

PROPHECY UPDATE ON THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES May 2023

Since our last update in February 2023 on the anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the world has stumbled towards the Day for which we look so earnestly – the arrival of our Lord Jesus Christ to raise the responsible dead and collect the responsible living unbeknown to a world which will be in utter chaos. This is the clear message of Dan. 12:1-2. The “time of trouble such as never was” is concomitant with the resurrection of the dead. Armageddon will follow some years later just as the nations of the world will boast that they have secured ‘peace and safety’ only to be crushed when sudden destruction comes upon them (1 Thess. 5:3).

In this update we do not intend to deal with matters considered in depth in previous updates but with events occurring at the present in Sudan and on the world's economic front. Past updates can be accessed on the Home page of web site <https://jimcowie.info>.

THE CIVIL WAR IN SUDAN

The last two weeks have seen the civil war in Sudan spiral out of control. Many cease fire agreements have been ignored and the current week-long cease fire is likely to meet the same fate. Nations are extracting their diplomats and citizens as the war between the army and a rival paramilitary group rages intensely with hundreds of casualties and untold suffering being inflicted on the country's population.

Why is Sudan important to Bible prophecy?

An article that appeared in the Australian Christadelphian Lampstand magazine in July/August 2021 by Bro. Klaus Papowski tells us all we need to know about that question. It is quoted in full here:

Watchman - Russian Naval Base in Sudan

Russia has struck a deal with Sudan to establish a naval base in the country, as Moscow seeks to expand its military reach in the Middle East and North Africa. On November 11, 2020, the Russian government announced its agreement with Sudan to establish a naval base at the city of Port Sudan. While the Russian navy already enjoys access rights to the Red Sea port, the concession with Khartoum envisages the creation of a Russian logistics centre that will host up to 300 personnel and four naval units, including nuclear-powered vessels, as part of a 25-year agreement. It will be Russia's first naval base in Africa.

In exchange for the concession, the Kremlin will send military advisers to train Sudanese forces and will be allowed to use Sudanese airports and airspace to support its base in Port Sudan including transport of “weapons, ammunition and equipment”. The base will be used as a logistics support centre and repair and resupply point. On top of that, Moscow will be in charge of security at the base, giving it the chance to install advanced radar and air defence systems.



Russia Joins the Red Sea Scramble

Port Sudan is significantly smaller than the Russian naval base of Tartus in Syria, but it will give Russia a strategic foothold along the Red Sea, which links European and Asian waters and is one of the world's busiest waterways. China established its first overseas military base in Djibouti in 2017 at the mouth of the Red Sea. The only permanent U.S. military base on the continent is also in Djibouti.

At various points during the Cold War, the Soviet Union had bases in the region in South Yemen, Somalia, and Ethiopia, but they were lost following the USSR's collapse. Vladimir Putin has made restoring the country's global military might a cornerstone of his two decades in power.

Regional Power Play

While Russia has sought to beef up its presence in the Mediterranean through its interventions in the conflicts in Syria and Libya, the Kremlin has also kept one eye on the Red Sea which has become a strategic pivot for countries with global ambitions like Russia. This is the rationale behind the long-sought naval base in Sudan, which will allow Moscow to span its military capabilities – and hence its influence – from the Black Sea, down through the eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean.



The Russian intelligence collection ship Ivan Khurs docked at the port of the Sudanese city Port Sudan on April 10, 2021.

Former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir raised the prospect of hosting a Russian base in the country during a 2017 meeting with Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu. After Bashir was ousted in 2019, the discussions continued with the head of Sudan's Transitional Military Council. Moscow and Khartoum have long enjoyed a close relationship, and Russia is a major supplier of arms to the country.

The Wagner Group

The Wagner Group, private military security contractors that the U.S. State Department has characterized as a “surrogate” for the Russian Ministry of Defence, already has a well-established presence in Sudan. Two mining companies from the Wagner network, which is believed to be backed by Putin ally Yevgeny Prigozhin, were sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury in July for formulating plans to suppress the pro-democracy demonstrations that toppled Bashir, including “the staging of public executions” to distract the protesters.



Why is the Red Sea Important

The area is rich in natural resources like gas and gold, and home to two critical choke points in global trade: the Suez Canal and the Bab al Mandab strait.

