

MILESTONES 2008

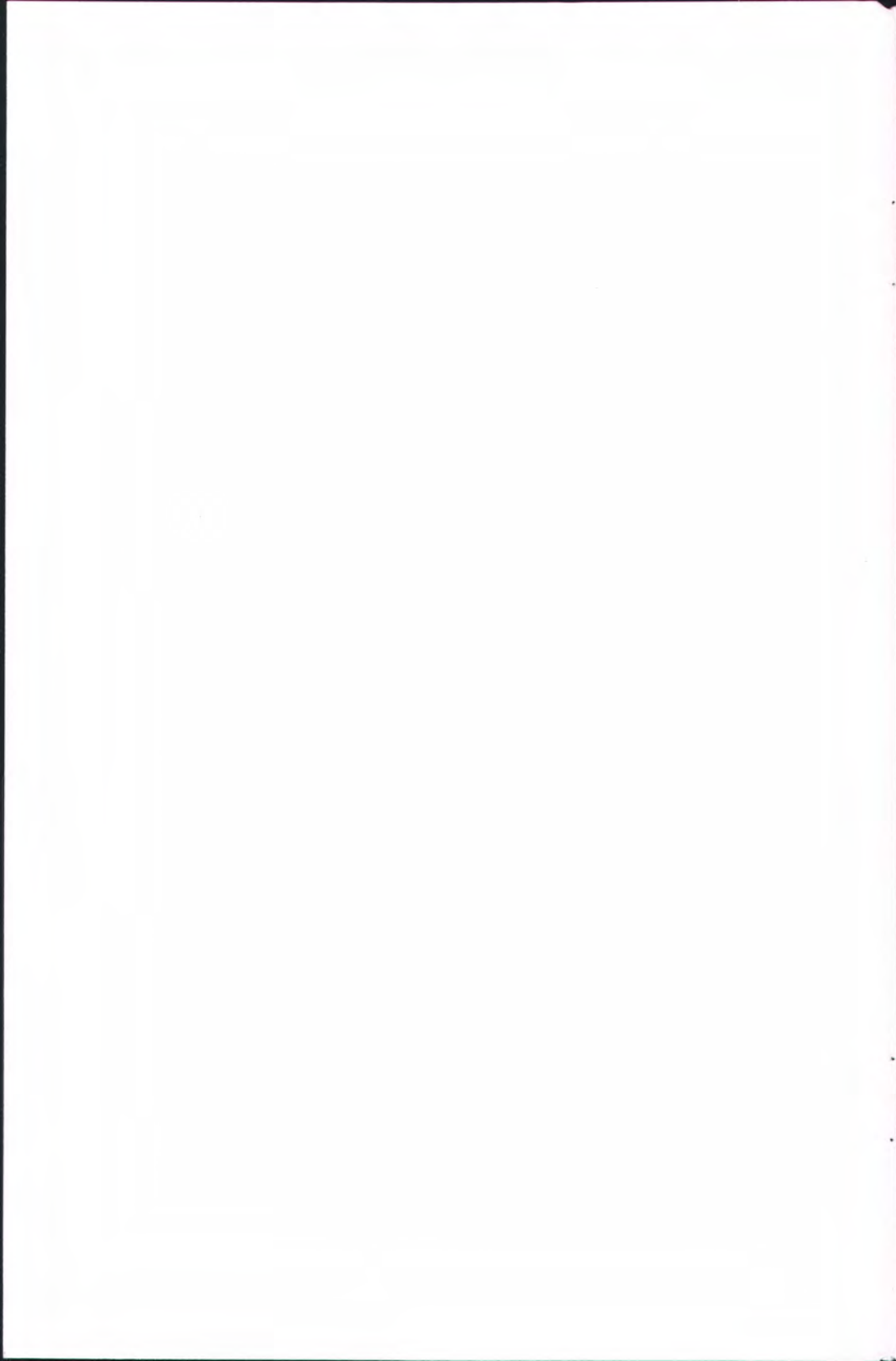
Don
Pearce



The Guardian, Tuesday October 28 2008

Cost of the crash: \$2,800,000,000,000





MILESTONES TO THE KINGDOM

***A Review of the
World Events of
2008 in the Light
of Bible Prophecy***

Don Pearce

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Preface

Very recently in a popular best seller it was declared that until the 1960's and 1970's most big companies financed their own business. They made good profits and used their own resources to support their plans and developments, using what was left after dividends had been paid to shareholders. A vast change has taken place in the attitude to debt in corporate boards. It has not been unusual to hear that companies had debt up to 45% or 55% of their net worth and some even more. To use funds from somewhere else, from banks and other financial institutions was the smart way to go and so rapidly accelerate the growth of the company. Yet the repayment of the loan and its interest and its fees brought another large set of expenses into the business rationale. Every company of every country virtually, was in on this new wisdom. Grow rapidly or disappear!

"Safe as a bank" is a statement about financial security. What almost none of us realized was that all the banks of the Western world and those who took their lead were doing the same thing as those companies who borrowed from them! The credit providers on one hand were borrowers on the other hand! Huge home-loan banks in the U.S.A. bundled together 10,000s of highly geared home loans and went off to Europe and Asia to find other banks to lend the money to them. And these found others to lend to them! And so the merry-go-round went on. "Owe no man anything" is a laughable maxim today.

When foreclosures began, the ramifications went around the world. One or two voices may have sounded alarm about the possibility but not one single large company or institution had spoken up for change. Why? Surely those closer to the picture must have known that this system of too-easy credit and wheels-within-wheels of loans had to end in disaster.

Why no voice? Because personal greed lay at the core of the whole system. No one would blow the whistle because it seemed, at **every** level, that there was rapid wealth to be easily obtained.

It has been described as the greatest financial crunch in world history and that, on the figures, has to be true. So 'men's hearts have been failing them for fear' as they see with horror the things coming on the earth just as our Lord said. When many of the largest 100 companies of the world have seen their company value slip by 50% or 75% we are surely in significant times. Jesus Christ must be at the door!

Whilst the financial crisis was warming up and the Beijing Olympic Games held the attention of the world, the Russian army moved into Georgia and took possession of two significant provinces, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, staying long enough in Georgia to destroy much of its military infrastructure. South Ossetia gives Russia two key tunnels that provide north-south access through the very high mountains of the Caucasus. Several years ago President Putin laid the cities of Chechnya in ruins in suppressing any remnant of independence in that region. Chechnya is neighbour to Georgia. The whole region is significant

for oil and gas and the pipelines that deliver these essential fuels. For Russia to make a Southward plunge the Caucasus, the corridor between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, is the obvious way to come. Ezekiel's words are coming forward every year as the roads to Armageddon are being prepared.

Europe and the world were alarmed by this and the French President on their behalf made a show of activity with many grand words. But in Paris two months later the red carpet was laid out for the President of Russia and he and Sarkozy pranced along in happy collaboration before the cameras of the world. But as this Milestones 2008 brings out it was the **German** Chancellor who cooled things down as she has gone further than anyone else in Europe in laying down plans for trade and security pacts with Russia; who wants Georgia to get in the way of those great European plans? Honey for the Bear and double reward for its brutal invasion of Georgia! The shades of the pre-war years of 1930-40 are very clear!

Israel is again caught in the cross fire of Islamic rockets and the rampant missiles of the world press. December saw in Gaza what we saw in northern Lebanon in July 2006. The fanatic anti-Semitic Iran is the mind and sponsor of both events.

It is not uncommon for correspondents to voice that the days of the nation of Israel are numbered, with the growing sophistication of enemy arsenals and the implacable support of Iran and Russia behind them. Ezekiel's view, however, is the voice of God and that indicates that a false peace will have been achieved in the Land before the Northern Confederacy makes its southern plunge. Uniquely Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia have not backed Hamas and fear the spread of Iranian Shi-ite Islamism more than the children of Israel. It strengthens the picture that we saw in 2006 though this time even Syria and Lebanon have been participants in negotiations. Brother Don has several exciting chapters on Israel's present situation.

So 2008 concluded! A new President of the United States comes into office, with a vastly different background than any before him.

We can be thankful to our God for the Truth we share and the knowledge and insight we have of things to come. "To show unto His servants" was the purpose of prophecy and we are witnesses of that blessing.

We are most grateful again for the informative summary provided by brother Donald Pearce. The grim English winter has this annual blessing that it keeps the author at his desk until the job is done!

Let us press on, with our families and our witnessing ecclesias, building our Brotherhood, supporting each other, especially those in poorer areas of the world and preserving our children in the faith.

May our God help us in these things.

B. N. Luke, Secretary

12.1.09

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Abbreviations used

EU European Union. Was the EEC, then EC, now EU

m = million; **bn** = billion; **GDP** = Gross Domestic Product

\$1= £0.68; €0.74; AUD\$1.40; CA\$1.19; NZ\$1.70 at 5-1-09 rates.

\$1 million = £685,000, \$1 billion = £685,000,000 approx. \$ always US\$.

Author's notes

I would like to especially thank my family and Bre. Kevin Allison, Stephen Whitehouse, and the CSSS for their helpful comments on the draft. It is all put together in the last few weeks of the year, so please bear with its imperfections! *Milestones* quotes extensively from overseas sources, and as **I retain original spellings, etc., check whether it is a quote before blaming the proofreaders!**

[] shows my comments.

Conventional religious terminology is used, sometimes put within “ ”, but often not. Readers will appreciate my understanding on the falseness of many of these terms. Conventional names are used: e.g. West Bank. Dates are always day-month-year.

I am very grateful for items sent in; ensure the date and source are indicated.

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Chapter 1:

A BRIEF SYNOPSIS

2008—when so many pieces of the prophetic jigsaw fell into place!

We are the privileged spectators of the closing stages of man's 6,000 year mis-stewardship of planet earth. With the prophetic scriptures in our hands we witness the times of trouble spoken of and anticipated for so long.

Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken, (Luke 21:26) were signs given by the Master. The speed at which the financial crisis has rocked the whole world has indeed frightened many. The headline in the business section of the *Daily Telegraph* reads—**World economy could shrink for the first time since 1945**. It follows on the heels of an even more dire warning from no less than the deputy director of the Bank of England: **"This is a once-in-a-lifetime crisis, and possibly the largest financial crisis of its kind in human history!"**

Remember, we are just at the beginning of the final convulsions of this sin-troubled world, so we can anticipate that much worse lies ahead. Many forecasters see no end in sight, only a seeming large black hole! Our community has been tested through a long period of peace and prosperity. That will now change. We will have to learn to live the Truth in times of austerity. Those in employment will be called upon to give their lives even more to their employer, putting ecclesial life under greater strain. Those out of work—where will the cut-backs fall? Will it be our ecclesial life that suffers? It is uncharted territory for this generation living in the so called first world. However for many of our brethren and sisters in the third world, times of austerity are what they are used to.

The Master warned of the days of his return being like those of Noah. The one great characteristic of his age was violence. Violence is often a symptom of times of hardship—for human nature does not change. If things can't be obtained legitimately, then they will be taken by force. The extensive destruction of property in Athens by young students, frustrated at the gap between rich and poor and the high youth unemployment is an explosive situation, mirrored in many other places.

The comparative ease with which the terrorists attacked in Mumbai in India has again brought fear—nowhere is safe! The point about this attack was the choice of targets. Jews were singled out for brutal torture before being murdered. Israel's friends, British and American citizens, were targeted in the luxury hotels frequented by Westerners. Indeed any non-Muslim was a target of this attack, in which many suspect that Al-Qaeda was implicated.

2008 saw the dramatic awakening of the Russian bear, as she poured her troops into the two disputed regions of Georgia, where many of them

remain as Russia strengthens Ossetia's and Abkhazeti's isolation from the rest of Georgia. It was heralded as a "mid-sized earthquake which indicates the geopolitical tectonic plates are shifting and that nations, including Israel, need to take notice." Why? Because Russia had now secured control of the majority of the few crossing points through the Caucasus Mountains, now making it much easier to send her troops ever southward.

The West's reaction to this was predictable, yet it was Germany, together with France, that stood up to prevent any lasting damage to Russian-European relations. Germany's agenda involves the removal of America as Europe's defender and embracing the military might of Russia. The EU leaders have now begun talks which will see the binding of Europe to Russia through a Security Agreement. In terms of Daniel's image standing up, we are seeing the development of the eastern and the western legs, but they are destined to be part of a united image. In the West, the Vatican's and Germany's dreams have been coinciding, both looking for greater power in the EU. Germany is the largest and strongest of the EU nations and she wants to control its direction. Meanwhile 2008 saw the tightening hand of the double-headed Putin-Medvedev partnership.

And what of Israel? 2008, their 60th birthday year, saw Olmert forced to hand in his resignation because of mounting corruption charges, although he remains as caretaker Prime Minister until the elections in February. It was just at a critical time when he appeared to be ready to relinquish control of so much of God's land to appease the Palestinians. The angels had thwarted Sharon's similar ideas. *Dwelling in the midst of the Land* is to be the location for latter-day Israel. The new elections may bring a change in outlook by Israel's leaders.

And then as the year closed the shaky truce between Hamas and Israel came to an abrupt end. Provoked to act against the daily indiscriminate rocket and mortar firing into Israel, Operation "Cast Lead" unfolded. Using pinpoint targeting, Israel demolished what she could of Hamas' terrorist structure. At the year-end it was expected that Israel will have to send in troops, as the rockets were still being fired. So far Arab response has been confined to words, many blaming Hamas for provoking Israel.

2008 saw Iran moving closer towards her goal of being a nuclear power, much to the concern of her neighbours. A more pragmatic realisation that it was the Iranian threat, not the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that was the real problem for the Middle East, caused a shift in attitude towards the need for Israel's existence as a bulwark against Iran's aggressive advance.

These matters, together with many more aspects serve as our basis for this latest edition of *Milestones*. We marvel that the same angelic hands that we perceive to be so active amongst the nations, are equally busy in these final days within the ecclesias in preparing a people ready and waiting for their Master's return. May this review strengthen our hands. The time is indeed short, so let us focus our efforts towards more profitable goals in 2009.

Chapter 2:

THE COMING CRISIS AND ITS RESULTS

This is the heading used by bro Thomas to introduce a wonderful article on the coming troubles. There were many events to excite the brotherhood in his day; how much more for our generation who are living at this pivotal point in the earth's history, when God is preparing to end the times of the Gentiles and to usher in the Kingdom of God.

We see a world that is facing economic turbulence; nations do not know which way to turn to find solutions to the unprecedented situations they are facing. Economic hardships have in the past led to military growth, as happened in Hitler's Germany in the 1930's.

The question on many people's minds is—is it going to get worse before it gets better? This is supposing it is going to get better. The main nations of the world have experienced many downturns in the past, but have eventually bounced back as demand increases again. But is this economic cycle to endlessly repeat? No! God has clearly set a time limit on man's guardianship of the affairs of this world. We are rapidly approaching the final dénouement between the Kingdom of Men and the Kingdom of God. There is no doubt as to the outcome. There is no place for man's continuing governorship of the earth's affairs because his ways have at their heart the thinking of the flesh, which is at enmity with God.

So let's open this year's Milestones with a brief study of the coming crisis and its results.¹

Why this time is going to be different

There have been many crises in the earth's 6,000 year history. The point about the final crisis is that it leads to the coming of the Son of God, who will himself bring the wrath of God upon a godless world. His judgements will lead to the promised *Day of Rest*, when Zion's King shall rule to the ends of the earth.

There is no other solution to the wickedness of man's misrule. The Churches may piously hope that with the preaching of the gospel throughout the world, eventually a time of peace and blessing will be ushered in! This is not the picture that scripture paints! It is only through the destruction of the ways of man and insistence on obedience to the newly-declared King in Jerusalem, that peace and sanity will be brought to this earth.

God's ways are not the ways that man chooses. Foolishly, he thinks his own ways are best. Yet once man has submitted and experiences the true

¹ Bro Thomas' article can be found in the book *Faith in the Last Days*, a book very pertinent to our days and the reader is urged to read his 20-page exposition.

benefits of living in a Theocracy with the great Creator's Son as their visible King, then they will appreciate the wonderful blessings that flow from living in peace with God and in harmony with God's world of nature.

When God *shakes terribly the earth* (Isa 2:19-22) it will sweep away all that man holds dear, his skyscrapers, his parliaments, his temples of worship—the sports stadiums, shopping malls, cinemas and so on. So great is this devastation, that it provides a new clean start for the Millennial Age!

We will not have this man to rule over us

The words that the Jewish leaders spoke on that fateful day some 2000 years ago which sealed the death of their Messiah, also sealed the fate of their nation. The judgements foretold in Deut 28 fell heavily upon that unrepentant nation. In the words of a parable by their rejected Messiah,

But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.
Matt 22:7

The call then went out to the Gentiles, who embraced the hope of the gospel, but it was not long before the truth was being corrupted. Paul warned the Thessalonian believers of the coming *Man of Sin* system that had to develop before the return of the Master.

Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. 2 Thes 2:3 NKJV

For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. 2 Thes 2:7,8 NKJV

It is clear that the nations are not going to submit to Christ. The language here is matched by many other passages.

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful. Rev 17:14

I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.

As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time. Dan 7:11,12

The 2nd Psalm wonderfully sums up the coming contest between the nations who refuse to submit to the new king.

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,

Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. Ps 2:1-3

Their fate is sealed!

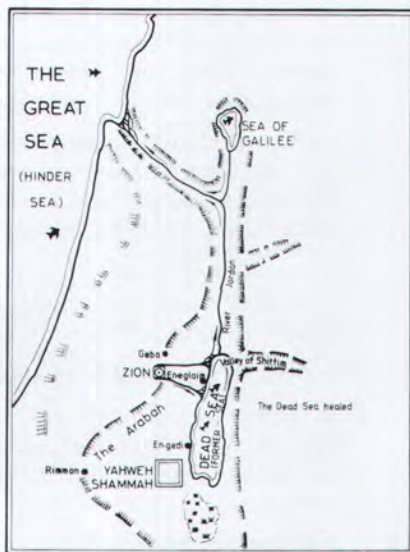
Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Ps 2:8,9

He will shake terribly the earth

Accompanying this time of war and destruction against those nations who have sought to purge God's Land of His People, will be physical destruction, caused by the world of nature. Ezekiel lists many means of destruction which will be in the Lord Jesus' arsenal of weapons: fire, great shaking, every man's sword against his brother, pestilence, overflowing rain, great hailstones, fire and brimstone. This is a devastating arsenal which will see the destruction of the armies of Gog in the land of Israel.

Zechariah 14 graphically details the great earthquake which will occur at the time of Messiah's revealing to Israel, when he saves them from the hands of their enemies. Its effect physically alters the topography of the whole region! The area around Jerusalem is elevated ready for the building of the House of Prayer for all nations. The Mount of Olives is split in two, creating a valley down to a much elevated Dead Sea, whose water source is no longer the Jordan descending from the north, but the new river flowing from Zion. This heals the Dead Sea so it is alive with fish, with the Jordan reversing its flow and creating a new exit into the Mediterranean.



ISRAEL AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE OF ZECHARIAH 14.

In last year's *Milestones* (ch 4) we listed some of the scriptural passages that describe the extensive devastation from these events.

The crushing of the nations

Two and a half millennia ago God through Daniel revealed the fate of the Kingdom of Men. The destiny of the great image that King Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his dream was to be crushed to powder!

Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.

Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. Dan 2:34,35

The control of man's affairs has been delivered into the hands of the Son of God. His co-rulers have all largely been prepared, awaiting their call from the dust of the earth to receive immortal power and authority to establish peace and righteousness upon this earth.

This changed earth looks to Zion for its laws! There is no place for other parliaments or organisations such as the UN; nor for the wheeling and dealing of the current banking system, nor for an arms trade, or factories mass-producing goods. It looks not to profit as its goal, but to truth, righteousness, justice and mercy. This earth is pictured by the prophets as one where people live contentedly under their immortal overseers.

And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it. Mic 4:2-4

The present day problems—birth pains

What we are seeing today is the beginning of the process that will lead to the outpouring of God's judgements on an unimaginable scale by the hand of His Son. Scripture uses the apt figure of childbirth to describe the unfolding pain that this will bring.

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. Rom. 8:22

The Greek word for pain is *odino* which Strong's defines as "to experience the pains of parturition" or childbirth. That groaning and travailing has continued on since Paul's day, but will soon have an end.

The figure is appropriate. Think of the natural. For the previous months there are ever increasing signs of a new birth to come. Before the actual birth come the birth-pangs. Wave upon wave of growing intensity and pain, heralding that great happening to come—the birth of new life. The final stages come with an unstoppable intensity. Then there comes the joy of holding the new baby, the pain subsides, there is a new joy in one's life! The new life that we joyfully anticipate is that of the Kingdom of God. We must however consider the sorrows before the coming of that joy.

God's threefold judgements

There is a threefold aspect to the unfolding judgements of God, each with different objectives, intensities and outcomes. We list the three judgements and then briefly examine them.

- 1) God's judgements of His household
- 2) His judgements against His people Israel
- 3) His judgements against the Gentiles.

The objective of the **first** judgement is to bring to a conclusion the refining process that has been taking place throughout a believer's life. It is a time for faith to be tested to show its strength or lack thereof, to see how deeply rooted the Word of God has taken hold in our minds. Or has it been choked by the cares of this world? All will be revealed at the Judgement Seat when we have to stand and give an answer for how we have lived our lives. Will there be a mind that can be used in the Master's service?

There are many references that speak of the saints having to be judged.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. 2 Cor 5:10

Romans 14:10 is very similar, see also Heb 9:27 and 2 Tim 4:1. This judgement occurs at the return of the Master, for it restores to life and bestows immortality on Christ's co-workers who will go forth with their Lord and King to render the next two judgements. So this judgement's objective is to prepare the saints and to separate the sheep from the goats. It will be the most serious thing in our lives, for it marks the end of our mortal life. If accepted then everlasting life, if rejected only shame and death. The words of Daniel sum up this period.

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. Dan 12:2,3

This judgement involves not weapons of destruction, only a quiet examination of our minds and our actions.

The objective of the **second** judgement is to refine a Jewish remnant who, after they have been brought to their knees in humiliation, will reflect glory to the God of Israel. These cry out to their God to save them from the day of Jacob's greatest trouble; when the Gentiles have slaughtered and plundered God's people and there appears none to save! But the "saviours" will have been prepared in the first judgment of God. Christ will have a multitude of immortal ones at his side as he goes forth to save his people. Micah uses the language of birth-pains in chapter 4. In the original fulfilment they refer to the Babylonian invasion, but it is quite clear from opening verses of the chapter that Micah is also seeing the final invasion and deliverance of Zion.

Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies.

Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. Mic 4:10.

We refer readers to *Milestones 2007 chapter 2* "Changing Israel's heart". The troubles that are to come upon her, when she is taken into captivity for the last time and all that she has trusted in has been destroyed by Gog, will refine a remnant who will be saved and become God's people in God's land.

Its intensity will be very severe—a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time. (Dan 12:1) Its outcome will be Jews who enter the New Covenant and are the first dominion of God's Kingdom.

Israel's salvation involves the **third** judgment—that of the Gentiles who have slain God's people and despised His land. These judgments begin in the land of Israel and will spread to every corner of the world. Its objective is to bring the Gentiles to recognise the God of Israel and Jesus as the true Messiah. Its intensity and duration is long and severe. The prophets speak of the figure of threshing of wheat or the crushing of grapes (e.g. Joel 3:12-16; Rev 14:14-20. See also passages quoted earlier in this chapter).

These three aspects of judgement still lie in the future. The first we believe is imminent, the other two lie within a period—maybe 10 years—beyond the first. They do not come however as a bolt-out-the-blue! The figure of childbirth indicates a steady but ever deepening progress towards this goal.

In our next chapter we will look at the effects of the unfolding financial crisis and how it could impact our lives.

Chapter 3:

THE UNFOLDING FINANCIAL CRISIS

2008 proved to be a year of unparalleled economic crisis. The speed of its unfolding brought comparisons with the Great Depression of the late 1920's and 30's. As the year closes the headlines are still full of gloom. In spite of the best efforts of man to spend his way out of recession, the prospects look only grimmer for 2009. It is not our intention to look at the reasons for the collapse—save to say it was brought about through the recklessness of the Western banking systems. America and Britain have to shoulder much of the blame for the shaky deals that were undertaken in the hope of quick profits.

We want to concentrate on the seriousness of the situation, seeing this as part of God's punishments upon man's ever increasing misrule and as a prelude to the coming judgements of God. We also want to see what practical lessons there are for ourselves, our families and our ecclesias.

A grim financial outlook

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

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

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

This recession, which officially began in December 2007, now appears virtually certain to be the longest downturn—and possibly most severe—since the end of World War II, as evidenced last week by a demoralizing repetition of grim reports on jobs, sales and public confidence.

The reports signalled that even after 11 months, more than the entire length of the last two downturns, this recession has only now entered its fiercest phase, and economists say the pain will not end soon.



“For the average American it’s going to be devastating for the next 6 to 12 months,” said Bernard Baumohl, chief global economist at the Economic Outlook Group, a research and forecasting firm. He added, “I have not seen anything particularly hopeful right now, which tells me we have a ways to go.” *New York Times* 8-12-08

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

How bad is the economy going to get?

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

It made it clear that there was no end in sight—the economy is in free-fall. The Bank of England has slashed bank interest rates in an effort to stimulate business; at the end of the year it is at 2%—a rate last seen in 1951. There are prospects of more cuts, down to 1%, which would take Britain into uncharted territory, as it has never fallen below 2% since the



Bank of England was created in 1694! Lack of business has led to a steady rise in unemployment figures and most optimistic economists foresee them doubling from their present level to nearly 3 million, with the gloomiest suggesting an increase to 3.5 million. This would be its highest level on record, beating the peak in 1984, when 11.9% were unemployed. Even the taxman is having to slash jobs—3,400 jobs are under threat and 90 regional tax offices face closure! As interest rates fall below inflation levels, savers are badly hit as this *Economist* cover 12-12-08 illustrated.

House prices continue to fall, shedding more value in the past year than many of their owners earned in the same period! Having fallen 10-16% during the past 12 months, analysts see them falling another 20% in 2009.

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



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

Recession: just how bad can it really get?

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

...it was Charlie Bean, one of the Bank of England’s own deputy governors, whose language managed to eclipse all the City professionals. **“This is a once-in-a-lifetime crisis, and possibly the largest financial crisis of its kind in human history,”** he said, in a stark abandonment of the measured, cautious language that is a hallmark of central bankers around the world.

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



Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the head of the International Monetary Fund, is worried enough to ditch a half-century of IMF orthodoxy, calling for a fiscal boost worth 2pc of world GDP to “prevent global depression”.

“If we are not able to do that, then social unrest may happen in many countries, including advanced economies. We are facing an unprecedented decline in output. **All around the planet, the people have reacted with feelings going from surprise to anger, and from anger to fear,**” he said. *Daily Telegraph* 22-12-08

The Powers of heaven shall be shaken

We recall the words of the Lord Jesus,

Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. Luke 21:24-28

Jesus was referring to the political heavens, the governments. Sun moon and stars; earth, sea and waves refer to all aspects of life—political, economic and religious. Is not this what we see? We see turmoil in every sphere. The Israeli Prime Minister Olmert had to resign because of corruption charges. This has forced elections, because Tzipi Livni was unable to form a coalition government; so Olmert continues as a caretaker Prime Minister. Elections are due on February 10th. There is much internal strife within Israel, between the religious Jews who look for the coming of Messiah and the secular Israelis who despise what they stand for. We know the political lights of the Israeli heavens are to fall when Gog invades Israel.

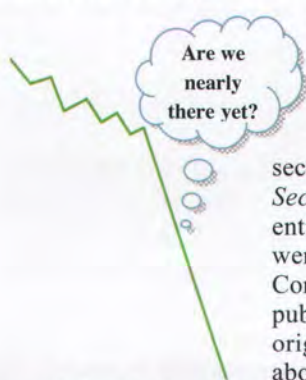
The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. Joel 3:15

On the wider scale we see whole countries are facing bankruptcy!

A string of countries face the risk of “going bust” as financial panic sweeps Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America, raising the spectre of a strategic crisis in some of the world’s most dangerous spots. *Daily Telegraph* 14-10-08

It mentioned Pakistan, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Argentina, Hungary and Iceland as vulnerable countries. Huge loans are being made to prop them up, with no certainty that these bailouts are going to work! We see rioting in Athens as “the earth” rebels against the powers in the Greek “heavens”. This type of behaviour looks set to spread to many other countries. Consternation is everywhere.

Matters can only get worse!



Associated with the time of resurrection is a time of unprecedented difficulty for the world, for God’s people Israel and for the Household of faith. Bro Roberts in *Christendom Astray* (1884) has an excellent section (ch. 15) entitled *Coming troubles and the Second Advent*. The forerunner of this book was entitled *Twelve Lectures*, published in 1862 and went through many reprints and a major revision. Continuing demand brought a further revision and publication under a more meaningful title. In the original version he has an interesting comment about the financial difficulties which he antici-

pated from Scripture, which nearly 150 years later is very relevant!

Hence, at the first indication of the approach of the end, we must look for times of great trouble and commotion. International politics will become

complicated beyond the possibility of unravelment, a universal war-spirit will be evoked, commerce will become embarrassed, trade fettered, employment precarious, distrust will fill society, panic will spread, trade bankruptcies will follow in quick succession and the social fabric will be shaken to the foundation; if not involved in ruin and reduced to chaos.

Is not this the situation that is unfolding before our eyes? The remarkable thing about this crisis is that it has affected virtually every country. In recent previous downturns, countries in the east have remained buoyant and provided the means to pull the world economy back up. Even the mighty China and the resource-rich Russia have been badly touched. We can expect the stronger nations such as Germany getting stronger as others countries falter. If there is to be another recovery we can be sure that it will not last long! The present system is doomed because it is based on the principles of the flesh, not of the spirit. It does not seek to glorify God the Creator, but man the creature. At some point, probably after the Master calls us, it will collapse bringing great fear to the inhabitants of the world.

Preparing for this crisis

James writing to his generation had warnings which are applicable to us. He was seeing the troubles that engulfed the Jewish people and nation for their rejection of the Messiah when he first came. Now they were under sentence of fearful destruction from the presence of the Lord and the followers of Christ would not be exempt from these troubles. In Gentile minds the believers were closely entwined with the Jews, even though often it was the Jews who sought the downfall of the Christians.

Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Jas 5:2

It was the ending of an age—the Mosaic Age. Just as the Kingdom Age had been brought to an end by God through Nebuchadnezzar with much pain and suffering, so the trials of AD 70 were intense. Why should things be any different in this ending of the Gentile Age?

Where are our hearts? How much trust do we put in uncertain riches?

Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven. Pro 23:5

Certainly savings seem to be held in bags full of holes! As Haggai explained to the returned exiles, *he that earneth wages earneth wages to put into a bag with holes.* (Hag 1:6)

In a time of crisis firms take a long hard look at their outgoings, to see what can be pruned to reduce costs. Would it not be a profitable exercise for us all to assess just what is important?

The signs are telling us we are living at the time of the end. The troubles of the world speak of the coming of our Master. What then must be our priorities in life? What are we going to take to the Judgement seat?

Stock and share certificates? No! Bank accounts? No! Property deeds? No! Educational certificates? No! Life insurance policies? No! Credit/store Cards? No! Membership cards? No! Driving licences? No! Car keys? No! Cash? Doubtful! Bibles? I should imagine so!

All we shall take to the judgement are our mind and heart and these are all the master wants to see.

This is what the Master wants. Everything else is packaging in our lives. What our Master desires is like-minded minds filled with truth and holiness, characters that have learnt through trial and testing to put their trust in sure riches; minds that have placed their deposits with their Lord, treasure that doesn't corrupt.

If we are, as Scripture guides us to expect, on the final downward spiral of the kingdoms of men, then we must be prepared for changes in our Western lifestyle.

There might not be the income to support our existing lifestyle. How will we cope? There might not be the freedom to worship that we have grown used to. How will we cope? In an ever-more violent age, how are we going to cope? How are we going to care for the older and more vulnerable members of our ecclesias?

In an age when baking, making and mending are skills largely lost, how are we going to train a generation that has lost these skills?

Married life is under great pressure today and that will most likely get worse. What are we doing to give vital support to our young and not so young families?

How healthy are our ecclesial welfare funds? I was reminded recently in an Arranging Brethren's meeting that my father used to comment some 30 years ago that one day it would be needed. Hard times were going to come!

Let's think these things through before it is too late. We may need to turn our thinking around. What is the appropriate way to spend our time, our efforts, and our resources in these last days? What should we be watching, reading, listening to? Whose company should we be sharing our time with? How central is the ecclesia in our lives?

There are lots of questions. We are wise to think them through.

We now turn to events that have excited the Brotherhood—the new Russian bear taking her first steps!

Chapter 4:

THE RUSSIAN BEAR TAKES HER FIRST STEPS

2008 will be remembered by many for the events in Georgia. Just as the eyes of the world were focused on the Olympic Games opening ceremonies in Beijing, Russian troops were pouring across the Russian border into two Georgian enclaves. The Georgian President had attacked targets in these two regions and seemed unprepared for the rapidity and fierceness of the Russian response.

We need to understand the significance of this region, and why Bible students saw these moves as being highly significant.

It is not our purpose to try to unravel the rights and wrongs of these two protagonists. Our part is to see the significance that these moves had, still have and potentially where they are leading. Firstly let's see the significance of this region.

Georgia—the strategic crossing point

Russia's access to the Middle East by sea lies through the Black Sea. By land (important for moving armies and supplies), the natural access lies through Georgia and so to Turkey.

However when we look at a physical map we find a natural barrier in the shape of the mighty Caucasus Mountains, the highest mountain range in Europe, which forms the northern boundary of Georgia.



There are few passes crossing from north to south through this almost impenetrable barrier and Russia now has control of these.



The Caucasus mountain range

This whole region was under Soviet control, but with the collapse of the Soviet in the 1990's, the many countries that make up this region became independent.

To the north of the Caucasus Mountains lies the Russian Federation, to the south Georgia and Azerbaijan. There are many disparate groups within the Russian Federation and to the north of another of the mountain passes into

Georgia lies Chechnya. One of Putin's first acts on becoming President in 2000 was to crush the Chechnyan rebels, establishing Russian control of this mountain pass. Three more passes are at the foot of North Ossetia, two of which run through to South Ossetia in Georgia, the third just skirts South Ossetia. The other main crossing is further west and goes from Russia into Abkhazeti.



The South Ossetians and Abkhazetii are mainly Russian speaking and have long been a source of trouble to the Georgian authorities, seeking—and largely obtaining—a measure of autonomy. Russia has been cultivating her links with her former citizens, handing out Russian passports to all who wanted one.

Russia waited for an excuse to exert control of these two regions. The occasion came through the rashness of the rather unstable Georgian President, Mikheil Saakashvili, who felt emboldened by the talks earlier in the year concerning NATO membership, along with the Ukraine. The NATO doctrine is of mutual support if a member is attacked. But the negotiation had not gone that far, membership was only being discussed, and in any case the matter had been postponed until the NATO December meeting.



Let's step back a bit. The Georgian President has been a strong supporter of the Americans in Iraq, in fact Georgia had 2,000 troops there. Now considering British troop levels were only twice this and the next below is Poland with only 900 troops, this is a measure of her support for the King of the South! The US flew these troops back to Georgia in August in order to help in the battles with the Russians.

The other intriguing nation involved in Georgia is Israel!

Israel and the War in Georgia

Since 2000, Israel has sold hundreds of millions of dollars in arms and combat training to Georgia.

Weapons included guns, ammunition, shells, tactical missile systems, anti-aircraft systems, automatic turrets for armored vehicles, electronic

equipment and remotely piloted aircraft. These sales were authorized by the Israeli defense ministry. *Ynet*, 10 August 2008.

Saakashvili filled two key positions in his government with Georgian Jews who had lived for a long time in Israel and spoke fluent Hebrew: Davit Kezerashvili was made defense minister and Temur Yakobashvili state minister for territorial integration, responsible for negotiations over Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Saakashvili was recently reported as “enthusing” that “both war and peace are in the hands of Israeli Jews”. *Time* 28-8-08

The land of Togarmah

Georgia is of interest because this is part of the territory of Togarmah. The Georgians and the Armenians trace their history to Togarmah, the son of Gomer and so grandson of Japheth. Josephus informs us that from Togarmah were descended those the Greeks called Phrygians. The Phrygians are associated with Armenia, southern neighbour of Georgia.

The ancient Greek historians Herodotus and Eudoxus of Rhodes related the Armenians to the Phrygians. *Enc. Brit.*

Ezekiel speaks of Togarmah of the north quarters; Armenia and Georgia are to the north of Israel.

Along with all the others of Japheth's sons (with the exception of Javan) they form part of the companions of Gog who are listed in Ez 38. They are joined by two of Ham's four sons, Cush and Phut—Libya and Ethiopia/Sudan. At the moment Georgia's President is in the King of the South camp, but clearly this has to change—and this is what we are beginning to see!

Outcomes of the Russian–Georgian conflict

The *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* 14-08-08 writing at the height of the conflict used the phrase: -The war is a mid-sized earthquake which indicates that the geopolitical tectonic plates are shifting, and nations in the Middle East, including Israel, need to take notice.

What did this startling news indicate? It may well be that we will look back at this Georgian conflict as a turning point in Russian-European affairs.

Consider what has already happened.

- ❖ Russia has seen the weakness and disarray of NATO, America and Europe—no one came to the aid of Georgia, for the other powers are tied up in Afghanistan and Iraq.
- ❖ France and Germany refused to back EU calls for sanctions against Russia, therefore any criticism of Russia's actions was muted. As we shall see Germany is pushing ahead with her ties to Russia.

- ❖ Russian troops have breached the Caucasus Mountains. They are determined to control Georgia—they are hoping that President Saakashvili will fall and be replaced by a pro-Russian President.
- ❖ Russia has taken offence at the West's outcry over her invasion of Ossetia and Abkhazeti. They say they were provoked—all they have done, they claim, is to support her Russian citizens. She is now openly taking steps that she knows will upset the American administration.
- ❖ Russia is actively pursuing her friendship with Iran. No longer is she holding back the installation of a missile shield around Iran's nuclear sites, nor the completion of Iran's nuclear power stations. Furthermore she is in talks about establishing port facilities in the Persian Gulf on the island of Qeshm situated in the strategic Straits of Hormuz.
- ❖ She is likewise pursuing Syria's offer of port facilities and is considering the installation of a missile shield to protect these ports.

Russia has a powerful weapon in her control of energy supplies and prices!

Russia is likely to reward nations that shy away from hostile measures by offering favourable future energy deals—and is already making noises about restricting supplies to less accommodating countries. *Daily Telegraph* 30-8-08

The Russian bear awakes

Russia is entrenching her troops in South Ossetia and Abkhazeti. Former Soviet bases in Abkhazeti are being brought into life, new bases built, defensive walls erected. According to a speech by a Georgian minister: -

"Russia physically destroys physical links between the regions of Georgia," she said. "It is blowing up bridges in Gali region so that it is harder for people to go to the neighbouring region of Samegrelo.

"In Zugdidi city, for that matter, they are building a wall which will be not perhaps the size of the Berlin Wall but is something resembling that.

"The same goes for South Ossetia with which the roads and then bridges are being blown up. In physical terms, they try to dismember these regions in such a way that there's a physical detachment of these regions." *Agence France-Presse* 26-11-08

A report in *Debka* 12-12-08 entitled **Massive Russian Military Build-up** indicates that Russia is preparing for Georgian invasion Round 2.

A March-April 2009 time frame is cited. Sources report that president Dmitry Medvedev has two goals in mind—testing incoming US president Barack Obama and finally removing Georgian president Mikhail Saakashvili, Vladimir Putin's pet hate. Russia is engaged in its mightiest military build-up in the Caucasus since the Cold War (in the 1950s).

The strategic gains which the Russians chalked up then will be the basis for further expansion. After all, no one challenged their illegal grab of bits of Black Sea coast and territorial waters by their virtual takeover of Georgia's breakaway province of Abkhazeti.

The converted 58th Army [stationed in N. Ossetia] has been equipped with the military vehicles lacking in the first round; its air force has been augmented with a large number of drones, as well as assault and transport helicopters, the lack of which in August reduced the mobility of Russian forces between areas.

In Abkhazeti, which borders the Black Sea, a naval build up is continuing. With her existing Black Sea base in Crimea under threat of closure in 2017 by Ukraine, Russia is taking steps to move her ships.

The Russian fleet's expansion of its Black Sea presence will be anchored on Novorossiysk on the Russian coast, a station soon to be established on the Abkhazian coast at Sokhumi and the old Soviet submarine base at Ochamchire in the southern part of the enclave.

This takeover is work in progress. So too are the Gudauta land and air base and the Gali border facility which are undergoing renovation.

Newspaper cartoonists have had a field day depicting this new aggression of Russia as a bear.

The roots of the bear connected to Russia go deep. The first time this image concerned Russia was in the 16th century, when bears were depicted as shield-bearers on the Muskovy Company emblem (an English company founded in 1596). *Moscow News* 19-9-08

The symbol goes back much further to the visions of Daniel. King Nebuchadnezzar had seen the nations as a mighty figure of a man. Many years later God revealed the kingdom of men under the symbols of wild animals. Assyria and Babylon were depicted as a lion; Persia as a bear; Greece as a leopard and Rome as a terrible beast. The bear's details are given in Daniel 7:5



And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.

The Persian bear went through two phases; that of the Medes and that of the Persians, then through marriage, the Medes merged with the Persians. The 3 ribs represented the three-fold administrative division of which Daniel was the chief president (6:1,2). It certainly devoured much territory, extending over 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia. (Esther1:1) We know that these four beasts extend right through to our time. (7:12) Just as Nebuchadnezzar's image was depicting *what shall be in the latter days*

(2:28), so these, as well as depicting unfolding history, are found to be present at the time of their destruction at Christ's return. So the developing Kingdom of Men will incorporate all these beast elements. John Thomas, writing of the situation in his day, 140 years ago, made this prediction.

...the Deity hath chosen for them the Bear to signify them as an element of the Image in the latter-days. The latter-day symbol then of Persia is a Bear; and a Bear is at this time her formidable neighbor, and has already taken from her a large portion of her territory. The Russian Bear is destined to supersede her present government as an independent sovereignty, and to grasp Persia between its teeth from near India to Ethiopia, which is to be 'at his steps'. This is no mere conjecture, but absolutely certain; for Yahweh has declared by Ezekiel that Persia shall be an element of Gog's confederacy, and that Gog is the Russian power will be seen when I come to treat of the King of the North at the time of the end. *Exposition of Daniel* p12

How much closer we are to this time when the Russian Bear will control the territory of so much of Asia. Ossetia and Abkhazeti represent the first of many paw prints by the advancing Russian bear!

Planting her paws in the Middle East

Syria. The Syrian leader has long courted the Russians as his father did the Soviets. Syria has asked Russia to use her port facilities and at the same time to put in missile defence systems to guard her against American and Israeli attack. This is a smart move as it brings Russian ships immeasurably closer to Israel than the present base in Sevastopol in Crimea. Moreover it trumps the Americans who have their naval base on Crete and Britain on Cyprus. With only Lebanon between Syria and Israel, it will provide Russia with the ability to monitor Israel's movements in the region.



Positioning missile systems at Syrian ports would be part of Russia's overall military payback for the array of US missile and radar installations in Europe and the Middle East. Therefore, the Kremlin may decide against handing the missiles to the Syrian army but prefer to install them to guard the Mediterranean naval bases Russians are building at the Syrian ports of Tartus and Latakia. *Debka* 18-10-08

The increased Russian naval presence in the region means that the Kremlin is seeking to cultivate Syria as a close regional ally, and is looking to secure additional bases for the Black Sea Fleet besides its current base in the Black Sea port of Sevastopol.

In addition, Russia would also be able to deploy electronic intelligence-gathering ships that could then improve its monitoring capabilities against NATO forces and Syria's ability to monitor NATO and Israeli transmissions, expanding the previous naval intelligence engagement

during the Balkan wars. Russian naval forces could deter or disrupt Israeli naval or air assets deployed in wartime against Syria or Hezbollah in Lebanon. *UPI* 16-10-08

Iran. Russia has long cultivated a friendship with Iran. As part of her protest at the West's reaction to the events in Georgia, she ceased to hold-back on the completion of the nuclear power plant at Bushehr. She had supplied the necessary nuclear fuel earlier in the year and is aiming to get the plant up and running by mid 2009. As *Debka* 5-12-08 pointed out: -

Our sources add that the Bushehr plant will make it possible for Iran to produce plutonium for nuclear weapons. Its completion will provide Iran with a second weapons option in addition to the enriched uranium already accumulated for its first nuclear bomb.

