

[Blue text = my highlight. Don.] 16-06-20

Bible Magazine Summer 2020

Here in the UK, lockdown is being eased, with the majority of shops being allowed to re-open in this week 12 of “lockdown”. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected over 8 million people world-wide and has claimed nearly half a million lives, though exact numbers are not really known as countries like Russia and China are said to be under-reporting their deaths.

There have been quite remarkable variations in the seriousness of the symptoms of those affected, pointing to variations as it mutates around the world. Population density, housing conditions, even ethnicity, seem to have had a considerable effect on the numbers of cases. The UK being densely populated and a business hub with visitors from around the world, and ethnically diverse, has been seriously affected. UK deaths have now risen above 42,000, though slowing considerably. One measure is infection cases and deaths per 1 million population. As different countries have differing standards of measuring, these figures are only a rough guide.

Country	Cases/ 1million	Deaths/ 1million
Australia	288	4
New Zealand	301	4
Israel	2,103	33
Canada	2,633	217
US	6,609	358
UK	4,393	618

Worldometers.info accessed 16-Jun-20

The UK economy has been severely affected, with many businesses facing closure, resulting in growing redundancies. It is uncertain how quickly it will bounce back, and whether increased contact as firms and shops return to work, will cause re-infection rates to rise, as is happening in Israel which came out of lockdown earlier. Will life ever get back to “normal”?

Covid-19 doubtless just a foretaste

As Bible students we look on these things as part of the signs of our times – a time of *distress* and *perplexity* (Luke 21:25) as God challenges the nations to acknowledge Him as the Creator and Sustainer of all life. We anticipate these occurrences will only grow more and more challenging. The coming of the Lord Jesus will bring these matters to a peak. Every nation will have to accept the challenge detailed in Psalm 2. Unless they accept Israel’s King as the rightful heir of the world, they will face the fierceness of his wrath.

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

*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.***

Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him. Psa. 2:6-12

Every ruler will be brought to acknowledge the Lord Jesus as their King and his Father as the One who has bestowed the world into his hands. This is the day of transformation that we long for.

What a contrast to today, where many parts of the world are caught up in ugly riots, as different factions seek to impose their ideas upon their fellow countrymen. Long-held values are being overturned as characterised by the uprooting of the statues of past leaders.

Covid-19 is doubtless just a foretaste of growing troubles as we approach the Day of the great clash between God’s Son and Heir in his battle against:

principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Eph. 6:12

The day when the little stone power of Daniel 2 will crush the opposition of the Kingdom of Men, to establish a Kingdom that will last for ever. (Dan. 2:44,45)

Israel – the future centre of the world!

Let’s begin with Israel, as this is God’s chosen place for His throne in the past and for His Son’s throne in the future. Both David and Solomon are said to have *sat upon the throne of Yahweh*. (1 Chr. 29:23) This is the throne

promised to the Lord Jesus. (Luke 1:32) Great changes are needed to prepare Israel's heart for their King and Messiah. We have seen over the years a gradual swing from Israel as secular state, to being a more religious state. The study of the Word of God is increasing, especially amongst the settlers who have chosen to live in the heart-land of Israel, Judah and Samaria, commonly termed the West Bank, as they desire for the land to become productive again in the expectation of the Messiah appearing. Barren hillsides and valleys have been transformed with vineyards and orchards, bringing employment and prosperity for Jew and Arab.

Israel's 35th government formed at last!

The 34th government was dispersed by a Knesset vote on 26-Dec-18. It did not reassemble until April 2019 but following the failure of Netanyahu to form a new government, they voted to dissolve on 30-May-19. After nearly 18 months without a government, Mr Netanyahu and Mr Gantz formed a national unity government following Israel's third election (02-Mar-20) in the space of twelve months. Israel's thirty-fifth government was sworn in on 17th May 2020. Many had written Mr Netanyahu off, but following the third election, his Likud party gained the most seats, but his normal coalition partners lost seats so preventing a slim majority of 61 of the 120 seats in the Knesset. His chief opponent, Benny Gantz, the leader of the Blue and White Party was given the first opportunity to form a coalition government, having vowed not to work with Netanyahu's Likud party. This proved to be impossible as it would have needed the support of Balad – an Arab political party, which was a step too far for some of his potential coalition partners. Following talks to establish a national unity government as Israel was facing challenging times with the Covid-19 outbreak, Benny Gantz's Blue and White Party split and Gantz, with the remainder of the party joined Likud and others in a coalition, with 72 seats.

