



VIEW OF GALILEE

THE TITLE DEEDS OF PALESTINE

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This booklet was first issued as a Supplement to 'Church News' in August 1967 soon after the famous Israeli-Arab War. Further copies have been requested and it is now re-written in the light of further developments during the last two years.

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An article to provoke thought.

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THE HOLY LAND TOUR

1967

It was dark already on Wednesday evening, May 3rd 1967, and the lights on the runway at Gatwick Airport formed a fascinating pattern as the Caledonian Airways Britannia raced down the runway, bound for Amman in Jordan with over a hundred pilgrims on board. As the four powerful jet-prop engines lifted the airliner into the air it was thrilling to realise that the next time we set foot on mother earth we would be in Jordan and within a taxi drive of Jerusalem. The warm hospitality of the Scottish crew on board added greatly to the anticipation of an adventurous pilgrimage ahead. After a perfectly smooth eight-hour flight we touched down at Amman in brilliant sunshine at 5.25 a.m. Taxis conveyed the party through long tracks of desert to the River Jordan and on to the famous Jericho road to Jerusalem itself. A friendly Arab welcome awaited us there at the Park Lane Hotel. Here we were, in the Land of our Lord!

Park Lane Hotel is situated on Mount Scopus, just north of the old city. The hotel itself was within hailing distance of 'no-man's land' which separated Jordan from Israel. Little did we realise how soon Mount Scopus would become the scene of some of the fiercest fighting in the coming Israeli-Arab war - in less than three weeks time!

During our first day in Jerusalem we visited the Mount of Olives from which one

has breath-taking views of the old city of Jerusalem. How deeply our hearts were moved at that wonderful sight! While on the Mount we pondered on our Lord's weeping over the city, His ascension, and upon the promise of His return again to that very spot. "And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem on the east" (Zech.14).

Our tour took us to Samaria in the north, and later to Bethlehem in the south. An outstanding moment came when we stood at the tomb of Abraham and Sarah in one of the oldest cities in the world - Hebron. The Bible really came alive!

In Jerusalem again we visited the Temple area. In the great Mosque we peeped over the central balustrade and saw the rock of Mount Moriah where Abraham offered up his son Isaac. Just a few steps away is the famous El Aqsa Mosque.

On the Lord's Day, Mr. Mattar, the Warden of the Garden Tomb, permitted us to conduct morning service in the beautiful garden in front of the empty tomb, where our Lord was laid, with Golgotha only a matter of yards away. The Cross! The empty tomb! This was surely the most sacred spot in Jerusalem! How shocked we have been since to learn that dear brother Mattar was killed during the war. We pray for his devoted Christian wife. Later we visited Jericho and the Dead Sea. What strange waters these are in which to swim!

A week later we passed through the Mandelbaum Gate into Israel, where a very warm welcome awaited us. We were taken by

coach along the Plain of Sharon to Nazareth where we stayed at the beautiful Hotel Cupat Choum. From there we visited such places as Capernaum, the Mount of Beatitudes, Tiberias, Mount Tabor, Mount Carmel, Megiddo and, of course, the Sea of Galilee itself. Shall we ever forget that glorious moment at sea when the engines of our motor vessel were purposely stopped! In the quiet calm which followed, we heard the voice of one of our party reading the Bible account of the storm on Galilee long ago, the storm which was stilled at our Lord's word of command. The voice we heard ended with "... and there was a great calm." What a moment! This was the Galilee of our Lord. We felt we were inside the pages of the Bible.

Later in the week we heard a faint rumour that Egypt was threatening Israel with attack over some dispute, but the seriousness of the situation was kept from us. Abraham, our Guide, was deeply moved as he bid us 'good bye' on that last evening. We sang the Hebrew chorus he had taught us, 'Hevvenu shalom a-lei-chem' ('We bring you peace'). The next morning he accompanied us to Lod Airport and bid us 'Shalom'. We were blessed with another quiet flight and arrived safely in dear old England, grateful indeed for every privileged moment of rich blessing spent in the Land of our Lord. We praise the Lord for His bountiful goodness to us.

