

# Pentwater Bible Church

*Book of Ezekiel*

*Message 52*

*September 4, 2016*



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The Book of Ezekiel

Message Fifty-Two

THE LORD JUDGES THE NATIONS

September 4, 2016

Daniel E. Woodhead

This section of Ezekiel begins a eight chapter section of the book starting in chapter twenty-five and continuing through thirty-two detailing Divine judgments against nations that have risen up against Israel many times as their adversaries. There are seven people groups singled out particularly and the text divides them in two groups of four and three. This eight section can be viewed as a transition to the last section of the book

The first four are Ammon, Moab, Edom and the Philistines who are immediate neighbors. The last three Tyre, Zidon and Egypt are somewhat farther away. Their presence posed a constant spiritual as well as physical danger to Israel's relationship to God and seemed to be a persistent frustration of the Divine plan for the nation Israel. Most Bible teachers and commentators avoid specifying a time on the world's chronology as to when these judgments will take place. All accept that they have not yet occurred. When one sees the entire Bible as one long chronological story the period of the timing of the judgment is brought into focus.

These eight chapters seem to provide an answer to the psalmist Asaph from his imprecatory prayer in Psalm eighty-three asking the Lord to terrify, cause them to be confused, and perish so that they will seek the name of the Lord Jehovah.

Psalm 83:1-8

*<sup>1</sup>O God, keep not thou silence: Hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.  
<sup>2</sup>For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult; And they that hate thee have lifted up the head. <sup>3</sup>They take crafty counsel against thy people, And consult together against thy hidden ones. <sup>4</sup>They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. <sup>5</sup>For they have consulted together with one consent; Against thee do they make a covenant: <sup>6</sup>The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab, and the Hagarenes; <sup>7</sup>Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre: <sup>8</sup>Assyria also is joined with them; They have helped the children of Lot. Selah (ASV, 1901).*

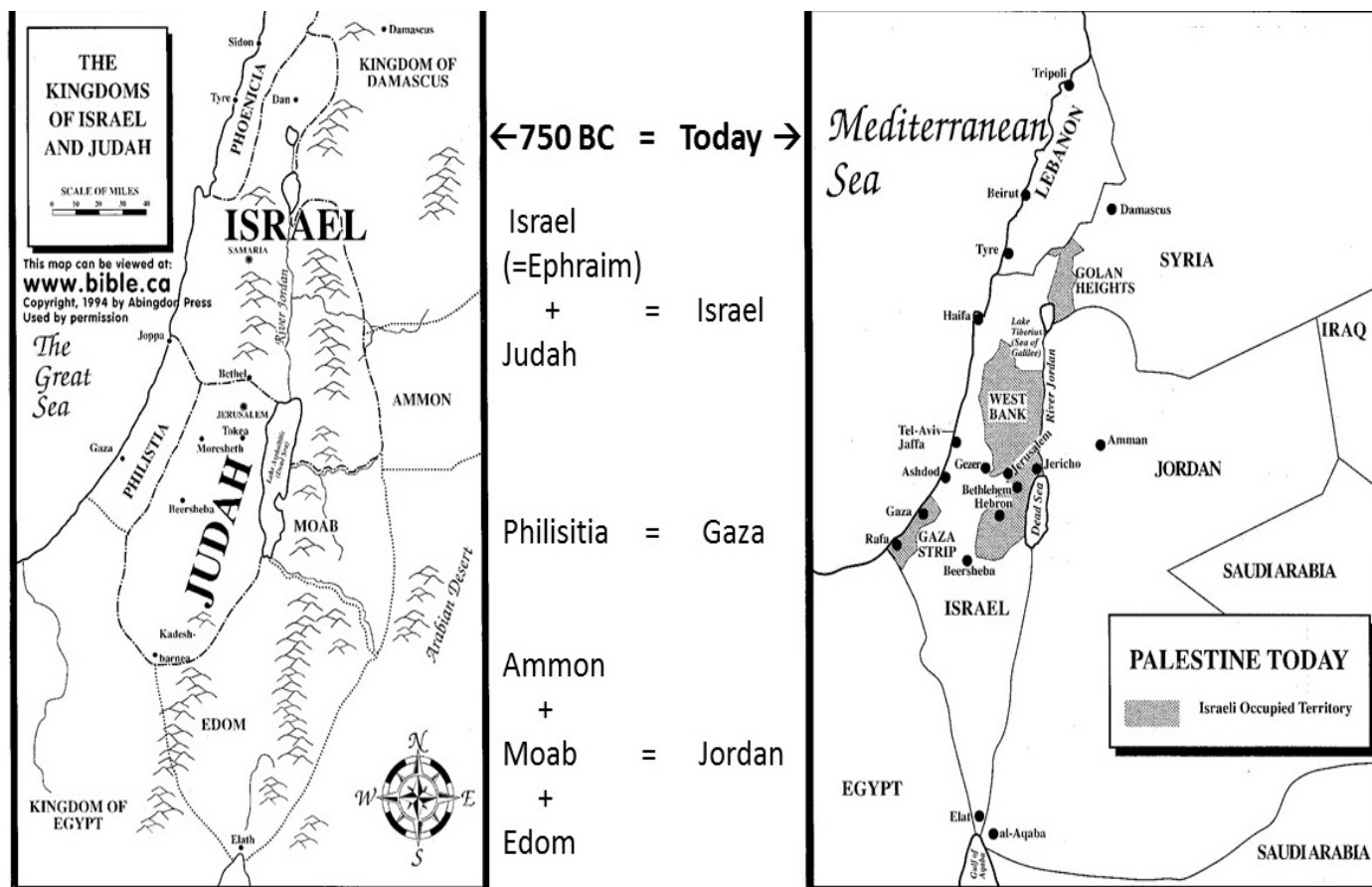
Some have written that this Psalm teaches that these nations will come against Israel before the Tribulation prior to the allied invasion described in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39. As we will see they already have. But the case in point is that this Psalm does not describe a invasion of Israel by these nations, just a hatred.