The agreement is that Mr Netanyahu is Prime Minister until October 2021 with Gantz as deputy Prime Minister. They then exchange roles, for the next 18 months. This makes Benjamin Netanyahu Israel's longest serving Prime Minister.

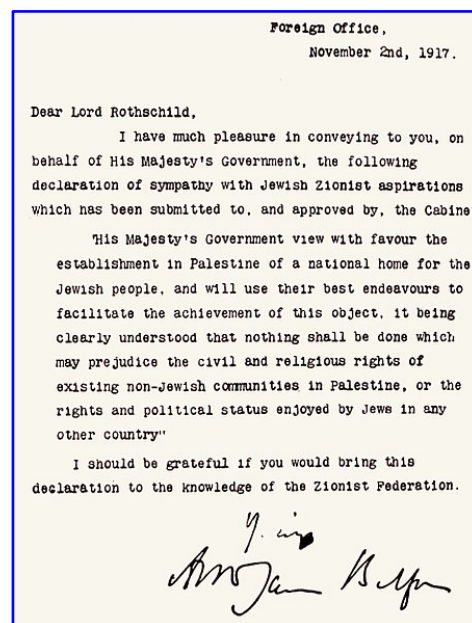
Netanyahu's "annexation" plans

Mr Netanyahu has stated that he wants to begin the process of absorbing into Israel some of the settlements in Judea and Samaria, as soon as possible, with July 1st being frequently mentioned. The UN, the Vatican, the EU, and most Arab countries are up in arms at this step which they brand as illegal. It threatens to destabilise the Middle East and turn many against Israel. So, let us examine Israel's case for taking control of this area.

We need to go back to the Balfour Declaration of 2nd November 1917. Britain and her allies in World War I were steadily advancing northwards from Egypt, driving back the Turkish occupiers of the Holy Land. The UK sought to reward Chaim Weizmann, a University chemistry lecturer, for his considerable contribution towards the war effort, in designing a method of bulk production of acetone - an essential part of explosives. However, he sought no reward for himself, but asked for a homeland for his Jewish compatriots. This struck a cord with the religious feelings of several in the British Cabinet, that the Jews were God's people, and they could now return to their homeland which was being freed at that time. Under the control of Britain, they could cultivate it and bring it back into production. Hence the Balfour Declaration, following the taking of the strategic town of Beersheba a few days earlier.

Sans Remo Resolution

Following the conclusion of WWI, a conference was held in San Remo, Italy, called by the allies, Britain, France, Italy, and Japan, (with the US later as an observer). They finalised a Resolution in April 1920 as to how the newly conquered Ottoman Empire should be divided up. Britain was given a mandate to rule over the southern area, and the Balfour declaration was



incorporated, promising the Jews their ancient homeland. This news was received with great joy by the Jews of the time as this cutting from *The Times* 26-Apr-1920 showed.

Crucially, the so-called San Remo Declaration charged the British mandate with implementing the Balfour Declaration, which three years earlier had endorsed “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”

The San Remo Conference, is historically significant as the first anchor of Israel’s right to exist in international law, though in contemporary geopolitics it is, for various reasons, not recognized as relevant to today’s Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“There is probably no more understated event in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict than the San Remo Conference of April 1920,” Efraim Karsh, the director of the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, wrote in a paper published Friday.

It was remarkable that within less than five years, the Balfour Declaration “had been endorsed by the official representative of the will of the international community: not in the ‘technical’ sense of supporting the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine but in the deeper sense of recognizing the Jews as a nation deserving self-determination in its ancestral homeland,” he wrote.

“Now in ratifying that historic declaration, San Remo recognized a fundamental truth: The Jewish people are not foreign colonialists in the land of our forefathers. The Land of Israel is our ancestral homeland,” Netanyahu said. *Times of Israel* 27-Apr-20

British self-interests however meant that the homeland shrank drastically when Britain decided to support the establishment of Jordan.

