

East Jerusalem will increasingly suffer, as overcrowding caused by large families, and poverty caused by low pay and unemployment, have their effect.

The *Economist* takes the view that the prime motive of Israel with regard to the purpose of the wall near Jerusalem, together with its other building projects in the city, is to strengthen its hold on Jerusalem. It concludes:

"If the barrier really is just for security, Israel could take measures to reduce its economic impact. It could improve the conditions for Palestinian Jerusalemites and it could stop the incessant encroachment of Jewish neighbourhoods into Palestinian areas. But so far its main concern seems to be to ensure that this conquest of Jerusalem be the last one".⁶

If this interpretation is correct then this provides evidence that Jerusalem is increasingly not being "trodden down of the Gentiles" (Lk. 21:24).

Whatever the motives behind the building of the barrier, there will come a time when Israel will see no need for walls and fences. No doubt the dismantling of the wall will be seen as a dramatic event akin to the fall of the Berlin Wall. Yet the confidence Israel will have at that time will be misplaced: "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thess. 5:3).

In Proverbs it is written, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls" (25:28). The absence of the walls and fences in Israel will be a manifestation of the folly of self-confidence in their own strength rather than trusting in God. The invasion of Gog against the land without walls will show just how great will be this folly.

6. *Ibid.*

Gazprom goes north to the empty place

Nigel Bernard

Gazprom is preparing to extract gas from one of the largest reserves in the world. The field is in the harsh northern Arctic Sea, but the revenue will help strengthen Russia as it is provisionally prepared for the invasion of Israel.

IN GENESIS 1 it is written, "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (v. 2). The Hebrew word translated "without form" is used later on in Scripture to describe places of desolation. For example, in Deuteronomy 32 the word is translated "waste" and is used to describe the wilderness: "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye" (v. 10). So even after the Creation there were areas of the world which still could be said to be "without form" or "waste".

The wilderness did not match fully the way the earth was at the beginning of the first day. This was because the earth at that time was covered in water. Yet there are parts of the world today

that come close to replicating the situation as it was on the first day of Creation. One such place lies in the Arctic waters of Russia. Undaunted by the 'first day' conditions of this area, Russia is looking to exploit the natural resources that lie beneath these waters.

Job said of God, "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing" (26:7). The "empty place" is the same in the Hebrew as "without form". The word "north" can relate to something quite local, for example the side of a tabernacle (see Exodus 26:20). However, the context in Job is global, for he goes on to talk about the earth in space. The further north one goes on the earth, the more desolate the earth becomes. Eventually the cold wastes of the Arctic are reached. Truly, the "north" stretches "over the empty place". And this place "without form" also includes water.

Recently, Richard Orange, writing for the *Business* newspaper, reported the following:

"Russian gas giant Gazprom will this week begin deciding which of five international oil companies will win the right to take part in the largest single gas project of the next dec-

PICTURE: GAZPROM



Gazprom launches construction of the onshore section of the North European Pipeline in 2005, illustrating the growing importance of Gazprom in supplying fuel to the nations, and the increasing strength of Russia that results.

ade—the \$25bn (€21bn, £14bn) development of the Shtokman field in the Arctic Sea”.¹ The gas field is the third largest ever discovered. Whichever companies Gazprom chooses, it is anticipated that Gazprom will retain a fifty-one-per-cent stake in the field. The gas will be pumped to liquefied natural gas (LNG) processing plants and then exported by ship to North America. The deputy chairman of Gazprom, Alexander Medvedev, has stated that the field “will enable Gazprom to be a major player in the LNG market in the USA”.² Orange reports that, according to a banking advisor to one of the competing companies, the Kremlin is instructing Gazprom as to which companies to choose. Gazprom itself is fifty-one-per-cent owned by the Russian Government, and this highly lucrative field will provide a boost to the Russian economy. It is another sign that the northern power prophesied in Ezekiel 38 is continuing to develop in strength.

But extracting the gas will be no easy task. Of this field, Orange writes, “More than 500km into

the Russian Arctic Sea, where the temperature is below freezing for nine months of the year, Shtokman is in one of the most forbidding environments on earth”. The area truly is a microcosm of what the sunless, and therefore presumably freezing, world must have been like at the beginning of Creation.

Ezekiel 38 describes the Gogian force as a power from the north: “And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts” (v. 15). At present, Russia is seeking to strengthen its foothold in the north, the place of which it is written, “He stretcheth out the north over *the empty place*”. However, Gog will need to learn the truth that, whatever success he may have in creating wealth from these waters, it is God “That made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Rev. 14:7).

1. Orange, R. (2006), “Battle begins for Russia’s huge Arctic Sea gas field”, *Business*, 9/10 Apr., p. 1.
2. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/4531578.stm>.

Special Issue June/July

The next issue of the *Testimony* will be a Special Issue on the general theme of bringing up children. After several articles setting out Scriptural principles and examples, the main part of the magazine will consist of Scriptural and practical advice from a wide range of brethren and sisters across the world. It will be approximately 100 pages in size.

Readers should note that this Special Issue will be a combined June/July issue and is scheduled to be sent out in early July. Subscribers will receive it as part of their subscription. Additional copies are available at £2.00 each, including postage. Extra postage will be charged to non-UK readers, who will receive an invoice with payment instructions along with their magazine(s). Orders for extra copies should be sent to the Subscriptions Secretary, address back cover.