

## **Light for the last days.**

*A series of studies in Scripture concerning the character  
of the closing days of this age.*

### **#5. God's answer to the problem of the Suez Canal. pp. 1 - 8**

In the year 1854 the Viceroy of Egypt, Said Pasha, gave the first concession to Ferdinand de Lesseps for the construction of the Suez Canal. The concession was for a lease of 99 years dating from the opening of the canal. The canal was actually opened on 17th November, 1869, so that the year in which it will revert to Egypt will be 1968, or 32 years from the date of writing.

The canal is such a vital feature both commercially and strategically, and the whole question of its future involves so many political difficulties, that one fears that war will be inevitable. While we do not intend to convey the impression that the Suez Canal is actually mentioned in Scripture, there seems to be abundant evidence to prove that it is linked up with the events of the future.

Several great changes are predicted that have to do with the configuration of the land. Among these predictions there is a definite statement that the tongue of the Egyptian sea (into which the Suez Canal enters at Suez) is to be smitten, and that another "canal" is to be opened, joining the Mediterranean Sea with the Dead Sea, and thence, via the Gulf of Abakah, with the Red Sea.

### **- - - Illustration - - - (BE-XXVII.2).**

In order to appreciate the prophecies that deal with this theme, several subsidiary studies will have to be prosecuted in order that the geography of the Scriptures may be intelligible, and the weight of evidence felt. Let us first of all acquaint ourselves with the statement made by Isaiah with reference to this subject.

"And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with His mighty wind shall He shake His hand over the river, and shall smite it into seven streams, and make men go over dryshod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt" (Isa. xi. 15, 16).

We shall have to refer sooner or later to the map that accompanies this article, and there is one point in this connection which we will explain at once. In the year 1855,

Major I. Scott Phillips wrote a small book entitled “Approximations of Prophecy” in which he developed the idea which stimulated our own search and is to some extent the basis of this article. It will be seen that the book was published in the year following concession to de Lesseps to begin the Suez Canal. No reference, of course, to this canal is found in the book, as it was not then in existence. Major Phillips was concerned with a mightier “canal” that shall enrich Jerusalem and heal the Dead Sea. In his map he quotes the reference given above to the smiting of the river into seven streams, and places the citation across the delta of the Nile. With this, however, we are not able to agree. The word *yeor* is usually the word found in the original when the reference is to the Nile, while the word “The River” without qualifications (usually the Hebrew *Naharas* as in Isa. xi. 15) generally refers to the Euphrates. The R.V. makes two alterations:--

- (1) The word “River” is printed with a capital “R” indicating the Euphrates.
- (2) The words “Smite it into seven streams” are translated as though the river Euphrates were to be subdivided into smaller streams.

The object is that there may be a highway “from Assyria” and “like . . . . Egypt”—which would not be intelligible if the Delta of the Nile had been intended. The exodus from Egypt underlies many of the prophecies of Israel’s final restoration (cf. Isa. ix. 11; Jer. xxxi. 31, 32; Exod. xxxiv. 10). The “smiting” of the river in Isa. xi. 15 corresponds with the “smiting” of the “wicked one” in verse 4 of the same chapter.

In our article referring to the nations at the time of the end we cited “The burden of Egypt” from Isa. xix. We paid little or no attention at the time to the lengthy reference that is made to an extraordinary failure of the Nile. We must now consider this point:--

“And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and become dry. And the rivers shall stink; the canals of Egypt shall be minished and dried up . . . . the fishers also shall lament” (Isa. xix. 5-8).

At the end of this chapter is another reference to the “highway”, not only out of Assyria as stated in chapter xi., but also out of Egypt (as implied in chapter xi. by the reference to the tongue of the Egyptian sea).

The drying up of the sea, and the making of the rivers into a wilderness is referred to once again in Isa. l. 2.

Judgment is to fall upon Egypt, and in Ezek. xxix. we read:--

“Behold, I am against thee, and against thy rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation from MIGDOL to SYENE, and even unto the border of Ethiopia” (Ezek. xxix. 10 R.V. margin).

The word translated “tower” in the A.V. is Migdol, the name of the city mentioned in Exod. xiv. 2. If the reader will turn to the map given on page 2 he will see that Migdol is vertically above Syene, which is now called Asouan.

