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A Study of J. Frank Norris: His Teachings before and during World War II

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Introduction

J. Frank Norris was considered the leading fundamentalist in the 1930s-1940s. This was evident as Norris held the pulpit at two different churches in two states (Texas and Michigan). Studying World War II from the lens of a leading Baptist pastor provides a unique perspective. Norris' teachings were

¹ Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, "J. Frank Norris Collection," *Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives*, July 2012, <http://www.sbhla.org/downloads/124.pdf> (accessed January 2022).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ J. Frank Norris, "The Jew in History," *Baptist Basics*, 1933,

connected to prophecies, eschatology, and overall, Christian living. This study examines the teachings of Norris before and during the period of the Second World War. Through studying his sermons and speeches, it is clear that Norris felt something unique was occurring worldwide. The laymen during his time and the reader today have the opportunity to understand his pre-millennial views and the ongoing tension overseas.

The Jew in History

Norris was revered within much of the Baptist Community. He was a graduate of Baylor University and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.¹ Furthermore, he was credited with assisting in the creation and development of the Southern Baptist Convention's Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.² There he served on a committee as a trustee while pastoring his First Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, and Temple Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan.³

In 1933, Norris visited Texas' Jews in their synagogue.⁴ The pastor was adamant that Jews played a historical role in past and future events. Addressing the antisemitic behavior seen across the globe, Norris vehemently condemned such rhetoric.⁵ He thoroughly discussed the Jews' history, explaining that they "were a unique people group."⁶ Norris went as far as teaching that "the existence of Jews was an apologetic tool for the reality of God."⁷ He stated the following:

If you want to understand the Bible, you study God's dealing with the Jews. He is the key that unlocks four things—first, the mysteries of divine revelation

<https://www.baptistbasics.org/baptists/j-frank-norris/the-jew-in-history/> (accessed January 2022).

⁵ Norris, "The Jew in History."

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

in both the Old and the New Testament. This book written by the Jew, inspired by God. You cannot understand his purpose in this world unless you understand His purpose in dealing with and through the Jew.⁸

Jerusalem was a significant location in history and the events to come. God protected the Jews. Whether the Jew knew this or not, they were a unique group of people around the globe. Norris argued that God worked mysteriously in the modern-day Jew. He went as far as to say:

I will tell you what you do—you go to persecuting him and you are digging your own grave. He isn't going to bother you, no—he isn't going to fight back. No—he won't burn your house down; he won't shoot you in the back—no—no danger of that; he isn't going to do that — but you lay your hand on him and God will put His curse upon you — that is what he says — I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curses thee.⁹

In 1933, the world faced uncertainty. From the lens of Norris, the future events of WWII made complete sense when utilizing Scripture to explain the chaos to come. It was simple — the Jews were a distinct group of people. They were often persecuted and even massacred but, strangely, always remained strong and separate from the rest of the world. Towards the end of his speech, Norris predicted an alliance between "Anglos and the Jewish race."¹⁰ Citing Ezekiel 38:13-14, he

mentioned that the Soviets and "Bolshevism" were a future threat.¹¹

Russian Bolshevism and its Relation to the Second Coming of Christ

In an evening service in 1933, Norris preached the Second Coming of Christ could connect to the ongoing threat of Russian Bolshevism.¹² In anticipation of the "Return of Christ," Norris believed that "it was prophesied that faith would almost leave the world"¹³ To support the Scripture, he shared that "70,000 out of 120,000 churches had already closed down in Russia."¹⁴

The pre-millennialist understood the current events and future days through the "Tribulation Period." This period, known as "a dark time," was a sign of the end of times and the return of Jesus Christ.¹⁵ Quoting Isaiah, he shared:

The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again. What a picture of toppling governments this hour! What a picture of the wisdom of man of this hour! What a picture of the social rottenness of this hour!¹⁶

Furthermore, a central theme of the night was the prophecy on how currency would lose its value. In Russia, Germany, and China an economic disaster was already occurring.¹⁷ This was, in large part, due to the aftermath of the Great War. Norris further

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. J. Frank Norris, "The Jew in History."

11. Ibid.

12. J. Frank Norris, "The Coming of the Lord Draweth Nigh," *Baptist Basics*, 1933, <https://www.baptistbasics.org/baptists/j-frank-norris/> (accessed January 2022).

