to the Mediterranean. Could such a stream, through a system of locks, make Jerusalem a seaport?

Now look carefully at the 47th chapter of Ezekiel, for therein is given a picture of these streams of water flowing from the Temple in Jerusalem. The angel showed Ezekiel how quickly these waters deepen, at least in the eastern stream, until they become waters that he could not pass over, "waters to swim in" (verse 5). Now in verse 8 we read: "These waters . . . go down into the desert, and go into the sea: (the Dead Sea) which being brought forth into the sea (the Red Sea, through the Gulf of Aquaba), the waters shall be healed." That is the natural course that these waters would have to take, giving the Dead Sea an outlet at last, into the Red Sea. The result would at once be that the waters, now so dead and salty, would be "healed." This state is further described in verses 9 and 10, where we read of living creatures being found in that now sterile and totally dead area; of fish being able to live in those healed waters, and of fishermen making their living on those shores. Engedi is especially named here, and that stands today about half-way along the western shores of the Dead Sea.

There will not always be a Dead Sea, so far below the level of the Mediterranean. As I saw all this fire-scarred, utterly desert area, and bathed in these waters that are 27% mineral, I thought of this coming day when all will be changed. The great new river from Jerusalem must flow down into this valley until its waters rise and rise, some 1,300', until finally it flows out to the south, into the Gulf of Aquaba, actually becoming a great extension of the eastern tongue of the Red Sea, reaching north even to engulf the Sea of Galilee, and part of the Jordan north of that. Then, a waterway through Israel would be easily possible, either by way of Beersheba in the south, or by way of Haifa in the north, through the valley of Jezreel, with an intervening height of land less than 600' above sea level. What possibilities lie ahead! Is anything too hard for the Lord?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE PROPHECY ABOUT THE ARABS?

While looking at the coming events God has foretold for the Middle East, the role of the Arabs must not be overlooked. Today these people literally surround the tiny nation of Israel on every side. In order to fly to India from Israel, it was necessary for me to take a plane first to Cyprus, and land there on British territory, before I could get a plane going east, for Israeli planes cannot fly over Arab territory. These nations are still at war, and any Israeli plane flying over Arab territory would be shot down. North of Israel is the Arab kingdom of Lebanon; to the north east

lies Arabic Syria; to the east is the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, composed of Arabic people; in the south east lies Arabia itself, and to the south is the Hamitic-Arabic land of Egypt. Israel is surrounded, except on the west, where lies the free expanse of the Mediterranean Sea. Thus it becomes most important to know what the Bible foretells concerning the Arabs.

To undertake such a study, it is at once necessary to set a background of history, against which to interpret the prophecies concerning these people. The story really starts away back in the days of the Flood, for out from Noah's Ark came the three families that have since that day repopulated the whole earth. From Shem, Ham and Japheth, with their wives, have come the nations of earth as we know them today. Japheth produced the great Gentile nations that we recognize today as world-powers; the English-speaking group, Germany, France, Italy, the Scandinavian group, Russia, the Balkan nations, Turkey, Spain, Japan and China, with some mixtures of these races. Shem has produced the Semitic peoples of the earth, and in the Bible Abraham is especially traced from this line, followed by Isaac and Jacob, and his twelve sons who became the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel. Thus the Hebrews are a Semitic people, with some mixture added. Joseph married an Egyptian woman, so his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who formed two of the tribes of Israel, were half Egyptian. There is now probably only a faint strain of this mixture left among the Hebrew people. Ham produced the people of Canaan, such as the Hivites, the Hittites and the Jebusites. And the Egyptians came of the line of Ham. They have since been overrun by Arabic peoples, but basically they are of the line of Ham. An examination of such scriptures as Psalm 78:51 and Psalm 105:23 and 27 shows this Hamitic nature of the Egyptians. It is this basic difference that makes the true Arabs afraid of Egyptian domination. Although often classed together, chiefly because of their Mohammedan religion, the Egyptians are a separate people. The Arabic name for Egypt is "Mizr," meaning "red mud," and was given to that land because of the red mud found in the Nile. The Egyptians have descended from Mizraim, mentioned in Genesis 10:13, of the line of Ham. Thus in the present struggles between Israel and Egypt, we have seen Shem on the one side, Ham on the other, and Japheth trying to interfere in the fight!