THE TITLE DEEDS OF PALESTINE

The present day spectacle of seeing the names of various Bible lands - Israel, Egypt, Sinai, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon - occupying the headlines of our national newspapers captures for many an atmosphere suggestive that "Bible days" are here again. The phenomenon of such an atmosphere may be more real than we suspect. Events in the Middle East, materialising only in our day and generation are, without question, preliminary fulfilments of Divine prophecies uttered hundreds of years ago, including those of our Lord. There is every reason to believe that these events are leading up to the fulfilment of the main body of Divine prophecy concerning, as it does, the judgment of the nations and the setting up of the Kingdom of God on earth under the personal reign of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that the Word of God is our only sure guide in these matters and the final Court of appeal and authority.

Our attention is constantly being switched from one trouble spot in the world to another. The time is arriving when the prophesied Middle East crises will outstrip all others for sheer drama and gravity. The great contention now emerging concerns the ultimate possession and control of this part of the world with its rich oil reserves and its natural landbridge between East and West. The main contending parties include the Arabs, the Israelis and Russia. China, however, should not be left out of this consideration. The present times are filled with the inter-play of vast forces manoeuvring for position from which to seize domination of the world or, as it is in other cases, to prevent such domination.

The ^{World} United Arab Republic, which is anything but united, is predominantly under Russian influence and obligation. Russia, using totalitarian methods to build up her technical knowledge and power, vies with both America and China for world mastery. America, straining with all her resources to "live up to the Russian Jones's," touches breaking point over Vietnam, the space race and her colour problem. She appears to be approaching her time of humiliation prior to her Divine cleansing and restoration. Britain, losing hold on her world position and influence, feels impotent. She is already deep in her humiliation, which we believe is preparatory to her own cleansing and restoration.

Meanwhile, the Israeli people, comparatively small but virile and patriotic, spare no energy in sacrificial service to build up the State socially and politically. 'Israel', buoyant and confident, is determined to establish herself permanently in the territory she now holds.

To all outward appearances, the present Middle East problem arises from the fact that Jewry has claimed land which has been occupied by Arabs for centuries. The Arabs consider that Palestine is essentially Arab land.

Nasser, an opportunist, took full advantage of the quarrel and aspired to the leadership of the Arab world. Military defeat at the time of his seizure of the Suez Canal failed to daunt him. He persuaded U Thant in 1967 to withdraw U.N. forces from Sinai overlooking the Straits of Tiran, whereupon he seized the Gulf of Aqaba with the intention of strangling Israel. What Nasser did not understand is that God Almighty has His Own plan and purpose for that part of the world, including Egypt.

The most dangerous and subtle situation, however, does not lie with such 'small fry' as Nasser. Prophetically Russia, along with her satellite nations, is pin-pointed as the ultimate aggressor (Ezek. 38 & 39). She has long coveted this strategic area on the Eastern Mediterranean and the prophets clearly foresaw her manipulating affairs to secure this prize. She is now dominating Egypt, Syria, and Libya, and has actually succeeded in getting her navy in considerable strength into the Mediterranean.

In view of the whole situation the question arises concerning the true heir to the land of Palestine. Who are the true legal heirs - the Jews, the Arabs, Russia, or some other people? Can we know? Indeed we can. There are in existence authoritative legal documents of great antiquity. These constitute the only legitimate Title Deeds of Palestine. These documents are accompanied by a solemn covenant, ratified by the oath of the Owner, and are expressly stated to be immutable for all time. Since this transaction was duly entered into and legally registered by God Himself, and since He has pledged His honour in regard to its fulfilment, it follows that any action taken regarding the Land must agree with, and in no way violate these Deeds. Any action contrary to these provisions is inevitably doomed.