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Millard Erickson, *The Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), 204.

16. Norris, "The Coming of the Lord Draweth Nigh."

17. Ibid.

predicted three nations (England, America, and the Jews) would stand together against the rise of the Soviets.¹⁸ Norris challenged his congregation to read Ezekiel 38, "Friends, read your Bible, read your Bible. The same Bible that tells us what is going to happen tells us what is going to be the outcome."¹⁹

The congregation needed to prepare for the future. Norris asserted that God's Word was the foundation of such events. The Russians had embraced atheism and remained a foe to liberty-loving Americans. The Jews were still displaced and looking for a home. Tensions growing across the globe made sense from a pre-millennialists view – peace would be from God alone.

The Battle of Armageddon

The Battle of Armageddon was a crucial part of Scripture for Norris and like-minded Christians. In a sermon focused entirely on this "upcoming conflict," Norris submitted five questions and answers to his congregation:

1. When will it be fought?
2. Where will it be fought?
3. What is the issue or the cause of the battle?
4. Who will be the leaders of the contending forces?
5. What will be the outcome?²⁰

Norris admitted that "he had no idea on the first question."²¹ However, he explained how people need to be ready for the return of Jesus Christ. The return of Christ was the answer to the first prompt. Yet, unlike some

other leaders, he respectfully refused to predict a specific period in which Jesus would return.

Regarding question two, the answer was simple. The battle was to take place in Palestine. Paying careful attention to Zechariah 14:1-3, Norris explained that "all nations of the world" focused on Jerusalem.²² On the cause of the battle, he preached, "The cause is the conquest of restored Jerusalem."²³

The fourth answer focused on humankind and the Lord Himself. Norris explained, "One of them is a man, a human being, a great military leader, and the other is the Son of Man, the Son of God. That is what David saw when he tuned his harp and sang of the coming kingdom."²⁴ Who could this powerful military leader be? It was a future dictator. Norris mentioned, "He could come from Italy, Japan, China, etc."²⁵ He explained, "We don't know, but he will be Satan incarnate, leading the martial hosts of the earth. Going where? Against Jerusalem."²⁶

The final question and answer were peace connected to Christ. Jesus was crowned King of the Universe, defeating evil.²⁷ The outcome was the return of Jesus Christ. Christ was to be accompanied by His angel army facing evil head-on.

Such sermons of Norris caught the attention of many parishioners. However, once WWII started and the intentional attack of the Jews began, congregants feared the current days and rejoiced, reflecting on the idea of Jesus returning to face destruction. For Norris, the future events all made sense. While never predicting definite dates, many of the

18. Norris, "The Coming of the Lord Draweth Nigh."

19. Ibid.

20. J. Frank Norris, "The Battle of Armageddon," *Baptist Basics*, 1933, <https://www.baptistbasics.org/baptists/j-frank-norris/the-battle-of-armageddon/> (accessed January 2022).

21. Ibid.

22. Norris, "The Battle of Armageddon."

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

circumstances of WWII were writings on the wall.

Twenty Earmarks of the Beast

By 1940, the war had started. Preaching as he did in years past, Norris spoke to his congregation of the "anti-Christ."²⁸ Norris explained it would not be long "before the world was in the anti-Christ's hands."²⁹ Reflecting on the current times in Europe, the congregation had to ask themselves if that day was drawing near. The Germans rapidly expanded their territory, and the fall of France was imminent. Evil was at work within much of the world.

Many Christians at this time were left asking if Hitler or Stalin could be the much-anticipated anti-Christ. On this topic, Norris preached:

I will stop here and say he will be on the scene a long time before he is revealed. For instance, the President of the United States has been in the world — not yet sixty years old — but he was here many years before he was made President. And so the Beast will be on the earth, a full-grown man, and then when he gets in power and in his estate, and the time comes for him to be revealed, to be manifest, to the whole world will know him. He won't be a child born then and grow up, but he will be a man already on the scene.³⁰

Norris maintained that the anti-Christ is the ultimate deceiver who would have a mass following based on deception. He declared, "He will say, I am for peace while he is preparing for war."³¹ Ironically, this

was the message often heard from Adolf Hitler. Stalin, too, remarkably fit this description.