There has been a long adversarial relationship between the progeny of Isaac and Ishmael since the days of Abraham. God promised a covenant to him along with a special child to receive the covenant that would come from the loins of Abraham. It began in Genesis with the barren Sarah giving Abraham her Egyptian handmaid Hagar as a concubine to produce

a child for him. That child was Ishmael. Sarah later had the child of promise Isaac and the two genealogical lines have been adversaries since (Genesis 16:12).

Isaac's son Jacob received the covenant and his twin brother Esau did not. In reaction to this he married into the Ishmael family adding people to the group in conflict with Israel. This animosity has been obvious since the time of Abraham. It was still there during the Exodus (Numbers 20:14-21) and later into more modern history.

The nations listed in this Psalm are unified in their desire to annihilate Israel. They do not want the name Israel to be remembered. They collectively desire to destroy Israel. These name are the ancient biblical names but have modern counterparts.



Maps from [www.bible.ca/maps](http://www.bible.ca/maps)

- Edom — Southern Jordan
- Ishmaelites — Father of the Arabs
- Moab — Central Jordan
- Hagarenes — Egypt
- Gabal — Lebanon
- Ammon — Northern Jordan
- Amalek — The Sinai Peninsula
- Philistia — The Gaza Strip
- Tyre — Lebanon
- Assyria — Iraq and some of Syria



These nations have been at odds with Israel since the earliest times. They all came against Israel several times in the post biblical period. Israel declared statehood on May 15, 1948 after the United Nations voted to give them sovereignty in the fall of 1947 over the piece of land on the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. This group of nations attacked Israel in a coalition of armed forces.



In 1948, after the United Nations voted to give Israel statehood, five Arab armies (Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Lebanon and Iraq) immediately invaded Israel. The stated purpose of this invasion was to "push the Jews into the sea", in other words, genocide. Assam Pasha, Secretary-General of the Arab League, declared their intentions: "This will be a war of extermination and a momentous massacre which will be spoken of like the Mongolian massacres and the Crusades. "What Hitler didn't finish three years earlier, the Arabs would finish once and for all."<sup>1</sup> A Nazi collaborator, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, led the Arabs of the former British Mandate of Palestine (Post WW I division of Israel). He was charged at the Nuremberg trials before escaping in 1946. Al-Husseini actively supported Hitler's aim to exterminate the Jews in World War II. Israel prevailed in all the military efforts of these cited nations to destroy them. The Arab nations failed miserably to destroy Israel. However, there has been no settled peaceful relationship between them. After the third war of 1973 the Arab wars turned to terrorism known as the intifada, attrition, and trying Israel in the world press (opinion).

