

2020 AN ASTONISHING YEAR – so far!

Few could have anticipated a year unfolding like 2020 and we are only half way through it. The year began with unprecedented bush fires in Australia and then immediately transitioned to a global pandemic that closed down almost every country on earth. If the first couple of months was not enough for Australia to contend with, its trading relationship with China is now in tatters forcing a search for new trading partners. Let's explore the prophetic implications of the events of the year so far.

The 'climate change' debate

The bush fires in Australia, like those in California and other places in recent times, have been attributed to global climate change. The severity of the fires in south eastern Australia was unprecedented and was due to a 'perfect storm' of extended drought, unusually high temperatures and gusty gale force winds over a period of three weeks in late December and early January.

Folk will debate whether 'natural disasters' are the result of pollution of the atmosphere by carbon, but few seem to realise that prior to the events of AD 70 there was Divine intervention in human affairs as a prelude to the judgements that were pending. This is evident from Luke 21:11 – "And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven." The Greek word for "from" is the preposition *apo* and deals with origins; i.e. where something originates. Many of the disasters and pestilences that afflicted humanity in the lead up to AD 70 were manipulated from heaven. Christ was sending angels to prepare for the oncoming judgements on Judea and Jerusalem.

While there seems little doubt that industrialisation in its myriad forms over the last 200 years has impacted the earth's environmental balance to some degree, it is also a probability that the range, frequency and severity of natural disasters have been influenced by angelic intervention as they were before the events of AD 70.

Similarly, the Covid-19 pandemic may be one of the pestilences being employed as a tool by 'heaven' to prepare for the judgements soon to fall on the earth.

The Covid-19 Global Pandemic

Pandemics are not new, but the Covid-19 pandemic has been compared to the 1918 'Spanish Flu' pandemic in which it is estimated 40 million people died around the world. Like then, much of the world was shut down. By the end of June 2020 the number of cases around the world surged beyond 11 million and deaths reached beyond 530,000. Economic activity was severely curtailed around the globe and fears of an imminent world-wide Depression emerged.

Prophecy is clear about "a time of trouble such as never was" (Dan. 12:1-2) being closely associated with the resurrection of the dead (i.e. prior to Armageddon). What accompanies

that time of trouble is strongly suggested by the pattern of the removal of Noah and his family, and Lot and his family from the impending judgements that fell upon those generations. Both eras were times of prosperity (Luke 17:26-30) and foreshadowed the era of Christ's return. That prosperity collapsed almost immediately after Noah and Lot and their families were removed to a safe place. The living will follow the resurrected responsible dead to the Judgement Seat of Christ and we can expect to be removed just before the world's economy collapses after that pattern.

Financial pundits are saying that the period from September through November is the likely time of the financial collapse. It is significant that most financial collapses in modern history have occurred in the October period commencing with the 29 October 1929 collapse of the stock market leading to the Great Depression of the 1930's.

The aggression of China

For some years now, China has been flexing its political and economic muscles in Third World countries and in recent times has focused on the Pacific region. Using its enormous economic wealth, China has insinuated itself into the politics of some small Pacific nations. For example, China has assisted with the debt burden of Papua New Guinea placing this young nation originally supported by Australia in its orbit and creating dependency. This is happening across the Pacific.

In addition Chinese companies have been buying up huge parcels of land and property in Australia and other nations as well as many companies. The Australian government has placed embargos on some Chinese technology companies like Huawei due to security concerns. On top of that China has taken control of islands in the South China Sea endangering international shipping lanes. New laws designed to suppress riots in Hong Kong were implemented in June and resulted in numerous arrests of protesters against Chinese hegemony in the former British territory ceded to China in 1997 under the "One state, two systems" agreement.

Why is this significant?

A good proportion of Australia's export trade is with China while its trade with Britain is not significant due to Britain's ties to Europe. Prophecy requires Australia and New Zealand as 'young lions' (Ezek. 38:13) to have strong trading relationships with "Tarshish" (clearly Britain as shown by Ezek. 27, history and archaeological discoveries in Israel and Britain). The phrase "the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof" is of the utmost importance because it emphasises that the relationship between Britain and its former colonies who share its governmental system is not only political in character but also includes a strong trading relationship. The 'young lions' are Australia, Canada, India and New Zealand (as is made clear from 1st World War posters). The first mention of a lion in Scripture is in Gen. 49:9-10 where the context reveals that a lion symbolically represents government and rulership. This is

confirmed by a study of lions in Scripture. Hence, to be a young lion a nation needs to have the governmental system of its mother country. The 'young lions' mentioned above all have a British parliamentary form of government.

When China aggressively turned on Australia for seeking an international investigation into the origins of the Coronavirus, a shipment of barley from Australia on its way to China was rejected and turned around. It is said India subsequently purchased that shipment. At the same time, the Australian government supercharged its discussions with Britain on a comprehensive free trade agreement with the UK. All this is heading in the direction required by prophecy.

