

# THE BATTLE OF GOG AND MAGOG

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*Frustrated at their inability to profit from Israel's fortune and determined to dominate and occupy the Holy Land, the Russians had launched an attack against Israel in the middle of the night. The assault became known as the Russian Pearl Harbor . . . The number of aircraft and warheads made it clear their mission was annihilation. . . .*

*Miraculously, not one casualty was reported in all of Israel. Otherwise Buck might have believed some mysterious malfunction had caused missile and plane to destroy each other. But witnesses reported that I had been a firestorm, along with rain and hail and an earthquake, that consumed the entire offensive effort. . . .*

*Editors and readers had their own explanations for the phenomenon, but Buck admitted, if only to himself, that he became a believer in God that day. Jewish scholars pointed out passages from the Bible that talked about God destroying Israel's enemies with a firestorm, earthquake, hail, and rain. Buck was stunned when he read Ezekiel 38 and 39 about a great enemy from the north invading Israel with the help of Persia, Libya, and Ethiopia.<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction

The Left Behind series commences with the fulfillment of the battle of Gog and Magog in Ezek 38–39. The prominence this battle is given in the Left Behind series is fitting because undoubtedly the battle of Gog and Magog in Ezek 39–39 is one of the most dramatic prophecies in the Bible. Taken literally, it predicts an eschatological invasion of Israel from every direction by a vast horde of nations, and God's direct, supernatural intervention to annihilate the invaders.

The primary purpose of this paper is to examine current events or signs of the times that point toward this future battle. In order to achieve this purpose, the text of Ezek 38–39 must first be briefly considered. Any examination of current events in light of Bible prophecy should begin with the Biblical text and then move to how events in our world seem to be setting the stage for those events. Beginning with the biblical text is a safeguard against the temptation to

twist the headlines to fit the Bible. To accomplish this purpose, Ezek 38–39 will be examined using the six standard questions of journalism: who, what, when, where, why, and how.

### **The Participants (38:1-7) WHO?**

Before considering the details of these chapters it is important at the outset to place them in their larger literary and historical setting. This basic overview of Ezekiel reveals that Ezek 38–39 appear in the restoration section of the book.

Ezek 1–24	Judgment on Judah
Ezek 25–32	Judgment on Judah’s Near Enemies Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt
Ezek 33–48	Restoration of Judah Chapter 33 is the transitional chapter. Ezekiel receives news that Jerusalem has fallen. Ezekiel is re-commissioned with a message of restoration and hope that he delivers in 34–48. Ezek 36–37 prophesy the physical restoration and spiritual regeneration of Israel. Ezek 38–39 focus on God’s eschatological judgment of Israel’s far enemies.

The prophecy of Ezek 38–39 can be divided into two main sections: the defeat of Gog (ch. 38) and the disposal of Gog (ch. 39).<sup>2</sup>

The prophecy of the battle of Gog and Magog begins with a list of ten proper names in 38:1-7. The name Gog, which occurs eleven times in Ezek 38–39, is a name or title of the leader of the invasion. It is clear that Gog is an individual since he is directly addressed several times by God (38:14; 39:1) and since he is called a prince (38:2; 39:1). Many modern scholars have identified Gog with Gyges (Gugu) who was a seventh century B.C. Lydian king mentioned in six inscriptions of the Assyrian monarch Ashurbanipal.<sup>3</sup> Since the setting of Ezek 38–39 is eschatological, Gyges, who reigned a century before Ezekiel, cannot be the fulfillment of this prophecy. Moreover, Gyges never led an invasion into Israel. Nevertheless, it is possible that Ezekiel used Gyges as an archetype or symbol of the great eschatological invader.

The other nine proper names in Ezek 38:1-7 are specific geographical locations: Magog, Rosh, Meshech, Tubal, Persia, Cush, Put, Gomer, and Beth-togarmah. All nine of these locations are found in the Table of the Nations in Gen 10:2-7. The only one that is questionable is Rosh, but it is likely that the name Rosh is actually derived from the name Tiras in Gen 10:2. Clyde Billington notes the Akkadian tendency to drop or to change an initial “t” sound in a name especially if the initial “t” was followed by an “r” sound. If you drop the initial “T” from Tiras you are left with “ras.”<sup>4</sup> It makes sense for Ras or Rosh to be listed in Gen 10 since all the other nations in Ezek 38:1-7 are also listed there.

None of the place names in Ezek 38:1-7 exist on any modern map. Ezekiel used ancient place names that were familiar to the people of his day. While the names of these geographical locations have changed many times throughout history and may change again, the geographical territory remains the same. Regardless of what names they may carry at the time of this invasion, it is these specific geographical areas that will be involved.<sup>5</sup> Each of these ancient geographical locations from Ezekiel’s day will be briefly examined, and the modern counterpart will be identified.

### *Magog*

According to Josephus, the ancient Scythians inhabited the land of Magog.<sup>6</sup> The Scythians were northern nomadic tribes who inhabited territory from Central Asia across the southern steppes of modern Russia. Magog today probably represents the former underbelly of the Soviet Union: Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. Afghanistan could also be part of this territory. All of these nations are dominated by Islam with a combined total population in excess of sixty million.

### *Rosh*

Modern prophecy teachers have often identified Rosh with Russia. However, many have begun to question this identification. There are two key issues that must be resolved to properly interpret Rosh in Ezek 38–39: 1) is Rosh a common noun or a name? and 2) does Rosh have any relation to Russia?

#### **Rosh: Common Noun or Name?**

The first point that must be considered is whether the word Rosh in Ezek 38:2, 3 and 39:1 is a proper name or simply a common noun. The word rosh in Hebrew simply means head, top, summit, or chief. It is a very common word and is used in all Semitic languages. It occurs over six hundred times in the Old Testament.

Many translations render Rosh as a common noun and translate it as the word “chief.” The King James Version, Revised Standard Version, English Standard Version, New American Bible and the New International Version all adopt this translation. However, the Jerusalem Bible, New English Bible, and New American Standard Bible all translate Rosh as a proper name indicating a geographical location.

The weight of evidence favors taking *Rosh* as a proper name in Ezek 38–39. There are five arguments that favor this view. First, the eminent Hebrew scholars C. F. Keil and Wilhelm Gesenius both hold that the better translation of Rosh in Ezek 38:2-3 and 39:1 is as a proper noun referring to a specific geographical location.<sup>7</sup>

Second, the *Septuagint* translates *Rosh* as the proper name *Ros* ( $\rho\omega\varsigma$ ). This is especially significant since the *Septuagint* was translated only three centuries after Ezekiel was written (obviously much closer to the original than any modern translation). The ancient Greek translations of Symmachus and Theodotian also translated Rosh in Ezekiel 38–39 as a proper

noun.<sup>8</sup> The mistranslation of Rosh in many modern translations as an adjective can be traced to the Latin Vulgate of Jerome.<sup>9</sup>

Third, many Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias, in their articles on Rosh, support taking it as a proper name in Ezek 38. Here are a few examples: *New Bible Dictionary*, *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary*, and *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*.

