

The Syria Situation in Bible Prophecy

Tags: Syria, Assad, Civil war, Bible, war, Prophecy, Bible Prophecy, Christian, Christadelphian, Carelinks, predictions, Syrian, ערב, Arab spring, revolutions, Israel, invasion, Aram, Ezekiel, Daniel, prophecies, significance, Christ, return, second coming, Jews, state, Islamic state, Palestine, Assyria, Al Sham, Sham, Greater Syria, Levant, Lebanon, Ahrar al-Sham, al-sham, as-sham, والشام العراق في الإسلامية الدولة, Damascus, Arab unity, Arab, Islamist, arab disunity, Biblical, meaning, nuclear, nuclear weapons, Aram, signs, signs of the times, Islam, Moslem, sharia, Islamic state, Iraq, regime, Nasiri, al-Islamiyya

The civil war in Syria is fulfilling Bible prophecy in that it is leading to the creation of a radical Islamic entity which is a re-formation of the ancient Assyrian empire, with a similar agenda of destroying Israel and incorporating Palestine in a pan-Arab state. This is exactly the situation described in the Bible as existing before Christ returns- and is therefore a sign He may well return very soon. Duncan Heaster's book "The Last Days" is available free at www.heaster.org/ld.pdf . Prepare yourself for Christ's return by studying the Gospel and being baptized. Free book "Bible Basics" from www.biblebasicsonline.com and free Bible with commentary from www.n-e-v.info

What's Happening in Syria

There's a complex civil war going on in Syria, as various factions seek to overthrow the Assad regime. It must be viewed in the wider context of the 'Arab Spring' throughout the Arab world, whereby established regimes were overthrown and replaced with populist leadership. But in every case, from Tunisia to Egypt, the new leadership was more radically Islamic and more determined than the previous regimes to exterminate Israel. Israel is now more than ever before surrounded by an Arab world united by one common theme- to overthrow Israel and establish an Islamic state in Palestine. And that's where the whole scene becomes so significant in terms of Bible prophecy, which predicts an invasion of Israel from her neighbours which will lead to a minority turning to Jesus Christ in repentance- and then, He will return. At no other time since the feet of the Lord Jesus were upon this earth has His return looked more imminent. Because there was no previous time in the last 2000 years when Israel existed as a nation and was surrounded by such well armed and capable enemies.

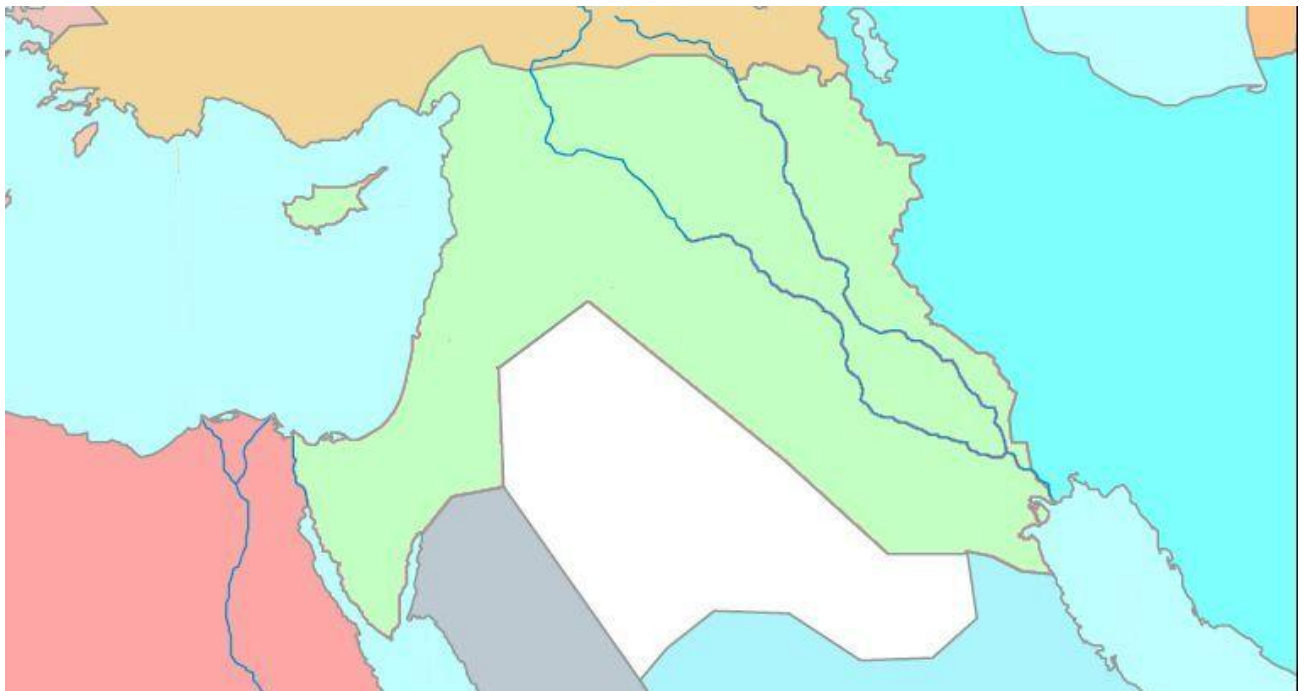
The West clearly doesn't know what to do about Syria. They can't support the undemocratic and abusive Assad regime. But the opposition is radically Islamic. If they support them, then they will make the same fool of themselves as they did when they backed, armed and trained the mujahideen groups in Afghanistan against the USSR in the 1980s- and now those same groups have morphed into Al Qaeda and become the West's greatest enemies. Clearly, the Assad regime will not hold out much longer. But they will be replaced by Moslem extremists who clearly have an agenda to destroy Israel. And Syria has powerful weapons, located right on Israel's northern border.