The pastor mentioned that the book of Revelation gave explicit warnings of the anti-Christ in chapter 13.³² Regarding signs of his coming, Norris taught, "He will be greater than Alexandria, greater than Caesar or Napoleon- until the whole world will say, "Who is like unto the beast? Did you ever see anything like this?"³³ He added, "He will be a great warrior and the world's greatest militarist."³⁴ Regardless of whether the anti-Christ was on earth, one could not ignore the concept of evil.

The beginning of WWII was an apologetic tool connected to the "Problem of Evil." Norris confronted questions such as "why does evil exist?" He pointed to God's sovereignty throughout the world to answer such questions. He preached:

He (God) couldn't use a good man. "God," says Paul, "raised up Pharaoh as a vessel fitted" — prepared — "for destruction." And he used old Pharaoh to scourge the people, and old Pharaoh pursued after the Israelites with six hundred iron chariots and chased them to the border of the unopened Red Sea. And the people wept and said, "What did you bring us out here for? To die?"³⁵

Norris explained, "No Christian needed to worry, as the anti-Christ would not be in the world long."³⁶ According to Norris, all "wars, famines, and earthly struggles" were part of God's plan and prophecies found in Scripture.³⁷ He argued that those "who were in Christ had nothing to worry about."³⁸ You

28. J. Frank Norris, "Twenty Ear-Marks of the Beast" (sermon, First Baptist Church, Fort Worth, TX, June 16, 1940).

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. Norris, "Twenty Ear-Marks of the Beast."

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

need to be ready for the Second Coming of Christ. He declared, "At the time of the end-what shall I do? Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand."³⁹ Biblical prophecies spoke of many trials and tribulations resembling the times of WWII. Whether the anti-Christ was truly present on earth or not, the world was in turmoil.

The Prophesied Alliance of America and England on One Side

After Germany conquered much of Europe and defeated the French in June of 1940, England remained the sole power in Europe, desperate for U.S. assistance.⁴⁰ Not too surprised by the fall of France, Norris preached a heartfelt sermon on the evening of June 24th, 1940, that addressed the current world issues.⁴¹ For Norris, the global conflict was nothing, but a prophecy fulfilled in the Bible. His sermon titled "The Prophesied Alliance of America and England on One Side versus All of Europe on The Other" caught the attention of his congregation.⁴² Quoting from the Book of Ezekiel Chapter 27, Norris declared, "That 37th chapter gives us the present condition of both the ten tribes and the two tribes, and what is going to happen."⁴³

Norris quoted "French General Philippe Petain" and preached that France had "committed race suicide."⁴⁴ Specifically, the preacher criticized "the French on their luxury living and worldly desires while lacking to build up their country in numbers."⁴⁵ Norris noted that the French "cared more about their

possessions than fighting a difficult opponent in the Nazis."⁴⁶ The world was in shock that the Germans trounced the French.

Norris was adamant that England would be the next target of the German forces.⁴⁷ Using the Bible as his leading resource, he urged his congregation to compare the past events in Scripture to the current days. He specifically mentioned the Jews and their treatment while comparing Hitler to Nebuchadnezzar. His congregation needed to consider the "end of times." More specifically, he brought up the "tribulation" or the "troubling days before the Second coming of Jesus Christ."⁴⁸ On Hitler, he argued, "I will stop here and say I believe profoundly that God raised up Adolph Hitler as an instrument of wrath and judgment, though he is the devil incarnate, I believe he raised up these dictators."⁴⁹ Norris ordered his congregation to study the Bible earnestly and compare the current events to those described in the book of Ezekiel. Was the end of times near? These were questions that the congregation was required to face. Norris continued:

And my friends, I believe profoundly tonight that God Almighty is in the destruction of France as much as He was in the birth of Jesus Christ. I believe tonight that He is changing the map of Europe and changing the nations. I believe tonight He is shaking heathen China, and Japan, and India. And I believe He is stirring America-though the Republican Party don't seem to know it, and neither the Democrats. I believe, my friends, He moves upon the islands of the sea, and

39. Norris, "Twenty Ear-Marks of the Beast."

40. John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Penguin Group, 2005), 87.

41. J. Frank Norris, "The Prophesied Alliance of America and England on One Side" (sermon, First Baptist Church, Fort Worth, TX, June 24, 1940).