Fourth, Rosh is mentioned the first time in Ezek 38:2 and then repeated in Ezek 38:3 and 39:1. If Rosh were simply a title, it would probably dropped in these two places because in Hebrew when titles are repeated they are generally abbreviated.

Fifth, the most impressive evidence in favor of taking Rosh as a proper name is simply that this translation is the most accurate. G. A. Cooke translates Ezek 38:2, “the chief of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal.” He calls this “the most natural way of rendering the Hebrew.”<sup>10</sup> Daniel Block says, “The issue revolves around whether *ro*’s is the name of an ethnic group or a common noun. Both LXX ἀρχοντα Ρως and the construct pointing of the Masoretes argue for the former.”<sup>11</sup> Having established that Rosh should be taken as a proper name of a geographical area, the next task is to determine what geographical location is in view.

### **Is Rosh Russia?**

Many scholars totally dismiss any notion that the word Rosh in Ezek 38–39 could have any possible connection to modern Russia.<sup>12</sup> One argument against identifying Rosh with Russia is that it is “impossibly anachronistic” since the name Russia did not appear until the Middle Ages.<sup>13</sup> Others maintain that those who identify Rosh as Russia base the connection only on the similarity in sound between the two words. On a *Bible Answer Man* radio broadcast in October 2002, Hank Hannegraaf asked Gary DeMar what he thought about Tim LaHaye identifying Rosh as Russia, since the two words sound so much alike. DeMar responded, “The idea that you can take a word in Hebrew that sounds like the English word, and then go with that

and to create an entire eschatological position based upon that is . . . it's nonsense." But DeMar's argument is a straw man. All competent scholars would agree that one should not equate an English word with a Hebrew word just because the two words sound alike.

There are two reasons for identifying ancient Rosh with modern Russia. First, Wilhelm Gesenius, who died in 1842 and is considered by modern Hebrew scholars as one of the greatest scholars of the Hebrew language, unquestionably believed that Rosh in Ezekiel was a proper noun identifying Russia. Gesenius says that Rosh in Ezek 38:2, 3; 39:1 is a, "pr. n. of a northern nation, mentioned with Meshech and Tubal; undoubtedly the *Russians*, who are mentioned by the Byzantine writers of the tenth century, under the name *the Ros*, dwelling to the north of Taurus . . . as dwelling on the river Rha (*Wolga*)."<sup>14</sup> This identification by Gesenius cannot be passed over lightly. As far as we know, Gesenius had no eschatological ax to grind. Yet, objectively, he says without hesitation that Rosh in Ezek 38–39 is Russia.<sup>15</sup> In his original Latin version of the lexicon titled *Thesaurus Linguae Hebraeae et Chaldaeae Veteris Testamenti*, Gesenius has nearly one page of notes dealing with the word Rosh and the Rosh people mentioned in Ezek 38–39. This page of notes does not appear in any of the English translations of Gesenius' Lexicon. Those who disagree with Gesenius have failed to refute his sizable body of convincing evidence identifying Rosh with Russia.

Second, there is considerable historical evidence that a place known as Rosh was very familiar in the ancient world. While the word has a variety of forms and spellings, it is clear that the same people are in view. Rosh (*Rash*) is identified as a place that existed as early as 2600 B.C. in Egyptian inscriptions. There is a later Egyptian inscription from about 1500 B.C that refers to a land called *Reshu* that was located to the north of Egypt.<sup>16</sup>

The place name *Rosh* (or its equivalent in the respective languages) is found at least twenty times in other ancient documents. It is found three times in the Septuagint (LXX), ten times in Sargon's inscriptions, once in Assurbanipal's cylinder, once in Sennacherib's annals, and five times in Ugaritic tablets.<sup>17</sup> Rosh was apparently a well-known place in Ezekiel's day. In

the sixth century B.C., when Ezekiel wrote his prophecy, several bands of the Rosh people lived in an area to the north of the Black Sea.

After providing extensive evidence of the origin and early history of the Rosh people, and then tracing them through the centuries, Clyde Billington concludes:

Historical, ethnological, and archaeological evidence all favor the conclusion that the Rosh people of Ezekiel 38–39 were the ancestors of the Rus/Ros people of Europe and Asia. . . . The Rosh people who are mentioned in Ezekiel 38–39 were well-known to ancient and medieval writers by a variety of names which all derived from the names of Tiras and Rosh. . . . Those Rosh people who lived to the north of the Black Sea in ancient and medieval times were called the Rus/Ros/Rox/Aorsi from very early times. . . . From this mixture with Slavs and with the Varangian Rus in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Rosh people of the area north of the Black Sea formed the people known today as the Russians.<sup>18</sup>

Edwin Yamauchi is often quoted, especially by preterists, as the conclusive authority that Rosh cannot be Russia. He says that the name Rus, which the modern name Russia is based upon, “was brought into the region of Kiev, north of the Black Sea, by the Vikings only in the Middle Ages.”<sup>19</sup> However, while Yamauchi is a respected scholar, his conclusion stands in direct opposition to the substantial historical evidence presented by Wilhelm Gesenius, James Price, and Clyde Billington.

#### *Meshech and Tubal*

Meshech and Tubal are normally mentioned together in Scripture. In his notes in *The Scofield Study Bible* at Ezek 38:2, C. I. Scofield identified Meshech and Tubal as the Russian cities of Moscow and Tobolsk. Scofield wrote, “That the primary reference is to the northern (European) powers, headed up by Russia, all agree. . . . The reference to Meshech and Tubal (Moscow and Tobolsk) is a clear mark of identification.”

While the names do sound alike, this is not a proper method of identification. Meshech and Tubal are mentioned two other times in Ezekiel. In Ezek 27:13 they are mentioned as trading partners with ancient Tyre. In Ezek 32:26 their recent defeat is recorded. It is highly

unlikely that ancient Tyre (modern Lebanon) was trading with Moscow and the Siberian city of Tobolsk. The preferred identification is that Meshech and Tubal are the ancient Moschoi and Tibarenoi in Greek writings or Tabal and Musku in Assyrian inscriptions.<sup>20</sup> The ancient locations are in modern Turkey

### *Persia*

The words “Persia,” “Persian,” or “Persians” are found 35 times in the Old Testament. The ancient land of Persia became the modern nation of Iran in March 1935, and then the name was changed to the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979. Iran’s present population is 68 million.