Now what about the Arabs? They are generally divided into four groups, together forming a complete race, though with many differing characteristics. These groups are descended from Ishmael (Isaac's brother), from Esau, from Keturah (Abraham's second wife), and from Joktan. Thus the Arabs are originally Semitic, with many of the same forefathers as the Hebrews! But note carefully what happened in their genealogy. Ishmael, the son of Abraham, had an Egyptian mother, Hagar. (Gen. 16:3). She, with her son, was finally cast out of Abraham's home, and then Ishmael married an Egyptian woman (Gen. 21:21). Thus his progeny was three-quarters Egyptian. We are not told anything about the nationality of Keturah, but she seems to have had a Hebrew name which means "Perfumed, as incense." Joktan was of the line of Shem, but we have no record of whom he married. The descendants of these three went

south and east from Palestine into what we know as Arabia proper. Now Esau, the brother of Jacob, married two Hittite wives of the line of Ham, and then, in Genesis 28:9, we read that he married a third wife, a daughter of Ishmael, who was, as we have shown, three-quarters Egyptian. Thus most of the Arabs now living in close proximity to Israel have come from Ishmael and Esau, often called Edom in Scripture. And these racially are part Semitic and part Hamitic, half-brothers to Israel and half-brothers to Egypt! So they resent the domination of Egypt, and also resent the intrusion of Israel as they have come back to the land. No wonder there seems to be such a muddle in the Middle East!

Now, with all that history in mind, we ought to be able to understand some of the Bible prophecies about these people. The Bible is not much concerned with the Arabic people of the southern and eastern sections of Arabia, but, in Psalm 83:4-6 it groups Ishmael and Edom together as the bitter enemies of Israel, their half-brother. These are the Arabic people who live next door to Israel, in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Now of Edom God has much to say. Isaiah 11:12-14, in speaking of the regathering of Israel, declares that they shall spoil the children of the east, and especially lay their hand on Edom. In agreement with this, God foretells the strange downfall of Edom. Jeremiah 49:17 and 22, while declaring that there will be mighty men in Edom, in the army and air force; also declares that some day they will be seized by a strange fear and despair, as a woman in the pangs of childbirth, and their land will become utterly desolate. A very dark future is ahead of Edom!

We may well ask the question, "Why will all this be done to Edom?" But as soon as we begin to examine the prophetic Scriptures, the matter is plain. We might put it in the words of that old saying, "Chickens come home to roost"! God says that the judgments yet to fall on the Arabs will be in the nature of a recompense. These people have always hated the people of Israel, and resisted them in every way possible. They opposed Israel when she came out of Egypt long ago, seeking to enter the Promised Land. They even refused her passage through the territory they held. Because of all these things, God is going to return to Edom the same kind of treatment she once gave. Read carefully such scriptures as Ezekiel 25:12-14 and Obadiah's prophecy "concerning Edom." Edom's hatred of Israel will call forth the wrath of God upon him. The 10th verse of Obadiah declares that all this judgment will be "for thy violence against thy brother Jacob." Verse 15 says: "As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee." The chickens are coming home to roost, after all these centuries! Today the Arabs are playing with fire, and the fire will burn them (verse 18). This is just what the New Testament says in Galatians 6:7. "Whosoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The bitter harvest lies somewhere in the near future for the Arab nation.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE PROPHECY ABOUT ISRAEL?

At midnight, on May 14th, 1948, an event took place which can be classed as the most significant of all events in the past 19 centuries. At that moment the nation of Israel was born in a moment, after lying for so long in a state of national death and desolation. We could almost hear

the cry of Isaiah 66:8 as the prophet said: "Shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." Though it sometimes seems that God tarries long, He is never late, and when He moves, His plans quickly come to fruition.