THE LEGAL CASE

OWNERSHIP: This is set forth in a document dating back to 1491 B.C., and is to be found in the Bible. To quote: "The land shall not be sold for ever: FOR THE LAND IS MINE; for ye (Israel) are strangers and sojourners with Me" (Lev.25:23). Here God Almighty claims exclusive ownership. When the prophet Ezekiel predicts

the still future invasion of Palestine by a colossus from the north at the time of 'Armageddon', the land is still described by God as "MY land". "And thou (the invader from the north) shalt come up against My people of Israel as a cloud to cover the land: It shall be in the LATTER DAYS, and I will bring you up against MY land" (Ezek. 38:16).

A British Mandate in Palestine failed because, among other considerations, she sought, in her blindness, to appease both Arab and Jew. An Israeli management must inevitably run into judgment because of its attitude of unbelief towards the Son of the Owner, the Lord Jesus Christ the Messiah. An anti-god Russian occupation of the land can never succeed, nor is it even anticipated in Scripture. There can be no peace in the Middle East, therefore, until the legal Ownership of the Land is fully recognised and the legal requirements are observed. The problem is as simple as that.

THE BENEFICIARY is 'the whole House of Israel'. In a document dating back to 1918 B.C., we are informed about a solemn promise made by God to Abraham and his future generations: "Lift up now thine eyes and look ... northward and southward and eastward and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed FOR EVER" (Gen. 13:14). Shortly afterwards this verbal promise was given the form of a most solemn covenant between the parties and it was attended by an outward ceremony giving added weight to its solemnity. The covenant and its ceremony is described in Genesis 15. In it God promised: "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river Euphrates." It is described as 'an everlasting covenant' in Genesis 17. Moreover, it promised: "I will make thee exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee" (Gen.17:6).

The whole purpose of the Divine plan was to lay down a basis upon which the Lord God could work out His redemptive purpose to bring 'blessing to ALL the families of the earth', to restore all that man had lost in Eden, that is, to restore the lost Kingdom of God on Earth. That basis was laid down in this covenant which was made with a selected line of Abraham's descendants who were to become known as 'Israel'. The object was of such paramount importance it had to be absolutely unconditional (Gen.22:15-18 & Gen. 26: 1-5). In the full knowledge of the frailty of the human agency involved God was prepared to make the covenant so. Full provision for the outcome of that frailty was, of course, provided for in the redemption of Israel at Calvary (Lk. 1: 67-79).

A SECOND COVENANT

The materialisation of the Legal document necessitated the birth of a son but, we are told, "Sarah, Abraham's wife bare him no children." It would seem that in order to 'help God out of the difficulty', Abraham and Sarah decided that he should marry their handmaid, Hagar. Later, when Hagar realised that she had conceived, she despised her mistress, this resulted in her having to leave the homestead. God, however, said to Hagar, "I will multiply thy seed exceedingly ... Behold thou art with child and shall bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael ... He shall be a wild man: his hand shall be against every man and every man's hand against him, and HE SHALL DWELL IN THE PRESENCE OF ALL HIS BRETHREN" (Gen. 16:10-12). This is not the original covenant. It is another or second covenant and is concerned with Ishmael and his descendants.

Now God had promised that Sarah should

have a son, but as time went on it became humanly impossible for Sarah to become a mother. Abraham was approaching one hundred years old and Sarah ninety (Gen.17:17). Abraham craved that God would make the original covenant real in Ishmael. God graciously replied: "Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish My covenant with HIM for an everlasting covenant, and with HIS seed after him. And as for Ishmael (second covenant), I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation" (Gen.17:19-20).

From this quotation we notice a point on Divine selection. Isaac was born eventually and his line was chosen to be the inheritor of the covenant proper in preference to Ishmael. A second covenant is confirmed to Ishmael and to his descendants, the Arabs. They were to become a great people with their own peculiar national characteristics. According to the promise made to Agar the Arabs have a covenant right to domicile "in the presence of all his brethren" i.e., Isaac's people in the land.