A few months after the San Remo conference, for reasons of realpolitik, Britain hived off some three-quarters of Palestine to create Transjordan.

The scope of what was left for the Jewish national home, however, is something that Israel's enemies don't want to acknowledge – and is the reason that San Remo is conspicuously ignored. For in that resolution lie the roots of Jewish legitimacy, not just in Israel but also in the disputed territories.

That's because the Palestine within which the Jews were legally entitled to settle as their designated national home included not just the Israel that emerged in 1948, but also Judea and Samaria. That legal right given to the Jews to settle the entire land of Mandatory Palestine has never been abrogated.

During the war of extermination mounted against Israel at its rebirth in 1948, some of that designated territory was captured by the Jordanians.

As the international lawyer Eugene Kontorovitch has noted, when Israel eventually recovered this land as a result of the Six-Day War in 1967, much of the international community pretended that its own earlier guarantees didn't exist.

Far from acknowledging the legal, moral and historical right of the Jewish people to live in Judea and Samaria, the international community has consistently claimed that the areas Jordan

ZIONIST REJOICINGS.

BRITISH MANDATE FOR PALESTINE WELCOMED.

News of the conferment of the mandate for Palestine on Great Britain has created a great impression on Zionist and Jewish circles. A prominent Zionist has given the following views to a representative of the London Jewish Correspondence Bureau :—

The news that Great Britain is to have the mandate for Palestine, and the decision to incorporate the Balfour Declaration in the Treaty of Peace with Turkey will be received with intense gratification by Jews in all countries. It means that at last, after 20 centuries, the Jews will begin the work of re-establishing their ancient Homeland, under a stable and civilized Government. The Wandering Jews will at last have a home.

The Jews have always desired to be under British trusteeship, realizing that the British colonizing methods are based upon the notion of giving free scope to the peoples under British protection. The Zionist leaders at San Remo who have been the spokesmen of the Jewish claims are Dr. Weizmann and Mr. Sokolow. They have been greatly assisted by the support of Mr. Herbert Samuel in this country and of Mr. Justice Brandeis in America.

Another factor which undoubtedly contributed to the granting of the Zionist demands is their great moderation.

The practical consequence of the decision at San Remo will be that Jewish energy and capital will begin to flow towards Palestine to be devoted to the development of the country and to the benefit of all its inhabitants.

The event will be celebrated in all Jewish centres with great joy, and the date—April 24, 1920—will perhaps become a Jewish national holiday. A Zionist Congress, and possibly a Pan-Jewish Congress, will have to be convoked at an early date to concentrate Jewish effort on the restoration of Palestine.—*Reuter.*



ethnically cleansed of Jews in 1948 must indefinitely remain Jew-free zones.

Ignoring San Remo is thus essential for those who perpetrate the lie that the Jews have usurped the Palestinian Arabs in their own land. *Israel Hayom* 24-Apr-20

The Six-Day War and the Oslo II Accord

In 1967, the Israel's took control of the "West Bank", driving out the Jordanians who occupied it. Israel had asked the Jordanians not to join the nations who were preparing to drive Israel into the sea, but they did not listen, with disastrous consequence for them, losing all the possessions they had taken to the west of the Jordan in 1948, which they had annexed in 1950. We fast-forward to 1995 and the signing of the Oslo II Peace Accord by Israel under PM Rabin and the PLO under Chairman Arafat. This divided the area into 3 zones, labelled A, B and C.

Area A is the space in which the Palestinian Authority has political and military jurisdiction over its residents – all of whom are Arab.

This includes all of the major towns and their immediate environs – with the partial exception of Jewish Hebron, which came under exclusive Israeli control in the 1997 Hebron protocol between Israel and the PLO. This area comprises approximately 18 percent of Judea and Samaria's land mass.

According to the Oslo Accords, the PA was never given jurisdiction over Israeli citizens and foreign nationals.

Israeli citizens have the right to enter and pass through Area A unmolested, provided that they are not involved in illicit activity, in which case the PA can only temporarily apprehend them until they are transferred to the Israeli authorities. Joint Israeli-PA patrols were intended to handle these cases.