It is thus well to search out the scriptures concerning Israel today. Now as soon as we propose this, we recognize that the task is too great for the compass of this publication. Yet we propose to give enough to show the way, to plot the course, and to reveal what God has in mind for His people. Let the reader fill in the rest. Today events are crowding so upon us, one on the heels of another, that it is almost a difficult matter to separate history from prophecy. What is prophecy today may well be history tomorrow, for prophecy is fast running into the mold of history. Here, for example, is the prophecy found in Matthew 24:31-33. Will any Bible student tell us how far this has already progressed? In this parable Christ was undoubtedly speaking of Israel in the last days. In many scriptures, such as Joel 1:7, Jeremiah 24:1-5 and Jeremiah 29:17, figs are associated with the Jewish people. Now in the parable our Lord said: "When his branch (the fig tree) is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves." Is not this NOW true of the Jewish people? It would seem that this parable is certainly in its preliminary stages, with the fig tree of Judah showing many signs of national life. There is no sign of real fruit for God as yet, but the leaves are appearing, and the tree is budding! Jesus said: "When ye shall see all these things, know that it is . . . even at the doors."

Then in Ezekiel 37 we have another, somewhat similar prophecy, the story of Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones. In verse 11 we are plainly told that these bones represent the whole house of Israel, for so long lying in a dried-up state of death. Then in verses 7-10 we are told what is ahead for that nation. Here three stages of a coming national resurrection are foretold, first a shaking and joining of the bones, then a covering with sinews, flesh and skin, and finally a filling with new life from God. Now certainly we have already heard the shaking of the bones of Israel in our day! And it would seem that this new nation is already getting some of the sinews of industry and war. But as yet there does not appear to have been a real moving of the Spirit of God in the heart of this nation.

Now turn with me to still other important prophecies concerning the people of Israel. Here is a very specific and important one in Isaiah 66:19-20. This is of vital interest today, while Israel is surrounded by threatening foes who would be pleased by nothing more than the destruction and scattering of Israel. God says that He will instruct the Gentile nations to seek out His people Israel from every part of the earth, and bring them to the land of Palestine, as an offering to God. In this scripture the term "ALL your brethren" is used. This means that some day ALL of Israel will be gathered back into their ancient land, not just the comparatively small part we have seen return in recent years. They will come by various means of transport, including the "swift beasts." What sort of beasts are those? The term comes from a root meaning "to dance or whirl." That description sounds like some of the planes I flew in over these countries! But, by one means or another, God says ALL Israel will return to the land.

Near Jericho I saw vast and squalid refugee camps where thousands of displaced Arabs exist under appalling conditions, living on hand-outs from UNRRA. Yet all about them are countless opportunities for work and for exploitation of the natural wealth of the country. When asked why they sit there idle, they invariably reply, "We shall be back soon." With this statement comes a gesture to the west, to their former homes that they left before the advancing armies of Israel. But they are wrong! God says Israel is coming back to Palestine, in TOTAL! This means that Israel cannot be finally defeated or disinherited.

All the prophecies of the Bible concerning Israel are completely in agreement with what we have read here, that God is yet going to regather and bless His ancient people of Israel. Paul said: "Hath God cast away his people? God forbid." In Jeremiah 32:37 we read that God said, concerning Israel: "I will gather them out of all countries . . . I will bring them again unto this place . . . I will cause them to dwell safely." Ezekiel 28:25-26 likewise speaks of this regathering, and then the dwelling in safety, the building of houses and the planting of vineyards. Then the prophet adds these words: "when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise them round about them." Those latter words, "round about them" so very adequately and accurately describe the condition of surrounded Israel today! God has promised judgment upon these surrounding "despisers," upon Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Arabia and Egypt, while Israel is to achieve final safety.

Now one great question faces us at this point of our investigation. It was presented to me the other day by a friend, and denoted his careful thought about the matter of this return of Israel to the land. Here it is:—

IS THE BIRTH OF ISRAEL ABORTIVE?

Webster's Dictionary defines the word "abortive" as meaning "brought forth in an immature state; failing, or coming to naught before it is complete." You see, this man had been observing, like the rest of us, the rebirth of the nation of Israel, the great throngs that have returned to the land of Palestine to possess at least a part of it, the setting up of a responsible government, and the organization of an efficient army. He has heard of the land being rejuvenated, rebuilt, reclaimed, reforested and made to yield its harvests. He had heard of great irrigation schemes, the reclamation of vast desert areas, the planting and farming of vineyards and countless acres of citrus orchards. He had read of cities and towns springing up, of new roads and railways being completed. He had always felt that these were part of the promised, prophesied restoration of Israel, and that they would come to pass by some miraculous moving of God, and not by the natural efforts of the Jewish people. Thus he asked this important and thought-provoking question, "Is the birth of Israel abortive? Is it all premature? Will it come to naught? Is it all an ill-fated attempt to bring the new State to maturity before the right time; or is this that we see indeed the beginning of a glorious fulfillment of the prophetic scriptures which foretold such things for the very last days?