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Norris, "The Prophesied Alliance of America and England on One Side."

47. Ibid.

48. Erickson, *The Concise Dictionary of Christian*, 204.

49. Norris, "The Prophesied Alliance of America and England on One Side."

I believe you and I are going to see the climax of the ages, and I believe we are going to see the greatest moment of all times.⁵⁰

Norris taught that God was judging nations based on their sin. Norris was adamant that God would rise up evil to gain the world's attention. He said that God was the same deity found in the Old Testament and governments were judged for their disobedience towards the Almighty Creator.⁵¹ The preacher assured his congregation that the "only hope that existed was in Jesus Christ" and that Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin would be destroyed by God when the time came.⁵² He emphasized something powerful was happening in the world "and it was the sovereignty of God."⁵³ On this account, he preached, "We are all running around wondering what in the world is going to happen. God says, "Just wait, I will attend to that."⁵⁴ England would play a major role in the future. Norris "preached a prophecy where all of Europe would be under the control of one dictator."⁵⁵ The preacher explained, "London too should be worried as should Washington D.C."⁵⁶ Norris felt that if Paris fell, anything was possible. He concluded his sermon challenging his congregation for Jesus' return. He preached the following:

The conclusion is, here this peculiar people, now in the greatest distress of all time-the hour is coming when the blindness shall fall from their eyes and they shall look on Him whom they pierced. We may be near that hour. I close with this word. You have been

seeing in the papers how Hitler and Mussolini have been hurling defiance at old England, and the whole continent of Europe will be in one great alliance-and it is now. What Hitler hasn't got he will get in a few days-they have no choice.⁵⁷

By Faith, Abraham

By 1943, America was in a global conflict. The war was much more personal for the congregation. In his sermon, "By Faith, Abraham," Norris explained that faith is "what would save Christians and Americans alike."⁵⁸ This pastor informed his congregation that "the days were drawing near when Jesus would return and judge the world."⁵⁹ Unbelievers needed to worry about this judgment day.⁶⁰ He stated the following:

When wars shall be no more, when dictators will sweep around the world no more, when no more we will hear the crash of heavy artillery or sinking ships, when we hear no more the screams of helpless boys as they go down in the cold cruel waters of war — thanks be to God He is coming again! ⁶¹

Norris argued that Christians needed to live in righteousness and follow the ways of God. He declared, "We are not righteous by any merit of our own, but it is the righteousness of God's grace. Faith is the channel through which we receive it."⁶²

Many young Americans were paying the ultimate sacrifice. Norris stated that it was "the hour of judgment on a wicked world in which Americans were going to face darkness

50. Ibid.

51. Norris, "The Prophesied Alliance of America and England on One Side."

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58. J. Frank Norris, "By Faith Abraham" (sermon, First Baptist Church, Fort Worth, TX, February 15, 1942).

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

head-on."⁶³ He prayed, "I close with this word, God help us in this hour that we shall have that spirit, First to give ourselves; Second to give the best that we have unto Him who gave all for us; and Third, that we present unto Him that which is His. God help us that we may."⁶⁴

The Second Coming of Christ

Later in 1942, Norris preached a sermon on the Second Coming of Christ. He commented on the current war. According to him, the war would "terminate one day."⁶⁵ Norris admitted that he did not know when, yet was adamant that God would decide when to end this conflict.⁶⁶ People needed to reflect on what the world would look like "once the war was over," the pastor explained to the congregation he recently visited with an Army chaplain. ⁶⁷ Norris was adamant that WWII was different from the First World War.⁶⁸ He went on, stating the following:

I talked to a chaplain, he was head chaplain, he was saying what a difference between this and last war; they didn't preach then, gave them cigarettes; they don't do it now. He said "I want to give these boys the gospel." This old war will soon be over. The world will stand aghast at what it has cost us, cost us everything we have.⁶⁹