Area B signified less built-up areas, many of which shared their space with settlements created in the massive settlement drive in the 1980s launched by the Likud government. Area B comprises approximately 22% of Judea and Samaria.

In Area B, Israel and the PA share jurisdiction.

Israel enjoys exclusive jurisdiction over the Jewish inhabitants and exclusive authority over security for both its Arab and Jewish inhabitants. The PA has political, administrative and police jurisdiction over the Arab inhabitants. They are subject to its laws, pay the necessary taxes and benefit from the same public services the PA provides in Area A.

Strictly speaking, only the IDF and the Israel Police can make arrests in these areas.

Most of geographic Judea and Samaria (60% of the area) is designated Area C, over which Israel has exclusive jurisdiction both administratively and in security matters.

Area C's distinguishing characteristic is that it is sparsely populated – by Arab or Jewish inhabitants.

Most of this area lies east of the populated mountain spine from Jenin in the north to Hebron in the south. The eastern slopes descending and including the Jordan Valley are characterized by harsh climate and low to no rainfall. The Jordan Valley, the South Hebron Hills and the area in the vicinity of Ma'aleh Adumim – from east of Mount Scopus to Jericho – are by far the most politically contested spaces in Area C, due to both Jewish settlement and Israeli security concerns. *Jerusalem Post* 23-Apr-13

President Trump has agreed that Israel is not an illegal occupational force in these areas, and her building of settlements is not in violation of international law. This showed considerable movement on the part of the US which had relied on a 1978 State Dept. memo that (wrongly) concluded that settlements were illegal. Israel has claim to this area from ancient times and by reason of the San Remo Declaration. That it was Jordan that annexed the region – where were the protests in 1950? – and proceeded to ethnically cleanse the region of Jews. Israel has been offering to negotiate a Peace Settlement with the Palestinian but has met rejection all along the line. There never has been a Palestinian State. The Arabs were under the British Mandate, as were the Jews. Before that they were under Ottoman rule.

Most of the world is hostile to the prospect of Israel taking full control over the area C, covering roughly 60% of Judea and Samaria, as Israel terms the territory, linking it to its historic past. The UN, the Vatican and the EU have



thrown their weight against such a proposed action. Israel is not proposing to bring areas A and B under any deeper Israel control. Much of the C territory is needed to strengthen defences against offensive infiltration through Jordan.

Extending Israel's sovereignty to the Jordan Valley will not have immediate security benefit compared with the prevailing status quo. It may even have some negative impact, but in the long run it will send a clear message that Israel is determined to have this area, which is critical for its security, as its eastern border. *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* 21-May-20

Bibi's Brilliant Annexation Bluff?

Benjamin Netanyahu is known for his strategic planning. So far, he has refrained from revealing much detail of his proposals. There has been speculation, that in exchange for a slowdown of what the world terms “annexation” in Area C and agreeing to further talks with Abbas, the Gulf States would pursue closer linkage to Israel. The Palestinians would be seen as not a partner for peace if they followed their usual path of rejection. As this article with the above heading put it:

A Gulf Arab diplomat put it best: "Why doesn't Israel let the clock run and show that [Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud] Abbas isn't serious about peace. To pursue annexation will shift all the focus to Israel, which will be subject to global condemnation."

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the de facto leader of the Gulf monarchy, has made clear that his patience with the Palestinians has worn thin. If Israel can secure a commitment that the Saudis will not oppose annexation when the Palestinians refuse to accept a peace deal in a reasonable period of time, then it makes sense to pause on annexation.

Now is the time for Israel to consider cashing in on the leverage it has built over the past several months by making the world believe that massive annexation is imminent. In exchange for agreeing to slow the pace—something the Trump administration has already hinted it deems desirable—Israel should request immediate diplomatic recognition from the Arab Gulf.