Russia also had earlier threatened to go ahead with the supply of the S-300 missile system to protect Iran's clandestine nuclear weapon programme. There is some uncertainty, but it does look as if Russia is now supplying this, making it much harder for Israel to attack Iran once operational.

The Two-Headed Tsar

In May Putin stepped down, as the Russian legislation required, after 8 years in office, handing over to the existing Prime Minister, Dmitry Medvedev. Putin then stepped into Medvedev's shoes and became Prime Minister! It is still not clear who is the main power in Russia! Putin is still playing an active role.



Medvedev is a 43 year-old lawyer and a protégé of Putin, who helped Putin when he was mayor of St Petersburg. He was Putin's campaign manager in the successful presidential elections in 2000 and served under him, being promoted to the office of first deputy Prime Minister in 2005, a post Putin created for him. He was also the chairman of Gazprom, the mighty state-owned energy company.

Medvedev's name has a significant origin. Medved in Russian means "honey eater". This was the name given by superstitious Russians in old times to the bear—it was not considered right to call a bear a bear!

Interestingly, the occasion of Medvedev's inauguration was marked by the revival of the May Day Parade, a long standing Soviet tradition of showing off their military might through the Red Square in Moscow.

"Russians should see that the country has such might that nobody from the outside should even think about some aggression or some military action against Russia." *Sunday Herald* 22-3-08

Come-back for Putin?

On the day when the results of the US Presidential elections were being announced, November 5th, Medvedev gave an important State of the Nation speech. It was quite an aggressive speech, throwing down his challenge to the US President elect that the time had come for Russia to be treated with more respect on the world stage. He also blamed America for the financial crisis. One of the interesting measures was the promise to change the constitution so that the term of Office for the President was extended from 4 years to 6 years, and the lifetime of parliament (the Duma) extended from 4 to 5 years, before re-elections are needed. There is considerable speculation that this would make possible a comeback for Putin. He served the maximum presidential term of 8 years, but with the changes to the constitution, which were rushed through the Duma in December, the constitution has been changed. In effect the clock has been reset and it would be possible for Putin to serve two more terms, now of six years each! A crisis could be engineered, with Medvedev stepping down and Putin stepping back in! We shall await developments!

The Russian rouble

Another promise that was made in Medvedev's speech was to strengthen the Russian currency, by passing laws to make it a convertible currency which could float on the world markets, just like the dollar, the euro and the pound, and that Russia would charge in roubles for her energy supplies. However the rouble has suffered dreadfully on the currency markets. By the year's end it had fallen to around 29 roubles to the US\$, compared with around 23 at its peak in July.

There has been no further news on making the rouble convertible, and the plan may sink into oblivion, or be revived at a better time in the currency cycle. Potentially it has the ability to harm America if the vast amount of energy that Russia trades is no longer done in dollars, plus it would strengthen Russia's currency.

The Russian stock market

This too has been badly hit, falling in value from a peak of nearly 2500 points in May to a low of 550 in October (i.e. a loss of 78% of its value)—it has recovered to around 630 at the year end. The central bank has burned through a quarter of its reserves, or \$161 billion, since August to stem the rouble's decline. International and domestic investors have pulled about \$211 billion from the country. (*Bloomberg* 15-12-08)

We now look at the significant developments in Europe as Germany leads the EU to begin the path of turning to Russia for its protection.

Chapter 5:

EUROPE LOOKS EAST NOT WEST

One of the great signs-of-our-times is the increasing shift in public opinion in Europe away from America and towards Russia. The financial crisis is perceived to have an Anglo-Saxon origin, and America together with Britain is being blamed for the economic woes engulfing Europe. We need to review Europe's recent history to see the great changes taking place.

We also need to know, as Bible students, why this shift is important and so we start with this aspect.

Several prophecies about Europe in the last days

Most of the prophecies that cover Europe and the Middle East have a common thread—that of Europe, east and west, being united together. A few prophecies, for example Ezekiel 38:13, show that there is an opposition to the work undertaken by these nations who have banded together. Another prophecy in Daniel 11 speaks of a King of the South power. Both of these depict nations operating in the Arabian Peninsula, Arab territory, but it is clear that other nations from outside the region are also involved. We examine the role of the “Tarshish” powers and her “young lions” when we look at the Middle East in chapter 11. Suffice it to say that we believe Britain, the US and India, among others, who are already operating in this area, will continue to do so.

When Ezekiel speaks of the Gogian confederacy and Daniel speaks of the King of the North coming against *the glorious holy mountain* (11:45) they are depicting the same event. There is only one invasion of Israel to destroy it as a nation, and the aggressor itself is destroyed by Israel's returned King! The nations of the “King of the North” do not include the English speaking nations or their allies—their role lies in the grouping of nations who are friendly to Israel.

The prophecies that we have in the book of Revelation subtly change as Europe goes through its various historical phases. The era of the Holy Roman Empire is marked prophetically with a description of the Beast of the Earth, as opposed to the earlier Beast of the Sea. The Beast (Gk. *therion*, “wild beast”) of the Earth spake as a dragon but, strangely, had two horns of a lamb. (Rev 13:11). The two horns aptly illustrate the situation where Pope and Emperor ruled the people. It was a fearful time for true believers, for though this “Beast” spoke like the Dragon, the horns were those of a lamb. Church membership was essential for “normal”



living. Those who hadn't been "christened" into the Church suffered grievously, often with their lives as described so graphically: -

And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Rev 13:16,17

The Dragon had been introduced in the previous chapter first as a symbol for pagan Rome and then to denote the military might of Eastern Rome after Constantine became "Christian". He moved the seat of



Rome's power eastward to Byzantium or Constantinople which he rebuilt in the style of Rome. With the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Dragon's centre moved northwards to Moscow, which was rebuilt and became known as the 3rd Rome. The final step of the Dragon's journey will be taken when Russia takes control of Constantinople and from here directs her advances into the Middle East.

During the time that Russia was flourishing under the Tsars, the Beast was suffering a slow decline, and the Holy Roman Empire came to an end with the events of the French Revolution and the exploits of Napoleon as described in the first five Vials of God's wrath. (Rev 16:1-11) The Sixth Vial then sketches the history of modern times, with the events of World War I and the drying up of the Euphratian power. This freed much of the Middle East from the Turkish power that had impoverished the area, allowing the setting up of the State of Israel and other nations which have developed in this region.

The symbols used to cover our period are that of the Dragon, the Beast and a new symbol, the False Prophet. Revelation ch 17 indicates that there are changes to the Beast. It doesn't have 2 horns, it is described as an eighth manifestation of the Beast system (17:11), its characteristics of 7 heads and 10 horns have a similarity to the 1st Beast described in ch 13—the Beast of the Sea, which, significantly, covers the history of the Roman Empire at a time when Rome's military might (the Dragon) was flourishing in Constantinople. Revelation 17 also speaks of a Harlot Woman who rides the Beast, yet the False Prophet still continues, for both the *Beast* and the *False Prophet* are cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. (Rev 19:20). The False Prophet signifies the Roman Catholic Pope with his world-wide hierarchy of cardinals, archbishops etc and the Harlot represents the Vatican with its "government" of the system, *that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth.* (17:18) For an exposition of the subtle difference between these two symbols see *Milestones 2005* p75, or *Rome and Jerusalem* (G. Pearce) p125. So we look for a revival of the

Beast System, which we see in the growth of the EU, led very much by Germany. We see a Dragon system emerging under Putin and now Medvedev. We see the Papacy, under the symbol of the False Prophet, growing in influence.

The final picture is of the papal woman riding the European Beast indicating that a situation similar to that of the two horns of the Beast of the Earth phase, with the Papacy exercising strong control over the political affairs of Europe. We are not expecting this situation before the Judgement Seat. In fact it may reach its zenith after the Battle of Armageddon, when the cream of the Russian and European armies have been

destroyed on the mountains of Israel, leaving the Papacy to mount Europe's desperate challenge against Christ's newly installed Kingdom in Israel. Because Christendom has been brainwashed into believing that Anti-Christ is going to do the very things that the Lord Jesus is going to do, we can see the cause of the heavy judgments of God upon a generation who have corrupted the Truth and believed a lie. The Harlot city of Rome is destroyed (Rev 18:2,8,21) and over a period of possibly years of judgement the Beast and the False Prophet are cast into a symbolic *lake of fire!* (19:20,21)

These pictures are of nations cooperating together, but do not include Britain and the United States. Hence the current involvement of these two countries in Europe has to change. We shall see how steadily America has reduced her presence in Europe. Britain's position is slightly different in that she inhabits an island which is part of Europe and at the moment is an active member of the EU. That has to change and she has to re-orientate her policies away from continental Europe and towards her partner across the Atlantic, matters we look at in chapter 12. Again it is encouraging to see the changes which perhaps can develop in a relatively short period of time. Not that time is critical; such a breakaway of Britain from the EU could well take place **after** the call to the Judgement Seat by the Master.

America's involvement in Europe

With the defeat of Germany in WWII, the freedom that the Allies had hoped to bring to Europe suddenly evaporated as the Soviet grip fell upon Eastern Europe. Churchill spoke in 1945 in America of his personal grief at this turn of events.



A shadow has fallen upon the scenes so lately lighted by the Allied victory. Nobody knows what Soviet Russia and its Communist international organization intends to do in the immediate future. From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe... All are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in many cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow.

America put her troops into Europe in an effort to hold back the communist threat. This was the Cold War, with much spying, space-race exploration and weapons developments. America's philosophy was to have troops stationed near possible centres of conflict, to avoid having to bring them from half way round the world. Both the Soviet Union and the Middle East were seen as possible conflict areas. The main bulk of US troops were stationed in Germany, also in Italy, Britain and Turkey. At the height of the cold war there were over 250,000 US troops in Germany, at present there are nominally 50,000 troops but many are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. America plans to continue to draw down these troops. The financial crisis and Europe's lack of interest in having the troops here will surely speed up their withdrawal.

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)

NATO was formed in 1949 with its HQ in Brussels. Its goal was put thus by the first NATO Secretary General Lord Ismay, "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down".
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/-cite_note-3 *Wikipedia*

The organization constitutes a system of collective defence whereby its member states agree to mutual defense in response to an attack by any external party. *Wikipedia*

Like the EU, NATO has steadily expanded eastward, much to the concern of Russia. At its meeting in April, America was anxious to enlarge further and bring in the Ukraine and Georgia, countries that Russia very much regards as being in her sphere of influence. The meeting had been arranged at Bucharest in Romania, again from Russia's viewpoint rather a dig, for this country was formerly under Soviet influence and a member of the Warsaw Pact. It joined the EU in 2007.

Germany was opposed to this expansion of NATO, which they regard as American dominated. Germany has power plans for the region and doesn't want America's expansion of influence here. Also there was the matter of Kosovo. Germany and the Vatican had been working hard in the Balkans' region to bring these states into the EU. Russia had protested against the methods used to pull Kosovo into the western fold. It seems that a deal was done; if Germany opposed eastward expansion of NATO, Russia would give up her protest over Kosovo. We will come back to look at the Balkans—the dividing line between the Western and the Eastern legs of the Image.

The NATO meeting went no further than agreeing to look at the matter of the Ukraine and Georgia's membership again in December. Then came the August battles in Georgia. Again it was Germany that ensured no sanctions were taken against Russia. What was Germany planning? Towards the end of the year it began to emerge! Again we need some background material.

The Russia-EU Partnership and Cooperation Agreement

This remarkable document which ran from 1997 to December 2007 was a 10-year blue-print for Russian-EU affairs. It was designed to bring Russia up to the standards expected in the West. Every 6 months the leaders of Russia and the EU would meet to move forward progress. There were four specific areas called "common spaces", which covered: -

- Economic issues and the environment
- Freedom, Security and Justice
- External Security
- Research and Education

Both sides wished to renew the agreement but a dispute between Poland and Russia held up talks and so they agreed a 12-month extension.

The dispute was settled earlier in 2008 and at the June Summit meeting, the two sides agreed to the resumption of talks, which commenced in July. The events in Georgia put a stop to them, and it was not until November that the EU agreed to resume talks, which began on December 2nd.

Russia and Germany however have something more in mind than just a renewal of the agreement; they want a Security Pact between Russia and the EU. One of Putin's first requests on becoming President in 2000 was that Russia and Europe should draw up a Security Accord. Few took any notice. When Medvedev took over from Putin in May, he too spoke of the need for deeper security ties; again he seemed to have been ignored. Then came the Georgian conflict and suddenly Europe realised that America hadn't come running to sort the matter out and neither had NATO. There was a growing realisation that Europe was on its own. Suddenly the thought of a Security Pact with Russia looked much more attractive. In effect it would replace American defensive forces with Russian. Was it not better to tie Russia to Europe rather than have her as a possible adversary?

The St Petersburg Dialogue

Germany has long held ambitions for a partnership with Russia. Way back in 2001 a glimpse was given of future developments.

German-Russian summit in St. Petersburg: big expectations, little achieved

The fourth round of consultations between the German and Russian governments, took place in St. Petersburg on the April 9 and 10 (2001).

On April 5, German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder published a long article in *Die Zeit* newspaper in which he emphasised the "strategic

partnership with Russia” and its outstanding importance for German and European foreign policy. The article continued: “The centre of Eastern politics for Europe and Germany is Russia”, and “because of its situation and history, Germany sees itself as an impulse and motor for the Russia policy of the European Union.” For its part, close collaboration with Europe is indispensable for Russia: “Russia has always been successful when it has opened itself up to Europe, engaged in a lively exchange and linked itself with the economic and intellectual development in the rest of Europe.” *wsn.org* 14-4-2001

In spite of the negative headline above, the seeds were being sown! The St Petersburg Dialogue was set up which has met annually since 2001, alternating between the two countries. This year the 8th meeting was held in October at St Petersburg with the ambitious theme of *Russia and Germany —partners in modernization in the global world*—we will come to this shortly.



Medvedev visits Germany first

Medvedev made Germany the destination of his first visit to the West after taking over from Putin, visiting on 5th June.

Mr. Medvedev's decision to make Germany his first Western stop holds promise of warmer ties between Moscow and Berlin.

Last year, rapidly expanding bilateral trade between the two nations topped \$52 billion. With Medvedev in power, Germany's business sector is eager to further develop economic relations with Russia, says Mr. Meister. “The hope is that he will move away from the pattern seen under Putin, of the businesses being owned and influenced by the state, and open up new opportunities for investment,” he says. “Germans would be rushing to invest in Russia if there was not this political threat.” *The Christian Science Monitor* 5-6-08

A *German Foreign Policy* article 3-7-08 had these significant comments to make about this visit. [My emphasis]

The German-Russian cooperation in the financial sector and the negotiations for a new agreement between the EU and Russia are seen in Berlin merely as tests for an even closer rapprochement. It couldn't just remain at a “Greater Europe” with the inclusion of Russia, but must also incorporate a **new military alliance** as an alternative to NATO or even its replacement. Berlin attentively took note that in his first foreign policy speech, the new Russian President, **Medvedev constantly criticized the USA**. He assessed the US role in international politics quite negatively and would like to see limits set for Washington's actions. **Medvedev deliberately chose Berlin as the location for**

making his foreign policy bid, explained the government advisors at the German Institute for International and Security affairs (SWP) concerning his speech in the German capital. Medvedev declared that the transatlantic military alliance has “outlived” itself; it can no longer provide security for Europe. As a solution, he proposed a new **“collective security pact” to insure stability in the new “Greater Europe” with all European states participating.** The concept is “not without attraction” commented the German government advisors. “This puts an offer on the table, to which the German and European policies can react, if they find it opportune.”

They did! Following the St Petersburg German-Russian summit held in October, *Stratfor* 3-10-08 made these dramatic comments.

Germany is the closest thing that Russia has to a friend in Europe these days... It could be far easier for the Germans to cut a deal with the Russians to share influence in the regions that lie between them. This has happened before—and **has been known to lead to a world war.**



European Security agreement with Russia—Helsinki II

A *Stratfor* article 2-10-08, detailed the implications of the joint security agreement that the two countries were discussing.

Russian President Medvedev and German Chancellor Merkel met Oct. 2 in St. Petersburg to discuss a multitude of issues... One topic of discussion was even more intense: a new collective security agreement between Europe and Russia, dubbed Helsinki II. Moscow is pushing hard for discussions about an agreement between Russia and Europe outside of NATO, in order to undermine the U.S.-dominated alliance.

Russia has been especially vocal about its initiative of a new legally binding treaty on collective security in Europe, which Medvedev put forward in Berlin in June. At the time, most of Europe seemed to ignore Russia's move to balance its security concerns in Europe with those of the United States, which is installing missile defense interceptors and related radar in Central Europe. However, all of Europe and the United States have taken a step back to re-evaluate their dismissal of Russia since it proved its prowess by invading Georgia in August.

The aim of this Security Agreement is to replace America's guardianship of the peace in Europe, effectively the role of NATO, with Europe's own peace deal. A security agreement, perhaps initially between Germany and Russia, but then embracing the EU would be an attractive way of offering energy security in an area increasingly dependent upon Russia for its supplies. *Stratfor* continued: -

To this end, Moscow is targeting Germany, the one player that has both the geopolitical impetus to bargain with the Kremlin (it is dependent on Russian energy) and the means within NATO to nix [stop] membership invitations to countries that Russia does not want to see join, such as Ukraine and Georgia. Moscow's tactic is based in history. In great part, it was West Germany's decision to negotiate with the Soviet Union that gave the original Helsinki accord its symbolic power, and now the opportunity has arisen again for Germany to cut a deal.

The German Question

Stratfor 6-10-08 followed up with this heading and article. What it had to say was a thrilling vindication of our traditional understanding of Bible prophecy concerning the time of the end. Germany is the strong power of Europe and with the terrible economic abyss that many countries are staring into, as we see later, Germany will no doubt emerge as the undisputed leader of Europe.

In one sense, Merkel's reasons for her stance are simple. Germany is heavily dependent on Russian natural gas. If the supply were cut off, Germany's situation would be desperate. Russia might decide it could not afford to cut off natural gas exports, but Merkel is dealing with a fundamental German interest, and risking that for Ukrainian or Georgian membership in NATO is not something she is prepared to do.

Therefore, Merkel went to St. Petersburg and told the Russians that Germany does not favor NATO expansion. More than that, the Germans at least implicitly told the Russians that they have a free hand in the former Soviet Union as far as Germany is concerned ... It does not want to recreate the situation of the two world wars or the Cold War, so Berlin will stay close to France economically and also will accommodate the Russians.

The Germans will thus block NATO's ambitions—a dramatic shift in the Western alliance. This shift in fact has been unfolding for quite a while, but it took the Russo-Georgian war to reveal the change.

We can anticipate a profound shift in Russian—EU relations. There is to be a *Dragon* power—Russia; and a *Beast* power—we anticipate the EU changing considerably. When Britain and others are no longer part of this grouping, it will leave a coalition of nations more closely corresponding to the earlier phases of the *Beast*, with Germany at its heart.

We continue to look at Germany and her role in Europe in the next chapter.

Chapter 6:

GERMANY STONEWALLS. THE AWKWARD ALLY

Bible students have long taken a keen interest in the growth of Germany, for she was at the heart of the Beast system in the past and is destined to resume her role for one last time!

Our main aim in this chapter is to see the many ways that Germany is preparing for her traditional role as leader of Europe. We shall see in the next chapter that the hand of the Vatican is also behind her rise in power. Our chapter heading is taken from an article in The Economist which neatly showed the growing boldness of Germany and her determination not to be held back from her desires!

The Berlin stonewall. Has Germany replaced France as America's awkward ally?

On Russia, Iran and Afghanistan—trouble-spots that matter to both countries—Germany's position is annoying Washington. At the NATO summit in Bucharest last April, Ms Merkel stood most visibly against American pressure to grant a Membership Action Plan—a road-map to join the alliance—to Ukraine and Georgia. This was a marked change from previous summits at which France habitually obstructed American proposals.

After Russian troops pushed into Georgia in August, America wanted to ostracise the Kremlin while Germany appeared eager to return to business as usual. Germany has been the leading Western sceptic in toughening economic sanctions on Iran to discourage its alarming uranium-enrichment programme. In Afghanistan, Germany's military commitment is hedged with "caveats" that keep its troops out of the fighting in the dangerous south of the country. *The Economist* 30-10-08

Germany has been boldly building up her might as the EU's natural leader.

But she has not only been stonewalling against America—she has been refusing to cooperate with her EU partners over the financial crisis. Why? We shall look at this in chapter 12!

Germany's desire for power

Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher summed it up best back in 1995 when she warned,

"You have not anchored Germany to Europe; you have anchored Europe to a newly dominant, unified Germany. ... In the end, my friends, you'll find it will not work."

We saw in the previous chapter how Germany was pushing for the EU to be locked into a security pact with Russia, and it is salutary to note that this

is not a new phenomenon. Germany made it clear a long time ago that this was her aim and we shall see in the next chapter it has been the Vatican's goal too! This reference goes back 14 years to 1994.

It is seldom realised that the plan to integrate the states of Western Europe around a single currency, grandiose though it is, is only part of an even larger plan. 'European integration' is not an exclusively Western European affair. Indeed, the very purpose of suggesting the institutional restructuring of Western Europe around a hard core, according to the plan's German authors, is to permit the creation of a common (Western) European foreign and security policy, which will in turn be based on a 'lasting partnership with Russia'. The German government has repeatedly stressed that it is 'the advocate of pan-European, not just West European, thinking'. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 21-5-1994

Germany, which has placed herself at the centre of the process of Western European integration (principally by her leading position within the process of monetary union), is set to place herself at the centre of the process of pan-European integration as well. She has always boasted of her pan-European agenda: she is the primary advocate of the eastward enlargement of the EU and of the lasting partnership with Russia.

It is also in Germany that thinking on matters European—whether monetary or geopolitical—is the most coherent and therefore the most forceful. This explains why Germany's policies tend to carry the day against those of more intellectually muddled neighbours. John Laughland *The Tainted Source* 1997 p240

John Laughland, in the above book, traces from the 1930's aspirations of Hitler, how Germany has planned for the twin pillars—Western European integration and a pan-European integration.

These plans are working out apace. Germany no longer feels bowed beneath the guilt of World War II; there is a new spirit to foster Germany as the driving force of what is done in the EU. After all Germany is in a strong position.

- Germany is the largest EU country since the reunification with East Germany. In round numbers she has a population of 84million; France 64m; UK 61m.
- Germany has the world's 2nd largest gold reserves. USA 8,133 tonnes; Germany 3,417; IMF 3,217; France 2,562. In time of financial strain gold has



been a commodity that has held its value.