<sup>1</sup> Sachar, Howard M. *A History of Israel from the Rise of Zionism to Our Time: 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. New York: A Borzoi Book, 1976. Reprint Alfred A. Knoff, Inc., 1996, 333.

Following the 1948 Arab–Israeli War in the period leading up to June 1967, tensions increased dangerously. In reaction to the mobilization of Egyptian forces along the Israeli border in the Sinai Peninsula, Israel launched a series of preemptive airstrikes against Egyptian airfields. The Egyptians were caught by surprise, and nearly the entire Egyptian air force was destroyed with few Israeli losses. Simultaneously, the Israelis sent troops into the Gaza Strip and the Sinai, which again caught the Egyptians by surprise. After some initial resistance, Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser ordered the evacuation of the Sinai. Israeli forces rushed westward in pursuit of the Egyptians, inflicted heavy losses, and conquered the Sinai.

Nasser got Syria and Jordan to begin attacks on Israel by claiming that Egypt had defeated the Israeli air strike. Israeli counterattacks resulted in the seizure of East Jerusalem as well as the West Bank from the Jordanians, while Israel's retaliation against Syria resulted in its occupation of the Golan Heights.

On the morning of June 5, 1967 the Israeli Air Force destroyed almost the entire Egyptian Air Force (more than three hundred planes) in less than three hours. Israel's armored divisions, under the leadership of General Ariel Sharon, also launched a lightning attack on the same day. More than eight hundred Egyptian tanks had been destroyed, and thousands of soldiers were taken as prisoners of war. Nasser later acknowledged that eighty percent of Egypt's Russian-supplied military equipment had been lost in the Sinai debacle. Finally, at 8:00 p.m. on June 8, Nasser accepted a cease-fire.

On June 11, 1967 a ceasefire was signed. Arab casualties were far heavier than those of Israel: fewer than a thousand Israelis had been killed compared to over 20,000 from the Arab forces. God has obviously caused the Israelis to regain their land after being out of it since 586 B.C. which is a total of 2533 years. He has allowed them to prevail in several large scale wars in which the nations in these Ezekiel chapters state a desire to exterminate the Jews but always lose militarily. So this began the intifada.

These prophecies in Ezekiel chapters twenty-five through thirty-two seem to indicate a severe Divine *permanent* judgment against the nations. Other Scriptures indicate a *restoration* of a relationship of varying sorts with Israel (Ezekiel 35:6-9; Isaiah 19:18-22; 23-25; Jeremiah 49:28-33; 34-39 etc.). Since there has not been a restoration of relationship between these nations and Israel as of 2016 it is necessary to consider when this might be on the long chronological timeline of all of human history as laid out in the Bible.

These judgments have had a partial, past fulfilment, the complete fulfilment is yet to come. for the prophetic Word shows that the nations who have sinned against Jehovah and His people will be judged in a coming day, when Israel will be restored and be blest in the Millennial Kingdom. This is evident when we read the future promises to His covenant people Israel in Ezekiel 28:24–26 and 29:21. These passages will be expanded upon when we get to them. These unfulfilled promises concerning Israel's restoration as well as spiritual prosperity make it clear that these judgments will be end time events also known as the latter days.

Only the Biblically illiterate fail to see that we are presently in the “Last Days.” The Last Days began with the First World War as Christ stated in the Olivet Discourse. He used the idiomatic phrase *Nation rising against Nation and Kingdom against Kingdom*” which is a

Jewish idiomatic phrase, meaning a conflict in the total region under discussion. In the Olivet Discourse He was discussing the events surrounding His Second Coming, which pertain to the entire world. Matthew records our Lord's words with respect to the beginning of the end or as the Bible states the beginning of the latter days.

Matthew 24:7-8

*For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places, All these [are] the beginning of sorrows (KJV).*

According to all three synoptic Gospel writers, the sign of the end of the age is said to be when nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. This act will be coupled with famines and earth quakes in various places and Jesus clearly stated that this would be the beginning of travail (sorrows). The term travail means "birth pang". It refers to the series of birth pangs that a woman undergoes before giving birth to a baby. The Jewish prophets pictured the last days as a series of birth pangs before the birth of the Messianic Age also known as the Millennial Kingdom. The beginning of travail, the first birth pang and the sign that the end of the age has begun is when *nation rises against, nation and kingdom against kingdom*. It is important to find out just exactly where and how this idiom is used in the Bible. It is used in at least two passages.