Hagar was an Egyptian woman. Ishmael, therefore, was half Hebrew and half Egyptian. Hagar gave Ishmael an Egyptian wife (Gen. 21:21). It follows, therefore, that true Arabs are one quarter Hebrew and three quarters Egyptian. From the days of Isaac and Ishmael there has been strife between the two peoples throughout their generations. Psalm 83, which is prophetic of the struggle against Israel 'in the last days' names the Ishmaelites among their final enemies.

TRACING THE FAMILY TREE

Isaac, the first generation from Abraham,

was the bearer of the covenant-birthright. He married Rebekah. Twin sons were born of this marriage - Esau, who was born first and then Jacob. Of this second generation, Esau despised his birthright and God selected Jacob, whom he later renamed Israel. The birthright covenant, concerned with the Divine purpose and the Land, was confirmed by God to Jacob. At the same time God promised him, "A nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins, and the land, which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, to thee will I give it and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. 35: 9-11).

Esau was therefore counted out of the covenant. He and his descendants became known as Edom (Gen. 36:1), and these also became the traditional enemies of Israel.

Now, Jacob had twelve sons. These sons were the third generation from Abraham and they became the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel.

We now come to one of the most important legal documents concerning Palestine. It is to be found in the first Book of Chronicles, 5: 1-2. Here is a startling document and we must be prepared for some surprises. It is itself, of course, an integral part of the Word of God. Its declarations are binding and final. It leaves no room for private interpretation and is confirmed in the New Testament (Rom.15:8). We quote it in full. The vital words form a parenthesis:

"Now the sons of Rueben, for firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the SONS OF JOSEPH, the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. For JUDAH prevailed above

his brethren, and of him came the CHIEF RULER; but the birthright was JOSEPH'S)".

The situation that comes to light here is governed by the facts detailed:

1. Reuben, the firstborn of Israel, is ruled out concerning the covenant-birthright.
2. The birthright was actually passed on to the two sons of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh), Joseph himself being the eleventh son of Jacob-Israel.
3. The birthright was not to fall to Judah, his fourth son. Judah was to produce 'the Chief Ruler', that is, the Royal House of David and its line of kings, and that House would bring forth THE MAN, Christ Jesus, the Messiah, Redeemer of Israel and Saviour of the world.
4. That the birthright was given to Joseph and his sons is repeated for special emphasis. It was not given to Judah.

The act of Divine selectivity goes even further. As Jacob drew near to the end of his earthly pilgrimage he called for his twelve sons. Under the prophetic impulsion of the Holy Spirit he blessed them. Before doing so he called for the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, and he did an astonishing thing. He ADOPTED them as his own sons (Gen. 48: 5-6). By doing so he gave Joseph a double portion of his inheritance above his brethren. Again, to the astonishment of Joseph, his father set the younger son, Ephraim, before the elder, Manasseh, proclaiming, "He (Manasseh) also shall become A PEOPLE, and he also shall be GREAT: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become A MULTITUDE OF NATIONS."

Since the prophetic blessings of the sons of Israel are to be fulfilled 'in the last days' (Gen. 49:1), should we not expect to find this pattern working out in our day?

Since Ephraim was the leading tribe among the ten, the ten tribes of Israel, including Manasseh are often referred to as 'Ephraim'.

It should be clear to the observant mind that only part of the statements set out in these legal documents refer to Judah. The remaining statements refer to Ephraim. Who represents Judah today? Who represents Ephraim - where is there 'a multitude of nations' and 'a great people'?

The division of the twelve tribes into the Southern House or Kingdom of JUDAH, comprising the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and the Northern House or Kingdom of ISRAEL, comprising of the ten tribes under the leadership of Ephraim, is both historical and Biblical. The priestly tribe of Levi was scattered amongst all the twelve tribes. Both Houses went into captivity because of their sins - Israel to Assyria in 721 B.C., and Judah to Babylon in 604 B.C. The return to Jerusalem of 49,697 from the Judah captivity in Babylon is recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 2: 65-65). The families described there are those of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin with a sprinkling of Levi. What happened to the Ephraim tribes? Bible history has nothing more to say about them. It will be found, however, that their story is continued via Bible prophecy.