Norris explained how the mood was different in the world in 1942. There were reports from England "that Christianity was alive and strong in Europe."⁷⁰ Even when air raid sirens were ringing and attacks were

imminent, churches across England had lines of people waiting to enter.⁷¹ The current days were awful and Norris knew that countless people sought hope and answers. Norris preached it was possible that "the world was changing for the return of Jesus Christ."⁷² He continued, "Pre-Millenarians believe the Gospel is the power of God. The Pre-Millenarians don't believe the government of this world will ever bring about peace; that peace can only come through a Person."⁷³ That person, according to Norris, was Jesus Christ.⁷⁴ Theology was essential for Norris as events had significant implications within his faith. Those who adhered to the idea of "premillennialism believed that Jesus Christ would return and then set up his reign for a period of one thousand years."⁷⁵ Like in his past sermons, Norris challenged his congregation to reflect on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. According to him, Christians needed to be prepared for Jesus and His return. True peace was only found in Christ and no government could save mankind. Norris taught, "We were unprepared for this war because the government in Washington looked for peace to come, there cannot be any peace until the Prince of Peace comes!"⁷⁶

The pastor preached in his sermon speaking of a recent event in the war. He shared the following story:

Did you read the other day, that story, how that Colonel from the cruiser that went down, he leaped off, the Colonel a good swimmer, saw one of the boys, an Ensign, come up and then down. He reached him, asked him "Are you

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

65. J. Frank Norris, "The Second Coming of Christ" (sermon, First Baptist Church, Fort Worth, TX, November 22, 1942), <https://bibleportal.com/sermons/author/j.+frank+norris> (accessed December 2021).

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

73. Norris, "The Second Coming of Christ."

74. Ibid.

75. Erickson, *The Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 158.

76. Norris, "The Second Coming of Christ."

hurt?" He said, "I am shot in the legs." He couldn't swim. The Colonel said, "Hold on lad," and he took that lad to safety.⁷⁷

According to Norris, Jesus Christ was like this Colonel. He would be the one to rescue the souls who were humble and willing to call upon Him for salvation.⁷⁸ Americans needed to call upon God.⁷⁹ People needed to seek forgiveness and salvation before it was too late.⁸⁰ Norris knew people were uneasy in the world and could easily reflect on the current times and make a decision for Jesus Christ. He challenged his congregation to be ready for the return of Jesus Christ:

One of these nights you will hear the trumpet of God sound. You will not ask what it is. I do not believe in a secret rapture. A great trumpet: Isaiah says, "shall be sounded." The Trumpet of God shall be sounded and it will be heard the world around. That trumpet will be heard in the grave yard, where the flowers withered. "The dead in Christ shall rise first."⁸¹

Come and See a Man

In a sermon entitled "Come and See a Man" he invited his "congregation to do one thing which was winning people for Jesus Christ."⁸² The pastor knew there were many lost souls on earth, including in his own country. Christians needed to do their part in sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Norris believed that only one person would bring forth true Peace and this was Jesus Christ. It

was the duty of the Christian to share salvation through Christ.

This pastor explained, "Maybe one percent of his church shared the Good News of Jesus Christ with outsiders."⁸³ Norris mentioned how he was convinced that "ninety-nine percent of his church did not share their faith."⁸⁴ Whether it was due to the potential of rejection or embarrassment, this did not matter to the pastor. According to him, souls needed to be "won for Christ."⁸⁵ His command for his church was quite simple. Norris said, "Do not speak of Heaven or Hell, and do not tell someone I want to win you for Christ."⁸⁶ He maintained, "I want you to tell people to come to my church, I want you to tell your friends and family to come and hear my preacher speak."⁸⁷ Norris said this simple request was easy to carry out for all church members and could very well change people's lives. Norris asked his congregation to encourage outsiders to visit the church and the pastor would do the rest. If the church succeeded in bringing outsiders in, the power of the Gospel would win souls over for Christ.⁸⁸ He clarified this was exactly how he built his "first church" and urged everyone to follow in his direction.

Norris elucidated, "Darkness was present on earth and emphasized Jesus was the one who would bring light into the world."⁸⁹ In a time when war could not be ignored, he taught that Jesus Himself had the power to end "wars and suffering."⁹⁰ Like so many other pastors, Norris knew souls were lost and desperate for hope in such a dark time. WWII

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.