How shall we answer such a question as this? Many of you may feel that such an answer will be simply an expression of human opinion, and

with some cause. Certainly the Bible does not, in any place or by any means, set any date for the return of Israel to their land, nor for the return of Christ which is so closely involved in the matter. Some, in days gone by, have tried to set such dates, chiefly by a juggling of the days of Daniel's visions, changing all the days into years, and then trying to count from some presumed starting point. Some have said that Christ was to return in 1844. Others later set the date for 1914, then for 1925, and when those false prophecies failed, the date was set still later for the year 1932. Now, of course, that year has gone by, and still He tarries. Others claimed the wisdom to read the progress of humanity, year by year, by certain measurements of the passages of the Great Pyramid in Egypt, counting the years in the so-called "Pyramid Inch" fashion. Unfortunately, these speculators have run out of Pyramid Inches, for these measurements have now taken them right into the King's Chamber, and the King has not yet returned! In these last few years, the whole issue seems to have been quietly and gently laid aside by these "prophets"! It has become a most embarrassing matter!

Let's face the clear fact, set before us in the Word of God. Jesus said, in Matthew 24:36, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." In verse 50 of the same chapter we read: "The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of." That is plain enough. The date-setter is really saying that he is wiser than all men; that he knows as much as God! Such a man is declared by God to be a liar, a cheat and a fool. If the date of Christ's return were foretold, then the answer to this question would be easy, but because that date is not told, we must try to answer it by more indirect means, by evidence and inference, and by an opinion founded thereon. Let me then present the basis of my opinion that today we see, not an abortive effort, but the actual beginning of the Kingdom of Israel foretold by the prophets for these last days.

First, however, it will be necessary to modify that last statement. I still believe that the final restoration of the land of Israel, to all its pristine beauty and fertility, will come about by a miraculous act of God, and not by the labours of men. It appears to me that when the antichrist comes down upon the land of Israel, just before the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, he will utterly desolate the land once again. See such scriptures as Ezekiel 38:18-20 and Joel 2:1-10. Not only is there yet to come the great "shaking" of the land, with mighty earthquakes and upheavals, but the armies of antichrist will evidently carry out a "scorched earth" policy. This means that Palestine will once more be desolated, and THEN be restored by the Lord. So in this sense the restoration of the land at the present time is more or less abortive, and is not the final, glorious restoration promised by the prophets.

But our question actually concerns the rebirth of Israel as a nation, quite apart from the condition of the land she will occupy. Is this national rebirth abortive?

In answering that question I would point to three great factors which are before us like three signposts, all pointing the same way. First look

with me at the signpost of past circumstances. This is going to be another history lesson! Some of you, with me, will remember the days back in 1917, when, during the first world war, the land of Israel was at last freed from the long centuries of Turkish domination. That was the very climax, the turning point, of that war, which then quickly ran to its end less than a year later. In fact, that war, which ended at the 11th hour, on the 11th day of the 11th month, reached that end exactly 11 months after Jerusalem was freed by General Allenby, for he entered that city on December 11th, 1917! God had worked out His purposes. The fall of Jerusalem was a strange and awe-inspiring event, with quite evidently much of a supernatural nature in it. The Turks had a sort of folk-lore prophecy amongst them, probably born of a guilty conscience, that some day God's man would take Jerusalem from them. When they heard that Allenby was coming, it sounded in their ears like "Allah bey," meaning God's Man! In sudden panic they fled from the city without firing a shot, and General Allenby, an earnest "born-again" Christian man, (who later, in Military Academy taught the young man destined to become General Sir Bernard Montgomery, another sincere Christian leader), walked into Jerusalem. Was all this the moving of God, or merely the plans of men, that might possibly be premature? I think the answer is plain. God moved in these things. And if that be true, then what we have seen taking place has been the execution of His plans, and cannot be abortive in any sense.