We were sufficiently curious in 1957 to write to the Chief Rabbi concerning the origin of the Jewish people relative to the twelve tribes of Israel. We quote from his gracious reply: "Jews today, as far as is known, are the

descendants of the tribes which comprised the Kingdom of Judah. The re-union of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms has yet to take place, but it is the faith of Jews that it will be accomplished at the Redemption with the coming of Messiah."

That the re-union of the Northern and Southern Houses of Israel and Judah has yet to take place is Scriptural. The prophet Ezekiel foretells of a series of events (Ezek. 36 to 39) leading up to the 'Armageddon' scene, culminating with the invasion of Palestine by 'Gog of the land of Magog' (Russia and her confederate nations). The final re-union of Israel and Judah is included in these events (Ezek. 37:15-28), and is based essentially on a right relationship to the Lord Jesus. When the veil is torn aside true Jewry will at last recognise the Lord Jesus Christ, Whom they pierced (Zech. 12:10 & 13:6), as Messiah. Reconciliation of the whole twelve tribes is dependent upon reconciliation with Christ. Only then can the land be apportioned equally to ALL the twelve tribes in accordance with the Divine plan. This will be a very different arrangement from today's scene.

It will be seen from these observations that the question concerning the legal heir to the Title Deeds of Palestine is not an easy one. The matter is not solved by jumping to the conclusion that the Jews (of Judah) have exclusive right to the Land. Current popular ideas would never stand in a Court of Law when examined in the light of THESE Deeds which alone are valid. The Jews we know. They have their very important part to play in the inheritance, 'but the birth-right was Joseph's through to his son Ephraim. Where are Ephraim's descendants today?

THE TITLE DEEDS UNDER THE NEW TESTAMENT

St. Paul states that "Christ came to CONFIRM THE PROMISES made unto the fathers (which include the Title Deeds (Rom. 15:8). Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the House of His servant David; ... to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which He swore to our father Abraham". (Lk.1: 67-73). There is, of course, no repealing of the Abrahamic covenant in the New Testament.

The Jews of our Lord's day knew perfectly well that the title Deeds of the Land were legally with Ephraim of the ten tribes which they knew as 'the dispersed (diaspora) among the Gentiles' (Jn.7: 35). Yet they apparently hoped to qualify in the place of 'dispersed' Ephraim-Israel. Our Lord Jesus Christ showed that they had transgressed, "making the Word of God of none effect through your traditions, which ye have delivered: and many such things ye do" (Mk.7:13).

The Kingdom of God was deeply involved with Israel in the Land from the time when that Kingdom was set up in Israel at Mount Sinai. It was still so in the days of our Lord. The Jews were the custodians of that Kingdom in the absence of Ephraim-Israel. Now, however, because of their rejection of Christ, the true King of Israel, our Lord, acting on His Own royal prerogative, took the Kingdom from them. He decreed, "The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation (ethnos, a nation, not ecclesia a church) bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Mt. 21:43). What nation could that be? Whatever nation it may be it must be in keeping

with the unconditional covenant made with Abraham. Official Jewry confirmed their unbelief by crucifying Christ and rejecting the Holy Spirit's testimony at Pentecost. Judgment was inevitable. It came under Titus in A.D.70 when Jerusalem was sacked and Jewry was scattered over the world. Our Lord had warned, "They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Lk. 21:24). Where has the 'nation' and 'Kingdom' been meanwhile?

THE PRESENT SITUATION

'The times of the Gentiles' referred to by our Lord is shown to be a long period of seven prophetic times ($7 \times 360 = 2,520$ years). A dual purpose was to be served throughout:

1. Israel and Judah were to serve their long sentence of chastisement for their transgressions against the Divine Law. The only variation to this is concerned with the remnant of Judah which returned to Palestine and became known as Jews. The Divine purpose was to bring forth the Messiah Who should redeem Israel from their sin and work out salvation for 'all the families of the earth'. Once the Jews had rejected and crucified Him, they too were scattered abroad.