### *Ethiopia (Cush)*

The Hebrew word Cush in Ezek 38:5 is often translated “Ethiopia” in modern versions. According to *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon*, ancient Cush was the “land and people of southern Nile-valley, or Upper Egypt, extending from Syene indefinitely to the south.”<sup>21</sup> Ancient Cush was called *Kusu* by the Assyrians and Babylonians, *Kos* or *Kas* by the Egyptians, and *Nubia* by the Greeks.<sup>22</sup> Secular history locates Cush directly south of ancient Egypt extending down past the modern city of Khartoum, which is the capital of modern Sudan.<sup>23</sup> Thus, modern Sudan inhabits the ancient land of Cush. Sudan is a hard-line Islamic nation that supported Iraq in the Gulf War and harbored Osama bin Laden from 1991 to 1996.

### *Put*

It is clear from ancient sources that *Put* or *Phut* was a North African nation (Jer 46:9; Ezek 27:10; 30:5; Nah 3:9). From the *Babylon Chronicle* it appears that *Putu* was the “distant”

land to the west of Egypt, which would be modern day Libya.<sup>24</sup> The Septuagint renders the word *Put* as *Libues*. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon* also identifies *Put* with *Libya*.<sup>25</sup> Modern Libya, which is an Islamic nation, has been under the rule of Colonel Mu‘ammar al-Gadhafi since 1969.

### *Gomer*

Gomer has often been identified as Germany, or more particularly East Germany before the fall of communism. Gomer is probably a reference to the ancient Cimmerians or *Kimmerioi*. Ancient history identifies biblical Gomer with the Akkadian *Gi-mir-ra-a* and the Armenian *Gamir*. *The Cambridge Ancient History* states that the Assyrian *Gimirai* is the Hebrew Gomer.<sup>26</sup> Beginning in the eighth century B.C. the Cimmerians occupied territory in Anatolia, which is modern Turkey.<sup>27</sup> Josephus noted that the Gomerites were identified with the Galatians who inhabited what today is central Turkey.<sup>28</sup>

### *Beth-togarmah*

The Hebrew word “beth” means “house,” so Beth-togarmah means the “house of Togarmah.” Beth-togarmah is mentioned in Ezek 27:14 as a nation that traded horses and mules with ancient Tyre. Ezek 38:6 states that Beth-togarmah comes from “the remote parts of the north with all its troops.” Ancient Togarmah was also known as Til-garamu (Assyrian) or Tegarma (Hittite) and its territory is in modern Turkey, which is north of Israel.

### *Charting the Nations in Ezek 38–39*

With these identifications in mind, all the nations that will participate in the battle of Gog and Magog can be seen in the following chart.

<b>Ancient Name</b>	<b>Modern Nation</b>
Rosh (Rashu, Rasapu, Ros, and Rus)	Russia

Magog (Scythians)	Central Asia and possibly Afghanistan
Meshech (Muschki and Musku)	Turkey
Tubal (Tubalu)	Turkey
Persia	Iran
Ethiopia (Cush)	Sudan
Libya (Put or Phut)	Libya
Gomer (Cimmerians)	Turkey
Beth-togarmah (Til-garimmu or Tegarma)	Turkey

Based on these identifications, Ezek 38–39 predicts an invasion of the land of Israel in the last days by a vast confederation of nations from north of the Black and Caspian Seas, extending down to modern Iran in the east, as far as modern Libya to the west, and down to Sudan in the south. Therefore, Russia will have at least five key allies: Turkey, Iran, Libya, Sudan, and the nations of Central Asia. Amazingly, all of these nations are Muslim nations and Iran, Libya, and Sudan are three of Israel’s most ardent opponents. Iran is one of the “axis of evil” nations that is trying desperately to attain nuclear weapons. Many of these nations are hotbeds of militant Islam and are either forming or strengthening their ties as these words are being written. This list of nations reads like the Who’s Who of this week’s newspaper. It does not require a very active imagination to envision these nations conspiring together to invade Israel in the near future.

### **The Period (38:8) WHEN?**

There appears to be a general consensus concerning the basic composition of the invading army and the course of events in the battle of Gog and Magog. By far, the most controversial issue in Ezek 39–39 is the setting or timing of the invasion. Concerning this issue one would be wise to follow the advice of Clarence E. Mason. “One thing is certain; no teacher should speak dogmatically on a prophecy like that of Gog and Magog in Ezek 39–39. So many different views have been offered that it is difficult to sift, discard, and retain. . . . It is the details, particularly as to the time of the action, regarding which there is disagreement.”<sup>29</sup> There are seven main views of the timing of the invasion. Each of these views will be briefly presented and critiqued.

#### *Preterist View*

Preterists contend that the events in Ezek 38–39 have already occurred. Gary DeMar argues strenuously for a “literal” interpretation of Ezek 38–39, and repeatedly criticizes Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins for interpreting these chapters symbolically, thereby, spiritualizing the text. DeMar insists that Ezek 38–39 was “literally” fulfilled by the events described in Esth 9 occurring in about 473 B.C. in the days of Queen Esther of Persia.<sup>30</sup> DeMar states that the parallels between the battles in Ezek 38–39 and Esther are “unmistakeable.”<sup>31</sup>

DeMar, however, fails to account for several clear differences between Ezek 38–39 and Esth 9. A simple reading of the two passages reveals that they cannot possibly be describing the same event. Here are five of the more apparent and problematic inconsistencies.

#### **Ezek 38–39**

The land of Israel is invaded (38:16).  
The enemies fall on the mountains of Israel (39:4). Gog, the leader of the invasion, is buried in Israel (39:11)

#### **Esth 9**

Jews are attacked in cities throughout the Persian empire and defend themselves (9:2). The enemies die throughout the Persian empire.

The Jews bury the dead bodies over a period of seven months to cleanse the land of Israel (39:12)

No need to cleanse the land because the bodies are not in the land of Israel.

The invaders are destroyed by a massive earthquake in the land of Israel, infighting, plagues, and fire from heaven (38:19-22). God destroys the enemies supernaturally.

Attackers are killed by the Jewish people themselves assisted by local government leaders (9:3-5)

Invaders are from as far west as ancient Put (modern Libya) (Ezek 38:5) and as far north as Magog, the land of the Scythians.

The Persian empire never included these areas. It only extended as far west as Cush (modern Sudan) (Esth 8:9) and as far north as the southern part of the Black and Caspian Seas.

God sends fire upon Magog and those who inhabit the coastlands (39:6)

There is nothing even close to this in Esth 9.

One important question we might ask at this point is—if Ezek 38–39 was fulfilled in the events of Esth 9, why did this escape the notice of everyone in Esther’s day? Why is there no mention in Esther of this great fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy? And why are there no Jewish scholars in that day or subsequently who recognized this fulfillment? The answer seems quite clear. Esth 9 did not fulfill Ezek 38–39.