- Germany is the world's biggest exporter! \$1.35trillion of exports; China \$1.22trillion; USA \$1.15trillion. Very close and things can change with the financial crisis, but that's where things stand. *Wikipedia 5-12-08*

Let's see how Germany has been asserting herself. We would refer readers to chapter 11 of last year's *Milestones* where we sketched the recent history of Germany and saw how she was seeking to be the leader in so many fields. Most striking were the charts showing how Germany is determined to be "Masters of Transport". The number of container ships that she owns or is having built is extraordinary, but understandable. As the world's leading export nation she is dependent on the prompt import of raw materials and export of her finished goods. She is also using the EU to achieve her own goals. One of Germany's aims was to revive the Constitution, which had fallen under the two rejections by the French and the Dutch. As we saw in last year's *Milestones*, Germany succeeded in her task—the constitution was revised and renamed as the Lisbon Treaty.

The German government has made the adoption of the EU constitution in one way or another a central goal of its presidency. The existing proposed constitution corresponds in large part to Berlin's ideas for the future development of Europe. The tightening of a common foreign policy will make it possible to weaken world-political concepts which deviate from the German strategy, including British ideas which may be permanently excluded in the long term—at any rate whilst the German position in Europe remains as strong and dominant as at present. The planning for continual military rearmament, contained in the proposed constitution, corresponds exactly with the German intention to strengthen its own military power, which is at present regarded as insufficient, with the help of the EU. Arising out of such thinking, political advisors from the milieu of the Bertelsmann Foundation, probably the most influential private German think tank, developed a scenario four years ago for a "Superpower Europe".

In this strategy paper it is asserted that a precondition for the rise of such a super power is a European constitution, on which basis all necessary political areas could be taken under EU control. This will at last make it possible to build a European army under the control of a Brussels high command and so under German influence, which has the nuclear potential of France and Great Britain at its disposal. In looking at further prospects, the text reads "Superpower Europe is finally abandoning the idea of a civil power and is providing for itself without restriction the means of conducting the policy of an international superpower". The paper closes with the remark "the great political and economic power potential of the EU permits comparison with the USA". *German-Foreign-Policy 2-2-07*

Speaking of the move to link Germany and Russia, the article recalled an earlier phase of military cooperation between Germany and Russia.

From the early Nineteen Twenties Berlin and Moscow began a secret cooperation which involved the armaments firms and forces of both sides. For Germany this was a method of circumventing the restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles which had been imposed on Germany as the aggressor, after World War I. On Soviet territory German soldiers could try out the use of poison gas, conduct an armoured warfare training school and carry out air exercises—all activities forbidden by the Versailles Treaty. Historians reckon that without Soviet help German forces could not have been completely ready for war by 1939. Cooperation continued right up to June 22nd 1941, the day when Germany attacked the Soviet Union. In September 1939 both sides concluded a frontier and friendship treaty across their common border in defeated Poland. In the first two years of the war the Kremlin placed the harbour of Murmansk at Germany's disposal, not only for merchant ships but also for German naval vessels, involved in the fight against Great Britain. An authority on German-Russian relations recently told us in interview that the present intensification of military cooperation between the two countries showed distinct parallels with the Twenties and early Thirties.

Military Power

The terms agreed for Germany at the end of WWII meant that she was only allowed a token show of military forces. Germany has been fine with this until more recent years when she has been chafing at those restrictions. Working through the EU provides her with the opportunities she desires, as she is the biggest EU economy.

Steinmeier calls for European army.

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier at a conference earlier this week called for the establishment of a "European armed force", saying that he is in favour of speeding up such a development. **He also pointed out that the Lisbon Treaty will allow groups of EU member states to "proceed" on their own in foreign and security policy.** *Open Europe* 08-05-08 [My emphasis]

Germany has taken the lead in the EU plans for its own defence forces. The Bertelsmann Foundation is by far Germany's most influential private think tank. A group of six experts of the Bertelsmann Foundation and seven scholars and politicians from various European states, make up the "Venusberg Group". This is the title of their 3rd strategy report: -

"Beyond 2010—European Grand Strategy in a Global Age"

The report states that "a new balance will have to be struck between sovereignty and security" meaning a de facto disempowerment of smaller EU member states. As the Bertelsmann experts propose, the

seven countries with the largest defense budgets (in absolute numbers) should be permanent members of this "Security and Defence Group": Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands and Poland (the "leadership group"). The other EU member states would take a temporary and rotating seat in the group. To ease the burden on the EU's leading military states, the smaller members should participate in the "common funding" of future military interventions.

With the publication of this report, the Bertelsmann Foundation is seeking to intensify the debate on a common foreign and security policy of the European Union. Cooperation has to be reinforced "now or never", says the report, otherwise "the dangers faced by the European citizen will become acute". Every chapter ends with the warning "The clock is ticking". *German-Foreign-Policy* 16-1-08

In November, France and Germany reiterated their calls for an EU army.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy proposed establishing an army capable of deploying 60,000 troops with naval and air support within 60 days. Having navy operations under its belt will only help the EU accomplish its goal.

Another sign of greater European military cooperation is that on the same day EU defense ministers signed off on Operation Atalanta [next item], 12 EU defense ministers pledged to support the European Air Transport Fleet (EATF). The EATF is meant to allow the EU to possess its own transportation fleet for both military and humanitarian missions worldwide by having members of the group provide planes for missions and resources to maintain the fleet. *The Trumpet* 13-11-08

Britain did not sign up for the EATF.

Operation Atalanta

This is a practical example of how Germany, unable to act alone, has been able to act within the EU umbrella. Operation Atalanta is an EU task force set up to patrol the Somali coast to protect shipping from pirate attacks. There is a NATO force and the Coalition forces also patrol the area, but the EU is insisting on her own forces, rather than helping the existing patrols. Germany's constitution does not allow her to actively pursue the pirates; however her constitution does permit it if they are acting within a "system of collective security". So Germany is actively involved, having dedicated several ships to join the Atalanta. Incidentally the force is under British command; Britain has not often joined the EU in naval forces. However the British have had to divert one of their frigates, HMS Cumberland, "to lead" the task force. This frigate was due to guard the Falkland Islands, instead a civilian naval force has been despatched there which will be powerless to defend Britain's claims to the region. The last time Britain withdrew her defence vessel, the Falkland's were invaded!

“What on earth are we doing putting EU flag waving ahead of our own security priorities? It is outrageous that the British Government would ever diminish the protection of our strategic interests in order to pay homage to the politics of the EU”, fumed Liam Fox the British Shadow Defense Minister. *LiveLeak* 6-12-08

Germany in Iraq

Germany was heavily involved in Iraq in the days of Saddam Hussein, being the leading business partner. In an effort to get Iraq back to a stable economy, the US has asked Germany to help in the rebuilding of Iraq's infrastructure. German businesses are welcoming the opportunity to refresh their old contacts; they see another opportunity to better America!

While Washington is expecting German enterprises to contribute to strengthening Iraq's western ties, the German businesses are pursuing their own objectives. German enterprises want to “pick up from the good old days, when business with Iraq was at four billion Euros.” At the beginning of the 80s, West Germany had succeeded in becoming this Gulf state's most important business partner, enjoying exceptional political influence—not least of all through arms deliveries. Berlin has the ambition of again attaining a comparable standing—for the moment as a partner of the United States, later possibly autonomous and independent of the USA. *German-Foreign-Policy.com* 15-12-08

Germany is interested in building new railway links and restoring existing lines, developing the oil industry and building lorry, bus and truck plants.

In July, Angela Merkel visited Algeria in a bid to boost trade with this African oil and gas rich country. Germany offered business deals to exploit her energy reserves in exchange for supplying military hardware and arms. France was keen to bring Algeria into her Mediterranean Union, but this seems to have failed and Germany looks set to lay her hands on the energy supplies of this country.

Germany in the Balkans

We have yet another example of how Germany can use the EU to further her wishes. What we are seeing in the great efforts to bring the Balkan region back into the Western fold, is none other than the preparation for the forming of the two legs of Nebuchadnezzar's image in these last days. In the time of the Roman Empire, Europe became divided into an Eastern Roman Empire and a Western. The split did shift over time, but the majority of the Balkans region would have been in the Western Empire. It is interesting to see that this is the last area to be brought into the orbit of the EU and



Germany has been playing a lead role in this work. If we see the map of the present EU one can see where the probable division into the two legs will come. It may need the division of the Ukraine into east and west to complete the dividing lines. This is not critical as the two legs will be attached to one body, and working in unison!



The process of absorbing the Balkans has been going on for many years. It was Germany's drive to recognise the independence of Croatia and Slovenia from Yugoslavia in 1991 that began the process. It is salutary to be reminded of what was written about this at the time. This is from the *Time* magazine 30-12-1991. [E.C. (European Community) is the EU's old name.]

The Twelve E.C. countries found themselves deeply divided over whether to recognize the independence of the breakaway republics of Slovenia and Croatia in the face of continuing attacks by the Serb-dominated national army. By the next day, in an unexpected show of diplomatic muscle, Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher had cajoled and bullied the European partners into partial agreement by threatening that Germany would act alone if they failed to go along.

The result was a compromise: the E.C. would recognize the two republics, but only if they pledged to respect human and minority rights. The Germans immediately undermined the decision, by declaring their intention to recognize Croatia and Slovenia even before the E.C. makes a determination on whether the conditions have been met.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl called the compromise "a great victory for German foreign policy."

"E.C. policy is now German policy," commented Belgrade's state-run TV, repeating the official Serbian accusation that the Germany of today is a reincarnation of Hitler's Third Reich, which, in a new march to conquest, is trying to break up Yugoslavia. "The main problem with recognition," said Wolfgang Biermann, a foreign policy analyst for the Social Democrats in Bonn, "is that it is the Germans who are pushing it. Considering Germany's history in Yugoslavia, the Serbs are convinced that Germany is splitting up their state again. That escalates the

conflict.” In a number of capitals there was discomfort with the appearance of Germany again supporting Croatian independence, as the Nazis backed fascist Croatia during World War II.

Germany has been working in Kosovo to bring this largely Muslim country back into the fold, replacing UN troops with EU ones—totally without a mandate. This is what Germany—and the Vatican—wants, so the rest of the EU falls in line. We shall examine the religious motives in our next chapter on the Vatican.

Progress in bringing the Balkan countries into the EU



Let's review the progress in bringing the remaining Balkan countries into the EU.

Croatia. She is now a “candidate” country and according to the EU web site, negotiations have “entered their decisive stage”. It is aimed to have completed the necessary transformation by the end of 2009, for her to become a member in 2010.

Macedonia. She too is a candidate country, meaning talks are well advanced. The main sticking point is the dispute with Greece over the name of the country.

At a less advanced stage are **Albania** and **Montenegro** who are implementing interim agreements. This puts them on the road to membership, but several years off it. **Bosnia and Herzegovina** started to implement an interim agreement in July, but have run into problems over reforms. **Serbia** too has signed an interim agreement but disputes over the handing over of military leaders to the International Criminal Tribunal have slowed progress. **Kosovo** is perceived as making the right moves and is being “helped” with considerable EU funds towards being acceptable to the EU. *Ec.europa.eu/enlargement* 5-11-08

The other country that has been struggling to join the EU for many years is Turkey. The EU has mixed feelings about welcoming Turkey as she is not a “Christian” country. However she is becoming more and more valuable to the EU as a transit route for oil and gas, avoiding dependence on Russia. On the other hand it may prove to be significant that Turkey has turned her back on Israel and America regarding Israel’s “Operation Cast Lead”. She has allied with Iran and is supporting Hamas! Whatever happens to Turkey, the Almighty has shown that she will come under the control of the Eastern leg, not the Western leg in the final picture. Constantinople is to be the seat of the Dragon power at the time of the invasion of Israel.

Let's now turn to look at the Vatican's plans.

Chapter 7:

VATICAN TROOPS PUSH EU ALONG!

It was Stalin during World War II who famously quipped “How many troops does the Pope have?” He has many divisions! The Vatican has successfully motivated the laity to use their positions in society to move forward the church’s goals. In Milestones 2007 we devoted chapter 7 to a review of the many prophecies concerning this dreadful system, which claims to speak for God, but is in fact a system that deceives people into believing a lie. We encourage readers to re-read this important section. Without the guidance of God’s viewpoint we could easily be deceived, too. As Revelation 17:4-6 tells us, she has a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. This is no friend of the true believers!

In this chapter we want to see her continued growth in power and influence.

Using the laity

May 2008 was the 140th anniversary of the founding of the Catholic Action Movement, a grouping of lay members who used their positions in society to support the Church; it was known also as the Lay Apostolate.

The **lay apostolate** is made up from laypeople and consecrated religious who exercise a ministry in cooperation with the Catholic Church. These organizations cooperate with ecclesiastical authorities. These organizations operate “under direction of her pastors” but are not members of the official Church hierarchy or enjoy Holy Orders. Apostolates operate with the permission of the local Ordinary of a Diocese, but often without material support.

Catholic Action is not a political party, although in many times and places this distinction became blurred. *Wikipedia*

Catholic Action seeks to establish the reign of Christ, to restore all things in Christ, to spread Catholic principles in every field of life—in other words, to Christianize the world.

Catholic Action therefore makes of the layman a **soldier of Christ**, a missionary of the priesthood. At present the activities are channeled through the National Council of Men, the National Council of Women, and the National Catholic Youth Council. These Councils are really *federations*, made up of existing lay religious organizations affiliated to make one whole.

Catholic Action is concerned with the *home...* with the *school ...* with the *social life ...* with the *civil life* of the nation.

There is *variety* in the works of Catholic Action, and in the means it uses to effect its ends. This variety is according to necessities of time and place.

One place may demand the teaching of catechism; another, the support of the parochial school; another, the defense of the Church's rights against unjust and unlawful impositions of civil officials; another, vigilance over the press and the moving pictures; another, the education of the working classes. In many places, all or most of these necessities, with others, ought to be met. This is why an organization of well-trained laity is imperative. *catholicbook.com*

This year Benedict XVI reiterated the need for the laity to be active. On a visit to Sardinia he called upon his hearers to invoke Mary to: -

"make you capable of evangelizing the world of **work**, the **economy**, **politics**, which requires a new generation of committed Christian laypeople capable of seeking with competency and moral rigor solutions of sustainable development". *Asia News* 7-9-08

That was pretty embracing! Work, economy and politics doesn't leave much untouched! We quoted several Humanist websites in *Milestones 2007* which showed what considerable progress had been made in making the Roman Church respectable, and a power consulted by the EU. This has continued in 2008. As *The Trumpet* 15-9-08 remarked: -

Rome has always been clever at carrying out its strategy of embedding Catholic laity in labor movements, government bureaucracy, the secret services and the legal profession. Now the pope is calling for those Catholics who hold positions of influence within society to heed the clarion call from Rome to saddle up for a new global crusade!

Benedict, the political Pope

His predecessor, John Paul II was certainly one who played a big role in politics. Working with the CIA, John Paul succeeded in bringing down communism, as we saw in *Milestones 1992* ch. 3. One of the interesting links was a chance meeting of Karol Wojtyla, then a Polish Archbishop, and Zbigniew Brzezinski from Harvard and Columbia who later became President Carter's national security adviser. The two men struck up a friendship and much correspondence took place. A year later when Wojtyla became Pope, the two men began to work together. The details were revealed in a *Debka* report 2-4-05 under the heading **The Secret Cold War Partnership between Pope John Paul II and White House Revealed**

Pope John Paul II broke out of the conventional papal mold in many ways that will engage generations of historians. Above all, he was the most democratic of any of his predecessors, always in close rapport with

Catholic communities in every corner of the globe and possessed of an unfailing instinct for the times in which he lived.

“...an American president (Carter) inspired by the elevation of Cardinal Karol Wojtyla as the first Pole to become Pope, began a secret initiative that some believed altered the course of the Cold War.

“ ‘It’s the beginning of the end for communism,’ exulted Ms. Mikulski in Rome at a US Embassy lunch of rare oratorical exuberance. Some thought her toast measured more than a notch too high on the hyperbole meter, yet history proved her right. John Paul II’s courageous pilgrimages behind the Iron Curtain captured world attention from the start. Defying party orders, tumultuous East European turnouts soon made him communism’s liveliest scourge—and the Free World’s most valuable Cold War player.”

The Surprising Geopolitics of Joseph Ratzinger, “The Pope of the West”

In past ages, the papacy was concerned with European politics; now it operates on the world stage as indicated by the picture in Revelation 17 where as well as riding the European Beast she is said to be sitting on many waters, indicating the universal appeal of her adulterated wine.

Pope Leo XII had this medal minted in commemoration of the second year of his reign, the jubilee year of 1825. The reverse of the medal depicts a woman, holding a communion cup, while sitting on the world. The inscription reads SEDET SUPER UNIVERSUM, declaring that her seat of authority is universal, i.e., over the entire globe.



How that power has grown since 1825! The *Aspen Institute*, an Italian think-tank, devoted its September issue to a study on *Religion and Politics*. There was a long article, written by Sandro Magister, a Roman Catholic journalist, describing the political nature of the papacy today. The article had the above heading.



The Catholic Church is a 2,000-year-old reality. But the current political role of the papacy on the **world stage** is a recent achievement, from the past few decades. For three centuries, after the peace of Westphalia, the papacy stood on the outer edge of political power. ...

Its resurgence began midway through the past century, with the pontificate of Pius XII. And it continued with his successors, John XXIII and Paul VI.

....Then came a pope from Poland, and everything changed.

Magister describes the great influence that John Paul had on the ending of communism. He then turns to the present Pope.

Unlike his predecessor, Benedict XVI is believed to be an apolitical pope. But it's not true. Joseph Ratzinger simply engages in politics in original ways. These are sometimes imprudent, according to the canons of diplomatic realism, including those of the Vatican. And yet, after his three years in the pontificate, they have been shown to be much more productive than many foresaw, as proven in part by the unexpected "success" of the pope's recent trip to highly secularized France.

A clear admittance that he **was** a political Pope!

In January the Vatican was instrumental in bringing down the Italian government!

In January, Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi was forced to resign after Clemente Mastella, the Catholic leader of Italy's Udeur Christian Democrat Party, quit his post as justice minister. His resignation undermined Prodi's coalition government, causing it to lose its majority in the senate.

Mastella, long recognized as a Vatican rook [a chess piece], was operating on the instructions of church leaders who were frustrated by Prodi's liberal tendencies. "Prodi's government dared to challenge the ecclesiastical hierarchy for the second time and this time it has had its hands burned," wrote Italian newspaper *La Stampa*. Vatican fingerprints were all over Prodi's political corpse. *The Trumpet* 28-2-08

The following month there was a powerful effort by the Spanish clergy to bring down the Spanish government; but it narrowly survived.

Pope Benedict XVI is encouraging Catholics who get involved in politics to stay true to their church's teaching. Benedict says it is necessary that a new generation of Catholics in politics be "coherent" with the faith they profess. He also recommends that they act with moral rigor and work passionately for the common good. The pope urged Vatican officials in a speech Saturday to be vigilant about the evangelical education of Catholics who get so involved in society. Benedict recently said religion and politics should be "open to each other." *quicktake.wordpress.com* 16-11-08

In the previous chapter we remarked on Germany and the Vatican taking the lead in recognising the breakaway states of Croatia and Slovenia during the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990's. The significance for Bible students is that Yugoslavia was the scene of terrible brutality in WWII with

the massacre of Jews, gypsies and Orthodox believers. Church and State worked together as amply testified in the book *Vatican against Europe*¹. It explains the hostility on the part of the Orthodox Church to the Roman Catholic Church.

Prior to the Slovene unilateral action, [in 1991] the European Union and the United States were in agreement that the [Yugoslav] nation must remain united. This policy soon changed, and it became evident that Germany and Austria were pressing for the recognition of Slovene and Croatian independence. It is now known that as early as 1990 Croatian and Slovene leaders held meetings with senior politicians from both of these countries [Germany and Austria] urging support for independence. During this time the Vatican was openly lobbying for independence and had particular influence on German politicians in Bavaria. *History of Western Interference in the Balkans*² p 7 by James Bissett, Canadian Ambassador to Yugoslavia at the time.



Vatican set to making Kosovo Catholic

This report, from the *Balkan Investigative Reporting Network* 3-3-08, shows the increasing power of the Roman Catholics in Kosovo.

Far from being marginalized—as is the story in so many mainly Muslim societies—in Kosovo the small Catholic minority has seen a resurgence in its fortunes as Kosovars of all faiths look to Europe to resolve their political destiny. ...

Since NATO drove Serbian forces from Kosovo in 1999, Catholics have increasingly emerged from the sidelines in Kosovo.

As Gjergji presses forward with his missionary activities, he is also devoting considerable effort to supporting the construction of a major Catholic cathedral in Pristina. This cathedral—which is being built with the support of Kosovar President Fatmir Sejdiu—has been hailed as a symbol of the Vatican's attempts at "cultural baptism."

Gjergji was appointed as bishop of the Albanian Sape Diocese by Pope Benedict XVI before he was transferred to Kosovo. Vatican involvement in Kosovo, however, runs a lot deeper than the pope's relationship with Gjergji. Kosovar President Fatmir Sejdiu met with Benedict himself in the Vatican on February 2. This visit was reminiscent of the long-

¹ Obtainable from *Bible Magazine* distributors or *Milestones*

² Downloadable at www.deltax.net/bissett/western.htm

standing relationship between former Kosovar President Ibrahim Rugova and Pope John Paul II.

It makes sense that Kosovar leadership would want a relationship with the Vatican. The Vatican was one of the first states to recognize both Croatia and Slovenia when they broke away from Yugoslavia back in the early 1990s. Kosovo also would like Vatican support for its independence—but the Vatican does not give its support for nothing.

In other words we need you to convert to Catholicism! This is what is happening as our next report with the headline **Vatican set to making Kosovo Catholic** from *Interfax* 1-4-08 shows. The translation was rather poor so I summarise it. It said that the Vatican's missionaries were working on their plans to convert the Moslem Kosovars to Catholicism. The Kosovo Catholic bishop, Dode Gjergji, reasoned that they were Roman Catholics until overrun by the Muslim Ottoman Turks, who forcibly converted them to the Muslim religion, when they pushed westward into this region, following their conquest of Constantinople in 1453. So they were ready as it were for a "cultural baptism" to bring them back! He said the Kosovars were "pro-Christian" and thus were "pro-European and pro-American."

500 years of history was being rolled back!