Besides political considerations, the Red Sea is already particularly crowded – the United States, France and China maintain military bases in Djibouti. Now the United States will have to deal with Russia's accrued military presence in a pivotal region. The main reason of concern is Russia's increased capability to operate militarily in the proximity of two of the most relevant chokepoints of the world, Suez and Bab el-Mandab. Since 10% of the world's trade and 9% of oil shipments cross these points every day, controlling them is of crucial importance for global economic stability and security. In the long term, Russia's footholds in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea will affect the United States' control over Suez and Bab el-Mandab, bringing an intensification of global power competition and potentially turning these chokepoints into flashpoints.

Sudan in the Bible

The word Sudan is not actually found in the Bible but we do find the ancient territory of the Sudan called in the Bible “Cush”. “Cush” is often translated Ethiopia in the KJV.

The Hebrew word rendered “Ethiopia” is, according to Strong, *Kûsh*, and is often rendered ‘Cush’ in the AV. Cush was the name of a son of Ham (Gen. 10:6). It is thought that some of his descendants may have gone east and settled in Cushistan. However, the primary area of settlement was to the south of Egypt, where his descendants formed the kingdom of Kush, also known as Nubia.



The Kingdom of Kush

There is total agreement among scholars that the specific land of Kush, a specific powerful kingdom, was just south of Egypt and that it was centered in what is now northern Sudan. It had vaguely defined borders that fluctuated throughout the hundreds of years of its existence, as did Israel and Judah. Evidence for the location of Kush comes from both the Biblical text itself and from a variety of archaeological sources.

Location of Kush

Several biblical references pointing to the location of Kush clearly link it with Egypt, such as Ezek. 30:9; Psa. 68:31; Nah. 3:8-9; Isa. 20:3-5. That Kush was just south of Egypt is shown by Ezekiel when he speaks of the punishment coming upon Egypt: “Therefore, behold, I am against you and against your streams, and I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation, from Migdol to Syene, as far as the border of Cush.” (Ezek. 29:10 – ESV). Migdol was on the Mediterranean at the northern end of Egypt, Syene (modern Aswan) was at the south end of Egypt, so Ezekiel's prophecy includes all of Egypt, from the northern coast to the southern edge, “as far as the border of Kush”. This puts Biblical Kush just south of Egypt at that point in history.

This is also seen in Daniel 11, where the king of the north is described as invading Egypt with “the Libyans and the Ethiopians [Hebrew *Kûshiy*] ... at his steps” (Dan. 11:43). The writer Nicolas Soteri states: “In what is now modern Sudan, Kush was centred on the Middle Nile – downstream from the confluence of the White and Blue Niles at Khartoum”. (Soteri, N. (2003), “Africa’s other pyramids”, *BBC History Magazine*, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 30).

Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary refers to **Cush** as “The land south of Egypt, also called Nubia, which includes parts of Sudan. Cush began just beyond Syene (modern Aswan; Ezek. 29:10). ... Its ancient Greek name was Ethiopia, not to be confused with the modern nation of Ethiopia (Abyssinia).”

History of Kush

During the eighth century B.C. Kush expanded beyond its borders northwards and took control of Egypt. The Kushite king, Piye, completed the conquest started by his father Kashta, of the whole of Egypt, creating an empire that stretched from central northeast Africa to the Mediterranean. Kushite kings were to rule Egypt as Pharaohs for just under a century, and play a major role, for a brief period, in the international power-politics of the day. One of the Kushite kings who ruled Egypt is mentioned in 2 Kings 19 in connection with Rabshakeh: “And when he heard say of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia [Hebrew *Kûsh*], Behold, he is come out to fight against thee: he sent messengers again unto Hezekiah . . .” (2 Kings 19:9). When the Assyrians invaded Egypt they drove the Kushites out.

The kingdom of Kush declined from the first century onwards, and was eventually overrun by the Aksumite empire in the south. The Romans had called the Kushite kingdom Ethiopia, but it was the Aksumite empire which would form the basis of modern Ethiopia.

