

CHINA

in Bible Prophecy

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One fifth of the world's population today is Chinese. China, occupying the third largest area on earth, has always fascinated modern western minds because of its more than 4,000 years of undivided history and culture. The great ancient wisdom manifested by Confucius (551 - 479 B.C.) and Lao Zi (570 B.C.) are gems in the spiritual treasures of the world. In the darkness of today's lax morality, the light from this ancient jewel is still shining. If the Bible is a book for all peoples, it seems only reasonable to find China at least mentioned in the Bible! Does the Bible have anything to say about China? In searching for an answer to this intriguing question, let us start our quest by delving into a bit of China's ancient history.

For millennia, China has called herself "the land of God." It would appear that the Hand of Omnipotence was leading this ancient civilization. In the annals of Chinese history, we do not find a single instance of God's anger being poured out upon a Chinese city because of moral depravity, as happened to Sodom, Gomorrah, or Pompeii. Ancient Chinese art has never featured pornography or naked female sculptures—like that uncovered in Near and Middle East excavations.¹

When it comes to China, however, you might agree that, for most people in the world today, the familiar image that comes to mind is not Confucius or high moral standards, but the Great Wall! Construction of the Great Wall was intensified by the first Chinese emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi (259 - 210 B.C.).

The Middle Kingdom

The Chinese nation, earlier known as the "Middle Kingdom," dates back to 2205 B.C. with its first dynasty, the Xia, established by King Yu. Even today in China, King Yu is still well-remembered as "the great Yu." He was favored by Shangdi [the God of Heaven] who instructed him in the nine methods which enabled him to solve the problem of draining a huge flood that prevented further development and habitation of their land.² King Yu was also renowned as a virtuous and exemplary ruler, providing a fitting pattern for later rulers to emulate.

Following the Xia were the Shang and Zhou dynasties. Each of these kingdoms ruled over many states, some of these states having more extensive land and greater power than the royal dynasty itself. We will learn that most of the many kings of these first three dynasties served as Heaven-appointed agents, ministering by love rather than by force.

During the later Zhou dynasty, the rulers of the eastern states fought one another for the control of all China. In 221 B.C., the Qin State defeated all its rivals and established China's first empire controlled by a strong self-imposed emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi. Thus China entered its fourth dynasty, the Qin, (221 - 206 B.C.).

To keep out invaders, Qin Shi Huangdi ordered the

construction, repair and strengthening of the Great Wall, which, with its eventual completion, stretches about 4,000 miles. It was built with the blood and tears shed by thousands of slave workers under ruthless oppression, and was finished several centuries after the Qin dynasty. The Great Wall, the greatest human project in the history of mankind, has a sad history. Many of the 300,000 workers, who suffered from a most inhumane and cold-blooded treatment, lie entombed within its massive structure. Even though the Great Wall today is a symbol of unity and peace for the Chinese, no one can forget the high price paid to keep out potential foreign aggressors. Now, more than 2,200 years after Qin Shi Huangdi, the Great Wall has gradually become a landmark of unity for Chinese all over the world, and an identifying symbol of China. The name of “China” in all foreign languages of the world finds its root in the Qin [Chin] Dynasty.

Revelation of God to Man

Back to our opening question: does the Bible, which is meant for all people of the world, have anything to say about the land of China? The Holy Bible, inspired by the Holy Spirit of God and written by more than 40 authors over a period of 1,600 years, faithfully records the words of the God of the universe. It is a treasure mine of priceless truth. It is the great standard of right and wrong, clearly defining sin and holiness. Of all the books that have flooded the world, however valuable, the Bible is the most deserving of our closest study and attention.



The Bible opens the history of past ages. Without it we should have been left to fables and speculation regarding occurrences in past eras. This sacred volume gives not only an accurate history of the creation of this world, a history of our human race, but also the world’s only authentic account of the origin of nations. It contains instruction concerning the wonders of the universe, and reveals God as the Author of the heavens and the earth. The Scriptures unfold a simple and complete system of theology and philosophy. Without the Bible, we are soon enveloped by false theories, superstition, and spiritual darkness.