One feature of the civil war is the bitter disparity between the various Islamic groups opposed to Assad. And the same is true in much of the Arab world. The *only* factor which can unite them is their joint hatred of Israel and desire to destroy her. The bitter disunity between the Arab factions is great indeed- tens of thousands of deaths in Syria bear witness to it. They are aware of their problem- and the classical resolution of such a situation is to focus upon an agreed external enemy and unite in a military endeavour based around religious and ideological principles that all factions are totally agreed upon. And there is indeed such a solution, right on their doorstep- an invasion of Israel.

Al-Sham- Greater Syria

The significance of what's happening in Syria is that this solution is becoming the more obvious. And further, there is much talk amongst the opposition groups about the concept of *Al-Sham*, the formation of a 'greater Syria', incorporating not only Syria but the territories formerly in the Assyrian empire- including Israel. This is not a new idea; it is one of the tenets of faith of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), who were the largest opposition party to the ruling Ba'ath party even before the current civil war broke out. The Wikipedia article about this party gives a good overview of their vision of a 'Greater Syria'. In continuity with this, one major body of factions fighting against Assad in Syria have given themselves the official title of *الدولة الإسلامية في العراق والشام* - "The Islamic state of Iraq and Greater Syria". Or to quote the aims of another group: "On the goal of Katibat al-Muhājirīn the spokesman is quite frank: the defeat of the al-Assad regime and the establishment of an Islamic state in the Levant (Greater Syria; the medieval *Bilād as-Shām*)" [source: <http://pietervanostaeyen.wordpress.com/category/syria/>]. Further, "On January 31st 2013, Syrian Islamist groups announced they would unite in one single group; known as Harakat Ahrar **al-Sham** al-Islamiyya (*The Islamic Movement of Freeman of Greater Syria*)" [Source: <http://pietervanostaeyen.wordpress.com/2013/02/02/ahrar-al-sham-the-greater-islamist-union-in-syria/>]. From the same source we read: "We thank Allah for the affection between the believers ...Here are your brothers from the Islamic Groups, who are fighting the criminal Nasiri ['Alawi] regime to overthrow and remove it from our beloved Levant and to form a Muslim society under Shari'a Law... [we] were united completely under the name of Harakat Ahrar **al-Sham**. [This organization] belongs to the same group in obedience to Allah's order to the believers to unite and reject to be divided. As Allah says "hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you) and be not divided among yourselves" and "obey Allah and His Messenger; and do not fall into dispute, lest ye lose heart and your power depart". Your brothers of Harakat Ahrar **al-Sham** al-Islamiyya want to announce to all the Muslims in Levant their unity. [They] give them the glad tiding (that will please them) and will establish the moral strength of the believers'. In its first audio address, Ahrar **al-Sham** stated its goal to replace the Assad regime with an Islamic state governed by the Shari'a".