The Kushite empire eventually split into three states: Nobatia, Makuria and Aiwa. By the seventh century there were just two states, Makuria having absorbed Nobatia. These states had initially adopted a Christian culture. However, from the seventh century onwards the states came under pressure from Arab Muslims, and by the fifteenth century Arab incursions had led to the states becoming Islamic. Nevertheless, in the

south the country continued to be dominated by black Africans. This north-south divide continues to be felt to the present day.

Britain and the Sudan

In 1898 British-Egyptian forces led by Lord Kitchener, established a joint British-Egyptian rule in Sudan. In Isaiah 43 Yahweh declares: “For I am Yahweh thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia [Hebrew *Kûsh*] and Seba for thee” (Isa. 43:3). This had a fulfilment when Britain received control of Sudan in 1898. This “ransom” was given for the part that Britain played in the restoration of the Jews to Palestine.

Control of the Sudan also gave Britain another benefit which was strategic. During the Second World War the Sudanese helped the Allies in a number of ways: their Sudan Defence Force prevented Italy from gaining a foothold in Sudan, giving time for British and Indian forces to arrive in strength; the Sudan railways and ships helped supply forces with food; and also the Sudan government gave gifts of cash to Britain and India.

Sudan Independence

Sudan gained independence in 1956. Since then, for most of the time, it has been racked by civil war. This war has been fought between the government forces in the north and the rebel forces in the south led by the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA). The roots of the violence have never changed: British-ruled Sudan wasn’t a country; it was two. The south is tropical, under-developed, and populated by Dinkas, Nuers, Azandes, and some hundred other ethnic groups of African descent. The north, by contrast, is drier, and wealthier – a Saharan world with strong links to the Muslim Middle East.

North and South Sudan

In part to prevent neighboring Egypt from claiming northern Sudan as its own, the British lumped the Sudan’s north and south together. The two parts of the country are very different, though: The north is mostly Arab and Muslim, while the south is made up of ethnic sub-Saharan Africans who are Christian or Animist.

Until 2011, they were one country. That year, following decades of civil war, an overwhelming majority of South Sudanese voted in a January 2011 referendum to secede and become in July 2011 Africa’s first new country, South Sudan, since Eritrea split from Ethiopia in 1993. Today, conflict continues to roil both countries.

Sudan in Prophecy

Russia’s move into the Sudan is significant in relation to two well-known passages of scripture



concerning the “latter days” (Ezek. 38:16) and “the time of the end” (Dan. 11:40). Both Ezekiel 38 and Daniel 11 indicate that when Gog or the King of the North invades Israel, that North Sudan will be allied to Russia.

Ezekiel 38 describes the invasion of Israel after its re-establishment as a nation in the land (Vv. 8,9,11,12,14,16,18). The invader is Russia, v.2 – “Son of man, set thy face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the **prince of Rosh**, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him” (R.V.). Gesenius states that “Rosh” is a reference to “undoubtedly the Russians”. Unger’s Bible Dictionary describes this as “the actual invasion of Palestine by a great northern confederacy ... headed up by Russia”.

The confederate nations are described as a “great company” (v.4) and “all thy company that are assembled” (v.7). Some of the “great company” is named in verse 5: “Persia, Ethiopia (Hebrew *Kûsh*), and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet” (KJV). Many other translations translate this as “Persia, Cush, and Put” (RV, RSV, ESV, ASV, Young’s Literal Translation). Cush as we have seen is a reference to Sudan, and in particular to North Sudan. So here is a small detail of the prophecy which is coming into the picture as Russia establishes a naval base in North Sudan. This is yet another of the many unmistakable signs that we are living in “the latter days”.

In chapter 11 Gabriel reveals to Daniel how the angels would rearrange the world scene to provide for the final outcome of the Divine plan. This would require important world-wide crises to occur. It was necessary that two mighty powers be developed, described as “the King of the North” and “the King of the South”. These would develop out of Alexander’s Grecian empire after his death and would ripple down to “the time of the end” (Dan. 11:40) when, in the latter day manifestation, the King of the North “shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown” (Dan. 11:41). “The Libyans and the Ethiopians (*Kûshiy* = Sudan) shall be at his steps” (Dan. 11:43), “And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.” (Dan. 11:45). The ESV translates Dan. 11:43 as “the Libyans and the Cushites shall follow in his train”, and Rotherham as “with Libyans and Ethiopians (*Kûshiy* = Sudan) among his followers”.