The Vatican at work in Bosnia and Ukraine

The Vatican is exerting similar pressure on the EU to accept Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, the Secretary for Relations with States, —[the Vatican's "foreign minister"] said that the Holy See would look favorably on an application by Bosnia-Herzegovina for EU membership. The archbishop offered that assurance during a visit to the Balkan nation in the last week of April.

One could wonder—what's it to do with the Vatican, surely this is an EU matter. That fails to comprehend the role the Roman Church has had in extending the EU eastward, bringing more Vatican countries with their influences, into the EU. Of the countries that have joined in 2004 and 2007, these are predominately: -

- **Roman Catholic:** Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Malta
- **Orthodox:** Romania, Cyprus
- **Lutheran:** Estonia, Latvia
- **Non religious:** Bulgaria

The non-EU Balkan countries are mainly

- **Roman Catholic:** Croatia
- **Orthodox:** Serbia, Montenegro Macedonia
- **Muslim:** Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina

Interfax 15-12-08 reported that the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Lviv, Mieczyslaw Mokrzycki, had handed the Ukrainian President Victor Yuschenko an invitation from Pope Benedict XVI to visit the Vatican. Ukraine is mainly Orthodox with several competing branches, with a smaller grouping of Greek Catholic Churches which are in communion with Rome, with a further small grouping of Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches. Quite a mixture and a host of religious tensions. Ukraine is being pulled apart, with some wishing to link eastward with Russia and others westwards with the EU. The Vatican is lending its hand to pull it westward!

Benedict's Strategy for Expanding Vatican Power

It is now 20 years since Pope John Paul II addressed the European Parliament in Strasbourg and spoke of Europe breathing with her two lungs, in other words he was looking for the day when the two lungs—Western Europe and Russia—would be working together! He exhorted the members of parliament to *"render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's"*. They held the temporal power, he the spiritual. In other words, you look after the political matters and I will look after the spiritual matters. He spoke of his wish for the day when "Europe may once again cover its true geographical and more important, historical dimensions".

Much has happened since. Last year his successor was invited by the European Parliamentary President, Hans-Gert Pöttering, an enthusiastic Roman Catholic and fellow German, during a private audience with the Pope, to come to Strasbourg and address parliament on the role of religion. This was turned down, pleading no time to fit it in! Benedict obviously felt this was not yet the right time.

In April, he made another attempt to draw Europe's eyes to the fact that the roots of today's Europe were largely crafted by the influence of the Church. It is true it did have a big influence and from our viewpoint it is no coincidence that the period from the fall of Rome in the 5th century A.D. to the time of the "Renaissance"—the period when the Roman Church had great influence—is termed "the Dark Ages"! However the Papacy sees things differently! Benedict drew attention to the fact that it was in the time of his namesake, "Saint" Benedict, whose influence on the Roman Emperor Justinian pulled Rome back from the "dark night" that followed the sack of Rome by the barbarians. Justinian was the Emperor who freed Rome from the barbarians and famously recognised the Bishop of Rome "as the head of all the holy churches of the empire". It was Justinian's "collection of Roman Laws" that became the basis of European laws to this day.

Justinian was an outstanding ruler and extensively revised Roman law, and at the same time fitted into the revision the new status of the Bishop of Rome—later to become the Pope. This structure of Roman law, both

religious and civil, has in broad terms continued down to this day.
G. Pearce *Milestones* 1989

With this background we can appreciate what the Pope was driving at, for Benedict did not actually mention Justinian in his speech. He uses words very carefully and the implication is clear, Europe will only grow when the influence of the Church is respected and accepted!

At his regular weekly public audience on April 9, Pope Benedict XVI spoke about the enormous influence of his namesake, St. Benedict.

St. Benedict, the Pope said, is “the father of western monasticism, who with his life and work exercised a fundamental influence on the development of European civilization and culture.” His life and work ... helped Europe to emerge from the “dark night of history” that followed the fall of the Roman Empire.

The influence of St. Benedict produced “a true spiritual ferment” in Europe, and over the coming decades his followers—the fast-growing Benedictine order—spread across the continent to establish a new cultural unity based on Christian faith.

In fact, the Saint’s work and particularly his *Rule* were to prove heralds of an authentic spiritual leaven which, in the course of the centuries, far beyond the boundaries of his country and time, changed the face of Europe following the fall of the political unity created by the Roman Empire, inspiring a new spiritual and cultural unity, that of the Christian faith shared by the peoples of the Continent. This is how the reality we call “Europe” came into being.

By proclaiming St Benedict Patron of Europe on 24 October 1964, Paul VI intended to recognize the marvellous work the Saint achieved with his *Rule* for the formation of the civilization and culture of Europe. Having recently emerged from a century that was deeply wounded by two World Wars and the collapse of the great ideologies, now revealed as tragic utopias, Europe today is in search of its own identity. Of course, in order to create new and lasting unity, political, economic and juridical instruments are important, but it is also necessary to awaken an ethical and spiritual renewal which draws on the Christian roots of the Continent, otherwise a new Europe cannot be built. *Catholic World News* 9-4-08

Bro Thomas thought that this period of Emperor and Bishop of Rome working together provided a model for what is to come.

Bro. John Thomas considered that this Justinian—Bishop of Rome and ruler in the 6th century is expressive of what will occur in the future: a civil/military leader in the East and the spiritual head in the West with centres at Constantinople and Rome. This future will be the brief revival of the original Christian Roman Empire, and it is appropriate that its final glory should be on the same pattern. G. Pearce *Milestones* 1989

In September Benedict XVI visited France and came back to the theme of the monasteries being at the centre of European life.

“From the perspective of monasticism’s historical influence, we could say that, amid the great cultural upheaval resulting from **migrations of peoples** and the emerging new political configurations, **the monasteries were the places where the treasures of ancient culture survived**. And where at the same time a new culture slowly took shape out of the old” *Zenit* 12-9-08 [My emphasis.]

This was given on the second anniversary of his Regensburg speech on the Muslims (see *Milestones 2006* p84/5), so one can see the significance of his carefully chosen words. The **migration of [Muslim] peoples** is exactly what is worrying the Continental Europeans. How can Europe counter them? By strengthening the strong bulwark of the Roman Catholic Church, who held back the advance of the Ottoman Empire in the past, and who will do so again! Benedict seems to be the only leader capable of standing up to the Muslims; the politicians are too frightened to do so!

Catholic-Orthodox relations

With the death of the Russian patriarch Alexy II in December, we will have to wait to see who is elected as his successor at the end of January. We would expect the new leader to increase the dialogue between Rome and Moscow. Alexy, born to German parents seemed to have a much better relationship with Benedict, a fellow German, than with the Polish John Paul II. Eventually the two branches have to combine at the time of Nebuchadnezzar’s image standing up. Here are a few headlines emphasising the remarkable ecumenical progress in recent times.

Chances of Pope-Patriarch Meeting Gain 10-1-08

Orthodox and Catholic Churches Move Toward “Strategic Alliance
23-4-08

Patriarch-Pope talks possible after rifts overcome - Moscow Patriarchate 24-9-08

Pope to Patriarch: We Need Unity Faster Benedict XVI Tells Alexy II the Times Urge Haste 6-10-08

Meeting between Alexy and Pope Benedict XVI was planned late next year. 5-12-08

Under Alexy, the Russian Church flourished, with leaders—Putin and Medvedev among them—happy to be associated with the Russian Church. What Rome is hoping for is the day when Roman Catholicism will be as influential in Europe as Russian Orthodox is in Russia.

Having looked at Russia, Germany and the Vatican, we want to see the remarkable way in which the companion nations of Gog are working together, a sure sign that we must be getting ever closer to the time of the end!

Chapter 8:

GOG'S COMPANIONS "ASSEMBLING UNTO HER"

Our chapter heading is taken from Ezekiel 38:7. How often we must have read this verse, yet I have to confess there was an aspect here that had not struck me until recently.

Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company **that are assembled unto thee**, and be thou a guard unto them.

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

Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a **guard to us**, and labour on the day.

So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the **men of the guard** which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing. *Nehemiah 4:22-23*

So let's tease out just what this verse is telling us and see how it is being fulfilled before our eyes!

Assembling Gog's companions—Ezekiel 38

The verse commences with a command to Gog to ensure that he is ready for this battle. Before he can extend his guarding to others, it is necessary that he is prepared. We compare the first part of the verse in some different translations.

Be ready and keep ready, ESV

Prepare yourself and be ready, NKJV

Be prepared, and prepare for thyself, The Interlinear Bible (TIB)

The second part of the verse tells Gog that he has to prepare his companions. Again comparing different versions.

you and all your hosts that are assembled about you ESV

you and all your companies that are gathered about you: NKJV

you and all your assembly that are assembled to you, TIB

This is telling us that these nations have come to Gog, rather than being forced into submission by Gog. Gog doubtless will take some countries by force, but the picture here is of nations who have sought to be with Gog and for whom he has made preparation, so that they can be with him. The word for *assembly* is an interesting one. It is usually used in the context of Israel

assembling at the tabernacle or temple for the purpose of worship, i.e. a religious assembly, but it is also used of assembling for war. According to my *Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Lexicon* this is the usage here—for war. This is the sense of an earlier passage in Ezekiel 16:40. However from other passages (e.g. Isa 34:8; Joel 3:9) we learn that this assembly of nations will indeed be a religious war—against God's nation of Israel.

Finally, Gog's role is that of a guard for those who have assembled to him.

and be a guard for them. ESV & NKJV

and be to them for a guard. TIB

It is true the word can have the sense of a jail guard, in which case these companions would be prisoners, but *Gesenius* distinguishes the passages for the two meanings, and the Ezekiel and Nehemiah passages are listed under guard, rather than place of confinement, gaol, and prison. We can see from the various translations that none of them say *a guard over them*. Gog is a guard *unto* or *for* them, which is quite different.

So it has been remarkable to see so many nations turning to Russia for their military protection, countries moreover who are to be expected to be in the Gog camp. More than that; these nine countries which are listed can be traced to locations covering a wide area, yet we find, 2,600 years later, that there are strong trading links between them! If we didn't appreciate the incredible foreknowledge of God we would find this truly astounding. How could Ezekiel present us with a list of nations, many of which had little to do with each other, until we come to the eve of the fulfilment of this prophecy when we find them working together? This is the inspired word of the Living God!

Let's briefly trace the nations listed as the companions of Gog, and then we can see how they are seeking to come under Gog's protection, and how they are increasingly being linked by trade. For a fuller tracing of Gog and his companions the reader is recommended to study the relevant section in Bro John Allfree's book on *Ezekiel* published by the CSSS. An important point to note about all these countries is that they descended from Noah's son Japheth, except for two who descended from another of Noah's sons, Ham. The significant thing is that none of them are descended from Shem, from whom came not only the Jews but the true Arab nations—descendants of Abraham through Hagar and Keturah. This is important for it tells us that, troublesome though the Arab countries are to Israel, they are not the ones who confederate to eliminate Israel. Some of them will probably join in as in times past, but their role is apparently secondary.

Gog

In Ezekiel's time, Gog of the land of Magog referred to the Scythian power to the far north of Israel. Magog was then in the region beyond the Black Sea—today's Ukraine and Southern Russia. One of the Assyrian cylinders refers to Gog under the name of Gagi. According to the *Companion Bible*

the Arabic version reads *Agag*. This gives an interesting linkage with an earlier prophecy at the time of the Exodus, when Balaam sees the latter end of Israel in his last prophecy.

Balaam's prophecy concerning Agag

He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. Num 24:7

Israel's king is to be higher than Agag! Agag is the title of the leader of the Amalekites, descendants of the grandson of Esau (Gen 36:12). Amalek attacked Israel as they journeyed to Sinai, seeking to destroy them, but they were defeated by Joshua. The incident recorded in Exodus 17 of Moses being supported by Aaron and Hur, to keep his hands raised, while Joshua did battle, is full of significance. With Moses the prophet, Aaron the priest and Hur the prince¹ we have a depiction of the greater defeat of the latter-day Amalek at the hands of Israel's Prophet, Priest and King, the greater Yahshua.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-LORD-Is-My-Banner;² for he said, "Because the LORD has sworn: the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." Exodus 17:14-16 NKJV

The AV mg reads *Because the hand of Amalek is against the throne of Yahweh*. This sums up the age long conflict, so that Amalek is used as a type of the enemies of Israel. 1 Samuel 15 records Saul destroying the Amalekites and Samuel slaying their king Agag. Years later, Haman the Agagite tried to destroy Israel in the time of Esther, but he and his family fell at the hands of Mordecai.

We return to Balaam's prophecy, for having spoken of the day when Israel's King will be higher than Agag, he saw the day when: -

I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.

And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly.

Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city. Num 24:17-19

¹ 1 Chron 2:20,50 Ephratah = Bethlehem

² Hebrew YHWH Nissi

Balaam from his vantage point sees the Amalekites and foretells their ultimate doom!

And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever. Num 24:20

Balaam then speaks of the Kenites—Moses' father in law (Jud 1:16; 4:11)

And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his parable, and said, Strong is thy dwellingplace, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock.

Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted, until Asshur shall carry thee away captive. Num 24:21,22

The Assyrians came and took the 10 tribes captive, and among them may have been part of the Kenite tribe. We know that the Rechabite branch continued in the land until the time of Jeremiah (Jer 35) and the Babylonian captivity.

Balaam closes his series of prophecies with this final 7th one.

And he took up his parable, and said, Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!

And ships shall come from the coast of Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber, and he also shall perish for ever. Num 24:23,24

We assume that this is an amplification of the 5th prophecy and referring to the latter end of Amalek. We can best understand these words in the light of Daniel 11:40-45, that the ships are Agag's, Gog's, which come against Asshur—modern day Iraq and against Eber. Eber means *(the land) beyond or other side (the river)*. The word Hebrew comes from "*the descendant of Eber*" i.e. one who has crossed over from the other side the river. Eber was an ancestor of Abraham, the father of Jew and Arab. Eber died when Abram was about 18, so would have remained on the other side of the Euphrates. So just as the closing verses of Daniel 11 picture the Gogian forces flowing down into Egypt and then up into Israel, so Balaam saw trouble for Israel and the surrounding Arab nations. However, in the words Balaam uttered, he, Agag, Gog, *will perish for ever!*

Of the Land of Magog

It is Josephus that links Magog with the Scythians, whom we placed in the region of Ukraine in Ezekiel's day: -

Magog founded those that from him were named Magogites, but who are by the Greeks called Scythians. *Antiquities 1 vi 1*

Herodotus (around 430 BC) indicates that the Scythians who were originally found in central Asia migrated and that they could be found between the rivers Don and Danube. Siculus was a Greek historian who wrote a 40-volume history of the world around 60 BC and wrote of the



Scythians spreading to the shores of the Baltic. Some Jewish sources translate the word as Goths. So they point to the region today of Germany and Poland. So although Gog is prince of Rosh, Meschech and Tubal, names we associate with Russia, Moscow and Tobol, there is an interesting German connection which we will see at the end of this chapter.

Persia, Ethiopia, Libya, Gomer, Togarmah



We briefly identify these companion countries. Persia is the modern-day Iran. Ethiopia according to *Smith's Bible Dictionary* covers much of today's Sudan as our chart indicates. Libya is still with us. Gomer, we are told by Josephus, equates with those whom the Romans called Galatians, or Gauls. Caesar fought his Gallic Wars in the region of France. Togarmah we

looked at in chapter 6 and placed them in the Armenia/Georgia area.

Gog a guard unto his companions

Most of these countries have strong trading links binding them together, but what we now want to see is the remarkable way in which all these countries look to Russia as their guard. Let's see some of the headlines with brief comments that indicate they are turning to Russia to be their protector.

Libya. Military and nuclear cooperation *thedailystar.net* 29-11-08

... the Libyans were in talks to buy \$2 billion worth of anti-aircraft missiles (S-300 and Tor-M1 surface-to-air missile systems), fighter jets (SSu-30 and Mig-29 fighter jets), helicopters, tanks (T-90 battle tanks) and a diesel submarine. The Russian military presence will be a guarantee of non-aggression against Libya from the United States.

Libya has offered Russia the use of a port for her navy; Russia has at the moment turned the offer down, but the situation could well change. Libya was firmly in the Soviet orbit, then turned to the West, but now is turning to Russia to supply her military needs. Qadhafi perceives the Russians are more willing to be her protector than America.

Russia S-300 anti-air weapon already delivered to Iran *Debka* 24-12-08

Dan Goure, a senior Pentagon arms adviser on the system, described it as "one that surely scares every Western air force" which can track up to 100 targets at once and destroy aircraft at a range of 75 miles. Operational, it could dramatically affect any attack on Iran's nuclear facilities."

Iran is seeking to have Russia's protective missile shield to save her from an attack by Israel or America. She has also offered Russia monitoring facilities which would enhance Russia's protective role.

The deployment of a military base on the Island of Qeshm would allow Russia to monitor the United States' and NATO's activities in the Persian Gulf zone, Iraq and other Arab states. With the help of special equipment Russia could effectively monitor who is sailing toward this sea bottleneck, from where, and with what cargo on board to enter the World Ocean or to return. *Moscow Vremya Novostey* (Translated) 30-8-08



EU warms to Russian pan-European security pact idea *euractive.com* 19-11-08

"This is an agreement of strategic importance. We feel that it is strategic for the European Union and I think Russia thinks likewise," said Commission President José Manuel Barroso.

We looked in the earlier chapter at Europe's drive, led by Germany, to push America out of Europe and rely on Russia to be their defender.

Some incredible links between Gog's companions

It is equally wonderful to see the links between the different companions. Some are well known like those between France and Germany, others are less well known; we briefly look at two of these links.

Iran and Ethiopia/Sudan. During 2008 they signed a far-reaching defence agreement. The headline ran: **Iran-Sudan. Iran Acquires a Strategic Foothold in Africa.**

On March 8, Iran and Sudan signed a string of military cooperation pacts in Tehran that stretch Iran's military and intelligence presence in Sudan up to the borders of Chad.

For years Tehran has been gradually building up its military ties with Khartoum with an eye on its geopolitical assets: a long coast on the Red Sea, a main sea lane to the Persian Gulf, a Muslim nation located opposite Saudi Arabia and next door to Egypt; Sudan's command of oil resources and the White Nile, a major water source for an entire African region.

The two governments will establish a joint military committee to define forms of mutual defense collaboration based on the Iranian-Syrian pact. Each undertakes to come to the other's aid in the event of foreign aggression.

Germany and Iran. Germany has long resisted America's calls for sanctions against Iran, because she is the biggest European supplier to Iran; her exports were up 50% in the first half of the year. Much of their exports are in the form of heavy machinery, useful for Iran's pursuit of making nuclear weapons. On their part the Iranian government invests its savings in German banks.

So in a remarkable way we see Gog's companions are already cooperating together, preparing for the day when they will come together so that the image can stand upon her feet.

A possible German-Russian link

Gog is described as *of the Land of Magog*. There are several historical links between Russia and Germany. The Romanov family have been traced back to being descended from a German nobleman, who moved to Russia in the 14th century. The heir to the Romanov throne—there are several claimants, but the Russian Church recognises only one—is Georgy Romanov, the son of Prince Franz Wilhelm of Prussia, a German prince. He uses the titles of Tsarevich and Grand Duke of Russia and is also a Prince of Prussia with the style of Royal Highness. At the age of 15, he, his mother and grandmother moved to Russia from Spain. He studied law and economics at Oxford and took a job as assistant to the Vice President of the European Commissioner and the Commissioner for Transport and Energy. He then moved to Brussels where he was employed at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Atomic Energy and Security. In December he was appointed to the board of a Russian company, Norilsk Nickel, the world's biggest producer of nickel and palladium (a rare metal). He is advisor to the Director General and will be responsible for contesting the European Commission's classification of some nickel compounds as hazardous.



Georgy Romanov

When asked by reporters if he expected the monarchy in Russia to be restored some day, he replied, "I hope so."

We cannot tell whether Russia will reinstate the Tsar and he become the figure-head of Russia; but if he did he certainly would be of the land of Magog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal!

We now turn our attention to Israel.

Chapter 9:

ISRAEL'S TROUBLED YEAR—INCREASING HOSTILITY

So many prophecies of Israel in the latter-days speak of the troubling times they will experience, when their enemies are described as despising Israel. Yet there are to be other nations, including Arab nations, who will at this time be friends of Israel and protest at the coming invasion of Israel.

We will start this section by looking at some of the prophecies that speak of those who despise Israel—in the next chapter we shall see some prophecies concerning her friends.

Despisers of Israel—some prophecies

One of the descriptions that frequently occur in scripture is that Israel's enemies **despise** her. It started before Isaac was born: -

*And [Abram] went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was **despised** in her eyes. Gen 16:4*

An angel spoke to Hagar of her yet-to-be-born son on this wise: -

*And he will be a wild man; **his hand will be against every man**, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. Gen 16:12*

Or as the English Standard Version puts it: -

*He shall be a wild donkey of a man, **his hand against everyone** and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen. Gen 16:12 ESV*

When Ishmael was grown up he *mocked* Isaac (Gen 21:9). Later Ishmael's 12 sons spread over the Arabian Peninsula (Gen 25:12-18).

A generation later we have Esau and Jacob and we are told of the conflict foretold between them in Isaac's blessings on his son Esau.

And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above;

*And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt **serve thy brother**; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have **the dominion**, that thou shalt **break his yoke** from off thy neck. Gen 27:39,40*

There was a linkage between Esau and Ishmael, in that Esau married, as his third wife, Mahalath, Ishmael's daughter. (Gen 28:9) As we move through Israel's history we see the descendants of Ishmael and Esau, together with Keturah's extensive offspring, were constantly working to harm Israel. It was especially seen in the time of the Babylonian captivity, when they took

their opportunity to join Israel's enemies. Edom (Esau) is singled out in Obadiah.

*For thy **violence** against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.*

*In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even **thou wast as one of them.***
Oba 1:10

*Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is removed: all that honoured her **despise** her, because they have seen her nakedness: yea, she sigheth, and turneth backward.* Lam 1:8

In the days of the return from Babylon, the surrounding nations did their best to thwart Israel's rebuilding plans.

*But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us **to scorn**, and **despised** us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?* Neh 2:19

*Hear, O our God; for we are **despised**: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity:* Neh 4:4

There are several passages that highlight the Israeli-Palestinian relations of today.