Think a little more about history. In 1919 Lord Balfour made his famous Declaration, in which he pledged the resources of the British Empire to help the Jewish people regain Palestine as their national homeland. The story behind that is in itself a wonderful thing. During the first world war, when Britain was in desperate straits owing to a shortage of acetone, a necessary ingredient of many explosives, there was in Manchester University a brilliant scientist by the name of Dr. Chaim Weizmann. At that time David Lloyd George was Minister of Munitions, and, hearing of this brilliant Jew, he took the problem to him. Weizmann began work at once, and finally devised a cheap and easy way of producing abundant supplies of acetone, and thus helped to turn the tide of battle against the enemies of Britain. When asked to name his reward, he claimed nothing for himself, but asked that the British government help his people to regain their National Home. The result was the Balfour Declaration. Later, after the war, Britain received the Mandate over Palestine, and at once was faced with a golden opportunity to make good on her promise.

It is a sad thing to record, but the fact remains that Britain backed down. She "welched" on her promise, to her everlasting shame. Is it any wonder that God allowed her to again become involved in war and horrible bloodshed? Is it surprising that she lost the Mandate? Is it amazing to see that many of her cities were reduced to smoking rubble as bombs poured from the skies on that land? Why should not God lift His hand of protection and care? Why should He not allow the second world war to bring its devastation and suffering? During that second great conflict, the tides of war circled round again, ever centering more and more on Palestine, north through Greece, and south through Lybia, in a great pincers movement, with Israel as the prize. But at El Alamein the tide was

stayed, this time by that other great Christian soldier, General Montgomery, with his famous 8th Army. Yet not by that General, but rather by God. The enemy was stopped by the miracle of El Alamein. When the way was wide open to Alexandria, and a simple conquest of Palestine, the thirsty Nazi troops, lips dried and cracked after the long desert advance, came to a new pipe-line recently installed by the British. They shot it full of holes, and then pressed their parched lips to the stream of water and drank their fill. Only then did they realize the water was SALT WATER from the sea! On that very day, and that day only, sea water was being pumped through it to cleanse the new pipe! The results can be imagined, for a new awful thirst almost crazed those men, and the advance stopped. God was surely at El Alamein, and Israel was saved! And if that is true, then this again was the moving of God, and was not premature!

Finally, on May 14th, 1948, at midnight, the new nation of Israel was born. Many said then that it was abortive. The Arabs said they would throw the Jews into the sea. But step by step God planned, and then protected. Israel fought with almost nothing. But terror seized her enemies, and they fled again and again, in many cases from fear of mere noise and dust. Israel drove on and on, until her enemies called for an armistice, hoping to catch their breath and then drive Israel out. But Israel drew breath too, and she is still there. Now I believe that these movements were evidently of God. They carry the stamp of the supernatural. I am sure that He intervened again and again. And if that is true, then this rebirth of Israel is real, God-planned and God-directed. Thus it cannot be abortive.

Now the second signpost is that of present conditions and current events. Let me recall some that we have already mentioned. In Isaiah 19:5 God forecasts trouble for the Suez Canal, as the "waters fail from the sea." Again in Isaiah 11:15 we read the prophecy of the destruction of the isthmus of the Nile, and also the destruction of the "tongue" of the Egyptian Sea, the Gulf of Suez. How near we can be right now to the fulfillment of these prophecies! Moreover the recent defeat of boasting Egypt by the armies of little Israel has given much pause for thought to the Arab countries. Isaiah 19:17 declares that in the last times Judah will be a terror to Egypt! This is surely coming to pass, for when Israel swept south against the Egyptian forces, they were routed at once. Israel today has freed the Sinai Peninsula, and thus opened her port at ancient Ezion-Geber which the Egyptians have persistently and illegally blockaded for so long. Now Israel is the only nation on earth, besides Egypt, that holds a land bridge between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. By running a railway line to Ezion-Geber, she becomes utterly independent of the Suez Canal! It is evident that Israel will do all in her power to hold that strategic position!