2. The Gentiles were given the opportunity to run the world according to their own forms of human government.

If Israel, with their glorious opportunity failed and suffered, how much greater will be the judgment on a godless system which has brought the world to its present state of chaos?

The seven prophetic times began in earnest when Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar and the people of Judah were banished to Babylon in 604 B.C. The treading down of Jerusalem continued unbroken for 2,520 years until the 9th of December 1917 A.D., when General Allenby and his British forces 'delivered' the city. The pattern of world history has changed completely from that time until now. The Balfour Declaration by Britain opened up the Land as 'a national home for Jews', while the Arabs were promised protection. Britain handed Palestine over to the League of Nations. It was handed back again to Britain as a Mandate from the League. Increasing immigration of Jews from Europe resulted in serious friction between the vigorous Jews and the more slowly moving Arabs. By 1948 Britain was driven out and the Israeli State came into being. War between Arabs and Jews intensified and culminated in the Arab-Israeli war in June 1967. The Israelis gained complete control of Jerusalem and the West Bank of Jordan as well as of the Sinai Peninsular. The gravity of the situation is still escalating.

The short transitional period between the end of the times of the Gentiles and the setting up of the Kingdom of God on earth is now well advanced. We are experiencing an intensive period of demolition of the old world order in preparation for the new.

Since 1917 the 'fig tree', emblem of the Jewish people, has been bursting into national leaf as our Lord said it would. "Behold the fig tree and all trees, when they now shoot forth ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Lk. 21:29).

That the Jews have flocked back to Palestine

irrespective of any belief in Jesus Christ the Messiah or are any more concerned with the requirements of the Title Deeds of the Land, is indicated by the fact that there is 'no fruit' on the 'fig tree' but 'leaves only' (Mt. 21:19). The present amazing situation demonstrates the detailed accuracy of the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy in our day and generation. It also indicates the end period of the Gentile age and the approaching golden age of the Kingdom of God.

Herein lies the reason for the unprecedented world upheaval which has characterised the years since the 1914-18 war. The disease of evil must come to its climax preparatory to the Divine operation for its removal. Jesus said, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be. And except those days be shortened, there should be no flesh saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (Mt.24: 22).

At the time of the crushing defeat of Egypt in 1967, the Israeli people emerged joyfully triumphant and buoyant. As time has proceeded she is becoming tense and apprehensive, facing as she now does a far more ominous situation. As a result of her overwhelming defeat, Egypt has been thrown completely into the embrace of the Russian Bear. For sinister motives of her own, Russia has re-armed Egypt and she has attained control of the Arab world. Not only so, but Russia has now been able to enter the Mediterranean Sea in considerable naval strength and she now enjoys the facilities of Egyptian and other Arab ports. No other generation has witnessed these 'signs of the times'. The setting of the stage for the final act seems obvious - all according to the Book. The domination of the Middle East by Russia is but a preliminary in her plans to dominate the world.

The centre of Christianity must be first crushed. The prophets, however, show that the final bid for world domination will be abortive, for these events do not spell victory for the powers of darkness. They do spell the end of 'the times of the Gentiles' - the end of all human mis-rule and the setting up of God's Kingdom on earth. Here is the reason for operation Armageddon.

THE ISRAELI STATE

The Israeli State today is composed of "Jews" from various parts of the world, especially from Central and Eastern Europe. The Jewish question is complex because many Jews are Jews by name or religion and not necessarily by race. Our present Chief Rabbi, Dr. Jakobovits, is reported to have said, "I believe that the most basic definition of a Jew is a religious one ... A person is taken as Jewish if his mother is Jewish. But I do not believe this ethnic factor to be important. It is the fact that a man is religiously Jewish which makes him a Jew" (Daily Express, 23.3.67).

Writing on this strain we quote the Associate Minister of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in London: "This fact will surprise you if you think of the Jews as descended from the ancient Hebrews. But the probability is that the majority are not so descended. There has been an almost continuous intermingling" ('Towards Mutual understanding' by John D. Rayner, page 13).