81. Norris, "The Second Coming of Christ."

82. J. Frank Norris, "Come and See a Man" (sermon, Temple Baptist Church, Detroit, MI, February 6, 1944), <http://fundamentalbaptistsermons.net/JFRANKNORRI>

S/NorrisJFrankComeAndSeeAMan1944.htm (accessed November 2021).

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid.

86. Norris, "Come and See a Man."

87. Ibid.

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid.

was an apologetic tool. Norris preached of Jesus Christ:

That Man (Jesus) must and will come again, someday, as Lord, as God! And say to all nations, "Put up your sword, and come and sit down at my peace table." That Man will make wars to cease to the ends of the earth. That Man shall reign, that Man shall be seated upon His great white throne, from whose presence Heaven and earth shall melt away, that Man before whom all nations shall stand, to Whom every tongue must confess, and before Whom every knee must bow. "Come ye, blessed of my Father." Oh, which will it be today? God help us, He's coming. We shall see Him.⁹¹

Encouraging his congregation to bring outsiders into his church would be a victory for Christ. Throughout history, people have always looked for answers in troubled times. Christian leaders are often the first to address darkness. Perhaps much of the world did not understand why WWII was occurring. For Norris, all one needed to realize was that sin was rampant and humanity was living in a temporary dark world.

But God

By September 23rd, 1945, the war was over. Norris knew his congregation was still mourning the deaths of thousands. Likewise, Christians remained devastated, as they realized that millions of souls had perished in the war. The pastor stated, "There were three enemies for every soul."⁹² According to him, they were "sin, defeat, and death."⁹³ Norris mentioned, "Thousands of soldiers had died on the battlefield and Christians needed to live

their life as Joseph the son of Jacob did in the Bible."⁹⁴ He preached, "I can look over the city of the dead, I can see them by the thousands on the battlefields where a little cross marks their last resting place - the only answer to the tomb is not found in laboratories, nor in science, nor in the wisdom of man, but the only answer is found in these words: "But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him."⁹⁵

The pastor explained, "His church did not need to live in fear questioning God and His ultimate plan."⁹⁶ He mentioned that so many Christians "cry out to God proclaiming their misery with the following words, "But God."⁹⁷ Norris challenged his congregation to remain positive and focus on how God had saved them from destruction. On using the phrase "But God," Norris proclaimed:

A world in poverty, but God who is rich: a soul in death, but God who has abundant life; a soul in bondage, but God who has abundant life; a soul in bondage, but God who can set that soul free; so, therefore, man's first enemy is sin, sin that entered the world, sin that wrecks the homes, sin that wrecks the life, sin that wrecks the nerves, sin that robs your peace, sin that destroys your happiness, sin that brings death in the world, and the only remedy for sin is found in Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.⁹⁸

Norris explained how God was the answer to all questions. For it was God who saved souls and redeemed sinners. He emphasized that those who believe in Christ had nothing to worry about; the unbelievers should be concerned with the darkness. When people questioned why evil occurred or why

91. Ibid.

92. J. Frank Norris, "But God" (sermon, First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, Fort Worth, TX, September 23, 1945), <https://bibleportal.com/sermons/author/j.+frank+norris> (accessed January 2022).

93. Ibid.

94. Ibid.

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid.

97. Ibid.

98. Norris, "But God."

God did not intervene sooner, the answer was to read your Bible. Ancient Israel was an example of modern times. Christians were urged to know their history to understand God properly. Interestingly enough, the future of the Jews was shaping to challenge Christians and much of the world.

The Future of Israel

By 1947, Norris became involved in the "Jewish controversy."⁹⁹ Norris penned "a letter to President Truman expressing his concerns and opinion on the future of the Jews and Palestine."¹⁰⁰ Norris wrote the following to the President, "The Lord God Almighty in Genesis the 17th Chapter, specifically states that the title to Palestine is given not to Ishmael, the ancestor of the Arabs, but to Isaac and his seed forever."¹⁰¹ Norris sought to educate Truman on the history of the Jews and inform the President that the rightful owners of Palestine were, in fact, the Jews. Norris continued, "Explaining thirteen hundred years ago followers of Muhammad with fire and sword robbed the land from the Jews."¹⁰² Norris was "adamant that former English Prime Minister Chamberlain made the situation worse in 1939 when he allowed the Arabs to control whether Jews could continue to migrate into Palestine."¹⁰³ England had violated international law and had no right to dictate how many Jews were permitted into Palestine. According to Norris, Palestine "was taken away unfairly by followers of Muhammad."¹⁰⁴