Only one other nuisance remains to trouble Israel. That is the Arab bulge which still lies west of the Jordan river, including in its grasp the ancient city of Jerusalem. Is the conquest of that next in Israel's plans? If so, the very end times are indeed upon us! In Luke 21:24 we read that great prophecy made by our Lord himself: "Jerusalem shall be trodden

down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." That prophetic word stopped the armies of Israel at the very walls of old Jerusalem, for the very end time had not come. The "Times of the Gentiles" had not yet been fulfilled, and the word of the Lord cannot be broken. If Israel takes Jerusalem, then we shall plunge into the last hours of this Age of Grace! How near that might well be!

Still another significant circumstance of our present day is the increasing hostility and pressure upon Israel from Russia. We have much to say about this, and it will take a separate section to tell the story. A mighty menace is coming out of the north country, upon Israel, and it is looming up more and more every day.

The third signpost is a prophecy of the future. It can be stated briefly, in simple and short language. We have already brought it to your attention. It is found in the words of our Lord, as recorded in Matthew 24:32-34, the Parable of the Fig Tree. He said that when we could see the fig tree of Judah showing new life, putting out its leaves, and budding for the fruitful days ahead, then His return is AT THE DOORS! Is the rebirth of Israel abortive? I think not. The times are too evidently directed under the hand of God. The fulfillment of these prophecies is too imminent to allow time for anything else but a real birth, and a clear bringing into prominence of the nation of Israel. She MUST be back in the land, with her Temple rebuilt, before the antichrist will appear, out of the north! Is he coming out of Russia? Then, before we close this study, we had better examine one more subject.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE PROPHECY ABOUT RUSSIA?

In trying to outline the answer to that question, we must again, from sheer necessity, limit ourselves to what God says about Russia in relation to His people Israel, for that people, in the land of Palestine, is the focal point of all prophecy. As we write these words, that land is also the focal point of world events. Strong tides are today sweeping through the nations of this earth, and men are desperately trying to measure their force, their direction, their goal and their meaning. And in the very midst of these swirling waters, at the centre of the very maelstrom itself, stands the little land of Israel. Forty years ago little attention was being paid to that sleepy little strip of desert land on the shore of the Mediterranean, but today the eyes of the world are focussed there, and statesmen are anxiously scanning the political horizon for some indication of where the tides of the nations will sweep next.

There is a tide today moving westward, pushing harder and harder. The land of Jordan has recently expelled Sir John Glubb from his position as leader of the Arab Legion. This same country has recently elected, for the first time, an anti-western bloc in its parliament. The whole Arab world, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan and their associate nations of Iran and Iraq are apparently turning anti-western in viewpoint. At the same time a great tide is turning eastward, as Russia meets increasing difficulties on her western side. She is being pushed into an eastern orbit more and more. The tides are indeed moving. What will they mean to little Israel, caught in the centre?

We might well guess at the outcome, but there is no need to do that. God has spoken! And here is a great Bible fact every student of prophecy ought to grasp. The pressing danger to Israel in the last days will be FROM THE NORTH! Her greatest danger is not from the assaults of the Arabs in Jordan, nor from the Egyptians. A careful reading of history from 1948 to our day will soon convince anyone that the Arabs will never conquer Israel. A few days of observation on both sides of the No Man's Land that runs through the land of Palestine thoroughly convinced me of this fact. To travel from the Arab side to the Israel side is like going from the medieval to the modern, from the slothful and backward to the keen and up-to-date. Israel's real danger does not lie there.

The Bible says, again and again, that the danger to Israel is from the NORTH. In Jeremiah 1:13-15 we read: "Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land . . . I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD . . . They shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem." If that were the only such statement to be found in the Bible, it would surely be clear enough. Danger is coming "out of the north." But this is corroborated again and again. In Jeremiah alone we have such statements found in Jeremiah 4:6, 6:1, 6:22-23, 10:22, 15:12. The enemy is coming out of the north!