Establishing formal ties should not be done quietly, and doing so out in the open, with the United States taking lead as the mediator, would be a smart move. Trump, a key proponent of Israeli-Gulf relations, could use a major diplomatic victory as he faces a tough re-election campaign, and the Israeli-Gulf alliance could use another four years of Trump. *Jewish News Syndicate* 12-Jun-20

Scripture guides us that the Gulf region will be a friend of Israel at the time of the Gogian invasion (Eze. 38:13) and that Israel will be dwelling on the *mountains* of Israel (Eze. 38:8,21; 39:2,4,17).

Israel Approves Initial Budget for ‘Trump Heights’

Israel’s cabinet has approved an initial \$2.5 million budget for the development of “Trump Heights,” named after the US president. The decision to build the new town in the Golan Heights was made shortly after Washington in March 2019 recognized Israeli sovereignty over the portion of the territory the Jewish state captured from Syria during the 1967 war. In June of last year, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu oversaw an elaborate ground-breaking ceremony near the designated site that was attended by high-ranking officials and US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman. The preliminary plan reportedly allocates about \$1 million to the newly established Settlement Affairs Ministry, which has been tasked with setting up a temporary encampment replete with mobile homes. Overall, the construction of Trump Heights, which will eventually be home to some 300 families, is expected to cost about \$8 million. *Media Line Mideast Daily News* 15-Jun-20



Israel blessed with rain

For the first time for many years, Israel has seen the Sea of Galilee well replenished, following a winter of many heavy storms. At 208.92 M below sea level at start of May, it is considered to be full – the first time for 20 years. Israel has been able to reduce the amount of water it draws from the lake due to water-saving measures and increased desalination. This allows greater flows into the southern stretch of the River Jordan. Sadly, due to

lockdown there are no visitors to see the changed landscape with islands and shorelines now under water. (*Times of Israel* 02-May-20)

Brexit talks: Johnson – “I want a deal by the autumn”

Brexit talks have been proceeding via video links, but little progress has been made as Mr Barnier sticks to his brief, that there must be:

- a) a level playing field – Britain must not be allowed to undercut the EU.
- b) the supremacy of the European Court of Justice.
- c) Britain must continue to allow the same access to her fishing grounds.

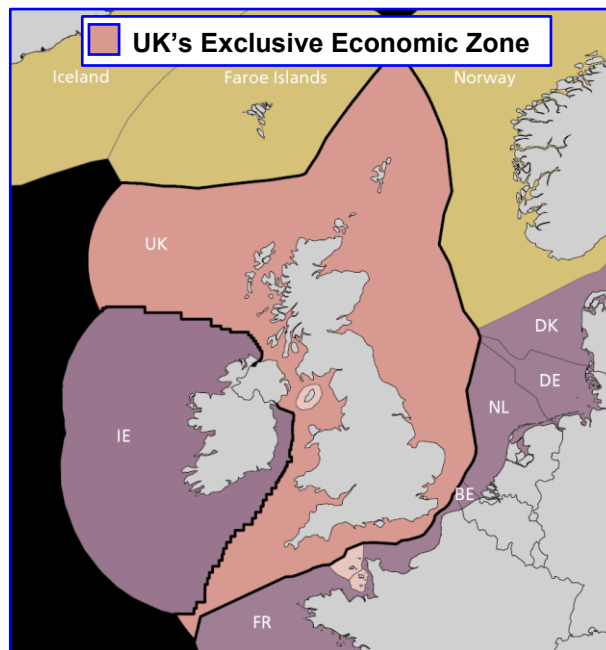
These three points reinforce the different thinking between the UK and the EU. The EU continues to think in terms of calling the shots when the UK has come to the end of this year’s transition period. Mr Johnson makes it clear that this will no longer be the case. The UK will be a sovereign, independent power. There have been reports of huge EU fishing factory ships, hoovering up fish in some of the areas where the UK wishes to conserve dwindling stocks. At present the UK is powerless to stop this. Mr Johnson has repeatedly told the EU that at the end of 2020, Britain takes back control of her maritime waters (see map) and the fish within them. Fishing will then be on UK terms.

Hence the negotiations have been protracted, with lots of accusations of bad faith being hurled back and forth. Business leaders in the EU are beginning to pressurise their leaders to allow their negotiators to accept the reality of the changed UK status and be more accommodating.