An important Jewish holiday known as Purim developed out of the Esther event (9:20-32). This is a joyous annual holiday to celebrate God’s deliverance of Israel from the hand of her enemies. Purim’s celebration includes the public reading of the book of Esther, but no tradition has developed or even been heard of in which the Jews read Ezek 38–39 in connection with this observance. If Ezek 38–39 had been a fulfillment of Esther, then no doubt a tradition of reading that passage would have arisen in conjunction with the celebration.

Fortunately, Ezekiel states in general terms when this invasion will occur. In Ezek 38:8, he says specifically that this invasion will occur in the “latter years.” This is the only occurrence of this exact phrase in the Old Testament.

Another similar phrase occurs a few verses later in Ezek 38:16. “It will come about in *the last days* that I shall bring you against My land” (italics added). This phrase is used in the Old Testament in reference to Israel’s final time of distress or to Israel’s final restoration to the Messianic kingdom (Isa 2:2; Jer 23:20; 30:24; Hos 3:5; Mic 4:1). Likewise, in Ezek 38:16, the phrase “in the last days” is a technical term that refers to the end times.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, Ezekiel is telling us that this invasion will occur in the final time of history in preparation for the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom of Christ.

Another very simple reason we can know that this invasion is still future is that nothing even remotely similar to the events in Ezek 38–39 has ever occurred in the past. When has Israel ever been invaded by all these nations listed in Ezek 38:1-6? Or when did God ever destroy an invading army like this with fire and brimstone from heaven, plagues, earthquakes, and infighting among the invaders (Ezek 38:19-22). The answer? Never. That is because Ezekiel is describing an invasion that is still future even in our day.

#### *Pre-Tribulation View*

The other seven views of the timing of this invasion are held by futurists. The first of these views is the pre-tribulation view. This view is held by Tim LaHaye, Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Tommy Ice, and Randall Price. It is the view expressed in the Left Behind series where the Gog and Magog invasion occurs before the rapture. Those who hold this view believe that the invasion will occur before the tribulation begins, and possibly even before the rapture. However,

in keeping with the imminency of the rapture, they carefully avoid saying that it *must* occur before the rapture.

The pre-tribulation view has two main strengths. First, it fits well with the seven years for burning the weapons and seven months to bury the dead in Ezek 39:9-12. Under this view, the seven years in Ezek 39:9 corresponds with the seventieth week of Dan 9:27. Second, this view provides a reasonable explanation for how the Jewish people will be able to construct a temple on the temple mount in Jerusalem. If the armies of many of the major Islamic nations are decimated in Israel before the tribulation begins, the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem could be accomplished with much less Muslim resistance.

This view has two main weaknesses. First, according to Ezek 38:8 and 16 the invasion will occur in the “latter years” or “last days.” As noted above, these expressions appear to refer to the final time of Israel’s distress and restoration, or the end-times. These chronological indicators point to a time period after the beginning of the tribulation rather than a time within the church age or during the time between the rapture and the beginning of the tribulation.

Second, the invasion will occur at a time when Israel is “at rest,” “living securely,” and dwelling in “unwalled villages.” Fruchtenbaum maintains that the Hebrew root *batach* which appears in Ezek 38:8 and 11 simply means “security.” He says, “This is not a security due to a state of peace, but a security due to confidence in their own strength. This, too, is a good description of Israel today. The Israeli army has fought four major wars since its founding and won them swiftly each time. Today Israel is secure, confident that her army can repel any invasion from the Arab states. Hence, Israel is dwelling securely”<sup>33</sup>

It is true that the inhabitants of modern Israel live in unwalled villages and have some degree of security due to their military might. However, they are not “at rest” as required by

Ezek 38:11. The Hebrew word translated “at rest” (שָׁקֵט) means “be quiet, undisturbed.”<sup>34</sup> This hardly describes Israel today. The nation is one huge armed camp.<sup>35</sup> The people are disturbed on a regular basis by threats and homicide bombings. Since 1948, Israel has lived under the constant threat of terrorist attacks and invasion by her neighbors. The terminology in Ezek 38 fits much better with the first half of the seventieth week of Daniel when Israel will enjoy the protection of her covenant with Antichrist and will temporarily let down her guard (Dan 9:27).

### *First Half of the Tribulation View*

Another common view is that the invasion will occur during the first half of the tribulation. Most who hold this view place it closer to the midpoint of the tribulation. This view is held by John Walvoord, J. Dwight Pentecost, Charles Ryrie, and Herman Hoyt. There are two main strengths of this view. First, it provides an excellent explanation for Israel’s peace and security described in Ezek 38:8 and 11.

As John Walvoord states,

One of the principal questions one could ask about this battle is, When is the battle going to occur? . . . Unfortunately, varying opinions have been offered by capable Bible scholars on this point, and there has been considerable disagreement. . . . It will not be possible to consider all these view in detail, but there are some hints that provide a good clue as to when this battle will take place. One of the hints given is that the battle takes place at a time when Israel has been regathered into their ancient land, and is dwelling securely and at rest. There are not too many times when Israel is at rest in God’s prophetic program. They have been scattered and persecuted over the face of the earth, and not even in the future will Israel have many periods of rest. Certainly, Israel is not at rest today. Israel is an armed camp. . . . There is only one period in the future that clearly fits this description of Ezekiel, and this is the first half of Daniel’s seventieth week of God’s program for Israel (Dan 9:27).<sup>36</sup>

After discussing the coming ruler who will arise from the ten-nation confederacy after the rapture and make a seven-year covenant with Israel, Walvoord concludes: “Under that covenant, Israel will be able to relax, for their Gentile enemies will have become their friends, apparently guaranteeing their borders and promised them freedom. During that first three and

one-half years, we have the one time when regathered Israel is at rest and secure. Apparently Russia will invade the land of Israel during that period, possibly toward its close, and the Scripture will then be fulfilled.”<sup>37</sup>

Second, this view provides a reasonable scenario for the Antichrist’s ascent to world domination at the mid-point of the tribulation. If the armies of Russia and her Islamic allies are wiped out in Israel some time before the mid-point of the tribulation, this would create a massive power vacuum and a dramatic shift in the balance of power that would allow the Antichrist to ascend to world domination as predicted in Rev 13.

The primary weakness of this view is that it does not deal very well with the seven months of burying the dead and the seven years of burning the weapons. However, if the invasion occurs at least one year before the mid-point of the tribulation, then it is possible for the dead bodies to be buried before the Antichrist invades Israel and begins his reign of terror. The burning of the weapons could continue into the beginning of the millennial kingdom.