It was evident that Norris wanted Palestine to be under the control of the Jews.¹⁰⁵ He believed that the region held extreme importance to the Jews and his

religion of Christianity. He concluded his letter writing the following, "I interviewed many Arab leaders, and without question, I found that the whole crowd are for Stalin, just like they formerly were for Hitler. While this country was fighting Hitler, thirty thousand young Jews from Palestine volunteered and went to the battle front and not a single Arab regiment."¹⁰⁶ Norris emphasized the loyalty of the Jews to the Allied cause to persuade the President to support the creation of Israel.

On October 7th, 1947, President Truman responded to Pastor Norris. He wrote the following, "I am most grateful for your thoughtful letter of October 2nd. I deeply appreciate having the benefit of this expression of your views because I know that you have given long and extensive study to the Jewish Palestinian question."¹⁰⁷

On May 12, 1948 "a formal Jewish government was formed with a declaration of independence."¹⁰⁸ On May 14, 1948, President Truman released the following statement, "This Government has been informed that a Jewish state has been proclaimed in Palestine, and recognition has been requested by the provisional government thereof. The United States recognizes the provisional government as the de facto authority of the new State of Israel."¹⁰⁹

The Jews had officially returned to Israel and the wandering people once again had a home. For people who shared the theology of Norris, this step was significant in the return of Jesus Christ. Israel remains a small, powerful, distinct nation arguably protected by the most powerful country in the world, the United States. Those interested in history and theology must never forget the

99. J. Frank Norris, Letter to President Truman, October 2, 1947.

100. Ibid.

101. Ibid.

102. Norris, Letter to President Truman, October 2, 1947.

103. Ibid.

104. Ibid.

105. Ibid.

106. Ibid.

107. Ibid.

108. Harry S. Truman, "Telegraph on Israel" (telegraph, May 14, 1948), <http://www.ngu.edu/library-databases.php> (accessed January 2022)

109. Ibid.

relationship between Israel and the U.S. Every new president is faced with the task of deciding how involved they should be with Israel. Everyone since Truman has solidified its relationship with the nation of Israel. This can only grow the speculation that foreign governments know the Jews are a unique people group that are still used as an apologetic tool towards the existence of God.

Conclusion

Studying the work of Norris before WWII is crucial. Something made the preacher uneasy about the world. The signs of Christ returning were clear. Admirably, he refused to give exact time when Jesus might return. Although he was adamant, nations like England and America would unite with the Jews. Furthermore, he predicted that the Jews would return to their Holy Land. Regardless of one's theology, Norris is respected for correctly predicting several outcomes.

While Jesus did not return during the conflict, speculation grew regarding future events to come. Israel was once again a nation and, for Norris, this fulfilled a prophecy. In 1933, he predicted the Soviets would play a vital role in the return of Christ. The Cold War, arguably, was beginning as Russia and the U.S. were at odds following the war's end. A new "Red Scare" and atomic era begin. The threat of communism grew as Joseph Stalin became a leader feared by much of the world.

Studying Norris before and during the war provides readers with the opportunity to dig deeper into his theology and pastoral teachings. The reader learns Christ was always the focus. Darkness covered the world and hope was not found outside of the Lord. While the return of Christ did not occur during these years, God's sovereign hand was at work. Nations rose against evil to save the Jews. The Jews found themselves a home in the Promised Land.

Most importantly, from the preaching of Norris, it was a prayer that people across the world found salvation in Christ during dark times. God was at work – the Bible had all life's answers. Not much has changed today; governments cannot provide ultimate peace and stability or conquer darkness. There is only one force that can defeat evil – Jesus Christ.

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Death is Nothing to Us: Epicurean Materialism and the Denial of the Afterlife

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Paul and the Epicureans

On his second missionary journey, the Apostle Paul travelled through Asia Minor, sailed across the northern Aegean to Europe, passed through Macedonia and turned south to Athens. The development of Greek philosophy, beginning with Thales and the Milesians, likely followed a similar route, circumnavigating the Aegean. But whereas philosophy found congenial soil and