The UK has given formal notice that Britain is not going to seek an extension of the transition period. To do so would lock Britain into excessive demands to contribute to the EU bailout costs for Covid-19.

The Prime Minister will make clear that the UK will be prepared to leave the EU "whatever happens" on December 31

There will now be talks in each week of the five weeks between June 29 and July 27 to try to strike a deal. Number 10 sources said on Sunday that Mr Johnson "will make it clear that the negotiation now needs to be swiftly concluded, with certainty provided to the public and businesses by the autumn at the latest". *Daily Telegraph* 15-Jun-20



Brexit talks: Johnson – “Put a tiger in the tank”

In order to speed things up, Boris Johnson, his chief Brexit negotiator David Frost and cabinet minister Michael Grove held a video conference call with Michael Barnier, Ursula von der Leyen (European Commission president), Charles Michel (European Council president), and David Sassoli, (President of the European Parliament), on 16 June.

Boris Johnson has called on the three EU presidents to put a “tiger in the tank” of Brexit negotiations and said he sees "no reason" why a deal cannot be done in July.

There was renewed optimism in London and Brussels about the prospects of finally breaking the deadlock over fishing, the level playing field guarantees and the European Court of Justice after the video call.

“I don’t think we are actually that far apart,” the Prime Minister said, “but what we need to see now is a bit of oomph in the negotiations.” *Daily Telegraph* 16-Jun-20

Those of us who lived through the 60s and 70s will remember the Esso advert, *Put a tiger in your tank*. An extremely successful promotion of Esso fuels, which claimed your vehicle would run faster if you switched to Esso!

So, Boris was pushing the EU to speed up talks and get an agreement by the end of July to give time to get procedures in place for Jan 2021.

Parallel trade talks with US and Japan

Talks are also taking place with several other countries in order to have Trade Deals in place as soon as possible after Britain cuts her last ties with the EU. Many nations



have agreed to initially trade on the same terms as they do at the moment so there will be no disruption. However, Mr Johnson would like to get better deals in place with the potentially huge markets of the US and Japan. Covid-19 has highlighted the danger of much of the world's reliance on China as a trading partner, thus emphasising the value of good deals with these two countries, neither of which are driven by a communist party outlook. It would also strengthen the UK negotiations with the EU, if deals can be rapidly agreed. If the UK can not get a deal done with the EU, she faces a 10% tariff on imports of EU vehicles. A trade agreement with both the US and Japan for a much lower, or zero tariff, would be a boost for US and Japanese carmakers. Nissan already have an assembly plant in the UK, and Ford has three plants here.

The pandemic has not deterred the two governments from taking the first cautious steps towards creating an "ambitious" Japan-UK free trade agreement. Last week, the Department for International Trade (DIT) released an expansive outline of its hopes for the new deal, while confirming the first round of London-Tokyo talks will start shortly via videoconferencing.

The Japan negotiations are just one layer of the UK's complex process of delicately untangling and rewriting its global map of trade relations following its departure from the EU on Jan 31.

Last week, high-profile trade talks with the US kicked off, while negotiating objectives for Australia and New Zealand will shortly be laid out, all against a backdrop of pivotal ongoing UK-EU trade discussions.

For the Japanese government – and the 1,000-plus Japanese companies based in the UK – the imminent start of bilateral trade talks is likely to be greeted with cautious relief following a turbulent four years since the Brexit referendum.

"Japan is one of our largest trading partners and a new trade deal will help to increase trade, boost investment and create more jobs following the economic challenges caused by coronavirus," says Liz Truss, International Trade Secretary, whose team will include top negotiator Crawford Falconer when talks kick off.

Trade flows between the two countries could **jump by £15.2bn**, with UK exporters potentially saving £33m a year from zero or lower tariffs. *Daily Telegraph* 20-May-20

An agreement would then be a stepping stone to an even larger agreement.

As Liz Truss, the UK Trade Secretary, recently argued, with her counterparts from Australia, New Zealand and Singapore, **the case for the UK's membership of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)** has been strengthened.

Japan, its biggest member, views the grouping as a means of engaging with China from a position of greater strength and, unlike the EU, the CPTPP does not aspire towards ever closer union.