Although unappreciated by many in today’s secular world, the Bible is, in fact, the foundation of all true knowledge, for it is the revelation of God to man. Throughout the ages God’s divine hand has preserved its purity. The many mysteries found in the Bible are perhaps the strongest evidence of its divine inspiration. One of these mysteries is Bible prophecy—foretelling persons or events in the future. In the entire Bible there are thousands of prophecies. By now, most of them have been exactly fulfilled in time and place as predicted. The rise and fall of nations have been foretold in the Bible long before they happened. Some prophecies are yet to be fulfilled in due time. This is entirely beyond human comprehension!

Jesus clearly revealed God’s purpose for giving prophecies when He said:

“And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe.”
(John 14: 29).

One of the most powerful, yet often neglected, Bible prophecies that might bring conviction to the Chinese, as well as the world, is the prophecy of China written by Isaiah (720 - 680 B.C.).

The Land of Sinim

The ancient Dead Sea Scrolls,³ found in 1947, include the book of Isaiah, and once again confirm that today's Bible is accurate and reliable. This verse in Isaiah is thought to refer to China:

Surely these shall come from afar; Look, those from the north and the west; And these from the land of Sinim. (Isaiah 49: 12).

You may wonder what the word "Sinim" means. Where is this land of Sinim, mentioned by Isaiah before his service was terminated in 680 B.C.?⁴ According to Strong's Concordance, "Sinim is a distant Oriental region."⁵ Young's Concordance reports, "Sinim is a people in the far east; the Chinese?"⁶

However, the meaning is still not quite clear. Let us now check an English dictionary for help: "'Sino' indicates Chinese; for example, Sinophile. [French, from Late Latin 'Sinae;' the Chinese, from Greek 'Sinai;' from Arabic 'Sin;' China, from Chinese (Mandarin) 'Ch'in' [Qin], dynastic name of the country.]"⁷

Now it is clear that the Hebrew word "Sinim" means China, as can be seen, for example, in the word "sinology"—a study of things Chinese. As we mentioned earlier, all Chinese roots meet in the Qin dynasty. However, the Hebrew alphabet does not have the equivalent of "ch" in English and "Q" in Chinese. Thus "Qin" has been phonetically translated as "Sinim."

The Significance of Chin

In Isaiah's day, the state of Qin was only one of hundreds of states under Zhou (770 - 256 B.C.). It was located in the present Gansu Province through which trade with the West was conducted. How is it that Isaiah chose Qin to indicate the Middle Kingdom? What was so special about Qin?

Rang Kung was appointed as the first Duke of Qin (770 B.C.), then a small, aristocratic house. Under his administration, the state of Qin emerged as

one of the 14 major states under the Zhou dynasty.⁸ It was 500 years after Isaiah that Qin Shi Huangdi defeated all the other competitive states and established the Qin dynasty. From then on, Qin represented the Middle Kingdom [China].



Qin Shi Huang was buried in his mausoleum, with the famous Terracotta Army, near modern day Xi'an. For 2000 years, a secret army of clay soldiers protected the hidden tomb of China's first emperor, Qin Shi Huang. Until 1974 none knew of its existence; now Chinese archaeologists are gradually unfolding the mystery.

Simply put, the God of Isaiah, with divine foreknowledge, saw all the stages in the development of Qin—from a small, dependent, aristocratic house to becoming the famous Qin empire. God knew that the Duke of Qin would become ever stronger, equal with those of the other 13 states. Furthermore, He foresaw that after another 500 years, the Dukedom of Qin would still exist, defeat all the other states, and unite them as one empire, even choosing “Qin” as the name for the new empire!

Some attempt has been made to identify Sinim as Syene [Aswan] in upper Egypt. Yet a closer look at what Isaiah said precludes this opinion. Listen to what he said:

Indeed He says,

*“It is too small a thing that
You should be My Servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob,
And to restore the preserved ones of Israel;
I will also give You as a
light to the Gentiles,
That You should be My salvation
to the ends of the earth.”
(Isaiah 49: 6).*

God proclaimed here that the mission of His Servant [Jesus Christ] was not limited to the salvation of the Jewish nation and its colonies [like Aswan] alone, but is also extended to all Gentiles throughout the world. In fact, when Jesus affirmed the faith shown by the Roman centurion [a Gentile] He said,

“And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 8: 11).