Now it may be argued that these prophecies simply referred to the invasion that came from Babylon, and they are now all fulfilled. But a careful examination of them will show that many of the things mentioned never did come to pass, and thus they must be yet in the future. Moreover, even after Judah had gone into that captivity to Babylon, the finger of the prophets still pointed inexorably to the NORTH! In Jeremiah 46:20 we read: "Destruction cometh; it cometh out of the north." This prophecy indicates, as do many others, that the tide out of the north will sweep south even to possess and engulf the land of Egypt. The leaders of that land are playing with fire when they court the favour of Russia. When the Bear hugs, it hugs to death! How like Daniel's prophecy is this story of a tide flooding southward out of the north. In Daniel 11:40-42 we find this statement: "The king of the north shall come . . . he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. He shall enter also into the glorious land . . . and the land of Egypt shall not escape."

Now we might well ask the question, "Who is this King of the North?" Turn to another scripture that gives us some specific information on this matter. It is found in Ezekiel 38:1-2, for here are specific names mentioned in connection with those invading forces from the north. The names are "Tubal and Meshech." And ethnologists agree that from those names have come the names of two cities in Russia, Tobolsk and Moscow, the capital of that land! Moreover, the word "chief" used in this scripture is from the Hebrew word "Rosh," which is akin to the name "Russia." Thus God pronounces this prophecy against RUSSIA! What folly it is to go around mouthing the totally false platitude that God is neutral, that He does not take sides in national affairs. He certainly does! He is always for right and against wrong. God will be totally against Russia in the last days.

Let me suggest that the reader of these things take the Bible, and read through the 38th and 39th chapters of Ezekiel, paying special attention to verses 8 to 18 of chapter 38. This is a crystal clear account of what is going to happen between Israel and Russia in the last days. This passage continually refers to this Tubal-Meshech-Rosh people coming out of the NORTH, upon the land of Israel, upon this regathered and resettled people. It is perfectly clear that Israel's peril lies THERE!

→ Are we seeing the setting of the stage for all these things? With communists elected to the government of Jordan, with communistic influence pervading all of Syria, with Russian pilots on the Suez Canal, with a strong communistic movement in Ethiopia, Russia's spearhead is **ALREADY IN THE MIDDLE EAST!** Let us not be fooled into thinking that Russia is about finished because of the recent troubles in the western satellites. This has been a mere turn of the tide, and that tide will eventually turn **SOUTH INSTEAD OF WEST!** The Bible says so. Remember, every Russian division taken out of Poland or Hungary is just one more that will be available elsewhere. Russia has her covetous eyes on the Middle East. Why did Israel plunge into the Sinai Peninsula and drive the Egyptians out? Why did Britain and France also move against Egypt? I believe that today the answer is clear. In the Sinai Peninsula Israel captured immense quantities of **HEAVY RUSSIAN WAR MATERIAL!** There was far more than Egypt could ever use, and indeed some that the Egyptians did not know how to use. What was it doing there? The great problem of any invading force is to get the **HEAVY** war material into place quickly enough. It is evident that Russia was already building up supplies of heavy armaments, so that when her paratroop "volunteers" were flown in, they would be ready to take over the whole land very quickly. It appears that this clever plan was known and has been forestalled, to the utter frustration of the Russians. No wonder they shriek for Israel to pay Egypt for these armaments they have captured, for they want Egypt to pay them!

How long will it be before those northern hordes pour down into the Middle East? Nobody knows. But how very near it could be! God has often dealt with Israel in 40 year cycles. Will these things climax 40 years after the Balfour Declaration made in 1919? Or will it be 40 years after the formation of the State of Israel in 1948? Nobody knows. It could well be either one, or in between, but surely it is coming very soon.

Before we close, let me add one more significant prophecy. In Daniel 11:40-42 we read that Ammon, Edom and Moab will escape out of the hand of Russia when this northern invasion takes place. Does not that seem strange? Yet I believe there is a reason for this. God has declared that, during the Tribulation days yet ahead, He will prepare a place to which Israel will be able to flee for safety when the northern flood comes upon the land. In the 12th chapter of Revelation Israel is pictured as a woman, the woman who brought forth the man-child, Jesus Christ, who is to rule all nations. In verses 13-14 she is pictured as flying before the persecuting dragon, the Satan-empowered antichrist, into a wilderness place prepared for her. Where will this place be found? In Isaiah 16:1-5 God calls on Moab to shelter His outcasts, and speaks of a place called

Sela. This Sela is Petra, that great and strange rock-hewn city in the wilderness of Moab, a perfect place of refuge, a well-nigh impregnable fortress-city, easily defended by a mere handful. It has Edom on one side and Ammon on the other, and these are the very countries that God says will NOT be overrun by the antichrist out of the north! How wonderfully all this fits together. There will be a place of refuge for Israel's remnant, perhaps her government and her leaders. They will be sheltered there until Israel is saved from all her enemies. Yes, she will finally be delivered, when her repentant cry rises to God, to the Messiah she once rejected. Joel 2:15-20 tells us that wonderful story of deliverance.