It is already **a club with major economic, and potentially geopolitical, significance. UK membership would enhance both of these properties.** *ConservativeHome* 30-Apr-20

Running in parallel with all these talks are the talks with the US, which began in May. As Robert Wood Johnson, the US Ambassador to the UK wrote:

The United States and Britain are close business partners. **We invest over a trillion dollars in each other's economies. We create over a million jobs in each other's countries. We do more than \$300 billion a year in trade. But as vast as our economic partnership is, it can be so much stronger. Despite the close bond between our two countries, we are essentially trading together on the same basis as any two members of the WTO.**

And for the UK as a whole, there are many other advantages to a trade deal with the US. We don't ask our close trading partners to give up sovereignty over their national decisions as a price for doing business. We don't attach a hefty price tag each year to be a member of our trade club.

For the first time in 50 years, the UK has **the power to set its own trade agenda to suit the needs of the British economy. This is the moment we have all been waiting for.** There is so much more we can do together, and the strong bonds between our countries will be more important than ever as we work together to resolve economic disruptions caused by Covid-19, and other challenges to the global economy. Now, at last, the countries known for **our special relationship will have a very special trading relationship too.** *Daily Telegraph* 12-Jun-20

Donald Trump to cut half of US troops in 'delinquent' Germany

Trump has grown tired of subsidising the defence of Europe, with little in the way of contributions on the part of Germany towards NATO's costs. He gave notice that he was reducing the US troops stationed in Germany by half, down to 25,000. (*Daily Telegraph* 16-Jun-20) He is still trying to frustrate the completion Nord Stream, the Russian

gas pipe line to Germany. We are seeing the separation of the US and the UK from Europe in preparation for their fore-ordained roles. Exciting times indeed, with Bible in hand!

The EU crosses the Rubicon as it inches toward fiscal union

It has been fascinating to see the longer-term effects of Covid-19. The West has been forced by their over-reliance on China as a reliable trading partner, to look elsewhere. This has been caused not only because of their handling of the crisis, but their trampling on Hong Kong. China's aggressive march to become the top economy, driven by communist ideology of its superiority over the West, has caused much heart-searching. Many companies are contemplating repatriation of manufacturing items. Cheap goods are of little value if they are stuck half-way round the world.

It has also given the UK a further impetus to turn away from its reliance on Europe and become a world-wide trading power.

For the EU, the effect of Covid-19 has been different. It has shattered the myth that pooled sovereignty brings mutual cooperation. There was little centralised direction from Brussels as to how the Covid crisis should be handled. Each country acted in its own best interest, and initially with little sharing of scarce personal protection equipment (PPE). It highlighted the big divergence in the economies of the EU. Many of the poorer member were badly hit and the economic damage has been immense. The EU's problem is how to bail out its needy members without jeopardising the German economy in doing so. It has speeded up the need to solve the EU's problem of having a monetary union – the euro – without the political unity that this requires.

This *Daily Telegraph* 15-Jun-20 article, with the above heading, sets out the problem and the fundamental changes that are required. (The phrase *crossing the Rubicon* indicates *the point of no return*).

The EU may soon have to decide whether it is **a federation of sovereign states or a fiscally joint United States of Europe**

All along, there has been a dichotomy between those who saw the EU as being on a journey towards a United States of Europe and those who saw it as destined to remain a federation of sovereign states.

There are three different aspects of this dichotomy, but they are all related. The first concerns the euro itself. It was always envisaged by its proponents that monetary union would be a key step along **the road to full union**, including the pooling of past debts, the common issue of new debt, a shared tax base and, eventually, political union. Indeed, this was also recognised by its opponents, including in this country, which is precisely why there was so much hostility here towards joining the euro.



But in other matters there has been anything but convergence. Perhaps most dramatically, while the economies of the prosperous north have grown reasonably well – albeit not spectacularly – since the euro was formed, Italy has hardly grown at all. That's right; **virtually zero growth in 20 years** – even before coronavirus struck. Figures for unemployment in different countries of the zone are similarly divergent.