#### *End of the Tribulation View*

Several well-known commentators and prophecy teachers view the battle of Gog and Magog in conjunction with the campaign of Armageddon at the end of the tribulation. There are two main strengths of this view. First, the invitation in Ezek 39:4 and 39:17-20 for the birds and beasts to feed on the carnage after the battle of Gog and Magog seems to parallel the description of the great supper after Armageddon in Rev 19:17-18. Second, this view dovetails nicely with the statements about Israel’s salvation after the invasion since according to Zech 12:10 Israel will turn to the Lord en masse at the end of the tribulation. Ezek 39:22 and 29 say, “And the house of Israel will know that I am the Lord their God from that day onward. . . . And I will no longer

hide My face from them any longer, for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,' declares the Lord."

There are four main obstacles to this view. First, Ezek 38 names specific allies, whereas Armageddon involves all the nations of the earth. Second, in Ezek 39 the destruction is on the mountains of Israel while at Armageddon it stretches from Megiddo in the north to Petra in the south. Third, in Ezekiel the armies are destroyed by convulsions of nature, but at Armageddon they are destroyed by the personal appearance of Christ. Fourth, and most importantly, at the end of the tribulation Israel will not be "at rest" or "living securely." Many will have fled into the wilderness and the rest of the Jewish people will have endured three and a half years of persecution by the Antichrist. The end of the tribulation will be one time when Israel will not be "at rest" or "living securely."

#### *Beginning of the Millennium View*

Another view, that is not very commonly held today, is that the invasion will be part of the judgment of the nations after the Second Coming of Christ. Arno Gaebelein, the main proponent of this view, used two main arguments to support his position. First, he argued that the restoration and rest language in Ezek 38:8 points to a time "when the Lord has brought back His people and resumed His relationship with the remnant of Israel."<sup>38</sup> Second, Gaebelein believed that the judgment of the living nations in Matt 25:31-46 will cover a considerable period of time and that the Gog and Magog invasion will be the climax of that judgment. Gaebelein described his view of the early part of the millennial kingdom. "There is first the Davidic aspect. He will begin to reign first as David did; His people are with Him and blessed, but all their enemies are not yet subdued or overcome. He will have to rule first with a rod of iron. And then when this final enemy is dealt with, He begins to reign as Prince of Peace, foreshadowed in the Solomonic

reign. Gog and Magog, etc., complete and end the judgment of the nations. They are the last enemies to disappear.”<sup>39</sup>

There are several problems with this view, but the main obstacle is that it is *after* this invasion that Israel returns to the Lord according to Ezek 38:23; 39:6-7, 25-29. Adopting this view would place the repentance of Israel at the end of the 75-day transition period between Christ’s second advent and the official beginning of the millennium.

#### *Two Phase Fulfillment View*

Harold Hoehner contends that Ezek 38–39 will be fulfilled in two phases.<sup>40</sup> He believes that Ezek 38 will be fulfilled early in the tribulation and that Ezek 39 will be fulfilled at the end of the tribulation. The strength of this view is that it harmonizes the text well with other related texts such as Rev 19. However, the main weakness of this view is that Ezek 38 and 39 appear to be describing the same invasion and its aftermath not two distinct phases separated by several years.

Along these same lines, Ralph Alexander contends that Ezek 38–39 have a double fulfillment in Rev 19:17-21 at the end of the tribulation and in Rev 20:8 at the end of the millennium with the former fulfillment prefiguring the latter.<sup>41</sup> Although prefiguring, foreshadowing, and typology are present in the OT, I reject the notion of double fulfillment or double meaning in prophecy. Neither the text nor the context of Ezek 38–39 provides any indication that it will be fulfilled on two occasions.

#### *Post-Millennial View*

The final view of the timing of Ezek 38–39 is at the end of the millennium. The strength of this view is that a battle of Gog and Magog is mentioned in Rev 20:7-10 after the millennial kingdom in conjunction with the release of Satan from the abyss. Although the

mention of Gog and Magog in both texts makes this view initially attractive, there are four reasons for rejecting it. First, Gog and Magog in Ezek 38–39 is *before* the millennium which is described in Ezek 40–48; whereas, in Rev 20:7-10 the battle of Gog and Magog is *after* the millennium described in Rev 20:1-6. Second, in Ezek 39 the bodies of Gog and his troops are buried for seven months and the weapons are burned for seven years after the battle, yet in Rev 20–21 the Great White Throne, new heaven and new earth, and eternal state immediately follow the battle of Gog and Magog. The post-millennial view would require the burying and burning to continue into the eternal state.

Therefore, the mention of Gog and Magog in Rev 20:7 is not the fulfillment of Ezek 38–39. These two events are separated by over one thousand years. The words Gog and Magog in Rev 20:8 are probably used as someone today would apply the word “Waterloo” as a shorthand way to signal a crushing military defeat.<sup>42</sup> During the millennium, the defeat of Gog and Magog in Ezek 38–39 will apparently become legendary among the nations. John applies this overwhelming defeat to a new historical situation. Satan will lead this final invasion and will meet his “Waterloo”—his “Gog and Magog.”<sup>43</sup>

### *Conclusion*

While no view of the timing of Ezek 38–39 is without difficulty, the best view is that the invasion will occur during the first half of the tribulation when Israel has her guard down due to her covenant with Antichrist (Dan 9:27).

### **The Purpose (38:9-12) WHY?**

The fourth key issue that is addressed in Ezek 38–39 is the purpose of this invasion. Both the human and the divine purpose for the invasion are given. The invading force will have four main goals: 1) to acquire more territory (38:8), 2) to amass wealth (38:12), 3) to totally

destroy the people of Israel (38:10, 16), and 4) to directly confront and challenge the Antichrist or the West who will be Israel's ally as a result of the covenant in Dan 9:27 (This fourth purpose is only valid if one adopts the first half of the tribulation as the setting for the invasion). The divine purpose in allowing this invasion is expressed in 38:14-16b. Through the attack God will be sanctified in the eyes of the nations.

### **The Proceedings (38:13–39:20) WHAT?**

Beginning in Ezek 38:13 and continuing through Ezek 39:20 the text focuses on the invasion, the fate of the invaders, and the aftermath of the invasion. When these nations invade the land of Israel, it will look like the biggest mismatch in history. It will make the invasions of Israel in 1967 and 1973 by the Arab nations pale in comparison. When Russia assembles this last days strike force, it will look like Israel is finished. But God is in control of the entire situation. He will mount up in His fury to destroy these godless invaders. “It will come about on that day, when Gog comes against the land of Israel, declares the Lord God, that my fury will mount up in My anger. In my zeal and in My blazing wrath” (Ezek. 39:18-19a).

#### *The Annihilation*

God will intervene to rescue his helpless people and will use four means to destroy Russia and her allies. The four means of destruction are listed in Ezek 38:19-22: 1) a great earthquake, 2) infighting among the troops of the various nations (in the chaos after the powerful earthquake, the armies of each of the nations represented will turn against each other. This will be the largest case of death by friendly fire in human history), 3) disease, and 4) torrential rain, hailstones, fire, and burning sulphur. The famous Six Day war occurred in Israel in June, 1967. This will be the “One Day War” or even the “One Hour War” when God supernaturally destroys this Russian-Islamic horde.