So Daniel predicts that Sudan will be among the followers of the King of the North when Russia advances against Israel (“the glorious land” or “the glorious holy mountain”) in the latter days. This alignment of Russia and Sudan is what we expect to see before the return of our Lord Jesus Christ to the earth, for “at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” (Dan. 12:1).

Klaus Papowski, Moreton Bay Ecclesia, Brisbane, Australia

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- Russia to Build Red Sea Naval Base (<https://www.futuredirections.org.au/publication/russia-to-build-red-sea-naval-base/>)
- History of Sudan - Wikipedia

THE CRUMBLING WORLD ECONOMY

Recently, questions have been received about what is happening in the world's economic and financial affairs as banks collapse, huge building companies go bankrupt and inflation continues to push up interest rates and impose unbearable cost of living pressures on ordinary folk around the globe.

To one recent correspondent the following response was given. It is repeated here:

What we are witnessing in the collapse of banks and large companies (particularly in the building trade) is the forerunner of the great Depression that many 'experts' expect later this year. They do not use the term Depression because it would be a self-fulfilling prophecy spooking the markets and hastening the collapse. Most now agree that the world will be hit by a Recession this year. However, the definition of a recession is two quarters of negative growth while a depression is years of negative growth.

The pattern of which we speak often in prophecy updates sent out is found in the warning of Christ in Luke 17:26-30:

"And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed."

Careful thought about this passage comes to the following conclusions:

- Christ will not come in a time of deep economic or domestic hardship. People will continue to consume lavishly despite increasing pressure on household budgets due to inflation (a useful tool in the hands of the angels to bring on the crash) right up to the day of Christ's return to raise the dead.
- Accordingly, Christ would not come when the world was in lockdown due to Covid. There must be full activity for restaurant and pub type dining and drinking, multiple unrestricted weddings, full-on buying and selling, building and planting. None of these happened during the Covid pandemic lockdowns but they are happening now.
- Christ's return will occur just before the collapse of the prosperity of the world and his servants will be secreted away from danger just as Noah and Lot and families were.
- The collapse of the world's economy and financial systems will be on the scale of the disaster of the Flood and the holocaust of Sodom and its sister cities in its effects on humanity. That is why it is called "a time of trouble such as never was" (Dan. 12:1), and

it is concomitant with the resurrection of the responsible dead (Dan. 12:2). Hence, the resurrection and the removal of the responsible living happens just as Noah's timely removal into the ark and Lot's fingernail biting escape from Sodom. We will not be here to experience the massive tribulations that will hit this world.

Anyone watching what is happening in the world, and in the Brotherhood, at present, and is not ignorant of Bible prophecy properly understood could not be 'asleep' to the looming crisis.

Readers are also directed to the prophecy update for Midyear 2021 (accessible via Home page of <https://jimcowie.info>) which we quote here again:

THE COMING GREAT DEPRESSION

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.

It is significant that most financial collapses in modern history have occurred in the September/October period (the Day of Atonement time of the year) commencing with the 29 October 1929 collapse of the stock market leading to the Great Depression of the 1930's. Financial commentators have been saying for years that another collapse in the cycle is overdue. It will happen when God is ready and the Covid pandemic has made it certain. Debt around the world is out of control and many countries and businesses teeter on the brink of bankruptcy. The watchful and faithful need to be ready for the call to the presence of Christ.

Any doubts about how close the collapse may be can be erased by the raft of articles and videos appearing on the parlous state of the world's economy as Covid tightens its grip on the throat of economic activity. The impending disaster has caused many nations to abandon a Covid elimination strategy and adopt an approach that learns to live with the pandemic.

By end of July (i.e. 2021), countries like Great Britain will end Covid restrictions even though the fast-spreading Delta variant of the virus is increasing the number of cases every day. The prime minister has said the country will have to live with Covid and accept the deaths that will inevitably come. The same approach is being adopted by other countries in Europe and the Americas. It is summer in the northern hemisphere and people are tired of being locked away from normal human activities.

