

14. God's protection and wrath – Part 1

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If you are into biblical prophecies, you might have heard "Ezekiel 38 and 39". People may not have a good grasp of what these two chapters are talking about in detail, but somehow they know that they have something to do with the End Time prophecies.

Many Bible scholars and students consider this section of Ezekiel to rank among the most difficult prophetic passages in Scripture for a couple of reasons:

1) Identity of the place names

2) Timing of the battle

Some have identified this invasion by Magog with the Battle of Armageddon, described in the Book of Revelation 16 and 19, but the contrasts between these two events are too obvious and they are not the same battle. We will talk more about it in future.

Others spiritualize Ezekiel 38-39 that it will not be an actual event, rather something the church will face during the Great Tribulation period. Of course, they are making two major eschatological misinterpretations:

1) The church, the body of Jesus Christ will not go through the Tribulation.

2) The event in chapters of 38 and 39 of the Book of Ezekiel will be an actual event, not a spiritualized one.

We should not lose the main point of this prophecy and the rest of the prophecies in the Bible. J. Barton Payne's Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy lists 1,239 prophecies in the Old Testament and 578 prophecies in the New Testament, for a total of 1,817. These encompass 8,352 verses. God uses all these biblical prophecies to prove that He Himself alone is the Lord, while none of those so-called gods could not even do one.

Isaiah 46:9-10 Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure.'

A. GOG OF MAGOG

Ezekiel 38:1-6 Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 2 "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, 3 and say, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. 4 I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords. 5 Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; 6 Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north and all its troops --many people are with you.

Obviously Gog is the king or ruler of the land of Magog which is located between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Many believe that Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal are the regions of Magog.

The coalition force of Magog is quite impressive in human eyes:

- Magog – the modern day Russia
- Persia – the modern day Iran
- Ethiopia – the modern day Sudan
- Libya – Libya
- Gomer and Togarmah – the modern day Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan

Historically, Persia and Russia did not get along well at all. As a matter of fact, they were enemies. Persia had some axes to grind with Russia for a long time. Nobody ever thought that they would join the force together except the Bible. Now Russia and Iran are practically bosom buddies since 2003 when Iran decided that they wanted to have nuclear weapons to wipe Israel off the map. I wouldn't be one bit surprised if Russia and Iran develop a full-blown military alliance in the not-too-distant future.

Amongst the coalition force, we don't find Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. For some unknown reasons they will not be parts of the force against Israel.

Here comes another interesting elements to the whole thing:

1) Increase of Muslims within the Russian society and military

Since the demise of the Soviet Union, there has been an exponential growth in religion of Islam in Russia. Russia had about 300 mosques in 1991 and now there are at least 8,000, about half of which were built with money from abroad, especially from Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia. There were no Islamic religious schools in 1991 and today there are between 50 and 60, teaching as many as 50,000 students.

The number of Russians going on the hajj (Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca) each year, has jumped from 40 in 1991 to 13,500 in 2005. Some predict that there will be a mosque on Red Square in the near future. In addition to that over 3 million Muslims live in Moscow, giving Moscow the largest Muslim population of any city in Europe.

According to some Social Sciences experts, by 2015, Muslims will make up a majority of Russia's drafted military, and by 2020 a fifth of the population. That means that The Russian military will become the most technological advanced muslim military in the world.

2) Will Vladimir Putin's lust for power ultimately lead him to invade Israel? If so, what is it in Israel that Putin wants?

You cannot watch any TV news program without seeing and hearing about the Russian force invading the Crimean Peninsula and building up their force along the border of Ukraine.

Vladimir Putin has been in the control of Russia since 1999 for 25 years. He is the longest since Joseph Stalin. He is the hard liner of the communist party in Russia and was a former KGB officer. Putin has cultivated a "he-man" and "super hero" image and is boosting the Russia nationalism. He is currently ranked as the world's most powerful person according to Forbes Magazine.

In Putin's mind, when Obama and the European leaders say or threaten him doesn't mean anything militarily while he does what he wants. Because he knows that they are gutless to do anything against Russia other than talking.

During Jimmy Carter's administration, the entire world knew that America was a paper tiger. But on Jan. 20, 1981, Iran released 52 Americans who had been held hostage for 444 days, minutes after the presidency had passed from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan. The hostages were placed on a plane in Tehran as Reagan delivered his inaugural address, because the Iranians knew very well that Reagan would bomb them immediately if they didn't release the hostages.