### *The Aftermath*

There are four key events that occur in the aftermath of this invasion.

1. The Birds and the Beasts (Ezek. 39:4-5,17-20; cf. Rev. 19:17-18)  
The carnage that results from this slaughter will provide a great feast for the birds of the air and the beasts of the field. God refers to the carnage as “My sacrifice” and “My table” to which He invites the birds and the beasts as His guests.
2. The Burying of the Dead for 7 Months (Ezek. 39:11-12, 14-16)  
Clean-up squads will be assembled to go through the land. They will set up markers wherever they see a human bone. When the gravediggers come behind them they will see the markers and take the remains to the Valley of Gog’s Hordes for burial. The cleansing will be so extensive that a town will be established in the valley at the gravesites to aid those who are cleansing the land. The name of the town will be *Hamonah* (horde).
3. The Burning of the Weapons for 7 Years (Ezek. 39:9-10)
4. The Blessing of Salvation (39:22)  
In the midst of His wrath and fury, God will also pour out His grace and mercy. God will use the awesome display of His power against Russia and her allies to bring many to salvation of both Jews and Gentiles. Many of those who turn to the true God as a result of this demonstration of His power will undoubtedly be among the vast group of the redeemed in Rev 7:9-14.

### *What About the Weapons and Horses?*

One issue that must be considered in any discussion of Ezek 38–39 is the nature of the weapons and the means of transportation. The weapons mentioned in Ezek 38–39 are ancient weapons that are made out of wood such as bows, arrows, shields, war clubs, and spears (39:9), and the means of transportation for the invaders is horses (38:15). How do we account for these ancient weapons if this invasion is in the end times?

There are two main views among futurists. First, it is possible that due to some form of disarmament the nations will resort to primitive weapons that can be constructed secretly and easily if a surprise attack were to be successfully achieved.<sup>44</sup> Second, the ancient weapons mentioned could be understood as their modern counterparts. While no view of the nature of the

weapons is without problems, this is probably the best view. Ezekiel, inspired by the Holy Spirit, spoke in language that the people of that day could understand. If he had spoken of planes, missiles, tanks, and rifles this text would have been nonsensical to everyone until the twentieth century. Moreover, the main point of Ezekiel's great prophecy is that a specific group of nations will attack Israel intent on completely destroying her. The focus clearly is not the specific weapons that will be used by these invaders. Ezekiel communicates in the only way that he can the powerful and well-equipped nature of the invaders.<sup>45</sup> Preterist Gary DeMar seizes this opportunity to argue that if the weapons are not bows, arrows, and shields, then futurists do not interpret this section of Ezekiel literally.<sup>46</sup>

However, this "modernizing" of the weapons is not spiritualizing the text but rather understanding God's Word in its historical context in light of the original audience. The Holy Spirit speaks to people in their own context and culture in ways that communicate God's truth in a meaningful, understandable way. Furthermore, DeMar's notion that Ezek 38–39 was fulfilled in the events of Esth 9 creates far more problems than how to interpret the weapons.

As noted earlier, nine specific ancient nations are mentioned in Ezek 38:1–6. Just as with the weapons, these exact nations, under these specific ancient names, will not attack Israel because they no longer exist under the names in Ezek 38. Obviously, there is no Rosh, Gomer, Magog, Meshech, Togarmah, or Put today on any world map. The names of some of these areas have changed numerous times through the millennia. But the modern nations that inhabit the same geographical territory as the ancient nations will invade Israel. Again, the Holy Spirit speaks to people in language they can grasp. He used the ancient names of these places going all the way back to Gen 10 to clearly identify the geographical areas that will invade Israel in the end times.

The contemporary counterparts that inhabit these same geographical areas in the end times will come against Israel. Likewise, Ezekiel used ancient weapons that were familiar to his audience to describe a future battle in which modern weapons will be employed. This brief chart demonstrates how Ezekiel used ancient weapons and places that people in his own day could understand and that can still be applied 2,500 years later.

### **Ezek 38–39**

Ancient weapons that are no longer used by civilized nations.

Ancient nations that no longer exist under the names in Ezekiel.

### **End-Time Fulfillment**

Modern weapons that correspond to the ancient weapons.

Contemporary counterparts in the same geographical locations

## **The Prophetic Significance HOW?**

Having briefly examined some of the key issues related to Ezek 38–39, the final question to consider is how the world stage today is being set for the fulfillment of this incredible prophecy. What are the prerequisites for this invasion? What recent or current developments correspond with Ezekiel’s prophecy? Eight major events in the last sixty years point toward the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy.

### *Israel Regathered in Unbelief*

First, for the events of Ezek 38–39 to be fulfilled Israel must be regathered to her land in unbelief. Ezek 38 follows the famous dry bones vision in Ezek 37 that pictures the physical restoration of Judah and Israel to the land followed by her spiritual restoration to the Lord. In Ezek 37 the restoration occurs in stages. It begins with restoration to the land in unbelief. Israel’s

initial regathering in unbelief is further confirmed by the fact that only after the battle of Gog and Magog do many in Israel turn to the Lord (Ezek 39:22).

Israel's regathering in unbelief has occurred dramatically in stages beginning in 1871 and continuing up to the present day. It is projected that in 2006 for the first time in about 1,900 years Israel will become home to the largest Jewish community in the world, surpassing the Jewish population in the United States. A report from the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute says that the Jewish population of Israel is about 5.24 million while the Jewish population in the U.S. is about 5.28 million. However, the balance is quickly shifting and is expected to tip in favor of Israel sometime in 2006. The report from the thinktank also predicted the Jewish population of Israel will grow to 6.23 million by 2020 from 650,000 when the Jewish state was founded in 1948. Thus, what we see happening before our eyes, the restored Jewish state in unbelief, is a necessary precondition for Ezekiel's prophecy to be fulfilled.

### *The Mountains of Israel*

Second, according to Ezek 39:2, 4, Israel must possess the "mountains of Israel" when this invasion occurs. Ezek 39:2, 4 says, "and I shall turn you around, drive you on, take you up from the remotest parts of the north, and bring you against the mountains of Israel. . . You shall fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops, and the peoples who are with you; I shall give you as food to every kind of predatory bird and beast of the field."

Arnold Fruchtenbaum notes the significance of modern developments in Israel to set the stage for this event. "Here is another example of where the Six Day War has set the stage for the fulfillment of this prophecy. Up to the Six Day War in 1967 all of the mountains of Israel, except for a small corridor of West Jerusalem, were entirely in the hands of the Jordanian Arabs.