Al-Sham, 'Greater Syria', 'the Levant', refers to an area including Syria, Iraq, Israel and Lebanon. Here's how it's envisaged:



This map is taken from Wikipedia, and as of April 2013 the comment is attached: “Antun Saadeh's and the SSNP's vision of a unified "natural Syria", corresponding closely to the maximum extent of the Neo-Assyrian Empire”. Notice in the declaration from *Harakat Ahrar al-Sham* the rhetoric of unity amongst the disparate, the religious appeal, and the intention to unite Iraq into this ‘greater Syria’. Syria and Assyria, despite their similarity as words, referred to different entities in Bible times. Syria was part of Assyria, but was then better known as Aram. But what is envisaged within the new *Al-Sham* is the creation of a latter day Assyria. Compare the map of the envisaged *Al-Sham* with this map of the Assyrian empire in Biblical times:



What’s happening before our eyes is the preparation of a restored Biblical Assyria- even if the significance is lost to Western observers because they generally don’t know Arabic or appreciate the significance of the *Al-Sham* rhetoric.

Shaun Waterman in the *Washington Times* of April 9th 2013 in his article, □Al-Nusra comments: "the Syrian extremist militia Jabhat al-Nusra admitted to being a branch force of al-Qaeda's coalition in Iraq □ and has been all along! This was acknowledged by the Islamic State (*not the Democratic State*) of Iraq early in April. No less a personage than the Emir of the Iraqi coalition group, Abu Bakr al-Hussayni al-Qurayshi al-Baghdadi, issued an audio message avowing this heretofore hidden fact: □It's now time to declare in front of the people of the Levant and world that Jabhat al-Nusrah is but an extension of the Islamic State of Iraq and part of it... Iraqi intelligence officials... [said] that the border between Iraq and Syria is not even a real thing" (Quoted in Harold Lafferty, *Present Day Events* April 2013).

The Biblical Perspective

Daniel 2

Daniel chapter 2 contains an outline of the powers who were to dominate the people of Israel within the land of Israel. It begins with a head of gold (Babylon), then breast and arms of silver (Persia), thighs of brass (Greece), two legs of iron (the two halves of the Roman empire) and then feet part of iron, part of clay. Each part of the image corresponds in proportion to how long each empire dominated the land of Israel and the

Jewish people- thus the legs were longest because the Romans dominated the land for longest. After AD70, the Jewish state ceased to be a nation. But now, it is once again, for the first time in nearly 2000 years. The final part of the image therefore represents a group of nations (perhaps divided into two groups, symbolized by the two feet) who will dominate Israel in the last days. A stone cut out of a mountain without hands (representing the Lord Jesus Christ) then hits the image on its feet, growing into a mountain which fills the earth. The interpretation is given, and it clearly refers to the second coming of Christ to destroy the kingdoms of men who have dominated His land and His people, and to establish God's Kingdom on earth: "In the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people; it shall crush to powder and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever" (Dan. 2:44).



Arab Unity and Disunity

Who, then, are these nations who were represented by the feet partly of iron and partly of clay? Some will be strong, others weak. "Then you saw the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, that shall be a divided kingdom; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, because you saw the iron mixed with miry clay. As the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and

partly broken. Whereas you saw the iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cling to one another, even as iron does not mingle with clay" (Dan. 2:41-43). One only has to look at the various groups currently fighting Assad in Syria to see how deeply divided is the Islamist group. Most of the names of the factions would be unfamiliar to Western readers, but the following at least are almost general knowledge to any who read Middle East news:

Palestine Liberation Front
 Palestinian Islamic Jihad
 The Muslim Brotherhood
 Hamas
 Hezbollah

Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
 Fatah
 Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades
 Abu Nidal

We of course are reading the Bible through translation. But take a closer look at the original Hebrew and Chaldee translated "they shall *minge* themselves" (Dan. 2:43). They were to be a mingled people- and that's exactly who Syria and the nations of 'Greater Syria' are. The original word translated 'minge' is *arab*. One easy way to check that is to use an online concordance to poke under the surface of Dan. 2:43. And you will

see it- Strong's number H6151. *Arab*. Surely there is a reference here to the Arab peoples! Here's what you see in Strong's concordance:

H6151

ערב

ʿārab

ar-ab'

(Chaldee); corresponding to H6148; to *commingle*: - mingle (self), mix.

The 'feet and toes' section of the image is proportionally not a very long part of the body. The domination of Israel by this group will not be for long- perhaps the three and a half year period which occurs in several latter day prophecies.