The 'Black Lives Matter' protests

America erupted on the deaths of two African Americans at the hands of police in May and June. Protests, riots, looting and arson marked weeks of protests in many big cities in America. The movement gained momentum and spread internationally culminating in demands for defunding of police departments and the revision of history. Statues of individuals associated with slavery and other activities dubbed as 'racist' were condemned and destroyed. By early July scores of people around America were either being wounded or killed by sporadic gunfire in cities across the country, particularly in cities where victims of heavy-handed police had died.

Observers can see in these events added to the protests over 'climate change' the incipient fulfilment of Luke 21:25 – “upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring.” Once the responsible are removed to judgement the world will enter that period described by Christ - “Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth” (Luke 21:26), because “the time of trouble such as never was” will have descended upon them.

That the return of Christ is very near is also shown by the insanity associated with the current protests. Calls for defunding of police forces would not long ago have been seen as lunacy but is now being adopted by some liberal authorities across America. In Rev. 16:13-14 Christ says that just prior to Armageddon every echelon of human society from rulers down would be impacted by the “three unclean spirits like frogs”. This 'spirit' (or ideology, i.e. a way of thinking) is called “the spirits of devils”. The Greek word for “devils” is *daimon* and is used in the New Testament for insanity and mental illness (Matt. 8:31; Mark 5:12; Luke 8:29). A cognate word *daimoniodes* is used in James 3:15 – “This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, **devilish**. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.” This is exactly what we are seeing in the world today from top to bottom. The ideology of the French Revolution – Liberty, Equality and Fraternity (the three unclean spirits of Rev. 16:13) have permeated every strata of society. Humanism (as it is more economically called) has reached a stage of pure lunacy and is even being called that by people who themselves are victims of its twisted way of thinking. Unfortunately, it has reached into the Christadelphian community

as well just as Christ suggested it would in Rev. 16:15. We need to be vigilant in the few days that remain before the Lord returns.

Brexit

The Covid-19 pandemic put the brakes on negotiations between Britain and the European Union which have just restarted with face to face meetings in early July. Britain has again made it clear that there will be no extension to the 31 December 2020 deadline for negotiation of a fair trade deal and has also warned that negotiations must reach a meaningful position by the northern Autumn (September/October). While both sides remain publicly optimistic, recent declarations by UK government ministers have put the writing on the wall. Cabinet Minister Michael Gove formally confirmed to the EU bloc two weeks ago (late June) that there would be no extension, tweeting: "On 1 January 2021, we will take back control and regain our political and economic independence." All the indications are that the negotiations will founder and not be completed to the satisfaction of either the UK or the EU. Should the Depression arrive before the end of the year it is almost certain the whole process will fail and Britain will be completely cut loose from its former European partners. Britain will need desperately to seek new trading partners and its former colonies will be in the front row.

Scripture requires Britain to be in the opposition to Gog and its confederates at the time of Armageddon and to be in close trading relationship with its former colonies (Ezek. 38:13). Everything is heading rapidly in that direction.

Russia, Turkey, Syria and Libya

Russia and Turkey are now on different sides in two Middle East wars. The relationship between the two nations has been a roller-coaster ride since the outbreak of the civil war in Syria in 2011 consistent with their history of relationships going back centuries. When Turkey shot down a Russian fighter bomber in November 2015 relationships soured, borders were shut and threats made. Then when Turkey sought American help, Vladimir Putin changed his approach and courted President Erdogan even offering the state of the art S400 missile system that he knew would undermine Turkey's military connections with the US. The US has an air base in Turkey and the latter was scheduled to purchase the new US fighter plane. That fell apart after Turkey refused to forego the S400 system.

However, as time has gone on, Turkey and Russia have fallen out over how to deal with the last enclave of resistance to the Syrian government in north-west Syria. Their conflicting geopolitical priorities have almost flared into war in recent months as Russia continues to support Bashar al-Assad president of Syria by mercilessly bombing civilians in the Homs enclave.

Turkey is also on the opposite side of Russia in the war in Libya between the internationally supported government in Tripoli and Libyan strongman Khalifa Hafta an ally of Russia. Hafta

who controls eastern Libya attempted to capture the capital Tripoli in May and June but was repelled by government forces assisted by Turkey. However, Hafta retaliated using Russian military equipment including unmarked jet fighters. Prophecy requires Libya to be part of the Gogian confederacy (Ezek. 38:5). We can expect to see the pendulum swing back towards the anti-government forces in the east as the bitter conflict unfolds and Russia becomes more deeply involved.

Turkey is now also involved in the civil war in Yemen on the side of the Iranian backed Houthi rebels who seized power in 2012. This puts them in direct conflict with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States (except for Qatar which is curiously funding Turkish intervention) who entered the war in 2014 in support of the legally appointed government. Yemen has suffered terribly ever since with millions perishing from war, starvation and disease, the latest of which is rampant Coronavirus. Yemen is regarded by the UN as the world's most catastrophic nation at present.