Only since 1967 have the mountains *of* Israel been *in* Israel, thus setting the stage for the fulfillment of this prophecy.”<sup>47</sup>

### *Israel Living Securely*

Third, Israel must be “at rest” and “living securely” when this invasion occurs. The drive for peace in the Middle East has consumed Western diplomats and dominates world news. From the Oslo Accords to the Roadmap for Peace, brokering a peace agreement between Israel and her neighbors is one of the major international priorities. A peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis is integrally linked to stability in the Middle East and Persian Gulf. The ongoing quest for Middle East peace points toward the peace treaty in Dan 9:27 and the period of security in Ezek 38.

Some have recently noted the construction of the security fence or wall in Israel and its relevance to the statement in Ezekiel that Israel must be a land of “unwalled villages” for the Gog invasion to occur. The security fence in Israel is a separation barrier between Israel and territory occupied by the Palestinians to prevent the infiltration of terrorists. It is not a wall around a particular village or city. Moreover, 97% of the planned 400-mile security barrier will be chain link fence. Only about ten miles of the wall is constructed of pre-fabricated concrete. While it is possible that the barrier will be removed at some point in the future as a result of a peace agreement, this is not necessary for Ezek 38–39 to be fulfilled since the fence does not encircle any city or village.

### *Rise of Russia*

Fourth, Russia has risen to world prominence, which is a necessary prerequisite for this invasion. Along with the United States, Russia (previously the Soviet Union) has been the world’s great military power. Although some hopeful signs of democracy appeared in Russia

after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, there are growing fears that Russia today is regressing back to her old totalitarian, autocratic ways. Russian president Vladimir Putin and all of the key leaders in his government come from the upper ranks of the KGB. Putin has made numerous moves in recent months to centralize authority. Experts maintain the Russia's oil wealth is allowing Putin to take the country back toward autocracy without any public outcry. Russia has a vital interest in the Middle East and Persian Gulf. Some control over this area is vital to Russia's national security. For Russia, an invasion of Israel with an Islamic coalition would be an opportunity for her to reclaim her lost glory and assert control over the Middle East.

### *Islam and Terror*

Fifth, the rise of pandemic Islamic fundamentalism with its virulent anti-Semitism and a hatred of the restored Jewish state provides a powerful motivation for this invasion. While Islam is and always has been a religion of violence and terror, the modern rise of the Islamic, terrorist state began in 1979 in Iran when the Shah was ousted by the Ayatollah Khomeini. Iran has exported this terror movement to neighboring Islamic nations. Of course, Ezekiel does not mention Islam or terrorism as a driving force behind this invasion since Islam did not exist until the seventh century A.D. However, the geographical areas he identified as participant in this invasion are all identifiable Islamic nations today with the exception of Russia (Central Asia, Libya, Sudan, Iran, and Turkey). This sets the stage for the final jihad into Israel depicted in Ezekiel's prophecy. For these Islamic allies the Gog and Magog invasion will be an opening to drive Israel into the sea and lure the West into a final clash of civilizations since Israel will be protected by her covenant with Antichrist.

Ironically, Islam has its own version of the Battle of Gog and Magog called the War of Yajuj and Majuj. In two places the Koran specifically mentions "Gog and Magog" (Yajuj and

Majuj) by name (18:96; 21:96). Islamic eschatology teaches that there are ten major signs that signal the approach of the end and the day of resurrection. There are various opinions about the order of these signs, but in at least one list Gog and Magog is the number four sign. According to Islamic teaching, Gog and Magog are two groups of Turks that were spreading corruption through the earth during the time of Abraham. Finally, to keep them in check they were enclosed behind a great barrier. They tried in vain to climb over it and have been trying to dig under the wall for centuries, but they will not be able to get out until Allah decrees that they can be released. Then, the barrier will collapse, and Gog and Magog will pour out in all directions rushing into the land of Israel to attack the Muslims there. When Jesus prays against Gog and Magog, Allah will wipe them out by means of some kind of disease or plague that he will send upon them. The disease is described as either infectious, lethal boils, or a disease that eats the flesh from their bones. If that sounds familiar, it should. It was evidently taken by Mohammed straight from Ezek 38 with a few convenient changes to fit his own ends. Ezek 38:22 specifically says that God will destroy the invaders with disease and with blood. Therefore, while Muslims believe in the prophecy of Gog and Magog, they appear to be totally ignorant of the fact that all the nations in Ezek 38 that will be destroyed by God are Muslim nations today, with the exception of Russia. One of their ten great signs of the end will actually be fulfilled by them when they attack Israel in the last days.

#### *Iran's Increase*

Sixth, Iran (Persia) is a key player on the world scene today as required by Ezek 38:5. Clearly, Iran is public enemy #1 today for the world. As home to radical jihadists and a supporter of terror groups around the world Iran cannot be allowed to possess nuclear weapons. This is unthinkable. Therefore, we can expect a great deal of focus on Iran in the near future. And all of

this is greatly exacerbated and complicated by the fact that Iran has about 10% of the world's proven oil reserves. Uncertainty over the situation in Iran is part of the reason that oil prices reached an all-time high every day during the week of August 8–12, closing at over \$65 a barrel.

To make matters even worse, in August, 2005 the Iranian people elected the hardliner, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as their new president. The 47-year-old President of Iran is the former mayor of Tehran and former Republican Guard commander. On October 26, 2005 when he said flat out that Israel should be “wiped off the map,” and said that “anyone who signs a treaty with Israel means he has signed the surrender of the Muslim world.” He further called for Iranians “to riot against Zionists (Israel) and unbelievers” in a nationwide demonstration on Friday, October 27, 2005 during al-Quds—or Jerusalem—Day. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad participated in the demonstration himself along with about one million others who backed his call for the destruction of the Jewish State. The marchers carried placards that read, “Death to Israel, death to America.” All of this comes at a time when the United Nations is cautiously dealing with Iran about sanctions over its nuclear program. Needless to say, tensions in the region are mounting. Iran is awash in oil money and is earnestly seeking nuclear weapons.