Psalm 83

The way the Islamists will seek to bind together their divided state is made clear in Psalm 83, where we have ten Arab nations, mostly in *Al-Sham*, Greater Syria, who unite themselves with a common aim of capturing the holy places in Jerusalem and blotting out the name of Israel:

"They conspire with cunning against Your people, they plot against Your cherished ones. Come, they say, and let's destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more. For they have conspired together with one mind, they form an alliance against You. The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab, and the Hagrites; Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assyria also is joined with them" (Ps. 83:3-8). Note that 'Philistine' and 'Palestinian' are the same word...

This 'conspiring together with one mind' and 'forming an alliance' is exactly what we see coming out of the uniting of the disparate Islamist factions in Syria and elsewhere. "Form an alliance" translates a Hebrew phrase more commonly translated 'to cut a covenant' (Ps. 83:5). The Palestinian Covenant unites these groups, and that covenant emphasizes the aim of overrunning Israel. Psalm 83 mentions ten nations- perhaps corresponding with the ten toes of Daniel's image, and the ten horns on the beast which will dominate God's people in the last days (Daniel 7, Revelation 13). Joel 3:9 is another prophecy of the invasion which happens just before Christ's return, and it speaks of how the invaders will make a 'proclamation' to "sanctify war"- a *jihad*, a holy war. And that is exactly the rhetoric of the groups now calling for Islamist unity based around a *jihad* against Israel in order to establish *Al-Sham*.

Syria, then known as Aram, frequently invaded Israel in Bible times. The invasions under the Syrian king Rezin were a result of 'taking evil counsel against' Israel (Is. 7:5), just as Assyria and her Arab supporters are to do in Ps. 83:3: "They have taken crafty counsel against Your people". The double emphasis on "Damascus" as being the nerve centre of Rezin's operations (Is. 7:8), may also be significant in that this very city is now a centre for Arab terrorism against Israel.

I've written more about Psalm 83 and the Palestinian Covenant in *Unrest In The Arab World: The Perspective of Biblical Prophecy* [an appendix to chapter 8 of *The Last Days*]; and in the same book, Digression 7: The Palestinian Movement In Bible Prophecy. You can get a free PDF from www.heaster.org/ld.pdf.

Ezekiel 38

Ezekiel 37 and 38 predict that when the Jews have returned to their land, then there will be a ten nation invasion by a group of surrounding nations, headed up by 'Gog' - which is to be destroyed by the direct intervention of God to establish His Kingdom. This invasion is to be after the Jews have returned to their land, and will begin with an incursion onto "the mountains of Israel" - which are bordering Syria, the Golan heights:

"In the latter years you shall come into the land that is brought back from the sword, that is gathered out of many peoples, on the mountains of Israel, which have been a continual waste; but it is brought forth out of the nations" (Ez. 38:8).

Only since 1948 and the uprise of serious Arab powers around Israel could this prophecy come true. All we're waiting for is the Arab confederacy to push into the Golan Heights. And we could view the news on the internet or turn on the telly- and find it's happening. Any moment now. And the next step will be the actual return of Christ to earth.

Al-Sham- A Reborn Assyria

Zechariah 9 is clearly a prophecy of the return of Christ to earth and the establishment of His Kingdom (see Zech. 9:1,9-11 especially). But this worldwide Kingdom will be established after judgments are executed upon Damascus, Hamath, Tyre, Sidon, Ashkelon, Ekron, Ashdod and Gaza- a collection of peoples likened to a beast with a mouth and teeth which have enclosed Israel (9:7). These areas are geographically exactly where the 'greater Syria' is envisaged as being. They surround present day Israel, from the Gaza Strip to Lebanon. And they are likened to some latter day beast descending upon Israel, which must be destroyed before God's Kingdom can be established. This encourages us to see the beast of Daniel and Revelation as referring in its final form to Israel's Islamist neighbours who now surround her. Is. 9:12 uses 'beast' imagery when it speaks of the Syrians and Philistines [same word as 'Palestinians'] as being the mouth of a huge beast, closing around Israel: "The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth". This image of an Arab beast devouring Israel is repeated in Joel 1:6 concerning the later Assyrian invader.