With regard to government debt, in Germany, even after the hit from coronavirus, the ratio of government debt to GDP in 2021 will be about 70pc. The equivalent figure for Italy will be 160pc. The underlying divergences in institutions, practices, productivity, and inflationary tendencies have been squeezed out of numbers such as the inflation rate and diverted instead into GDP, unemployment, and debt. The net result is that, if the EU were to push on to full union the cost to the north of accepting its share of the debts of the south is now far greater than before. Moreover, it has also increased the likely size of continuing one-way fiscal transfers.

The third issue concerns the question of how the EU will be structured while several of its members remain outside the single currency. The EU has dealt with this by pretending that it was only a matter of time before all EU members would join the euro, even though key non-euro member countries have shown no sign of wanting to join.

Consider the position of two such countries that are in the EU but not in the euro, namely Sweden and Denmark. Together with the Netherlands and Austria, they make up the so-called “frugal four”, which are against structures that pool the debt of member countries and against the institution of substantial fiscal transfers – the so-called “transfer union”.

Although we still don't know how things will pan out, it seems as though the EU has recently taken a major step towards a fiscal union. **The European Commission recently came forward, supported by Germany and**

France, with a plan for a new Coronavirus Relief Fund of some €750bn (£673bn). It is to be financed out of the EU's budget, possibly now partly funded through new taxes whose proceeds go directly to the EU, with payments from the fund being a mixture of grants and loans, and going to where the need is greatest. This involves a form of redistribution from the more prosperous countries, including Denmark and Sweden, to the least prosperous. Game, set and match to the full integrationists?

The amounts involved are not that large and on its own this fund will not do much to alleviate Italy's plight or save the euro. But it does look as though **the Rubicon has been crossed**. Mind you, after Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon in 49BC, things didn't exactly turn out too well.

Germany takes over 6 months presidency of the Council of Europe

At an extremely critical time for EU's future, on July 1, Mrs Merkel takes over from Croatia as the Council of Europe's president for the next six months. Her stamina and resilience are well known, as she prepares to step down next year as Chancellor of Germany. There will be many relieved to have her hand on the tiller at this time of crisis. We may well see substantial changes during this period as Europe takes the path that Bible students have been watching for. Europe has to be the latter-day Beast system. Revelation ch 16 in dealing with the situation at the time of Christ's return paints a picture of three powers in Europe and Russia.

*And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the **dragon**, out of the mouth of the **beast**, and out of the mouth of the **false prophet**.*

For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Rev 16:13,14

Our historic understanding is that the *Dragon* represents Russia, the *Beast* Europe, and the *False Prophet* the Roman Catholic Church. We see Russia ready to fulfil her role, as too the Roman Church. We have been waiting for the formation of a European system with centralised power, as in the past under the Holy Roman Empire. At the heart of both Europe and Russia has to be false Christianity. A Christianity that has reshaped the truth about Israel and her part as God's people and turned it into a picture concerning "the church". This led to persecution of the Jews as an accepted part of church teachings. Its effects are with us today.

Antisemitism on the streets of Europe

In recent days, there have been multiple incidents in Europe that deserve our attention. In France, video emerged of anti-racist demonstrators chanting "dirty Jews", while monuments to recall those who helped defeat the Nazis were defaced. In the UK, an ultra-Orthodox rabbi was stabbed in the streets.

Israeli media showed footage of a large banner saying "Israel, a laboratory of police violence" being held up at the same Paris anti-racism rally.

This banner draws on a conspiracy theory that is growing in popularity and seems to have originated in the United States. According to those spreading this falsehood, Israelis have trained police officers around the world in brutal methods of law enforcement, including the type of chokehold that killed George Floyd.

While it is no secret that Israeli law enforcement sometimes shares expertise with colleagues from around the world, as so many do, the idea that Israeli police teach lessons on brutality is entirely without basis, not to mention absurd. *Aust/Israel Jewish Affairs Council 16-Jun-20*

And so we have continued to witness the Hand of God in the affairs of men, pushing things along towards that final dénouement, when, as our hymn 309 says, *Zion's King shall reign victorious, all the earth shall own his sway*. In the Mercy of our God, may we be with him in that day. Let us redeem the time for the days are surely short.

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