*Before thy wickedness was discovered, as at the time of thy reproach of the daughters of **Syria**, and **all that are round about her**, the daughters of the **Philistines**, which **despise thee** round about.* Eze 16:57

*And there shall be no more **a pricking brier** unto the house of Israel, nor any **grieving thorn** of all that are round about them, that **despised them**; and they shall know that I am the Lord GOD.*

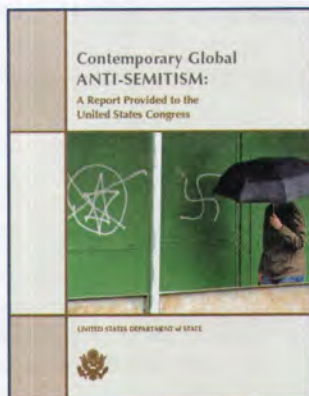
*And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that **despise them round about them**; and they shall know that I am the LORD their God.* Eze 28:24,26

Anti-Semitism a rising threat

Anti-Semitism is growing quite markedly across the globe. The US government issued a survey earlier this year. It opened with this statement:

Over the last decade, U.S. embassies and consulates have reported an upsurge in anti-Semitism. This same trend has been reported with concern by other governments, multilateral institutions, and world leaders.

Contemporary anti-Semitism manifests itself in overt and subtle ways, both in places where sizeable Jewish communities are located and where few Jews live. Anti-Semitic crimes range from acts of violence, including terrorist attacks against Jews, to the desecration and destruction of Jewish property such as synagogues and cemeteries. Anti-Semitic rhetoric, conspiracy theories, and other propaganda circulate widely and rapidly by satellite television, radio, and the Internet. Traditional forms of anti-Semitism persist and can be found across the globe. Classic anti-Semitic screeds, such as *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* and *Mein Kampf*, remain commonplace.



Jews continue to be accused of blood libel, dual loyalty, and undue influence on government policy and the media, and the symbols and images associated with age-old forms of anti-Semitism endure. ... Anti-Semitism has proven to be an adaptive phenomenon. New forms of anti-Semitism have evolved. ... The distinguishing feature of the new anti-Semitism is criticism of Zionism or Israeli policy that—whether intentionally or unintentionally—has the effect of promoting prejudice against all Jews by demonizing Israel and Israelis and attributing Israel's perceived faults to its Jewish character.

A *Pew* survey published in November and reported in the Israeli *A7 News* 5-11-08 reported: -

European Anti-Semitism Rising. According to a 2008 survey released this past week by the Pew Research Center, hatred of Jews is on the rise in Europe. Pew also noted a strong correlation between anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism.

Spain displayed both the highest level and the most pronounced increase in anti-Semitism, doubling since 2005 to 46% of adults surveyed.

36% of Poles and 34% of Russians expressed anti-Jewish sentiments, both figures representing increases since 2005. "Negative attitudes toward Jews are only slightly less common in Germany, where one-in-four express an unfavorable view, and in France, where 20% say they have an unfavorable opinion."

Jews blamed for financial crisis

One of the unintended consequences of the global financial crisis is that it gave free reign to blame being placed on the Jews. Doubtless there were Jews involved in some of the shady dealings that brought the banks to their knees, but it became a convenient scapegoat—America was blamed and the

Jews were blamed. The Madoff scandal which did involve a Jewish fund manager, who allegedly defrauded his mainly Jewish customers of \$50bn of their investments, rocked the Jewish world.

The full scope of the misdeeds to which Mr. Madoff has confessed in swindling individuals and charitable groups has yet to be calculated, and he is far from being convicted. But Jews all over the country are already sending up something of a communal cry over a cost they say goes beyond the financial to the theological and the personal.

Here is a Jew accused of cheating Jewish organizations trying to help other Jews, they say, and of betraying the trust of Jews and violating the basic tenets of Jewish law. A Jew, they say, who seemed to exemplify the worst anti-Semitic stereotypes of the thieving Jewish banker.

Many Jews say Mr. Madoff has brought shame on their people in addition to financial ruin and shaken the bonds of trust that bind Jewish communities. *New York Times* 24-12-08

Many Jews worry about the Madoff allegations providing fodder for extremist rants about Jews being greedy ... In fact the Anti-defamation League has reported an uptick in anti-Semitic material on the internet since the Madoff story broke. *Chinaview.cn* 25-12-08

The end of the six-month truce with Gaza

The so-called tahdiya, or calm, between Israel and Hamas who control the Gaza Strip came to an official end on the 19th December. The flow of rockets and mortars had been greatly reduced during most of the time, though firings escalated dramatically towards the end. On the 24th December southern Israel was subjected to a barrage of 60 rockets and mortars in one day! The Israeli cabinet met and agreed that this could not be tolerated and that troops would have to go in and take out the rocket factories, but no timetable was given as to when this action would be taken.

The six-month lull did bring a measure of normality to the inhabitants of Sderot and surrounding villages, but its ending brought back the terror that the 15 seconds warning sirens had on daily life. There is no doubt the greatest beneficiaries have been the Hamas terrorists. They have spent the time building better defences, building an extensive network of underground tunnels and bringing in a much larger arsenal of rockets with an increased range and accuracy. Major population areas such as Ashdod and Beersheba are now well within range and 10% of Israel's population are now vulnerable. The construction of rocket shelters lags far behind, especially in the now much enlarged vulnerable range. It was just a matter of time before Israel launched a major invasion of Gaza.

Israeli troops were on full alert in the north of the country following the discovery by Lebanon government troops on the 25th December, of eight Katyusha rockets primed to go off on the 26th into northern Israel. These rockets did immense damage in the Lebanon War of 2006.

Israeli warplanes pound Gaza

On December 27th, Israeli warplanes went into action against military targets in Gaza in an operation entitled “Cast Lead”. They had issued several warnings that Israel would not tolerate the continual launching of missiles against her civilian population. Over 200 rockets and mortars had been fired at Israel since the ending of the so-called truce. Hamas were caught completely off-guard as Israel launched a Sabbath attack targeting 50 Hamas targets within the space of a few minutes. With the deliberate siting of military bases in civilian areas there have been many civilian casualties in spite of Israel’s infinite care to target accurately. World reaction is mounting to stop Israel completing what she feels necessary to bring relief from the constant bombardment; but she is ignoring it. Unless she can stop Hamas firing rockets, she will have been weakened in the eyes of her enemies. It would be a rerun of Lebanon 2006. Some 10,000 Army reserves have been called up and tanks and soldiers are being stationed near the border in anticipation that a ground invasion will be necessary to deal with those rocket sites they can’t target from the air. The Hamas’ main weapon store is believed to be sited under one of the large hospitals! Short of giving a warning to clear the building and then bombing it, Israel has really no option other than a dangerous ground invasion. The flow of rockets from Gaza so far has hardly faltered, with Hamas using longer range ones for the first time.

In spite of some cynicism regarding Israel’s timing—Olmert wants to be remembered for something better than corruption charges, Livni and Barack need a boost in their ratings as elections draw closer and Bush also would like to achieve something on the Palestinian-Israeli situation before he steps down—Israel really had run out of options.

Operation “Cast Lead”

What is the significance of this codename? The battles against Hamas started at the end of Hanukkah, the Jewish festival celebrating their victory over Antiochus IV and the Seleucid Empire, when the Maccabees gained political independence for Judea. One of the Hanukkah songs has the verse:

My teacher bought a big dreidel for me, /Cast of solid lead, the finest known./In whose honor, for whose glory? /For Hanukkah alone.

Israeli dreidels are 4-sided spinning tops, inscribed on each face with the first Hebrew letters of the phrase *Nes Gadol Haya Poh*—“A great miracle happened here”.

The dreidel originally was manufactured by pouring molten lead into a mould. It had a double meaning, because that is how bullets are manufactured. *ajnl.com.au* 29-12-08

Gaza exposes Arab fault lines

Hamas have appealed to the Arab nations not to stand idly by, but after five days of fighting, at the year's end, Hezbollah had not opened up a northern front. Many Arab countries do not support Hamas and countries like Egypt and Jordan, whilst condemning the attacks, have little sympathy for Hamas in provoking this situation. They would welcome Israel's rooting out of Hamas so that Fatah can take back control. Egypt and Jordan have been the main targets for condemnation in their tacit support for what Israel is doing. Once again the divisions in the Arab world open up.

The essential divide is between, on the one hand, states aligned with the West—chief among them, Egypt and Saudi Arabia—and on the other an alliance led by Iran, of which Hamas forms a part. Israel's action in Gaza has led to unprecedented tensions between these rival blocs.

The prospect of Egypt's finding itself pilloried by pro-Iranian forces in the event of a clash between Israel and Hamas in Gaza was foreseen prior to the operation. Arab countries aligned with the west have in the past quietly backed Israel in its confrontations with Iranian proxy forces. This time, because of the close proximity and the Egyptian control of Rafah, no such ambiguity was possible.

Hamas would like to use the southern border in order to bring in supplies (and, tacitly, weaponry) in case of an extended Israeli operation in Gaza, including the involvement of ground forces. Such a capacity could be of strategic importance to Hamas in determining the outcome of the present battle. Despite stormy demonstrations in Cairo and elsewhere, the Mubarak regime in Egypt has held out against these demands and is likely—with US encouragement—to continue to do so.

Ultimately, the presence of an Iranian enclave between Egypt and Israel is a situation which neither country can accept. *Jerusalem Post* 31-12-08

Report indicates improvement in West Bank economy

In contrast to the Hamas-ruled Gaza, the situation in the "West Bank" where Mahmud Abbas and his Fatah party have power has been encouraging. Unlike Hamas, Fatah are willing to talk with Israel and much progress has been made in transforming the Palestinians' living standards.

A BICOM report 2-12-08 carried the above headline:

According to figures released by the Israeli Civil Administration, considerable economic progress has been made in the West Bank over the last year. The report shows a 24% average increase in daily wages earned by Palestinian residents of the West Bank. Unemployment has dropped by 3%, to a still high figure of 16%. There has been an increase of 35% in trade between Israel and the PA—186,840 trucks transported goods in 2008, compared to 137,698 in 2007. Tourism to the West Bank has also increased. There has been an 87% increase in the number of

tourists visiting Bethlehem (720,531 compared to 384,623) and a substantial 42% increase in tourists visiting Jericho (404,402 compared to 284,865) until October 2008. The total income from the olive harvest more than doubled when compared with the last year: 517.5 million shekels, compared to 200 million shekels in 2007.

Underlying these figures is the considerable improvement in security in the area. Military cooperation between the PA security forces and the IDF has very markedly improved over the last year. This is primarily related to the introduction of the Palestinian forces trained by US General Keith Deayton's team. The city of Jenin was chosen as a model for the new approach, which places most of the security responsibilities on the Palestinian forces. Over a year since the model began, the experiment is considered to have been a success. Better security has also enabled the removal of obstacles to freedom of movement in the West Bank: 113 roadblocks and earth mounds have been removed or opened in the last months. Additionally a greater number of passes allowing Israeli Arabs access to the West Bank have been issued. Last week, a trade fair in Jenin attested to the very considerable changes that have taken place.

This was followed by an article in the *Jerusalem Report* 8-12-08 under the headline **A West Bank Victory** it opened with the dramatic words: -

“Terror has been defeated in the West Bank.”

Israel has managed to register a clear victory against the menace; even though isolated bombings, shootings or stabbings may still occur, the backbones of the terrorist military organizations have been broken. This is a major achievement that must not be wasted.

It has taken six years—since Operation Defensive Shield in 2002—of systematic effort to reach this result, including nightly raids, into Palestinian towns and villages to arrest or kill terrorists, concentrated and focused coordination between all branches of the defense establishment, and above all, acquisition of accurate, real-time pinpointed intelligence. This achievement must be credited to the Shin Bet's ability to crack the terror networks by making them transparent and creating an almost intimate closeness to the top terrorist operatives.

The article described how successful the Jordanian trained Palestinian National Security Forces were in rooting out the terrorists with Israeli help.

The significance of these developments is in the emergence of a new security framework in the West Bank: The Palestinians are taking the direct struggle against Hamas and Islamic Jihad into their own hands, while Israel remains in the background—poised to act, but preferring to leave it to the Palestinians. That which could never have happened in the days of Yasser Arafat is happening: effective partnership against terror. But this partnership would never have developed if Israel had not

eradicated the terrorist menace first. And, of course, what motivates the Palestinian troops now is the realization that if they do not act forcefully now— Hamas is bound to ultimately take over the West Bank.

Harnessing Palestinian skills

Israel has a shortage of computer programmers; but has now found a source closer to home—the 3,000 Palestinian computer scientists who graduate every year from one of 11 Palestinian-run universities.

Cost-effective labor at a third of the cost of an Israeli engineer, working in the same time zone, a workforce with a good command of the English language and high productivity rates, make Palestinian programmers desirable, not just for Israelis, but any multinational company. *Israel* 21C 1-7-08

Bethlehem opens its doors to many visitors

Bethlehem has suffered greatly from falling visitor numbers. Many of the Christians living there have fled because of the persecution from their Muslim neighbours. However, due in part to the success of the security fence and the increasing effectiveness of Israel's rooting out of terrorism, trade has been booming in Bethlehem during the Christmas festivities.

Tens of thousands of worshippers travelled to Bethlehem for what were seemingly the largest and most tension-free Christmas celebrations in the city of Jesus' birth for a number of years. This year, security was handled by forces loyal to Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian Authority. No serious breaches of the peace were reported. Tourism virtually dried up when violence erupted in September 2000. Palestinian officials report that hotel bookings are up and that tourists are spending more room-nights in Bethlehem than in previous years. *MidEast Daily News* 25-12-08

The fall of Olmert—elections due in February

With increasing pressure building up from the corruption charges being brought against him, Prime Minister Olmert was finally forced to declare he would step down as the Kadima party leader and would hand over to who-ever his successor turned out to be, provided they could gain enough support from other parties to lead a coalition government. In the Kadima party elections on September 17th, Tzipi Livni emerged as the winner by a very small majority. On September 21st Olmert submitted his resignation to the Israeli President, who asked Tzipi Livni to form a government. She was unable to build enough support, and so elections have been called for February 10th. Under Israeli procedures, Olmert remains as a caretaker Prime Minister until a new government is elected.

At the year's end, opinion polls point to the possible defeat of the Kadima party with Netanyahu's Likud Party emerging as the main party. Benjamin Netanyahu was Prime Minister from 1996-1999 when he emphasised the "3

no(s)”: no withdrawal from the Golan Heights, no discussion of the case of Jerusalem, no negotiations under any preconditions. Having lost to Ehud Barak in the 1999 elections, he temporarily retired from politics, then joined Ariel Sharon’s government as Finance Minister from 2003-2005. Soon after Sharon left Likud to form his Kadima Party, Netanyahu became Likud Party leader.

His policies are quite different from Ariel Sharon, who still lingers in a coma, now three years since his stroke as he was examining West Bank maps and planning areas to hand to Palestinian control. His successor, Ehud Olmert, had similar plans of giving up most of the West Bank; he too is in the process of being removed.

The scriptures make it clear that Israel is to be found in the latter-days upon the mountains of Israel, which indicates that they retain some control over the backbone of the country. If Israel does lose control of this area, then she would have to take it back. If Netanyahu does take control and can build upon the success of the better conditions on the West Bank, and persuade the Arab nations to fulfil their promised financial support, then the Palestinians could enjoy a meaningful life under Israel’s watchful eye. Reports of Netanyahu’s campaign points to such a plan.

Netanyahu plans to demand that any Palestinian state be totally demilitarized, with Israeli air force jets maintaining the right to patrol over it. Defense analysts say this is vital to prevent a threatening Hamas-ruled Islamic state arising on Israel’s doorstep.

Netanyahu also reportedly wants to maintain the present Jordan Valley security buffer zone which runs along the border fence with Jordan and is regularly patrolled by army forces. Analysts say this latter position is also very important in that it would make it far more difficult for any future Palestinian state to be taken over by Hamas and then merge with Jordan after ousting the Hashemite regime currently ruling there.

Concerning Syria, Netanyahu made clear in December that he will halt the indirect talks while Assad continues to host Hamas leaders in Damascus. Syria wants to gain legal control over the northeast shoreline of the Sea of Galilee—the same demand that derailed American-brokered peace talks in early 2000.

David Dolan 22-12-08



The territory Syria wants to have!

Syria is demanding that Israel hands back the whole of the Golan, giving Syria access to the shores of the Galilee as this map indicates.

The success or failure of the situation in Gaza may well influence the election results.

Israel's security fence

This is constantly referred to by the media as a wall, parts of it are indeed a very high concrete wall, but these have only been erected where there has been sniper fire at cars and are built high enough to provide protection to vehicles. The vast majority of the security barrier is a barbed wire protected fence; when all is completed only about 4% will be concrete wall. So far only about 60% has been constructed and completion has been put off until 2010. Its cost has doubled from an estimated \$1bn to \$2.1bn.

The construction of the fence has seen a dramatic reduction in suicide attacks; even the Palestinians admit that it prevents them launching attacks. With the easing of tensions on the West Bank, the Israeli government does not seem in a hurry to complete it.

In February it was agreed to start the construction of a fence along parts of the Israel–Egypt border. This 200km border is open to terrorist infiltration. Construction is to take place at the Gaza end and the Eilat end—the two most vulnerable points. Construction is expected to last several years. (*Int. Christian Embassy Jerusalem* 6-2-08)

The Israeli-Palestinian Peace talks

The Annapolis peace talks held in November 2007, were supposed to have lead to a peace agreement by the end of this year. The talks were held between Israel and Abbas the Fatah leader, and many visits were made by Abbas to Olmert's Jerusalem apartment. No long-term results came—Olmert was dogged with corruption charges throughout the year, and eventually had to resign. President Bush was in the closing stages of his presidency, and little seemed to have been achieved. Of course Olmert's plan was to withdraw Jews from the West Bank in order that the Palestinians could have their own state. Even Jerusalem would have needed to be divided. Were the talks doomed to failure because they were on the wrong premise? It will be interesting to see how the outcome of the Gaza situation affects the mood of the West Bank Palestinians. We have looked at the steady improvements for a section of the Palestinians even without a Palestinian state.

At the same time Israel has been having secret talks with Syria, brokered by the Turkish Prime Minister. Again matters are on hold until the Israeli elections, but few in Israel would countenance the handing back of the Golan to their long-term Syrian enemy.

In chapter 11 we look at Israel's relations with the larger Middle East and see the possibilities of a time of peace as indicated in Ezekiel 38. But now we look at Israel's economy in her 60th birthday year.

Chapter 10:

ISRAEL 60 YEARS ON

Who would have thought that we would see the 60th birthday of the State of Israel, and their Messiah still not be back? The brotherhood was so excited when in May 1948 David Ben-Gurion declared that: -

WE ... HEREBY DECLARE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JEWISH STATE IN ERETZ-ISRAEL, TO BE KNOWN AS THE STATE OF ISRAEL. The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Yet so much has happened in these 60 years, which in hindsight we can see was necessary in the preparation of Israel for their Messiah. Israel had to possess Jerusalem—which takes us to 1967; the nations had to be pricking briers to Israel, the Palestinians in Gaza, the Arab nations divided into pro-Iranian or pro-Western camps. We still await a time of peace and prosperity, though we may perhaps only see the beginnings of that process before the Master's return to his household.

Who too would have thought that we would arrive at a situation where the highest concentration of the world's Jewish population would be found in Israel! According to Israeli government figures (2007) the estimated world Jewish population was 13,232,000—41% (5,478,000) living in Israel.

*We look briefly at two aspects of modern Israel. In the first section we look at the remarkable economic development of this tiny nation, making it a desirable **spoil and prey**. In the second section we look at the development of the religious settlers, and see the Hand of God in ensuring that there will be a remnant in Israel who can respond to the Elijah work of preaching to Israel before their final trial. This religious revival will spur the "Christian" nations in Gog's confederacy in a "holy war" against Israel.*

Israel at 60

Israel itself, far from a failure, has been an extraordinary success, a country that has gone in 60 years from being the poor, bankrupt, imperilled home of less than a million Jews to a militarily powerful, economically thriving, financially independent state of five-and-a-half million Jews who are among the world's richest and most technologically advanced peoples. Already at peace with some of their Arab

neighbours, they can hold out against the others until accepted by them as well. *National Post*, 6-5-08

Queen Elizabeth II congratulates Israel on 60th Anniversary

It gives me particular pleasure to send Your Excellency my congratulations on the celebration of your National Day, on the 60th anniversary of your independence. I extend my best wishes for the happiness and prosperity of the government and people of Israel in the coming year. *BICOM* 8-5-08



As part of Israel's 60th birthday celebrations, Shimon Peres, the Israeli President made his first State visit to Britain in November. During this visit the Queen knighted him, presenting him with the order of St Michael and St George. As a non-British citizen he becomes an honorary member of "Knight Grand Cross", which is bestowed in recognition of "important services in relation to Commonwealth or foreign nations".

Wikipedia

We are not concerned with the many ways this birthday was celebrated. We want to see her progress in becoming a desirable prey to the armies of Europe and Russia. What has Israel got that they want? What is today's equivalent of *cattle and goods* that form part of the *spoil and a prey* spoken of in Ezekiel 38:12? Although Israel in the early days was an agricultural nation, water shortages have meant that many crops are no longer grown. Instead, Israel has developed into a high-tech country, especially in the military fields. Even Russia wants to buy Israeli spy drones! Israel also was able to disable a sophisticated Russian radar system when she went to knock out an alleged nuclear plant in Syria in 2007. Russia would love to lay her hands on the equipment Israel has developed to do this!

In tough times Israel's high-tech sector thrives

Under the above headline this article detailed Israel's continuing success.

From processors to software, from innovations in online video to security systems, from cell phone technology to better ways to stay safe on the road, Israel is there—at the forefront, designing and producing the high-tech wizardry that has changed the world.

First, some stats: Over little more than a decade, Israel has grown into a high-tech powerhouse, with the technology boom fuelling Israel's amazing GDP growth of the past few years, according to the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor. Nearly three quarters of Israel's \$70 billion of exports last year were in the high-tech sector, ministry statistics indicate, and the country has one of the highest per-capita rates of patents filed. In its latest report, the Israel Venture Association (IVA) said that high-tech companies raised \$600 million during the third quarter of 2008, an eight-year quarterly high and up 45 percent from a

year earlier, and 29% more than the second quarter. The World Economic Forum in its 2007-2008 report called Israel one of the leading countries in the world in technological innovation, ranked first for availability of qualified engineers and total expenditure on R&D.

Strong economic growth

The high-tech boom, along with the solid fundamentals of Israel's economy, has helped the country sustain strong growth for decades, with GDP rising in most recent years. ... Israel has free trade agreements with the European Union, the United States, the European Free Trade Association, Turkey, Mexico, Canada, Jordan, and Egypt, and last year became the first non-Latin American country to sign a free trade agreement with Mercosur, the South American common market. According to Bank of Israel statistics, industrial exports grew by some 27% since the start of 2008 and high-tech exports climbed at an annualized rate of 18.2% over the past three months.