Christ was very clear about the conditions that would exist in the earth when he came again. Luke 17:26-29 – “And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did **eat**, they **drank**, they married wives, they were given in **marriage**, until the day

that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did **eat**, they **drank**, they **bought**, they **sold**, they **planted**, they **build**; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.” The pandemic put a damper on many of the activities highlighted in bold above. When restrictions are lifted, men will not only return to these pre-Covid activities, they will do so with alacrity and gusto. It will be in times of that character that Christ will return stealthily to gather his people, unknown to the world, whose attention and interest in the removal of the saints from among them will be distracted by the collapse of the world’s prosperity as the Great Depression hits.

Any doubt about the responsible being removed from a time of general prosperity is dispelled by the Lord’s warning in the letter to the Laodiceans (Rev. 3:14-21). As brethren of the past have pointed out, the letters to the seven ecclesias are actually prophetic of the history that would unfold from John’s day (AD 96) to the return of Christ. That is why the letter to the Laodiceans is the only one containing the words, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock” (Rev. 3:20). This letter pertains prophetically to the post-war period of general prosperity around the globe, a prosperity that in many countries challenges the vitality of the Gospel message in people’s lives. The Laodiceans were lukewarm because they were “rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing.” This is a warning to the final generation as the world hankers to return to its materialistic and entertainment pursuits after a long period of lockdown and restrictions on their normal way of life.

Mark 13:33-37 – “Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.”

There is little that we would change in the article above even though a couple of years have passed by.

RUSSIA’S INVASION OF UKRAINE

The world is hoping desperately that unverified rumors that Vladimir Putin is suffering from cancer and is undergoing chemotherapy are true. A friend pointed out recently that even if Putin were to die (and he is likely to do so in the job one way or the other), there is a cabal of close confidants who insiders say are actually worse than Putin who would probably replace him. One thing we know from Scripture. Russia will be ruled by a ruthless and deceptive dictator at the time of the end (Ezek. 38:2,8-12) and he is called ‘Gog’ (“the one at the top”).

On Wednesday 3 May 2023 two drones were shot down over the Kremlin in Moscow and Russia accused Ukraine of attempting to assassinate Vladimir Putin. Many believe this was the work of sources within Russia to set up a pretext for an escalation of the war with Ukraine.

Putin came to power as President in 2000 on the back of an FSB (formerly KGB) arranged bombing of two high rise apartment buildings in northern Moscow as a pretext to attack Grosny the capital of Chechnya where 500,000 lives were lost in the subsequent aerial bombings. Putin falsely accused Chechnyan rebels for the bombings in Moscow. Hitler did a similar thing on 1 September 1939 to justify his invasion of Poland and precipitate World War 2. There is nothing new in this type of behavior by dictators.

We do not intend to repeat the information provided in former updates, but to add just a few comments about the current situation in Ukraine. It seems like a stalemate at present but the inactivity of Russia belies what is actually going on behind the scenes.

- Western nations have promised new state-of-the-art tanks to Ukraine but most will not be available for some years. Too late to save the Ukrainian army from ultimate defeat through exhaustion of materiel and manpower.
- Ukraine's greatest need – air support – is still not available in the way and number repeatedly requested by the Ukrainian government. This is because NATO fears becoming directly involved in the conflict. The country remains vulnerable to attacks from the sky and its vital infrastructure is in tatters in many places. This can only go on for so long. Fatigue is setting in and eating away at resolve.
- Support within the European Union for Ukraine is waning as the shortages of supplies for modern living in those wealthy countries is increasing.
- Having been humiliated by the surprising resistance and pushback by the Ukrainian army and shown that its current weapons are outdated and deficient in modern technological warfare, Russia is undertaking a huge campaign to develop its arsenal and acquire new weapons from allies like Iran and China. Modernisation of its military forces and weapons is now top of the list of priorities in Russia. That is exactly what Joel 3:9-10 indicates, not only for Russia, but for all nations who perceive the dangers that now threaten the world.
- Ukraine has decided its own fate. By insisting that Russia must give up all captured territories, including Crimea, before there can be peace, Ukraine is demanding the impossible. No Russian leader of any character would accede to that leave alone a ruthless dictator. While Ukraine insists on that outcome as the only acceptable path to peace they are doomed to incorporation into the Russian orbit just as Putin intends and Scripture requires.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

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