The great invasions of Israel by the Assyrians are prototypes of the latter day invasion. Micah 5 is specific that the Lord Jesus will appear to save Israel when "the Assyrian" invades them in the last days. Balaam's prophecy about Israel's final destiny speaks of how finally both Assyria and Eber ['the other side', a similar meaning as the words 'Syria' and 'Aram' in Hebrew, and effectively referring to Syria] will be judged for their abuse of Israel in the last days. They are mentioned together because they will be operating together- and now we see that they actually are coming together (Num. 24:24). Whilst we must remember that Syria and Assyria were historically different, the current talk of a 'Greater Syria' and 'The Islamic state of Iraq and Greater Syria' is nothing less than Biblical 'Assyria' born again. Assyria invaded Israel in waves, initially just attacking the Northern part of Israel (2 Kings 15:29), commented upon in Is. 9:1 as a 'light affliction' compared to the fury of the main invasion. And it is the northern part of Israel which borders with modern day Syria. This is where any land invasion from Syria would naturally begin.

At least four waves of Assyrian invasions are recorded:

- under Menahem (2 Kings 15:19) - bought off
- under Pekah (2 Kings 15:29) - northern Israel affected
- under Hoshea (2 Kings 17:3) - Israel carried captive
- under Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:9) - took fenced cities of Judah and destroyed by God's direct intervention.

The gap between the third and fourth invasions was around six months. The third invasion took three years: "Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years" (2 Kings 17:5). This three-year period of domination followed by six months rings bells with the three and a half years of the (latter-day?) Elijah ministry, and the same period spoken of in the 1,260 days, the 42 months and "a time, times, and an half" (Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 11:2,3; 12:6).

The final Assyrian invasion is the seedbed from which the language of Gog in Ezekiel 38 is taken. Look up these Bible passages at your leisure:

Ezekiel 38 / Gog	Assyria (Isaiah)
:4	37:29
:7	8:7
:8	8:8
:9	28:2; 8:9,21; the Assyrian "strong one" of Is. 28:2 is the 'Gog' figure
:11	37:24
:12	10:6
:19	30:27
:22	29:6 RV; 30:30
:19,20	29:6; 30:25
39:10	33:1

The Assyrian is to be "broken in pieces" (Is. 30:31 RV), just as the whole image of Daniel 2 is to be. That image symbolizes a latter day confederacy of nations under the leadership of Babylon / Assyria, which will dominate the land / earth of Israel in the last days.

And so I repeat my basic point: The historical Assyrian invasions of Israel form the prototypes of the latter day invasions which the Bible prophesies, and which will immediately precipitate the return of Christ to the earth. The re-formation of 'Assyria' which is being called for by the groups coming to power in Syria today, along with the clear demand for a *jihad* to destroy Israel and Islamize Palestine, means that the Bible prophecies of the last days are being fulfilled before our eyes. It would seem that the return of Christ will be soon. Jerusalem is truly "compassed with armies", exactly as the Lord Jesus said it would be just prior to His return in glory has this in mind when He predicted that Jerusalem would again be like this in the last days:

"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that her desolation is at hand... For these are days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled... Jerusalem shall be trodden under foot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles [three and a half years of Gentile domination?] be fulfilled... And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory. But when these things begin to happen, look up, lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near" (Lk. 21:20-28).

For most of the last 2000 years, Jerusalem has been surrounded by Bedouin tribes- not nations with armies and oil wealth behind them. Only in our times has the whole jigsaw started to come together.

The Faithful Remnant

Isaiah opens his prophecy by stating that once all Israel has fallen to the Assyrian invaders, only Jerusalem will be left- and will only be saved because of a "remnant" within the city (Is. 1:7-9). But the rest of Isaiah

chapter 1 goes on to state that Jerusalem as a whole is as sinful and far from the true God as the rest of Judah. The size of this faithful remnant may have been very small indeed. They were "I (Isaiah) and the children (prophets - Is. 8:16) whom the Lord has given me" (Is. 8:18); and this is quoted in Heb. 2:13 as referring to Christian believers. That small group centered around Isaiah perhaps point forward to a small remnant of faithful Jewish believers in Jerusalem, for whose sake the whole race is not destroyed completely. And it seems that this part of the latter day jigsaw is already in place, thanks to a number of baptisms there recently.

Opportunistic Interpretation?