Israel, in other words, is a bright—very bright—spot on the high-tech world map. *Jerusalem Post* 1-12-08

Israeli Shekel to become globally convertible

As a high tech country Israel has not suffered from the global economic crisis to the same degree as most other countries, although their stock exchange has fallen by 50% over the year, which is more than the US or the UK exchanges, but not as great as say Russia! Their currency did fall against the US dollar, but ended the year virtually at the same level as 12 months ago. Because of Israel's strong growth, the Israeli shekel has been chosen to join a select band of the world's currencies.

The shekel's strength has resulted in it becoming one of 17 currencies traded in the global currency market, joining the 15 currencies currently traded, along with the Mexican peso.

Shekels will, in the next three months, become available in commercial banks in more than 80 countries. The development is expected to reduce exchange-rate risks faced by Israel's finance sector and improves Israel's standing with credit rating agencies. *A7 News* 17-2-08

Developing the Negev

This mainly desert region covers 60% of Israel's landmass, yet is home only to about 8% of her population. With increased pressure on the rest of Israel with rising land prices, the government's focus is on developing the Negev. It will need pioneers to build up an infrastructure and to develop farming methods that can cope with the climate.

As part of this drive to develop the region, the Israeli Defence Forces have moved their main Air Force base and training centre from Lod to the new Nevatim Israel Air Force base in the Negev. It is the biggest move in the IDF's history.

At the same time, infrastructure work is beginning on the new army city in the Negev, to be called Ir HaBahadim, or City of the Training Bases.

The new town is set to be built on an area of 1,065 dunams (263 acres, just over a square kilometer), and will house the IDF's Armaments School, Logistics Training School, Military Police, and more. Ir HaBahadim will also include an inn for visitors, a shopping mall, a country club and theaters, and is expected to provide a welcome economic boon for the sparsely-populated area—as well as boost for the IDF, technologically and manpower-wise. *A7 News* 25-8-08

But the real centerpiece of the improved Negev-based IAF complex is its new landing strip, a whopping 2.5 mile (over four kilometers) paved highway on which the largest transport aircraft can land. It will be the largest landing strip in the entire Middle East. *A7 News* 19-2-08

It will be home to some 20,000 soldiers.

The continuing search for oil

In spite of Israel's neighbours having oil and gas reserves under them, Israel has found very little to date. The search continues and there were two reports on new drillings being carried out. The first, in October, was of a consortium of Israel companies together with Nobel Energy of the US who were drilling in the Mediterranean for natural gas some 90 km west of Haifa. Some \$145m was being spent on the project. (*Reuters* 19-8-08) The second report was of permission for three major oil companies to drill for oil in the Judean Desert Nature Reserve. The companies believe that there could be as much as 6.5 million barrels of oil under the desert sands. That kind of reserve would be worth hundreds of millions of dollars. (*Int. Christian Embassy Jerusalem* 7-11-08)

Tourism up 36% in 2008

Israel's 60th birthday celebrations and the calmer conditions throughout the majority of Israel, boosted tourism so that for the first nine months of the year it was 36% up on the same period last year. This brings a much needed boost to the Israeli economy.

Israel and the Vatican

With the expected visit to Israel by the Pope as part of a Middle East tour, scheduled for May 2009, Israeli officials are planning to accelerate the talks on solving the long-standing dispute between the government and the Vatican over its rights and privileges regarding the payment of taxes. These have been dragging on for years, as Israel is understandably loath to grant concessions to a State that has proved no friend of Israel in the past, siding and working with the Arabs against Israel.

Russia plants her feet in Israel!

In October, Olmert on a visit to Moscow handed over to the Russians the deeds to the 9-acre compound in Jerusalem known as the Sergei Courtyard.

The Czar bought the land in 1860, and the hilltop became a complex serving Russian pilgrims to the Holy Land. The Russians are planning to invest heavily in upgrading the facilities.

At its heart is the Sergei Courtyard, a hidden urban gem containing exclusive lodgings for wealthy pilgrims, royalty and dignitaries. In 1964, Israel bought most of the neighborhood in exchange for the novel price of about \$700,000 in cash and \$500,000 worth of oranges. *Los Angeles Times* 14-10-08

Earlier was a report that Moscow had purchased land by the Dead Sea to build a resort. The Moscow municipality owns several spas, mainly on the Black Sea, now they have decided to have their own centre in Israel, which they hope to open by 2011. With visa-free travel to Israel coming into effect in December, Israel hopes to quadruple the current 100,000 visitors a year from Russia. The warm Eilat region is a popular winter destination for Russians, wishing to escape from their normally harsh winters.

The Moscow Municipality has announced the purchase of 10 acres of land in Ein Bokek, on the shore of the Dead Sea. Moscow explains the land, purchased from the State of Israel, will be used for a \$100-million resort complex. *A7 News* 1-9-08

We close the first part of this chapter with a couple of items which are interesting, but still speculative.

Turkey-Israel pipeline

A feasibility study is being undertaken to supply India with oil from Asia and the Caspian region via a pipeline from Ceyhan in Turkey, to Ashkelon in Israel. Here it would connect up to the existing pipeline which travels across Israel to Eilat, where the oil would be loaded onto tankers to take it to India. India is desperate for supplies which do not depend on Russia, hence her interest in a joint venture. Other reports have indicated that the proposal covers several pipelines being laid to Israel, to carry a fibre-optics communications link, natural gas, electricity and water from Turkey to Israel. It is hard to visualise Syria happily watching a pipeline being built down its coastline, and the pirate threat at the southern end of the Red Sea would have to be dealt with as far as shipping oil to India is concerned. Never-the-less, if some degree of stability could come to the region, it would provide Israel with a valuable source of income from transit rights, as well as a supply of badly needed water and energy.

The Red-Dead Canal

This has been mentioned in *Milestones* periodically since it was first mooted some 15 years ago in 1993. The project is still live and the money has now been found to fund the necessary feasibility study. Such a mixing of sea water with non-sea water has not been tried before. The Dead Sea is unique in that although the Jordan is fresh water, the Dead Sea has an extremely high concentration of salt, which give it its special properties.

With the water level falling some 3 metres every year, many resorts which originally were on the water's edge are now way inland! The falling water table is causing the ground to shrink, forming many dangerous sinkholes.

This scheme not only proposes topping up the water level with 5 million tonnes of water per day, but with the big difference in elevation, (1,380ft/420m) it provides the ability to generate electricity which could be used to desalinate water for the many hotels and chemical industries in the region. The 110 mile canal would provide leisure facilities along its path. The \$10m feasibility study will examine the effects of the water mixing and of constructing a canal in a region very dependent on subsurface aquifers which may be damaged by these works. If the scheme is approved it would cost in the region of \$3bn to construct.

God's solution is so much more elegant, though it involves a more dramatic solution and we know it will happen! Elevate Jerusalem, elevate the Dead Sea to make it above sea level, split the Mt of Olives to accommodate a new river flowing from Jerusalem to the no longer "Dead" Sea, now full of fish, reverse the Jordan and make a new connection to the Mediterranean. At the same time He causes rivers to flow in the deserts to support trees and vegetation. Instead of requiring billions of dollars and many years of construction, this will be achieved in the shortest of time!

Preparing for the Elijah work

We now turn to our second aspect. The "Christian" countries that predominately make up the Gogian confederacy also have another reason for coming against Israel—a direct challenge to the God of Israel. It is part of that millennia-long contest between the thinking of the flesh and the thinking of the spirit. Because Christianity is following a lie and not the truth, it misunderstands God's purpose with Israel. It prides itself as being the Kingdom of God upon the earth, which scriptures make clear is far from the case. They see no part for Israel in God's plan, except they convert Israel to their understanding of the gospel.

The truth as revealed in the scriptures is that both Israel and Christianity are astray, but it is Israel that is first going to turn to a correct understanding of who their Messiah is; then Christianity has to likewise open their eyes and turn from the lies that they have embraced as the truth and repent, or perish.

Sadly the prospects are not good. When Jesus does all the things that we know he will do, the churches will likely say "This is Anti-Christ and must be resisted". Hence the soreness of God's judgements as we saw in chapter 2. More details about the Anti-Christ can be found in this intriguing book available from the CSSS.

For Israel, the results are different. For many the



invasion of their land by the Gogian forces will be fatal, with a catastrophic annihilation last seen in WWII; a truly sad and frightening prospect. God is a God of mercy and compassion, however. He has been working to ensure that there will be a faithful remnant that will be refined by this process.

“Behold I send my messenger”

Malachi speaking of this work of refining Israel tells of the work of God’s messenger in preparing the way for the one coming to God’s temple.

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap:

And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness. Mal 3:1-3

As a result of this work the Levites are to be purged and purified, so that: -

Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years. Mal 3:4

Although elements of these verses are quoted in regard to the work of John the Baptist, it is interesting to see just how selective the quotations are, for John’s work was only a partial fulfilment of these words. It is clear that these last two chapters in Malachi apply in their completeness to the future work of Israel’s Messiah.

Malachi explains that the one to come to begin the process of bringing Israel back will be none other than Elijah. We considered this work in chapter 3 in *Milestones 2007*. What we want to see is the preparation taking place for this future work.

God said to Elijah when he had fled to Mt Horeb, that there was a remnant in Israel who had not turned to the false worship of Baal.

Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.1 Kgs 19:18

Elijah’s work now lay with working with this remnant. The phrase that is now used in relation to Elijah and Elisha’s work is, *the sons of the prophets*. (1Kgs 20:35; 2 Kgs 2:3,5,7,15; 4:38; 5:22; 6:1) We find them at Bethel, Jericho and Gilgal; they may well have been at other locations, but these are not mentioned by name. In the midst of the hard-heartedness of Israel, there were receptive hearts that were prepared to stand apart from their fellow countrymen and be educated by Elijah in the ways of God.

The religious settlers

Are there a similar 7,000 in Israel at this time who have not bowed the knee to the idols of today? This is the exciting thing. There are many groups of religious settlers found mainly "on the mountains of Israel" who are seeking to base their lives on a study of the Torah. The diligence with which they educate their children to at least be able to recite by heart the Torah puts us to shame. They look for Messiah to come. They see God's hand in establishing the nation of Israel again. They see from the hostility of their neighbours the fulfilment of the prophets. They fear a coming invasion. They do not recognise the Lord Jesus as the true Messiah and indeed scripture indicates that this would be the situation. In the words of bro John Thomas in *Elpis Israel*, they have returned in *unbelief of the Messiahship of Jesus, and of the truth as it is in him*. It is the work of their Messiah to show them the irrefutable signs of his Messiahship (Zech 12:10) and bring about a great change of heart. This time is prefigured by the scenes at Pentecost when multitudes repented and were baptised into the saving name of the Lord Jesus. Zechariah (12:11–13:1) speaks of their repentance and mourning for their long-standing blindness, and their baptism in the newly flowing river at Jerusalem.

The religious settlers are despised by their fellow secular Jews and tend to be found in small settlements. They are seen as eccentric and extremist. There are some fiery individuals among their numbers but in the main they desire only peace to be able to study God's word, within their God-given homeland. They endure the hardships of living in the settlements rather than in the towns and cities.

These religious settlers are surely the starting point for Elijah's work to prepare the nation against that coming *great and dreadful day of Yahweh*. (Mal 4:5) There will be a remnant who studies Torah in Israel (Mal 4:4), who, emerging from the *refining fire*, will cry out to their God in their hour of trial, and will be saved by the hand of their Saviour.

Israel Ze'ira, head of the Rosh Yehudi (Jewish Mindset) organization, said, "There is a great thirst for 'Torah,' in a big way. In our Rosh Yehudi centers, we see that new people keep coming to study Torah—and they generally ask, 'Where have you been hiding until now?'"

"What is needed now," Ze'ira said, "is for religious people to present, in a pleasant manner, the Torah as the great and sublime thing that it is, not in the small-minded way it is sometimes portrayed; the time for action has arrived." *A7News* 7-7-08

It is a wonderful sign that the hand of God is working amongst His People, to prepare them for the day of their greatest trials.

We now turn to see the way the nations are grouping—it is exciting to see them aligning as we have long expected!

Chapter 11:

THE MIDDLE EAST'S CHANGING ALLIANCES

We looked in earlier chapters at the Gogian confederacy, and we have seen the growing dependence of Gog's companions on Russia's military might for their defence. We now turn to those nations who are not part of that confederacy, who are friendly to Israel and oppose the coming invasion. Ezekiel 38:13 speaks of these nations: -

Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?

We add to this the picture described in Daniel 11 of the King of the South, who opposes the King of the North—the Gogian confederacy. We refer readers to chapter 6 of Milestones 2007 where we looked at the background to the King of the South. We will look now at the situation described in Ezekiel 38:13.

Sheba and Dedan

There were at least two separate sets of Shebas and Dedans in scripture. One pair were grandsons of Cush (Gen 10:7), the other grandsons of Abraham through Keturah (Gen 25:1-3) The Dedan from Cush is linked with the Persian Gulf area.

Dedan, the place where they resided, is believed to be identical with the *Daden* of the Middle Ages, now called *Bahrein*, in Arabia Deserts, an island on the western shores of the Persian Gulf. *Castell's Illustrated Bible Dict.*

This would fit with the description of the Dedan traders described in Ezekiel 27:15 who seemed to have traded with India where ebony and elephants were to be found.

The men of Dedan were thy merchants; many isles were the merchandise of thine hand: they brought thee for a present horns of ivory and ebony.

The Dedan of Abraham is associated with the area of southern Jordan, Arabia Petra near Edom and is spoken of as being in the region of Teman in Ezekiel 25:13. These could well be the ones that supplied Tyre with *precious clothes for chariots* (Ezek 27:20).

Sheba is a bit more difficult. The grandson of Cush is described by some as remaining close to Raamah his father in the northern Persian Gulf region. Others point to the traditional area associated with the Queen of Sheba, i.e. southern Arabia as being the area where the two Sheba's seem to have mingled.



This points to the Arabian Peninsula as the “Sheba and Dedan” region. They too appear to have been trading people.

We refer readers to *Milestones 2005* ch 14 for an exposition of the merchants of Tarshish and her young lions—a reference we believe to Britain the old lion and America, Australia and India being her young lions. The young lions are independent of their mother yet their historic bonds enable them to work together. The truly remarkable thing is their friendship with Israel today.

Returning to our quotation from Ezekiel 38:13 at the start of this chapter, it is clear that it is not **just** the merchants of Tarshish and the young lions who oppose the Gogian invasion, but Sheba and Dedan do too. This would indicate that in this region are Arab countries that have a changed attitude to Israel and do not seek her destruction! What has changed their minds? It is the growth of Iran—the Persia of Ezekiel 38:5, a non-Arab country that seeks to dominate the Muslim world. There are deep divisions between the Shiite Muslims of Iran and the Sunni Muslims of the other Arab countries. Countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and many of the Gulf States see that the biggest threat to them comes not from Israel, but from Iran. They see Iran working towards being a nuclear Muslim country, and perceive that Iran has regional ambitions, wanting to take control of the whole region and assert Shiite Muslim rules upon their neighbours.

It has been interesting how, step by step, the countries of the Arabian Peninsula—the Sheba-Dedan region—together with Egypt, are growing increasingly alarmed. They see Hamas and Hezbollah as extensions of Iran’s influence. At the year-end their protests against Israel’s “Cast Lead” operation have been very muted. They blame Hamas for provoking Israel, and secretly they would be very pleased to see Hamas’ power broken. Let’s trace this changed attitude to Israel during the year.

Persian Gulf states look to Israel to confront Iran

This is the headline to an article in *Israel Today* 13-2-08 that showed certain Arab nations appreciated the value of Israel as a bulwark against Iran.

A senior Kuwaiti official told Reuters on Tuesday that his nation and other Gulf States are operating under the assumption that Israel will not allow Iran to obtain nuclear weapons.

And if Iran does succeed in building an atomic bomb, Kuwait and neighboring countries will look to Israel to provide a nuclear umbrella to protect them from Iranian aggression, said Sami Alfaraj, a senior advisor to Kuwait’s prime minister.

Still, Alfaraaj said Kuwait and much of the rest of the Arab world would prefer for Israel to exercise the military option and prevent the Iranian regime from realizing its nuclear ambitions.

The disunited Arab summit

The Arab League met at the end of March; Syria was the host country. To the dismay of many Arab countries, Iran was invited, although she is not an Arab country. Many moderate Arabs



stayed away in protest or only sent low-level delegations to indicate their displeasure at Iran's presence. The map indicates the split in the Arab world and neatly illustrates what the Bible foretold so long ago. Countries associated with Gog—Libya, and Ethiopia (Sudan) and their neighbours attended. Those associated with the King of the South grouping mainly stayed away or sent low-level delegates. The fiery Libyan leader, Mu'ammar Al-Qadhafi (Col. Gaddaffi) addressed the assembly and upbraided them for their disunity.

"We are the enemies of one another, I'm sad to say. We all hate one another, we deceive one another, we gloat at the misfortune of one another, and we conspire against one another. Our intelligence agencies conspire against one another, instead of defending us against the enemy. We are the enemies of one another, and an Arab's enemy is another Arab's friend. If only we used such ferocity against the enemy.

"We meet in Syria, which is an Arab country. But the relations Syria has with Russia, Iran, or Turkey are a thousand times better than its relations with its Arab neighbors. The relations that Libya has with Italy are a thousand times better than its relations with its neighbors, Egypt and Tunisia. This is the situation of the Arabs." *Policy Watch* 27-3-08

A 23 state solution—22 members of the Arab League plus Israel

David Milliband, the UK Foreign Secretary, gave a speech in Abu Dhabi in November. The general heading was **Partnership in the Middle East, with the Middle East**. He set out the strong links that Britain had for the past 200 years with the region, now known as the UAE, United Arab Emirates. He gave praise for the incredible developments in the area. In dealing with the problems that they faced—the economy, extremist organisations such as Al Qaeda and the prospect of a nuclear Iran—his proposal

was for a 23 state solution—22 members of the Arab League plus Israel. The details are from the Foreign Office site *fco.gov.uk* 24-11-08.

And I am convinced that such a peace is our best if not our only hope. Because the Palestinian leadership needs political support from the Arab world in order to agree and implement a deal. Because it is only through an Arab brokered process that Palestinian reconciliation will be possible. Because Arab states can rein in the power of those groups which would seek to torpedo the process. And because the Palestinians simply do not have enough on their own to offer the Israelis to clinch a deal. The real, perhaps the only prize for Israel is a sense that its security in the region is guaranteed.

When I talk to Arab leaders, journalists or academics, they invariably raise their concerns about Iranian influence and activities. Iraqis complain about Iranian support for the Special Groups who have been responsible for much violence against other Iraqis as well as against multi-national forces. Afghans voice concerns about the assistance Tehran provides to the Taleban. Then there is its political, financial and military support for Hezbollah, as well as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad who are determined to frustrate efforts to achieve a comprehensive peace between Israel and Palestine. And the wholly unacceptable comments from Iran's President about Israel.

John F Kennedy once said that "World peace, like community peace, does not require that each man love his neighbour—it requires only that they live together with mutual tolerance, submitting their disputes to a just and peaceful settlement."

He spoke of the two very different visions of the Middle-East. One was a continuation of the present hatred-fuelled ideologies. The other would lead step-by-step to a peaceful Middle East.

Alternatively, the positive, pragmatic dynamics of the new Middle-East gain ground. The Arab world normalises relations with Israel as a Palestinian state emerges, and Iran accepts that it needs to work with others in the region and the international community to restore confidence in its intentions. New challenges are met through collective diplomacy, and the boundless energy of the Arab youth is channelled into business and technological innovation.

This is the world where Arab renewal follows your example, not just here in the Gulf, but across the Middle-East and North Africa. It is the world Britain is committed to working with you to create.

Falling oil prices are severely affecting the Gulf economies; this must increase the pressure to find some solution that brings peace and stability to the region. The situation that Bible students have long foreseen of a time of peace and prosperity in the region, may be at its dawn. It won't happen

overnight but the pressure is on to find an effective counter to the threats from Iran. The only strong power in the region is Israel!

Bahrain offers Middle East peace

The tiny Gulf Kingdom of Bahrain has proposed the establishment of a regional organization that all countries in the Middle East and North Africa, "with no exception," are invited to join to address "pressing challenges before them."

Stressing that "all Middle Eastern nations become members in such an organization" implies inviting Israel, with which most of the 22 members of the Arab League still do not have diplomatic relations and whose existence some still refuse to recognize.

Only Egypt, Jordan and Mauritania enjoy diplomatic relations with Israel. Some of the Gulf Cooperation Council states have engaged in commercial exchanges with the Jewish state but have stopped short of full diplomatic recognition. *UPI 17-12-08*

Israel's exports to Arab countries on the rise

Meanwhile Israel's exports to Arab countries continue to rise markedly. Israel's trade potential with the Arab world is an estimated \$1 billion.

Israel's direct exports to Arab countries continue to grow. In 2008, Israel's exports to Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco were 45% higher in the first quarter compared with the same time in 2007, the Export Institute reported.

Exports to Jordan, Israel's primary Arab trading partner, increased 85% last year. The Export Institute reports that exports to Jordan totaled \$102 million in the first quarter of 2008, 62% more than in the corresponding quarter, in the form of metals, jewelry, processed wood products, textiles, and plastics from 1,050 companies, the largest number of companies exporting to an Arab country.

Exports to Egypt increased by 10% to \$140 million in 2007. Exports to Morocco totaled \$3 million in the first quarter and exports to Tunisia totaled \$1.8 million. *Israel Today 29-5-08*

We see from these items that the Arab mood is shifting. As far as the ordinary people are concerned they remain largely against Israel. Their leaders look at events through different eyes. They are concerned with maintaining their position. We saw in chapter 9 that many Arab nations were quite pleased at the punishment that Israel was meting out in Gaza on Iran's proxy army Hamas!

America a shield to the Gulf nations

In a fascinating way, just as Gog's companions are seeking to Russia for protection, so we find the Gulf nations are turning to America, Britain and India to defend them! Here are some headlines and brief extracts.

Saudis welcomes U.S. tech to secure oil sites

Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef Bin Abdul Aziz said the United States, would provide the most advanced technology to help protect the Saudi oil sector. Nayef stressed that Saudi personnel would defend the energy facilities. *GeostrategyDirect.com* 4-6-08

U.S. THAAD system to shield UAE from Iran missiles by 2010

Officials said the THAAD project in the UAE, expected to cost \$7 billion, would begin in either late 2009 or 2010.