A series of prophecies are made against Egypt in Ezekiel, in which there is an interweaving of past history (see the reference to Nebuchadnezzar in xxx. 10) with “the Day of the Lord” (xxx. 3). Like the prophecy of Ezek. xxvii. and xxviii. concerning Tyre, they look forward for their real fulfillment to the time of the end.

We learn from these chapters that the King of Babylon will attack Egypt in the future, and the effect, unlike anything which has yet been accomplished in that country, will be that “they shall know that I am the Lord” (Ezek. xxx. 26).

Almost up to the time of the end, Palestine will have been a reproach and a wasted land, and Arabia a desert. The tables, however, are to be turned. Egypt is to be utterly wasted, the Nile is to be dried up, while Palestine shall become a delightful land, and “the desert shall blossom as the rose”.

Another prophecy associating the gathering of Israel with geographical disturbances is found in Zech. x.

“I will sow them among the peoples . . . . I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria . . . . And shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the depths of the Nile shall dry up . . . . and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away” (Zech. x. 9-11).

The association of the house of Judah with the house of Joseph (Zech. x. 6) shows that this passage looks forward to the future day of Israel’s restoration.

The above citations are enough to satisfy the reader that, at the time of the end, considerable geographical changes are to take place in Egypt, particularly in connection with the Nile. We now turn to one or two passages that speak of geographical changes at the same time in the land of Israel itself.

In order to appreciate the first of these references in Isa. xxxiii. a knowledge of the context is essential. We give below, without elaboration, the main structure:--

**Isaiah xxxiii. 13-24.**

- A1 | 13-17. THE KING.—Seen in the land.
- B1 | 18, 19. THE ENEMY.—Not seen.
- A2 | 20, 21. THE LORD.—Jerusalem seen as quiet.
- B2 | 21. THE ENEMY.—Not seen.
- A3 | 22. THE LORD.—He will save.
- B3 | 23. THE ENEMY.—Destroyed.
- A4 | 24. THE INHABITANTS.—Forgiven.

The particular passage with which we are concerned at the moment is Isa. xxxiii. 21 and 23.

“But there the Lord will be with us in majesty, a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby . . . . Thy

tacklings are loosed; they could not strengthen the foot of the mast, they could not spread the sail” (R.V.).

At no time in history has Jerusalem been “a place of broad rivers and streams”; and it is meaningless to say that no galley with oars or gallant ship shall pass a city if it is miles from the sea, and without a navigable river. The structure relates these references to the enemy, of whom Israel need have no fear, but that only makes it more emphatic that a great geographical change involving sea and river must have come about. Let the reader ponder the following passages in the light of these predicted changes.

“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee” (Isa. xliii. 2).

There is a reference to the crossing of the Red Sea here, for in verse 3 the Lord says: “I gave Egypt for thy ransom.” However, Israel are told not to remember “the former things”:-

“Remember ye not the former things . . . . Behold I will do a new thing: now it shall spring forth . . . . I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert . . . . I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert” (Isa. xliii. 18-20).

Turning to Isa. xi. we read:-

“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. xi. 9).

How are we to understand this last phrase: “As the waters cover the sea”? The expression is a strange one, for the sea itself is a gathering together of the waters. How then can we speak of “waters” covering the “sea” as at the time of the flood, but “waters covering the sea” seems a strange figure. The difficulty disappears if we regard these words as representing a literal fact in relation to the Dead Sea. Water flowing down from Jerusalem will cover the Dead Sea, and this fact is used as a figure of the fruitful results of the knowledge of the Lord. The reader may perhaps ask how it is possible for waters from Jerusalem to cover the Dead Sea, and to this problem we must now address ourselves.

The last nine chapters of Ezekiel are devoted to the restoration of Israel’s land and temple in the last days. In chapter xlvii. we read of waters that flow from Jerusalem becoming a river that a man might “swim in”, a river that cannot be “passed over”. Ezekiel’s attention is drawn to the direction in which this river flows:-

“These waters issue out toward the east country (i.e. they flow inland, not down to the Mediterranean), and go down into the desert (*Arabah*, the plain, Deut. ii. 18—associated with the Jordan and the “sea of the plain, even the salt sea”, that is the “Dead Sea”) and go into the sea (i.e. the Dead Sea), which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed” (Ezek. xlvii. 8).

That the Dead Sea is meant is rendered certain by verse 10, for Engedi stands on its western shore (see map).