Under the current administration, the reduction of our military to the Pre-WWII status will only worsen the situation against Russia and any other enemies of the U.S. America will not have the same strength that it used to have all these years.

I believe that Russia will invade Israel, not because I can see and know what is going to happen through the current events, rather the Bible says so. Furthermore, Israel has something Russia would like to get their hands on.

From the Dead Sea water, Israel produces 1.77 million tons potash, 206,000 tons elemental bromine, 44,900 tons caustic soda, 25,000 tons magnesium metal, and sodium chloride according to 2001 report. Israeli companies generate around \$3 billion USD annually from the sale of Dead Sea minerals (primarily potash which is the main element of fertilizer and bromine) and from other products that Russia would like to have.

In addition to that, in 2012 BusinessWeek estimated there was \$240 billion worth of natural gas reserves available in Israel.

Some Bible critiques say, "If this prophecy is real, why in the world is this army carrying swords, shields, and riding on horses?" This can be explained away easily in a couple of ways:

1) Yes, these are not the weapons of a modern army, but Ezekiel used language the people of that generation could understand as well as something he could describe. If he had written about jet planes and rockets, he would have been a poor communicator.

2) It has been said that if someone can detonate a neutron bomb from 250 miles above Kansas City which is located in the middle of the U.S., this will create enough electromagnetic pulse to wipe out the entire electronic capabilities of the U.S. It means that no one can contact you unless that person uses pastor Jack L. Avery's smoke signal systems. If this battle that is mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39 happens during the 7 year Great Tribulation, there will be so much destructions and loss of civilizations around the world that mankind might have to use to ancient style weapons.

B. THE INVASION OF THE COALITION FORCE

Ezekiel 38:7-13 "Prepare yourself and be ready, you and all your companies that are gathered about you; and be a guard for them. 8 After many days you will be visited. In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely. 9 You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you." 10 'Thus says the Lord God: "On that day it shall come to pass that thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will make an evil plan: 11 You will say, 'I will go up against a land of unwallled villages; I will go to a peaceful

people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates'-- 12 to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places that are again inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land. 13 Sheba, Dedan, the merchants of Tarshish, and all their young lions will say to you, 'Have you come to take plunder? Have you gathered your army to take booty, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to take great plunder?''"

I know what you are thinking. You've been wondering, "OK, Preacher, when is this going to happen?" I don't know. It can happen before the rapture or during the first half of the Great Tribulation.

Many well-known and respected biblical scholars place this invasion before the rapture. I am not one of them. Here is my biblical argument.

According to Daniel 9:24-27, the nation of Israel will make an agreement with the head of a ten-nation of the European Union to protect them for seven years so they can rebuild their temple in Jerusalem.

Daniel 9:24-27 "Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy. 25 "Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times. 26 "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary . The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined. 27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering . And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate."

Many Biblical scholars believe that the Antichrist is currently living in Europe and already posing himself to be the next leader. He is the kind of guy who can fit a square peg into a round hole with his diplomacy.

At this point Europe has anti-Semitism and anti-Israel sentiments rising rapidly. In November 2003, a majority of Europeans actually named Israel as the greatest threat to world peace, ahead of Iran and North Korea. So, in order to silence Israel from declaring a self-defense war against the Arabs, the European Union would decide that they would make a military covenant with Israel. This can happen right before, or at the time, or even right after the rapture which will lead to the Great Tribulation.

Did you notice that no country will come to help Israel when they will be invaded by the coalition force of Magog, except the Lord?

This raises the perplexing question: Why would Gog and his allies want to attack Israel at all, knowing that a powerful European Union had promised to defend Israel? The overt purpose stated in verses 12-13 is to remove Israel from their headache list. I really don't believe that there is one single nation around the world that cares for Israel. And if Iranians and Russians take complete control of Israel, it is

no skin off the European nose. Besides, many European politicians are influenced by their vast muslim voters.

Whatever king Gog's thinking might be, it's clear that it is the Lord who brings this army out against Himself. Prince Gog thinks he has worked out the whole scheme, but it is God who is in charge. I don't know whether that Gog is Putin or not. But the northern coalition comes into the land of Israel confident of victory, but they are walking into a trap made by the Lord.

D. APPLICATION

The world event is moving very fast in our eyes. But it is falling into its place according to the Lord's time exactly.

Luke 21:28 Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.