"The building and deploying of advanced anti-missile systems is meant to protect the nation's most valuable assets and to maintain security and stability." *GeostrategyDirect.com* 24-12-08

Saudis, India fostering close military ties

India and Saudi Arabia have intensified defense cooperation. Officials said India and Saudi Arabia have begun to implement plans for defense and military cooperation. They said the two militaries were exchanging officers, holding consultations and planning exercises.

Over the last year, Saudi Arabia has been sending military officers for training in India. India plans to send its first officers to Saudi Arabia in 2009. *GeostrategyDirect.com* 28-5-08

India concludes second strategic pact with a Gulf state

Qatar has agreed to sign a defense cooperation accord with India. Gulf sources said Doha intends to sign a so-called strategic partnership with India. The sources said the partnership would include joint projects in defense and security.

This would mark the second Indian strategic agreement with a Gulf Cooperation Council state. In 2005, India and Oman signed an agreement that led to joint defense and security projects.

"The agreement will make India a leading player in Qatar's security," a Gulf source said. *GeostrategyDirect.com* 12-11-08

NATO to network with Gulf states in security shield against Iran

The Western alliance was offering military cooperation and intelligence sharing with the Gulf States.

Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE have joined the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, designed to enhance NATO cooperation with the GCC. NATO expected Oman and Saudi Arabia to join the initiative over the next year.

"We are hopeful that Saudi Arabia and Oman will also join the ICI in the not too distant future." *GeostrategyDirect.com* 8-2-08

NATO concludes first naval exercise with the Persian Gulf states

NATO has ended a six-day naval exercise with the Kuwait Navy in an effort to enhance regional cooperation

Officials said the exercise, its first naval exercise with the Persian Gulf states, included air defense, marine landing and anti-piracy operations.

Over the last year, Kuwait has enhanced cooperation with NATO. Officials said the NATO exercise helped enhance Kuwaiti naval and air force skills. They said Kuwait would also enhance an intelligence dialogue with NATO. *GeostrategyDirect.com* 12-11-08

Before Bush leaves, Iraq seeks \$6 billion in U.S. weapons systems

The Bush Administration has approved an Iraqi request for up to \$6bn in US weapons. Iraq has requested hundreds of main battle tanks, combat vehicles, training aircraft and patrol boats.

"This proposed sale will contribute to the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping to improve the security of a friendly country, it directly supports the Iraq government and serves the interests of the Iraqi people and the U.S."

Officials said several of the proposed sales would introduce advanced combat platforms that would bolster Iraq's counter-insurgency capability. *GeostrategyDirect.com* 24-12-08

Iraq stands on her feet again

It has taken many years and many lives, but one can see dramatic changes in Iraq as life begins to get back to normal, as a democratically elected government takes control of Iraq's destiny. There are still suicide bombings, but at a much lower level. British troops are being drawn down and the US is due to begin winding down as the Iraqi infrastructure takes over. As the above article shows, they still look to the US for weapons to defend themselves. A British company is helping with upgrading their oil facilities and looking for new reserves.

Yet we know that Persia of old ruled over the former Babylonian territory, which modern-day Iraq covers. We saw in Chapter 8, Balaam's prophecy of the work of the latter-day Agag—Gog—in coming against Asshur and Eber—today's Iraq and Israel. In order to be taken, it may be that Iraq remains in the pro-Western camp until that time.

The agreement [on troop withdrawals] encapsulates the basic reality in Iraq today: Iraq is an independent, sovereign state able to negotiate on an equal basis with the United States; Iraqis and Americans both want American troops to leave Iraq as quickly as possible and believe that a withdrawal will be feasible by 2011. Above all, the agreement highlights Iraq's desire to become a strategic partner with the U.S., an opportunity the Obama administration can seize. *New York Times* 23-11-08

We now turn to Britain and her strained relations with the EU.

Chapter 12:

BRITAIN BEING SHOWN THE DOOR

Britain joined the EEC—the forerunner of the EU in 1973, 35 years ago. Bible students had traditionally seen Britain's role as lying outside the Beast system and therefore not part of this European confederation. The faith of many was tried; had we got it wrong? Britain's relationship with her continental companions has certainly proved stormy. Britain's outlook is so different, having been moulded by a Protestant background rather than a Roman Catholic one. Britain has found herself increasingly enmeshed in the European bureaucracy, and has had to pay a heavy price for her membership. We have been seeing over recent years the pressure on Britain to leave the EU and chart her own path. We trace this in our last main chapter, and see the distinct possibility, after so many years of being shackled to a hostile Europe, of Britain finally making the break—or perhaps, as we shall see, she is moved aside!

EU membership cost to Britain will treble to more than £6bn

The cost of membership to Britain is escalating. Some countries are net contributors, i.e. they pay in more than they take out, and others are net beneficiaries. Britain is in the first group. Mrs Thatcher did win a rebate on Britain's contribution, but under Tony Blair, with Gordon Brown as his Chancellor, Britain agreed recently to a phasing out of this rebate, and the effect is beginning to bite!

In 2008/09, Britain's net contributions to the European budget are expected to be £2 billion. In 2010/11, the Treasury forecasts the price of EU membership will be £6.5 billion.

The payments could end up being even higher since the contributions are paid in euros and sterling has fallen to record lows against the single currency and continues to slide on currency markets.

The extra British payments were meant to be matched by cuts in the Common Agricultural Policy subsidies paid to farmers, which cost the average British family over £300 a year. But France is trying to renege on the agreement to review farm spending. *Daily Telegraph* 2-12-08

The government is having to slash health budgets to try to find the money to pay their EU contributions! The EU is so "riddled with corruption it is likely that the equivalent of Britain's entire net contribution to the EU is going into the pockets of fraudsters" the *Bruges Group* 20-11-08 (estimated).

In addition to the net payment to the EU coffers, one must add the indirect costs of the EU regulations, her fisheries policies and the Common Agricultural Policy, which all adds to membership costs. The *Bruges*

Group estimate the true cost for Britain is a staggering £55bn per year—some £900 per man, woman and child!

There is building up much resentment in Britain at the costly regulations that pour out like a torrent from Brussels. There is also mounting dissatisfaction at the way that the Lisbon Treaty was rammed through parliament without the promised referendum. Opinion polls indicated that a referendum on the acceptance of the Treaty would be decisively rejected. The Government curtailed any proper parliamentary debate and discussion on the matter. The following two quotations give a flavour of the “sell-out”.

Lords usher in EU treaty with 12-hour farce

By happy coincidence, two events last week again confirmed the Orwellian ingenuity of the EU's coup d'état over the constitution.

In 2005, with the EU's leaders in shock after their constitution had been rejected by French and Dutch voters, their response was “Plan D”, to win the support of the “citizens of Europe” through “democracy, dialogue and debate”. Then they had an even better idea: to rearrange the contents of the constitution under another name and railroad it through national parliaments without allowing the voters of Europe a further chance to reject it.

April Fool's Day brought the latest instalment of this cynical farce in Britain. Once the treaty had been rammed through the Commons, it was the turn of the Lords. The 12-hour debate, the longest of recent times, was wholly ignored by the press—and why should it have been otherwise? Since the noble lords could do nothing to alter the treaty's contents, it was in no sense a real debate. The two sides merely talked past each other, from lunchtime until midnight, without ever engaging on any point. *Sunday Telegraph* 6-4-08

Sold Out To Europe: Brown Makes Queen Sign Away Our Sovereignty

Under a cloak of secrecy, the Government finally ratified the Lisbon Treaty earlier this week and committed the country to a new deluge of European meddling.

In a sign of the Prime Minister's personal embarrassment over the betrayal, the historic step was only made public yesterday—24 hours after the covert ceremony had taken place. The instrument of ratification was signed by the Queen, who had no choice. Because Mr Brown had signed the treaty, she was constitutionally forced to follow suit.

The document was then flown in a diplomatic bag to Rome and delivered to the Italian Foreign Ministry at noon on Wednesday. *Express* 18-7-08

So, on the one hand we have the Labour Party pursuing an ever deepening commitment of the UK to the European dream of a United States of Europe, and on the other, the general population remaining unhappy with

the link to Europe. The Conservative Party is committed to **not** accepting the government's signing of the Treaty and has promised a referendum on the matter. Parliamentary elections have to be held by June 2010. The Conservative Party had pulled strongly ahead over dissatisfaction with Brown's handling of the British economy, but that gain was largely wiped out with his perceived confident handling of the financial crisis on the world stage.

Before we look at the suggestions coming from Europe over Britain's place in Europe, we need to look at Ireland's rejection of the Lisbon Treaty. The Treaty has to be ratified by all 27 EU countries before it can come into force. At the year-end the only 2 countries that had not signed up to it were Ireland and the Czech Republic. It had been hoped that this process would have been completed by the end of 2008 so it could come into force at the start of 2009. This of course will not be possible. In addition to the two countries who have not ratified the Treaty, a further two—Germany and Poland—have not yet deposited the necessary documents in Rome—a step which is also necessary.

Ireland. In the referendum held in June, the Irish rejected the Treaty 53.4% to 46.6%, a fairly decisive no vote. The EU machinery immediately went into action, indicating that they would have to vote again on the matter. Various concerns were addressed at the December EU leaders meeting and the Irish leader confirmed that a second referendum would be held sometime before October 2009. The EU is mounting a strong "education" campaign to persuade the Irish that the political integration promised in the Treaty is a "good thing". What the EU hates is being rejected; it will spend whatever is necessary to change the vote. We shall see!

Czech Republic. The President, Václav Klaus, opposes the Treaty and doesn't want to go any further until Ireland has ratified it, however should the Czech parliament pass it he is expected to sign it. He refuses to fly the EU flag on government buildings. He takes over the EU Presidency for the first 6 months of 2009, much to the worry of France and Germany!

Germany. Although it has been ratified, the documents have not been signed and sent to Rome, due to a legal challenge. It is awaiting the ruling from the German Constitutional Court, which is expected in 2009.

Poland. It is stalled awaiting the President's signature, which he is unwilling to do until the matter is sorted out with Ireland.

So the pressure is on Ireland. This headline said it all: -

Betrayal all around from the guardians of democracy

Last week the Brussels nomenklatura [ruling class] once again proved that it won't accept a no, this time from the electorate of Ireland. In June the Irish voters firmly said no to the European constitution, or rather the Lisbon treaty. The Irish were not bamboozled; they didn't want the EU constitution. But no is not acceptable.

So last week Brian Cowen, the Taoiseach, reassured European leaders that he wouldn't take no for an answer from his people. He has promised to make them vote again on the matter. Dick Roche, his European affairs minister, then opined: "From a constitutional point of view, there's no other choice than a second referendum."

What can he mean? The truth is the precise opposite. Such deliberate untruth, backing Mr Cowen's promise to ignore his people's vote, gives new vigour to the phrase barefaced effrontery. Against such wilful, shameless betrayal of the democratic process it is useless to protest; democracy is being undermined by democratically elected governments that don't understand a constitutional no and smile benignly, or self-importantly, at our helpless rage. *Sunday Times* 14-12-08

Germany, who gains the most by the passing of the Treaty, is seeking Vatican help to bring maximum pressure to bear on this 2nd referendum!

Pressure on the Vatican

But doubts persist as to whether the Irish will go along with the wishes of the EU core states and approve the Lisbon Treaty in the re-run referendum. Berlin is therefore intensifying its direct pressure. Most recently, the President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Poettering (German CDU) visited Dublin to seek—together with Irish parliamentarians—an approach for a retroactive correction of the Irish majority decision. Poettering also intervened at a conference of Irish Bishops. This is very significant because the Catholic Church enjoys wide influence in Ireland. "The EU is applying pressure on Irish Bishops" reported Radio Vatican with rare candor. The clergy is being asked to "support the EU Lisbon Treaty." Radio Vatican reported that the CDU politician is hoping that "if the treaty is put to the vote again in the Irish Republic, this time it could suffice for a 'Yes,' thanks to the support of the church." *German-Foreign-Policy.com* 8-12-08.

Hints that it's time for Britain to go

Here are headlines from 2006 and 2007, to indicate this is no new thing.

EU may have to move forward without Britain.

Luxembourg P.M. Jean-Claude Juncker 15-6-06

Stop moaning or leave the EU, Britain is told.

Elmar Brok, close ally of Angela Merkel 20-8-07

But for a completely honest view, straight from the "horse's mouth" came this speech by Giscard d'Estaing to the British people. The former French President and architect of the European Constitution—now the Lisbon Treaty—made it clear that the rest of the EU didn't want to be continually thwarted in their plans for political union. Here are some extracts from what he had to say at a conference organised by the *Daily Telegraph* and the think-tank *Global Vision* in London on September 8th. [My emphasis]

D'Estaing shows the way ahead for Britain

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

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

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

Let us be realistic: these two approaches, these two stances, **are incompatible**, yet, at the moment, they co-exist within the EU. To avoid the possibility that these tensions grow and end up in a crisis, we need to ask ourselves **what is the best way to go forward**.

Let us be clear: we are not talking here of a two-speed Europe, arbitrarily separating the good from the bad, the strong from the weak. After fifty years of living together, a two-speed Europe would provoke an acrimonious dislocation of the system. On the contrary, for a Europe already united, it is **a question of pursuing its integration, at a realistic pace**, respecting the identities and competences of member states. This approach, based on the democratic legitimacy of the double majority, would be open to all, but, just as for monetary union, include **opt-outs**.

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

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

What has added pressure for political integration is the financial crisis. The 15 countries which are in the euro zone (16 on Jan 1st 2009 when Slovakia joins) have come under great financial strain, as their ability to take recovery steps is very limited because they are all locked into a one-size-fits-all monetary system. In the good times they have coped—but the cracks are now being revealed. When the euro was proposed there were many who didn't rate its chances of surviving long because of this. The euro is now 10 years old. Germany was the chief architect behind it; she had to work hard to reap the benefits by modernising her industry and driving costs down, for which she is reaping the benefit, for she is not going into a recession carrying heavy debts. House prices have been very stable in Germany, only increasing around 10% since 1990; compared with a tripling of prices in the UK. And the norm is to rent property, so people have not been saddled with huge mortgages as has happened in the UK as property prices zoomed, and then tumbled, leaving them with property worth less than their mortgage. Germans have been strong on saving, rather than buy today and payback tomorrow on one's credit card.

So whilst the rest of the euro zone and Britain likewise, have been throwing huge sums of money at trying to stimulate their economies, Germany has been much more reserved. Angela Merkel has roused their wrath in not wanting to spend German money in bailing everyone else out! So whilst Gordon Brown earns kudos for his daring schemes, Germany pours scorn on what he has done. Britain was distinctly unimpressed with Germany's criticisms. The German *Spiegel* 11-12-08 carried the headline **EU Ire with Germany Spills into the Open**. Mr Brown had pointedly not invited Angela Merkel to a London mini-summit on the economy. The article went on to say how increasingly Germany was looking after her own interests rather than the EU as a whole. Germany is hoping to emerge quickly from the economic troubles; putting her in a stronger position to increase her leadership position in the EU. Indeed, a high-level economic report (Dec 09) said that the German economy with its unrivalled export industries, is likely to be one of the first to emerge from recession.

The creation of a new "west European republic" is inevitable

This was the headline to an interesting article about a speech given by Lord Tebbit, that showed the pressure the euro zone countries were under to politically integrate, as proposed under the Lisbon treaty and how that didn't fit with British interests. Lord Tebbit was a minister in Margaret Thatcher's government, and was giving this speech to mark the anniversary of Lady Thatcher's speech in 1988 when she told the College of Europe in Bruges: "We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in

Britain, only to see them reimposed at a European level, with a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels.”

From the *Daily Telegraph* 26-10-08 we summarise Lord Tebbit’s speech: -

“The differing responses of whether to guarantee all savers’ deposits in crisis-hit banks at the height of the crisis exposed a “fault” among the 15 countries who have adopted the euro.

“When the chips went down, the EMU states acted each in its own national interest regardless of their mutual obligation. In short the euro was exposed as a single currency with 15 Chancellors of the Exchequer and 15 Treasuries. In the long run there can only be one Chancellor, one Treasury, one tax system, one economic policy for any one currency—and that means one Government and one state.

“Some EU countries like Britain will want to stay out of the new super-state—but still be bound by agreements within a looser EU structure.

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

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

With the millstone of Britain and other sceptical members removed, the EU can then forge ahead with political integration, the intended goal from its inception, forming the latter-day Beast of Revelation. Will Britain leave voluntarily or will she be pushed? Probably a combination of the two. With increasing costs and the burden of regulations, and pressures from the financial crisis, Britain will see the wisdom of charting her own course, working with her young lions.

We may not still be here when this happens, this step could well occur in the time period between the call to Judgement and the invasion of Israel by Gog. Our Master can call us at any time!

Britain and America

With the election of Barack Obama, the path of the special relationship enters new territory. Mr Brown’s Labour Party should be much closer in its outlook to Obama’s Democratic Party than with Bush’s Republican Party. Who will be the first leader to visit him? Apparently the money is on Brown! Could we see a larger role for Britain with her diplomatic skills, honed over centuries, whilst America slips more into solving her own economic problems at home? This is how the angels can work to ensure that the players are in their positions on the world stage as has been foreordained! With Britain loosening her ties with Europe, then America and the Middle East and the young lion countries, become her stage, as in years gone by. There was an interesting comment made about Britain

recently paying several visits to the Middle East in connection with the peace talks as well as seeking financial support from the Gulf in these troubled times. The headline in the *MidEast News Daily* 17-11-08 ran: -

Is UK Filling American Gap

The United Kingdom's foreign minister, David Miliband, is in the Middle East for shuttle diplomacy worthy of a United States secretary of state. His visits to the West Bank, Israel, Syria and Lebanon have caused some in the region to suggest he is trying to push a British peace agenda for the Middle East while Washington's diplomatic efforts are on hold.

Britain is Israel's friend and ally in freedom

This was the *Daily Telegraph's* headline in July on the occasion of Gordon Brown's visit to Israel and the first British Prime Minister to address the Knesset. He has been a supporter of Israel, from an early age, when his father, a Church of Scotland minister led tours to Israel at least twice a year, bringing back the films he shot of this young country. One of his Middle East advisors is Sir Martin Gilbert, a British historian, Jewish, and the official biographer of Sir Winston Churchill, who was a great supporter of a Jewish homeland. He accompanied Brown on his visit.

It is fitting that the British PM will be welcomed as an honoured guest in the Jewish "House of Commons" and underscores the deep and warm connections between Israel and Britain". *Daily Telegraph* 18-7-08

Here are extracts from a remarkable speech Brown made to the Knesset.

And let me tell the people of Israel today: Britain is your true friend. A friend in difficult times as well as in good times; a friend who will stand beside you whenever your peace, your stability and your existence are under threat; a friend who shares an unbreakable partnership based on shared values of liberty, democracy and justice. And to those who mistakenly and outrageously call for the end of Israel let the message be: Britain will always stand firmly by Israel's side.

The best minds in our two countries are working together in academia and the arts, in sport and music, in science and technology—and Prime Minister Olmert and I were able to announce yesterday path-breaking academic and cultural partnerships. And I want to make clear that the British Government we will stand full-square against any boycotts of Israel or Israeli academics and their institutions. *BICOM* 21-7-08

We look for Britain to play an increasingly active role in Israel and the Middle East, strengthening this area against the threat of Iran.

As always we bring our review of the past year with a final exhortation. We must be so close to our Master's Return. True we say this every year, but we know that one year it really will be the case. Our prayer is that 2009 may indeed see the promised return of our Lord and Master.

Chapter 13:

LIVING WITH LESS

Mary ... sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word. But Martha was distracted with much serving ... "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part ..." Luke 10:39-42 (part) NKJV

We need to think carefully now about the future. What is *the one thing that is needed or necessary*? Surely it is, like Mary, to *hear his word*! Everyday life is distracting, but the remedy will be found in the Word of God.

We must keep in the forefront of our minds that we are travelling to quite a different destination from where we are presently at. Our hopes, our future, lies, God Willing, in an immortal life that will not be dependent on eating and drinking—though immortals will eat for pleasure and fellowship, not of necessity. Neither will we need beds for sleeping, nor mechanical means of transport nor money for daily living.

The Kingdom Age—with God's gracious gift of immortality—will be life in a very changed earth. In God's mercy, our task—after the initial work of subduing the whole earth to acknowledge that the Lord Jesus is the one true King—will be to shepherd the mortal population in the ways of God. It will be a wonderful world with man happily living in harmony with God's creation, acknowledging God as the provider of all things and happy to bless the God of Israel.

So knowing these things now, we should be concentrating on what is going to be needed. God needs minds filled with His Word to such a degree that it influences our actions and our outlook.

As we saw earlier, there is nothing of this life's possessions that will be required in that age—only our minds. All the rest will be provided by our Master. Our part is to prepare our hearts and minds. We could manage on a lot less materially and this may well be a way that our faith and spirituality is tested through this period of unprecedented economic troubles. Like Mary, we have to choose the *good part* and discard what hinders.

Above all we must watch and in the words that Jesus spake of his thief-like coming in Matthew 24:42-51, *be prepared*. We have also to soberly consider what the *evil servants* were doing, who thought their Master was delayed. Not only were they excessively *eating and drinking* but they were *smiting their fellowservants*. What a dreadful thing to do! There must be lessons, for Jesus was warning of ecclesial divisions, those with power and those without. Our ecclesial arranging brothers have a great responsibility to gently nurture the flock in these trying times.

The Master is at hand. *Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*

Keep up-to-date!

World events are fast moving and to supplement the yearly *Milestones* review, one can keep up-to-date on a quarterly or a weekly basis.

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Both the *Bible Magazine* and the *Milestones* websites carry details of known Prophecy Days around the world that uphold our traditional understanding of the fulfilment of prophecy.

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Don Pearce

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Milestones 2008

The two notable wars of 2008—the Russian invasion of Georgia and Israel's incursion into Gaza—may prove to be major turning points in Middle East affairs.

Europe and Russia look to a Security Pact in a long held desire of Germany and the Vatican for Europe to “breathe with both her lungs.”

The financial crisis has opened a deep dark hole, affecting the comfortable lives of millions.



Merkel and Medvedev at St Petersburg summit meeting

The fast pace of change heralds the nearness of Christ's return. People's hearts are failing them for fear

Do we face a time of testing, have we to learn to live with less?

The chapters have a mix of exposition of prophecies and their connection to the events of the year.

Milestones 2008 encourages us to sharpen our focus on what really matters—preparing for our Lord's return.