At the moment of writing thousands of atheistic 'Jews' are rioting in Jerusalem over the 'What-is-a-Jew' problem (Daily Express 10.2.70). The intermingling of the Jewish people is yet another factor leading up to Armageddon.

There is in Palestine today a tiny remnant known as Orthodox Jewry. These people are outstanding because of the way they dress and because they strictly uphold the Old Testament religion. Their members reject 'Zionism' on the grounds that the setting up of an Israeli State is premature to the coming of Messiah Whose right alone it is to set up the Kingdom.

Zionism believes that the State itself is Messianic. It therefore rejects the Lord Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Sadly enough, the relatively small Orthodox community fails to recognise Him as well. It is on the grounds of their unbelief in Jesus as the true Messiah, and also on the grounds that they claim the Land which by birthright, in the terms of the Title Deeds, belongs to the sons of Joseph', that the Israeli State cannot possibly constitute the Bible Israel Kingdom.

It is precisely for this same situation of unbelief nineteen hundred years ago that our Lord Jesus Christ transferred the Kingdom of God from official Jewry to 'a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof' that is, a nation which would be Christian in faith (Mt. 21:43).

THE FINAL CRISIS

This non-recognition of the Messiah by a people at present occupying the Land is one of the main reasons why Palestine is to be the main theatre of final judgment. The remarkable six-day Israeli-Arab War in 1967, unifying Palestine and Jerusalem under 'ZIONISM' further prepares the ground for Armageddon. We are forewarned by the prophet Zechariah that under such prevailing conditions Jerusalem would inevitably become 'a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it

shall be cut to pieces' (Zech. 12: 1-3). Jerusalem! - as dangerous as an open razor in the hand of a child! What catastrophes await all that bemeddle themselves with it - Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Russia! Can even an unbelieving 'Jewry', holding that burdensome stone escape hurting herself when she fails to recognise Christ and her brethren of Ephraim? (Ezek. 11: 14-16).

Preliminary events can be expected to lead up to the final crisis. The present deteriorating Arab position is a likely sign. Nasser's military situation is desperate. The Israelis seem to be having it all their own way. Provoked, they carry out reprisal raids on Russian installed radar systems which are constantly having to be replaced. The Israeli object is to destroy Egypt's early warning systems without which Nasser dare not launch into a serious war. Are the Russians likely to keep on supplying and installing such expensive equipment when they know it will be destroyed? Yet, to cease rendering such help would be to allow the Arabs to suffer complete humiliating defeat. It is a situation like this which could lead to the final Russian decision to go in to 'rescue' the Arab cause, while at the same time seeking to achieve their own ends.

The prophet Ezekiel gives a graphic description of the invasion of Palestine by an atheistic confederation of nations from the north. The object of the invasion appears not only to obtain an important strategic position in the Middle East, but to destroy the very centre from which Christianity emerged. "And thou shalt come up against My people of Israel as a cloud to cover the land: it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against My land, that the nations may know Me when I am sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes" (Ezek. 38: 16).

"Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem", and the city will be half taken by the advancing enemy. It is at this point that the most startling events take place. "Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations... and His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the west and toward the east, and there shall be a very great valley. Half the mountain shall remove to the North and half of it toward the South... and the Lord my God shall come and all the saints with Thee" (Zech. 14: 1-5). True Jewry will be purged from the false and they will turn to the Lord Jesus Christ Whom they shall see with their own eyes (Zech. 13: 6-9). "For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the Lord dwelleth in Zion" (Joel 3:21). The military might of the atheistic world will be broken for ever, 'and the Lord shall be King over all the earth'.

Many Bible students look upon the recent Israeli-Arab War as a preliminary in the setting of the stage for the final act of Armageddon. The nations are even now taking up their positions akin to the prophetic pattern.

Jewry is not likely to be alone in this final onslaught. Indeed, 'all nations' will be involved one way or another. The Ephraim 'nation and company of nations' as well as their brethren, the 'great' people may expect to be in the forefront of enemy attentions. Why? Are they not the 'nation bringing forth the fruit thereof', that is, the people who took the Bible and Christian culture to the world and witnessed to the Gospel of Christ.