Jesus used the expression, “from the east and west,” to represent all the Gentiles. Isaiah used the term, “those from the north and the west and these from the land of Sinim,” in the same sense. “These from the land of Sinim” should naturally be a large group of people among the Gentiles. Only China, not the small city Aswan, could fit the verse so well.

Sinim and Today

Isaiah’s prophecy about China did not stop with the Qin dynasty, but rather it extended into the future. Over the 2,600 years since Isaiah, many countries have come and gone, but the land of Sinim (Qin) still stands firm as the land of China.

The most exciting phases of this prophecy relative to “Sinim” will surely continue to be fulfilled. Reading earlier verses in this 49th Chapter of Isaiah, we find these words:

*“That You [Jesus Christ] may say to the prisoners, ‘Go forth,’ To those who are in darkness,
‘Show yourselves. . . .’ For He who has mercy on them will lead them, Even by the springs of water
He will guide them. . . . Surely these shall come from afar; Look! Those from the north and the
west, And these from the land of Sinim.” (Isaiah 49: 9, 10, 12).*

Isaiah’s foretelling of a final gathering of God’s faithful among those “in darkness” must indicate a multitude of peoples—even from China. Most of the people living in China, since Isaiah’s day, have been “in darkness” concerning the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ. Yet here is a specific prophecy

and a promise to bring “prisoners of darkness” in the land of Sinim to the light of salvation, freedom and mercy.

We mentioned earlier that the Great Wall has forever been associated with the land of China—ever since the establishment of the Qin dynasty. The existence of the Great Wall is reminiscent of its first builder and planner. Hundreds of emperors have ruled and died in the long history of China. Most of them are forgotten. But the name of Qin Shi Huangdi stands out!

The same prophet Isaiah foretold that the God of Israel paid the greatest price of all in sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to rescue fallen humanity! Jesus Christ came to earth, was nailed to a wooden cross, and died that all mankind might be rescued from sin. He would bear the nail print scars in the palms of His hands forever.

Does the God of Israel know and care about the land of Sinim (China)? Listen to what He says right after the prophecy of China in this book:

“Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.” (Isaiah 49: 15 - 16).

The land of Sinim is still there. The massive Walls are still before the people of China and before the God of Israel. God has not forgotten the people of China, for He says, “See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands.” Jesus died for the people of China who must now come out of darkness. We must learn why it was necessary for this Holy Man, the suffering Servant, to die. Just as the Great Wall cannot be separated from the land of Sinim, so the Great Wall of defense from evil and sin, built at the cost of Jesus Christ’s blood on Calvary, cannot be separated from the God of Israel!



One might ask if, since the God of heaven was so interested in Sinim as to speak through His prophet Isaiah regarding this distant nation, is there a possibility that God could have spoken directly to the people of China in past ages? Could He actually have raised up “prophets” for Himself in this ancient land? If so, could these ancient Chinese wise men yet speak to the people of China today?

Editor’s Note: This is an excerpt from Samuel Wang and Dr. Ethel Nelson’s new book, *God and the Ancient Chinese*, which is now available. We trust that it will benefit all who read it both intellectually and spiritually.

End Notes

1 David L. Lin, China Letters (Rapidan: Hartland Publications, 1993), p.16. 2 James Legge, The Chinese Classics (Taipei: SMC Publishing, Inc., 1983), Vol. III, The Shu Jing, The Book of Yu, The Tribute of Yu, Bk. IV, p.77, Bk. I, Pt. III, pp. 93 - 151. 3 Some believe that Chapters 40 - 55 of Isaiah were written by an anonymous author, called Deutero-Isaiah, or the “Second Isaiah,” in the first half of sixth century. But most Bible scholars believe that the book was written by Isaiah the prophet, himself. They point out that the internal evidence of the book is consistent with one author. 4 The Nelson Study Bible, NKJV (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), p. 1109. 5 James H. Strong, Exhaustive Concordance, p. 5515. 6 Young’s Analytic Concordance to the Bible (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), p. 893. 7 The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973), p.1209. 8 Luo Xianglin, The History of China (Taipei: Zhengzhong Press, 1977), p. 63.