

Message #42

Ezekiel 38:1-23

It is obvious from listening to the news every day that there is much talk about Russia. All we hear about is Russian collusion. What we cannot deny from this is that Russia is in the news and I am certain that God has His sovereign reasons for this, even if we don't understand it. If we are nearing the Rapture of the church, then apparently one of the issues that God wants at a front and center place is the issue of Russia.

Now the name "Russia" never occurs in the Bible. But there is a description of a major world power that is so specific that most serious students of the Bible have concluded that Russia's destiny is carefully and explicitly predicted in Scripture. **The key passage in the Scripture where most of this information about Russia is found is Ezekiel 38-39.**

Now **verse 1** says that this data is given to Ezekiel "by the word of the LORD." So Ezekiel is not the one coming up with this information on his own. God tells Ezekiel in **verse 2** to "set his face" toward people and places to the north and to prophesy against him. So this will be a very negative prophecy.

All throughout this book we keep reading "son of man." That is important because this clearly indicates that the total fulfillment of these things will occur when the program of God is nearing the return of Jesus Christ. Also we have just examined chapter 37 in which God promises to bring Israel back to life as a nation and bless her. We may assume that the information here is closely related to that happening.

When we look at this chapter in Ezekiel, there are some observations that may be made:

Observation #1 - God is going to cause a major military from the far north to invade Israel.

38:4, 6

Observation #2 - God will do this in conjunction with five other nations. **38:5-6**

Observation #3 - There is no place in history where what is described here has happened yet.

Observation #4 - Ezekiel 38-39 will occur as a prelude to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Now when Ezekiel wrote **Ezekiel 38-39**, he was not doing so by using proper nouns that sound like names related to Russia. For example, when he uses the proper noun "Rosh" (**38:2**) he was not using a name because it sounded like Russia; he was using it because it referred to "Rosh." The same is true with places like "Meshech" and "Tubal" (**38:2**). He did not name them because they sound like Moscow or Tobolsk. As Dr. Charles Dyer said, "Ezekiel had historical places in mind (not modern-day names) and these areas must be located in Ezekiel's time" (Bible Knowledge Commentary, *Ezekiel*, Vol. 1, p. 1299).

But having said this, we believe it is very accurate to conclude that the prophecies of Ezekiel 38-39 do pertain mainly to Russia because of three main reasons:

(Reason #1) - Some of the countries named by Ezekiel were specifically located in what is now known to be Russia.

(Reason #2) - Ezekiel stresses that armies will come from the north (**38:6, 15; 39:2**). By naming Magog and Gog it does include territory that sits between the Black Sea (NW of Israel) and the Caspian Sea (NE of Israel) and that very territory is now part of Russia and the Soviet Union.

(Reason #3) - Ezekiel predicts a coalition of nations, many of which are under the influence today of the Soviet Union. In Ezekiel 38:5 “Persia” is modern day Iran; “Ethiopia” is modern day Sudan and Ethiopia; “Put” is modern day Libya and “Meshech, “Tubal” (**v. 2**) “Gomer” and “Beth togarmah” (**v. 6**) is modern day Turkey.

So we expect alliances to be formed between Russia, Iran, Sudan, Ethiopia and Turkey.

Dr. John Walvoord, in his introductory remarks to his study of Ezekiel 38-39 said, “In the quarter of a century since World War II, Russia has risen to be one of the great military powers of the modern world. To a far greater extent than ever before Russia has become a prominent nation, especially in its influence on the Middle East. The possibility of Russia attacking Israel is a modern concern of the United States and other nations. With both Russia and Red China constituting a major political block, the question of a future war between Russia and Israel becomes a possibility (*The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook*, pp. 189-190).

This possibility of a war between Russia and Israel has intensified in our time, since Russia has built an alliance with Iran, who desires to totally destroy Israel. Now the point of Ezekiel 38-39 is this:

JUST BEFORE GOD GIVES ISRAEL HER LAND, GOD WILL CAUSE RUSSIA AND A COALITION OF OTHER NATIONS TO COME FROM THE NORTH TO ATTACK ISRAEL AND THEN HE WILL COMPLETELY DESTROY THEM ALL.

As we come to Ezekiel 38, we may make the following observations concerning Ezekiel’s prophecy.

OBSERVATION #1 – God will sovereignly cause a coalition of nations from the north to come down against Israel. **38:3-6**

God is very clear to point out that He is actually “against” these nations (**38:3**). There is a leader named Gog, who is Prince of Rosh. God causes him to make alliances with others and turn against Israel. Alliances are being formed right now between Russia and other nations for what God describes in Ezekiel **38:4**. He is going to Personally bring Russia and other nations that form a massive army from the north with many troops to come down against Israel (**38:4-6**).

OBSERVATION #2 – When God does this Israel needs to be prepared for it. **38:7**

Israel needs to be on guard against Russia and that coalition of nations. She must never be duped into believing that these nations are her friend. She needs to realize that God is going to do this and what she would be really wise to do would be to get right with God.

OBSERVATION #3 – God will cause this to happen at some point in the future. **38:8**

When God gave this prophecy to Ezekiel, He was very specific about time fulfillment:

- 1) It will be fulfilled many days after Ezekiel gave it. **38:8a**
- 2) It will be fulfilled in the latter years, the end times. **38:8b**
- 3) It will be fulfilled when many Jews have returned to Israel from many nations. **38:8c**
- 4) It will be fulfilled when Israel inhabits desolate mountains of Israel. **38:8d**
- 5) It will be fulfilled when Israel thinks she is living securely in the land. **38:8e**

Now it has been many days since Ezekiel made this prophecy. In fact, it has been about 2500 years. Ever since 1948, the Jews have been returning to the land at record rates. There is an unprecedented discussion of peace talks in the Middle East; however, no talks have produced it.