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN TO US?

For all of us, there are tremendous implications. For Israel it means that the time of God's dealings with that nation are being resumed. It means a coming time of terrible trials and afflictions, the "day of Jacob's trouble," sent that she might at last turn back to the God of Abraham. It means that, beyond the dark clouds on the near horizon, there is breaking the dawn of the great prophesied Day of the Lord, the coming of Israel's glorious day of full restoration to the land, that she may dwell there in safety for ever. Her Messiah is coming back to reign!

For the Christian these things mean that the fulfillment of the "Blessed Hope" is near. Before the culmination of these prophecies, our Lord is coming back for His Church, to catch her away to be with Him forevermore. Our heavenly home is waiting, our Bridegroom is coming. (1 Cor. 15:51-52, 1 Thess. 4:13-18.) In the Song of Solomon there is a beautifully suggestive verse, found in chapter 2, verse 13. It reads in part: "The fig tree putteth forth her green figs . . . Arise my love, my fair one, and come away." Here is a picture of the fig tree, which typically speaks of Israel, putting forth **GREEN** figs, as yet unripe, in a very early stage of development. How that suggests the state of Israel in our day! Then the voice of the Bridegroom is here heard calling to his Bride, "Arise . . . and come away." What a picture that is of our Bridegroom calling His Church away to heaven! Surely we can expect Him any day now. Let us "live . . . looking" for Him, live as pleasing in His sight, live so that, whenever He may come, He will find us bearing fruit, "occupying" for Him!

If someone is reading these words, someone who has never yet found a personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, these things stand out as God's great warning sign that the time is very short! God's offer of salvation through faith in Christ has its expiry date. It is written plainly in II Thess. 2:11-12. When the Church is completed by the conversion of its final member, when the last of its number turns in simple, personal faith to Christ, He will catch it all away out of this world, and in that moment, that "twinkling of an eye," the door of mercy will swing on its hinges, and forever close to those who have refused God's loving, proffered redemption. After that the world will be ripe and waiting for the awful judgments of God to fall, and the hearts of men prepared to receive the "strong delusion" that will forever set them on the road to hell.

On which side of that soon-closing door will you be found? Where are you now? In the name of the Son of God we call you to look on the

things we have set before you, and to flee from the wrath to come. There is a Christ for every sinner out of hell, but there is a hell for every sinner out of Christ. Which is it for you? "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. (Isa. 1:18). How can such a thing be? "The blood of Jesus Christ, his (God's) Son cleanseth us from all sin." (I John 1:7). And how can such a cleansing be appropriated by the sinner? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts 16:31). Will the sinner then really find his sins forgiven? "Through this man (Christ Jesus) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things." (Acts 13:38-39). And will this belief in Christ bring new life to a man, and save him from condemnation? Jesus said: "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Friend, the promises of God are sure. The Saviour never fails. Come, trust Him now, with all your heart, and you will find Him all you need for this life and for the life to come. Settle it!



BEREAN PUBLICATIONS

Bible Facts About the Healing of the Body	25c
Challenge to the Cults, No. 1, Is Jesus Christ God?	15c
Challenge to the Cults, No. 2, Is There a Literal Hell?	15c
Challenge to the Cults, No. 3, Is There a Second Chance?	15c
Challenge to the Cults, No. 4, Was Jesus Christ Virgin Born?	15c
Conflict of Communism and Christianity	10c
Liquor Traffic - The Reptile of Society	15c
Muddle of the Middle East	25c
Why Christians Should Reject the New Bible	15c
Woman and Her Adornments	10c
Syllabus of Berean Bible College	Free

Published by

Berean Bible College

3216 - 4th St. N.W.

CALGARY - ALBERTA - CANADA