Isaiah 19:1-4

THE BURDEN OF EGYPT.

*Behold, Jehovah rideth upon a swift cloud, and cometh unto Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall tremble at his presence; and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it. <sup>2</sup>And I will stir up the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbor; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom. <sup>3</sup>And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst of it; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek unto the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards. <sup>4</sup>And I will give over the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts (ASV, 1901).*

Here the land of Egypt is discussed and it points to a conflict all over the land of Egypt as the nation is involved in a civil war.

II Chronicles 15:1-7:

*And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: <sup>2</sup>and he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: Jehovah is with you, while ye are with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you. <sup>3</sup>Now for a long season Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law: <sup>4</sup>but when in their distress they turned unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. <sup>5</sup>And in those times there was no*

*peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in; but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the lands. <sup>6</sup>And they were broken in pieces, nation against nation, and city against city; for God did vex them with all adversity. <sup>7</sup>But be ye strong, and let not your hands be slack; for your work shall be rewarded (ASV, 1901).*

In this passage it is the Middle East under discussion, and the idiom states that the conflict encompasses the entire Middle East. In the Olivet Discourse it is the *whole world* that is in view. This is clear from Matthew 24: 14; 21; 30 and 31. So the idiom refers to a world wide conflict and this world wide conflict is the first birth pang, signifying that the end of the age or the last days have begun.

Jesus stated in the Olivet Discourse that local wars between a few nations (wars and rumors of wars) did not mean that the end had begun. But when He said that when there is "*nation against nation, and kingdom against kingdom,*" this will mean the end of the age has begun.

Interestingly the Jewish rabbis have used this term "*nation against nation, and kingdom against kingdom*" in various texts outside of the Bible. This expression then used by Jesus is a Hebrew idiom for a world war. Remember Jesus is Jewish and all the writers of the Bible were Jewish. Even if the New Testament was written Greek, the men were all steeped in the Jewish culture, which they knew and lived in that milieu.

One Jewish source known as the "Zohar Chadash" states:

*"At that time wars shall be stirred up in the world. Nation shall be against nation and city against city; much distress shall be renewed against the enemies of the Israelites."*

Another Jewish source known as the Bereshit Rabbah states:

*"If you shall see the kingdoms rising against each other in turn, then give heed and note the footsteps of the Messiah (XLII:4)*

The Rabbis clearly taught that a worldwide conflict would signal the coming of the Messiah. Jesus corrected this idea slightly, for He said that when the world war occurs, while it does not signal the coming of the Messiah, it will signal that the end of the age has begun. These birth pangs that He talked about are the same as the footsteps the rabbis talked about. The footsteps of the Messiah had to do with a series of events that lead up to the coming of the Messiah

World war I, 1914-1918, was the fulfillment of this particular prophecy, for that was the first time the entire world was at war. World War II was a continuation of World War I because it involved the same participants and the same issues. Both wars had a significant impact on Jewish history. World War I gave impetus to the growth of the Zionist movement, and World War II led to the re-establishment of the Jewish State.

Since WW I, history has entered the last days of the Church Age. However, the last days are an extended period of time. We do not know when the end of the "Last Days" will occur. The last days are a period that includes the consummation of the church age and the Tribulation. The period of the last days up to the beginning of the Tribulation is

unrevealed in Scripture. The Great Tribulation is seven years long. The sign that the end of the age has begun is the worldwide conflict fulfilled by World War I and World War II.

Therefore our pinpointing the events of the judgment of the nations surrounding Israel seem to place themselves in the latter days. Specifically with the Tribulation still in the future and the Arab nations continuing to be at odds with Israel it is reasonable to place these judgments at the end of the Tribulation. This will be when all animosity toward Israel will end. It may also be at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom when Israel is at peace with all nations and the Messiah is governing the world from His throne in Jerusalem. This state of the earth after the Tribulation is one where wickedness and sin has been defeated (Isaiah 13:9) so the animosity of the nations toward Israel will be over.

NEXT MESSAGE: THE PROPHECY AGAINST THE ARAB NATIONS CONTINUED – AMMON.

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