The nature of attack may not be clear in this case but it could feasibly involve financial strangulation by the International Monetary

Fund bosses, economic blockade, the cutting off of oil, or the fear of actual attack in one of its modern forms. God Himself knows how best to condition a nation in order to bring it to repentance. We may be certain He will not allow it to be destroyed. It will be bound to hurt until, like true Jewry, there is repentance and a turning to Him. Listen to the prophet's description: "I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou has chastised me and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Turn Thou me and I shall be turned, for Thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented, and after that I was instructed I smote my thigh. I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach on my youth." Then the reply: "Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spoke against him I do earnestly remember him still. Therefore my bowels are troubled for him. I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord" (Jer. 31: 18-20).

With the Lordship of Jesus Christ recognised and gladly accepted, the way will be open to set up the Kingdom of God on earth which will be centred in the Land of Palestine. The Land will be settled according to the provisions of the Deeds. The prophet Ezekiel sets out the divisions of the Land which will stretch from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates. Each of the twelve tribes will receive its portion, and the new great city of Jerusalem will become the world capital of our Lord. "Out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem, and He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people. And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa. 2: 3-5).

THE NEW COVENANT

Reconciliation, whether it be concerned with the nation or the individual, is only possible on certain grounds. The righteous Law of God, which has been violated, demands the death penalty. On the other hand, the immeasurable love of God demands forgiveness, but forgiveness alone does not meet the situation. The only answer to the dilemma is to be found in Jesus Christ alone.

As the eternal Son of God Jesus came to this world to take upon Himself our human form. The whole testimony of Scripture witnesses to His sinlessness from His birth at Bethlehem to His death on the Cross of Calvary. The Eternal Court of Justice could lay nothing, absolutely nothing, to His charge. Jesus was therefore able to offer His perfect humanity upon the Cross in order to bear the penalty of sin in man's stead. The result is that the Law is satisfied, the penalty having been fully paid. The love of God is also satisfied because redemption for Israel nationally has been secured, while salvation is now wide open to 'all the families of the earth'. This is the glorious Gospel and central theme of the Bible.

Since Israel had hopelessly transgressed the Law of God, involving the death sentence, the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant were blocked. A NEW COVENANT to deal with the situation became necessary.

"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a NEW COVENANT with the House of ISRAEL, and with the House of JUDAH ... I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts: and I will be their God, and they shall be My people ... For I will

forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31: 31-34). This new covenant was sealed with nothing less than the atoning blood of Israel's Redeemer, for it is written: "And He took the cup and gave thanks... Drink ye all of it: for this is My blood of the NEW COVENANT which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Mt. 26: 26).

This brings us to a practical question. It is the vital question Pilate wrestled with when he came face to face with Christ: "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?"

We have seen how the Gentile nations are approaching their final judgment. The real reason for which is concerned with their record of world government during 'the times of the Gentiles' and their treatment of Israel. This judgment of the nations is portrayed in our Lord's Own words in Matthew 25. The real issue being, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these MY BRETHREN, ye have done it unto ME." The deciding factor is relationship with Christ - what did they do with JESUS?

The same situation arises in the case of Jewry, climaxing at Armageddon, when they behold Him face to face. But in this case, repentance on the part of true Jewry will bring reconciliation on the grounds of Christ's redemption.

Will the question be any different when Ephraim-Israel encounters the visible Christ? The prophets anticipate, at the time of Israel's redemption, a time of whole-hearted repentance, when God's Spirit is poured upon them and a nation will be 'born (again) at once' (Isa. 66: 8-14).

In the final analysis, we all, as individuals, must give an account of ourselves to Him. It will not be so much a matter of our wretchedness in His sight but, what did we do with Jesus which is called Christ?

In every case, whether national or individual, the Bible says, "As many as RECEIVED HIM, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (Jn. 1: 12-13).

A.S.G.