I can't stand opportunistic interpretations of Bible prophecy. What I mean by that is the forcing of Bible verses to somehow have relevance to any current event. I was guilty of this myself. Here's a photograph of me 30 years ago standing up in London's Hyde Park and dogmatically declaring that Bible prophecy required a Soviet invasion of Israel, and that Christ's return was 'imminent'. That means, any time right now. And that God's "more sure word of prophecy" would absolutely make all this come about. Right then, in 1983. I was wrong. Get it- *I was wrong*.

I have spent most of the subsequent 30 years living in the former Soviet Union, speaking Russian and having Russian speaking believers as my closest friends. As I sit here in 2013 in my apartment in Riga, Latvia, I can overhear my daughter speaking Russian as she watches a Russian movie. I was wrong. The USSR collapsed



in 1991. Christ didn't return in 1984. So, am I just having another crack? Maybe in a sense, yes. And I might be wrong again. I was wrong then and I might be wrong again. I am no prophet nor did I ever claim to be one. But from the late 1980s I shifted my attention from Russia and the West to the land promised to Abraham [from the Nile to the Euphrates], which is the focus of Bible prophecy. That is not to say that Russia, Europe, the Catholic church and the West generally have no role to play, but I do not think it is the leading role. I expressed the bulk of my thinking as presented in this article in a book, *The Last Days*, published in 1992 and still in print. You can get a free PDF of it from

www.heaster.org/ld.pdf. I mention this personal perspective because the crisis in Syria and the Arab Spring revolutions aren't being just forced into the mould and requirements of some Bible prophecies which I had a look at just last week. The overall picture of Bible prophecy requires the creation of an entity like *Al-Sham* and a focus of the Arab peoples upon overrunning Israel and establishing an Islamic state there- just prior to Christ's return. And all seems going to plan. I'm excited about this, and that's why I've been bold enough to share my thoughts with you.

A Personal Appeal

"He that shall come, will come" (Heb. 10:37). Whether I am right or wrong in my take on Bible prophecy. Effectively, Christ's return is only so far away as our death. And that could be any moment. And so my appeal to you is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ who shall return- and soon, relatively speaking. Give your brief, fragile life to Him by identifying with His death and resurrection by baptism into Him. Become one of



the true children of Abraham by baptism (Gal. 3:27-29), and rejoice with me in sure hope of resurrection and eternal inheritance of the land in God's eternal Kingdom. About *that* there is no doubt. That much is sure. Matching geopolitics with Bible prophecy is one thing. Maybe I got it wrong about Syria, just as I got it wrong about Russia. But in the bigger picture that is neither here nor there. What is sure and certain is that the Lord Jesus Christ lived, died *for you*, 2000 years ago, on a day in April, on a Friday afternoon, on a hill just outside Jerusalem. And three days later, He rose again, is now in Heaven, and shall surely return to establish God's Kingdom upon earth. And you really, really can connect with Him now and live with Him eternally then. Please give yourself no rest until your future is assured. Get a free Bible from us, and / or the free book *Bible Basics* which explains the Bible's message and prepares you for baptism into Him:

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APPENDIX: Some Speculative Suggestions

Accept Islam!

Initially, the Assyrians demanded that Israel pay them tribute and accepted their religion. One could well imagine 'Assyria' of the last days stipulating Israel's acceptance of Islam as a condition for military help and mercy. God was Israel's father (Jer. 3:19; 31:9; Mal. 1:6; 2:10) and master (Mal. 1:6; Deut. 32:36); both these concepts were well understood by Israel. For king Ahaz to say to Tiglath-Pileser, "I am *thy* servant and *thy* son" (2 Kings 16:7) was therefore a conscious rejection of Yahweh as Master and Father. For this reason

Isaiah, prophesying in this period, stresses the fact that God claims Israel as *His* servant (e.g. Is. 44:1,2,21). The historical account sadly records how not only Ahaz but Hoshea (2 Kings 17:3) and Jehoiakim (2 Kings 24:1) also became 'servants' of their Arab dominators - doubtless thinking that they could serve two masters. Note in passing how 'Islam' is a call to 'submit'. This conscious rejection of Yahweh worship is further shown by Ahaz cutting off "the borders of the bases" of the laver (2 Kings 16:17), i.e. the cherubic faces which were on the wheels. These would have been a distinctive part of Yahweh worship. 2 Kings 16:10,11 records how after meeting Tiglath-pileser at Damascus, Ahaz ordered a replica altar to one which he had seen there. Ez. 23:7 confirms that Judah were forced to accept Assyria's religion: "She committed her whoredoms with... the chosen men of Assyria (i.e. the Assyrian diplomats with whom Ahaz's messengers negotiated)... with all their idols she defiled herself".