Why all this suffering? The answer lies in the fact that Yemen (the ancient Sheba) must be part of the pro-Israel allies Sheba and Dedan (Saudi Arabia and Gulf States like Oman) as Ezek. 38:13 makes clear. The ancient kingdom of Sheba once straddled the Red Sea to incorporate modern Yemen, Eritrea and portion of Ethiopia. It was from here that the Queen of Sheba came. Aden (former capital of Yemen) was once a British Protectorate and was ceded to Saudi Arabia until independence in 1967. Scripture is clear that the relationship with Saudi Arabia must be restored prior to Armageddon.

The latest provocation by Turkey is a proposal by President Erdogan to convert the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul into a Muslim mosque (reported on 2 July). Within a couple of weeks of Turkey downing the Russian jet in 2015 Erdogan received a letter from Moscow demanding the return of the Hagia Sophia to the Russian Orthodox Church. Built by Byzantine Emperor Justinian I, it was the world's largest cathedral for nearly 1,000 years. The Unesco World Heritage site was turned into a mosque when the Ottoman Empire captured the city in 1453, but became a museum in the 1930s. Turkey's intention to turn it into a mosque will prove to be an intolerable provocation in the Kremlin affecting future military plans. All the indications are that Dan. 11:40 is not far away from fulfilment with a Russian takeover of Istanbul (Constantinople) and then of Turkey itself.

The future of leadership in Russia

Back in March, Russian President Vladimir Putin submitted to parliament a number of new constitutional changes, including amendments that mention God and stipulate that marriage is a union of a man and woman. On 1 July his amendments were passed by a referendum which like all recent Russian plebiscites had its outcome determined before it occurred. It is curious that Russia has become the defender of elements of Biblical teaching while the rest of the 'first world' pursues a raft of Humanistic liberties that defy and reject Divine principles. This fact fits the prophetic indications that the Gogian invasion of the Land will be religiously motivated.

The close ties between church and state (and its military power) was brought home in June by Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill consecrating a cathedral dedicated to the armed forces, built to mark Victory Day in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe. The church was supposed to be paid for entirely through donations, but according to Russian reports almost 3 billion rubles (about \$40 million) came from the Kremlin budget.

Another outcome of the referendum is the approval of changes to the Russian constitution that will allow Vladimir Putin to rule until 2036. Putin displays all the characteristics of Gog outlined in Ezek. 38 and Hab. 2 and may well prove to be the man to fulfil those prophecies.

Annexation of the West Bank by Israel

1 July was scheduled to be the day Israel annexed 30% of the West Bank but it did not occur on that day due to the US insisting that the remaining two thirds be reserved for a Palestinian State under pressure from Gulf States. Israel has no intention of allowing this to happen. Events will eventually lead to the full annexation of the West Bank as required by Ezek. 38:8,12 and Isa. 10:22-34.

If there is to be a Palestinian State it will be in the Gaza Strip with additional territory ceded by Egypt in the northern Sinai. This was the original plan conceived by the Trump administration to which Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and some Gulf States had agreed in principle some 3 years ago. This would accord with two clear prophecies of the time leading to Armageddon – Joel 3:4; Zeph. 2:4-11. Both texts mention Palestine (or Philistine) as having a coastline which the West Bank does not have. The Gaza Strip does and because Israel has already given it to the Palestinians is the most likely headquarters of any future Palestinian entity.

“Wake up the mighty men”

The world is preparing for war. When the Cold War ended in the 1980's and the Soviet Union collapsed under the weight of 70 years of Communism, some thought our understanding of Ezek. 38 should be revised. The chaos in Russia during the 1990's might have supported that notion, but students of Bible prophecy were confident the wheel would turn, and it did with the ascension to power of Vladimir Putin in 2000.

Today, Russia has rebuilt its military power to such an extent that Putin boasts that no other nation on earth has an arsenal like his. A once rusty and defunct navy has been revitalised with new state of the art ships that are unmatched, even by the US. No one now doubts the strength of the Russian war machine and while the US heads towards a \$25 trillion national debt and an economy in freefall, Russia already has the world's fourth-largest foreign currency reserves at \$570 billion as of June, including more than \$100 billion in a so-called “rainy-day” fund to be used during tough times. The wheel has done a full turn as prophecy requires.

Nations strong and weak are arming for an uncertain future as prophecy also requires - "Let the weak say, I am strong" (Joel 3:10). In early July, the Australian government announced Australia would spend \$270b building a larger military to prepare for a 'poorer, more dangerous' world and the rise of China.

Lift up your heads, your redemption draws nigh.

Should readers need access to the sources of the information provided above, contact the author Jim Cowie (jimcowie@webshield.net.au).