We believe what is described here will occur after the Rapture and after the Antichrist makes a peace treaty with Israel. Israelites will think they are safe and secure and they will flock to the land. The Antichrist will turn against Israel at the 3 ½ year point of the Tribulation and Israel will flee to the mountains. It is around this time when these things will occur with Russia.

OBSERVATION #4 – God will cause Russia and her allies to sweep into Israel like a storm. **39:9**

Russia will have a coalition of many peoples and troops and she will storm Israel. I do not believe Russia is going to get into a nuclear war with the United States.

OBSERVATION #5 – Russia will devise a plan to totally conquer Israel. **39:10-13**

There are four key facts brought out about this:

Fact #1 - Russia will devise an evil plan against Israel. **38:10**

The evil plan is to totally and completely disregard the importance of Israel and to totally destroy her. Those who think negatively and hatefully toward Israel are evil.

Dr. C. I. Scofield said Russia and “the northern powers have often been the persecutors of dispersed Israel, and it is congruous both with divine justice and with the covenants of God that destruction should fall in connection with the attempt to exterminate the remnant of Israel in Jerusalem” (*New Scofield Reverence Bible*, NASV, p. 1156).

Fact #2 - Russia will attack when Israel appears to be secure and peaceful. **38:11, 14**

This prediction right here takes us into the future. There is no point since the days of Ezekiel when Israel has felt totally secure and safe in her land. There is no point in history where she has lived in total peace and certainly that is true now. Although, there is a new political hope now that various nations will be at peace with Israel.

The prediction is when this prophecy is fulfilled, Israel will think she is totally safe and secure in her land. That of course will be when the Antichrist enters into a peace agreement with Israel. Just like Paul said when they are saying, “peace and safety,” destruction will come upon them suddenly (I Thess. 5:3).

Fact #3 - Russia will attack when Israel is prospering. **38:12**

Now carefully observe that this happens in Israel when Israel has acquired “cattle and goods.” This would lead us to conclude that the Temple is up and worship is flourishing in Jerusalem. Cattle are needed for the many sacrifices that will be taking place. This again places the time frame of this in the Tribulation, when the Antichrist has restored worship in Israel. This specifically will take place in the first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation (Dan. 9:27).

Fact #4 - Russia will attack with the support of many other nations. **38:13**

Sheba and Dedan have generally been identified as a prophecy pertaining to Arabs. When Russia begins her move against Israel, she will have the support and allegiance of many Arabs.

Now what is interesting is that Sheba and Tarshish are two places that will honor God and Israel during the Millennium (Is. 60:6, 9-14). What we may assume from this is that there will be a few Arabs who will not turn against Israel and also there will be some from Tarshish (Spain) who will not either.

OBSERVATION #6 – God causes Russia to fulfill His specific prophecy. **38:14-17**

There are three key realities that are revealed by God:

Reality #1 - Russia will know that Israel is God’s nation living securely in the land. **38:14**

The Rapture of the church will definitely send a signal to the entire world that God has just rebooted His program with Israel.

Reality #2 - Russia will come from the far north riding on horses. **38:15**

What this indicates is that the travel of a military will be by primitive means. During the first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation, God is going to demolish the world, which makes road travel almost impossible. The Tribulation will be a time of great economic distress so that nations are literally traveling by foot and horse.

From a human perspective this will be an impressive and massive army and when it starts moving from the north it will appear as if nothing can stop it. That is except God.

Reality #3 - God is directing Russia to Israel's land so that He can magnify Himself when He destroys Russia and her allies. **38:16-17**

Russia for the most part has been an atheistic nation. God says I will change all of that by bringing Russia into My people's land and I will destroy her right there. It is interesting that **verse 17** would seem to suggest that the leader of Russia will actually have some perspective that he is fulfilling prophecy that was made clear back in the days of Ezekiel. Has this happened yet? Obviously not. Will it happen? Dogmatically yes.

Perhaps a church such as ours that has just gone into Russia will be used by God to communicate these very things.

OBSERVATION #7 – God will completely judge and destroy Russia. **38:18-23**

There are five destructive facts brought out about Russia:

Destructive Fact #1 - God's anger and fury will mount up when Russia enters the Promised Land. **38:18**

Destructive Fact #2 - God's wrath will cause Him to cause a great earthquake to hit in the Promised Land. **38:19**

In Revelation 16:18-20 a description is given of an earthquake in Israel that leaves the world in total destruction.

Destructive Fact #3 - God will cause the entire world to shake at His presence. **38:20**

Again this fits the description of Revelation 16.

Destructive Fact #4 - God will cause allied armies to fight and kill each other. **38:21**

Do not overlook this point. God is the One causing all of these things to happen.

Destructive Fact #5 - God will specifically destroy Russia with His own weapons. **38:22**

Now carefully observe **verse 23**. God will do this to Russia to magnify Himself. He will make Himself known to many nations that He is the LORD God.

Russia is going to become one of the world's great evangelistic statements. God will destroy her to show His own power and to show that Israel is His nation.