The prophet Zechariah describes how these living waters that heal the Dead Sea come our from Jerusalem:--

“I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle . . . . His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half toward the south . . . . for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal . . . . And it shall come to pass in that day that living waters shall come out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea (Eastern, i.e., the Dead Sea), and half of them toward the hinder sea (Western, i.e., the Mediterranean)” (Zech. xiv. 2-8).

Here we have definite statements that cannot be explained away. East and West, North and South are geographical points.

A very great valley reaches to Azal. *The Companion Bible* comments: “A new place, yet to have this name, at one extremity of the valley.” The reader will see that the A.V. spells it Azal, and the R.V. Azel. A glance at the map will show that Rollins in his “Ancient History” marks two names close together near the site of Ashkelon, namely Afcalon-Azol. Jeremiah seems to refer to this in chapter xlvii:--

“O thou sword of the Lord . . . . the Lord hath given thee a charge against *Ashkelon*, and against the sea shore” (Jer. xlvii. 6, 7).

When we remember that the Mediterranean is 1300 feet above the level of the Dead Sea, we can well imagine what would happen if a “very great valley” extended from Ashkelon or Azal on the coast, as far as the Jordan valley in the East. The rapid rise of water at the Dead Sea would cause the Jordan to find its old river bed and flow out into the Gulf of Akabah (*see map*). *R. Stephenson writes*:--

“The Wadi-el-Arabah appears in part to be an old sea beach, deeply grooved by torrents.”

And Keith says of this valley that “without doubt it was the ancient bed of that river (the Jordan) before the volcanic eruption which formed the actual basin of the dead Sea”.

The “tongue of the Egyptian sea”, the sea of Suez, will be destroyed, the land slightly raised, and where the Delta of the Nile and the Suez Canal now exist, men shall walk dryshod. Micah speaks of the Lord clearing a valley like wax and of the waters pouring down a steep place (Micah i. 3, 4). Joel tells us that “all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come out of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim” (i.e., the plains of Moab bordering the Dead Sea) (Joel iii. 18).

The words of the well known Psalm may be far more literal than many have supposed:--

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, And the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled. Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah (i.e., “Look on this picture; now look on that”).

There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High” (Psa. xlv.).

The passage speaks of the contrast between the roaring torrent falling 1300 feet from Azal to the Dead Sea, the moving of the mountains and other accompaniments of this great moment, and the river of living waters that flows out from the holy place at Jerusalem.

We must bring this article to a close, particularly as the subject is not one that comes strictly within the orbit of our ministry. Enough, we trust, has been brought forward to throw some light on another feature of the last days.

There is, however, one further point which may be mentioned in conclusion. The only reserve that we might feel over accepting Major Phillips’ map is that, whereas he shows no water-way other than that of the Mediterranean, the prophecy speaks also of living waters that issue out from Jerusalem. This calls for some adjustment, which may not be possible with our present knowledge. The fact, however, remains that Major Phillips has put forward something that appears to be in general harmony with the Word, however incomplete the scheme may be. If all the details do not prove to be correct, the general teaching of prophecy concerning the land of Israel leaves us perfectly certain that in the glorious kingdom yet to come, God will not only blot out man’s canal at Suez, but will make His own at Azal, and moreover sweeten the Dead Sea, so providing a symbol of blessing for the whole earth.

## **#6. “All faiths” instead of “The faith of God’s elect”. pp. 21, 22**

We have considered in the preceding articles a few of the outstanding features that characterize the last days. We have gathered that an anti-christian system of worship will predominate, that Egypt, Babylon, Greece, Persia, the Mediterranean, and of course Palestine, will figure largely at the time of the end, and that great and even catastrophic changes must be expected in some parts of the earth, particularly in the neighbourhood of Egypt, Assyria and Palestine. Moreover, the “kings of the east” are mentioned (Rev. xvi. 12). The exact identity of these kings we do not present know. It is clear that Japan will probably play an important part in any future international dispute, but whether Japan will be one of these “kings” we do not pretend to say. Some think that the names Meshech, Tubal, and Rosh (translated “Chief prince” in Ezek. xxxviii. 2) refer to Moscow, Tobolsk and Russia. But this again we must confess we do not know. The LXX uses names here that refer to nations inhabiting the district round about the Caucasus. God and Magog in the same verse (Ezek. xxxviii. 2) refer to some nation or nations north of Palestine.