During the final invasion, the Assyrian commander Rabshakeh demanded: "Make an agreement with me... and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree... until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil olive and of honey" (2 Kings 18:31-32). The repetition of the word "land" and the evident allusions to the description of the promised land Israel would have if they were faithful (e.g. Deut. 8:7,8), show that Rabshakeh was offering the Jews a fake kingdom of God. The reference to each man eating his own vine and fig tree is alluding to Mic. 4:4, a prophecy which was uttered during this period, and doubtless repeated by the prophets within Jerusalem: "They shall sit every man under his vine and... fig tree". These conscious allusions by Rabshakeh again show that there was a strong religious element in his reasoning - as if to say, "Make a deal with us, and we can offer you something better than the kingdom your prophets tell you will soon come and is worth suffering for". The Islamist demand of the last days may run along similar lines: "Become Muslims, and *then* you will be the real children of Abraham and have hope of being in a real paradise". The language of vines, oil, corn, honey etc. are prominent in the Islamic concept of 'paradise', their equivalent to the Kingdom of God.

Three Groups

The Assyrian army was split up under three leaders, Tartan, Rabсарis and Rabshakeh. These names all have religious meanings, just as do the names of the leaders of the various Islamic brigades today- e.g. "Tartan" is related to the Assyrian god Tartak (2 Kings 17:31). The subdivision of the Arab invader into three groups, as in the original Assyrian battle plan, may also be thus foreseen in the last days, seeing that some previous Arab invasions may have had this feature too:

- "The spoilers of the Philistines (raided Israel) in three companies" (1 Sam. 13:17).
- The Israelites fought their Ammonite enemies "in three companies", perhaps because there were three groups of Ammonites (1 Sam. 11:11).
- The account of Gideon's victory over Midian, a clear type of the latter-day Arab destruction, has a triple emphasis on Israel attacking them in "three companies" (Jud. 7:16,20,22) - perhaps for the same reason.
- The "great city" of Babylon/Assyria will be "divided into three parts" for its destruction (Rev. 16:19).
- The Chaldeans (Babylonians/Assyrians) attacked Job, symbolic of faithless Israel, in three bands (Job 1:17)
- Is there some reference to this in the enigmatic three frog like spirits of Rev. 16?
- Rev. 9:14-18 describes how in the last days, 200,000,000 horsemen came from the Euphrates (i.e. Babylon/Assyria), using "fire and smoke and brimstone" to punish God's apostate people just before Christ returns. "By these three was the third part of men killed" might suggest that this invading army has three aspects to its work. The huge number of horsemen must allude to the "great company" of horsemen of Ez. 38:4, which we have shown to be rooted in the Assyrian invasion. The 200,000,000 horsemen of Rev. 9:16 may correspond to the fact that the strength of the Assyrian army which came against Jerusalem is claimed in some inscriptions to have been 200,000 men.

The Koran has interpretations attached to it called the Hadith, written by various Imams [Moleen pastors and teachers]. One of them is most significant in our context: “Abdulla Ibn Hawala, the Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم said: “You will be split up into groups of armies. An army will be in Al-shaam, an army in Iraq, and an army in Yemen”. Here we have it- three groups of armies coming against Israel, one of them being from A-Sham! This teaching is now being appropriated by the Islamist factions who are coming to power in Syria- just search for these sentences on the internet and you’ll see how common they now are!

The Burden of Damascus

“The burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap” (Is. 17:1). As has often pointed out, there is no time in previous history when Damascus was completely destroyed and became a pile and a heap- in fact, it is the world’s most lengthily inhabited city. The verse is in the Isaiah context of warning Judah not to trust in Damascus- so it may mean that *effectively* Damascus would be as nothing for Judah and would not save them from the Assyrian threat. However, the verse has a more comfortable interpretation if we look for a literal fulfillment. And now for the first time in history, this verse has the possibility of a literal fulfillment at the touch of a few buttons. For Israel have made it clear that in the event of a nuclear attack upon them, they will take out Damascus with their nuclear weapons.

In the prophecy of latter day invasion by Gog in Ezekiel 38, Syria isn’t mentioned. It could be that by the time of that invasion, Syria in the sense of Damascus has been taken out by Israel and is therefore not a player in the very last invasion.