### *Turkey Turns East*

Seventh, for the battle of Gog and Magog to occur Turkey must be willing to join the coalition of nations against Israel. In recent years Turkey has made every attempt to become part of the European Union. For this reason Turkey's participation in the Gog alliance against Israel appeared highly unlikely. However, it now appears certain that the EU will reject Turkey's bid for admission. On October 3, 2005, with great fanfare the European Union launched formal negotiations in Brussels to discuss Turkey's admittance to membership in the European club. Several months earlier European leaders had decided to open talks to consider Turkey's

admission to the EU. Even the possibility of this merger was hailed as the meeting of East and West. But it is generally agreed at this point that Turkey basically has no hope of joining the EU. Both France and the Netherlands rejected the proposed EU constitution, and one of their main objections was the notion of enlargement, especially admitting Turkey to the EU. Support for Turkish accession among the 15 EU countries that have been members the longest is only at 32%. However, the EU does not want to alienate the Turks; thus, the EU appears to be stringing Turkey along for geopolitics. There are five key reasons the EU will reject Turkey:

1. It is a Muslim country. Islam phobia is on the rise in Europe. This feeling will be heightened in light of the recent insurrection in France.
2. It is too big. With 70 million people, Turkey would be the second largest EU nation behind Germany.
3. It is agrarian. The EU supports farmers with huge subsidies.
4. It is poor. Turkey's gross domestic product per capita is only 27% of the national average.
5. It has enemies. Turkey faces two historic enemies within the EU: Greece and Cyprus.<sup>48</sup>

These developments are interesting since the Bible predicts in Ezek 38 that Turkey will be part of a massive Russian-led invasion of Israel in the end times. The main countries that will participate in this invasion are Russia, Iran, Libya, Sudan, Central Asian nations, and Turkey. At present the government of Vladimir Putin in Russia is gaining greater control and appears to be moving back toward the days of communist dictatorship. Iran, Libya, Sudan, and the nations of Central Asia are all predominantly Islamic, and it is not too difficult to see them all joining in for one last jihad against Israel. But as Turkey moved more and more toward the west it appeared highly unlikely that she would ally herself with a Russian-Islamic coalition against Israel. But that seems to be changing. Turkey's admission to the EU is hopeless at this point.

And when Turkey is rejected by the West, she will have to look elsewhere to bolster her strategic ambitions.

The AKP (Justice and Development party) of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan is an avowedly Islamic party that poses a difficult challenge to Turkey's 80-year-old secularism founded by Ataturk. It seems clear that the AKP wants to move the country and its foreign policy in a more Islamic direction. In recent months, Erdogan has reached out to some very unsavory characters in Turkey's neighborhood. He visited President Bashar Assad in Syria earlier this year and traveled to Iran to meet with the Iranian mullahs.<sup>49</sup>

Erdogan's chief adviser, Ahmet Davutoglu, is the driving force behind Turkey's foreign policy changes. He is now contending that Turkey has a historic opportunity to be a leader in the Muslim world. He also believes that her geographic position requires improved relations with Russia. Earlier this year, overcoming decades of enmity, Turkey signed a trade pact with Russia. At the same time Turkey is begin rebuffed by Europe and is warming relations with Russia, anti-Semitism in Turkey has been growing in the last few years. According to a recent article in *The Weekly Standard* (8/29/05), "At any bookstore in Istanbul or Ankara you will find prominently displayed Adolph Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, a popular seller these days."

While there may be many twists and turns in Turkey and other nations of the world before the rapture occurs, what is occurring there right now appears to be moving Turkey back toward Russia and the Muslim world just as one would expect if the battle of Gog and Magog is near.

#### *Sheba, Dedan, and Tarshish*

Eighth, Ezek 38:13 mentions "Sheba and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all its villages" as lodging a lame protest against the Gog and Magog invasion of Israel. There is

general agreement that Sheba and Dedan inhabited northern Arabia, or what today is Saudi Arabia.

The phrase “with all its villages” or “all the young lions thereof” (KJV) after the name Tarshish is a Hebrew idiom referring to the nations that come out of Tarshish.<sup>50</sup> The question is—where was ancient Tarshish? Some maintain that Tarshish was in what today is England. If this location is accepted, then “all its villages” would include the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.<sup>51</sup> Ancient Tarshish is probably the Phoenician colony in what today is Spain. Tarshish is also mentioned in Ezek 27:12. If this identification is accepted, “all its villages” could be a reference to the nations of Central and South America and could possibly include America since Spain was involved in discovering North America and ruling over parts of it for a time.<sup>52</sup> Or, it is possible that Tarshish, which was the farthest known land to the west of Israel, could denote all the nations of Western Europe.

Whichever view one adopts, Ezek 38:13 indicates that Saudi Arabia and at least some part of Western Europe and the nations that have come from it will object to this invasion by Russia and an Islamic horde. Although Saudi Arabia is no great friend of the west, she is the one Islamic nation that consistently serves her own self-interest by conveniently allying herself with western nations. Thus, the mention of a protest by Sheba, Dedan, and Tarshish corresponds with current developments.

### **Conclusion**

Events in our world today strikingly foreshadow the prophecy of the battle of Gog and Magog in Ezek 38–39. All of the necessary antecedents for the fulfillment of this prophecy are in place or are moving in that direction. The Jewish people have been regathered to their land in unbelief, the Middle East peace process is front and center in international diplomacy, and the

invaders in Ezek 38 are identifiable nations who have both the desire and the potential to fulfill the Gog prophecy.

In his commentary on Ezekiel, published in 1987, W. A. Criswell wrote these timely words concerning the prophecy of Ezek 38–39. “The prophet Ezekiel lived 2,500 years ago, and yet he writes as though he were a correspondent for the daily newspapers of the earth. What he says is so pertinent this moment that it is as though he lived in the places where history is unfolding before our very eyes.”<sup>53</sup> The remarkable correspondence between world events and what Ezekiel predicted is another indication that the coming of the Lord could be very soon.

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<sup>1</sup> *Left Behind*, 9-10, 13-15.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel 25–48*, NICOT, ed. Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 431-32.

<sup>3</sup> John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, gen. ed. D. J. Wiseman (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1969), 244.

<sup>4</sup> Clyde E. Billington Jr., “The Rosh People in History and Prophecy (Part Two),” *Michigan Theological Journal* 3 (1992): 66-67.

<sup>5</sup> Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, rev. ed. (Tustin, CA: Ariel Press, 2003), 108.

<sup>6</sup> Josephus *Antiquities* 1.6.1.

<sup>7</sup> C.F. Keil, *Ezekiel, Daniel, Commentary on the Old Testament*, trans. James Martin (Reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 159. Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* (Reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), 752.

<sup>8</sup> Clyde E. Billington Jr. “The Rosh People in History and Prophecy (Part One),” *Michigan Theological Journal* 3 (1992): 59.

<sup>9</sup> Billington, “Rosh People (Part Two),” 54-61.

<sup>10</sup> G. A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, ICC, ed. S. R. Driver, A. Plummer, and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), 408–9. John Taylor agrees. He says, “If a place-name *Rosh* could be vouched for, RV’s *prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal* would be the best translation” John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction & Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, gen. ed. D. J. Wiseman (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-varsity Press, 1969), 244. Since it appears that there was a place in Ezekiel’s day known as Rosh, this is the superior translation. For an extensive, thorough presentation of the grammatical and philological support for taking Rosh as a place name, see James D. Price “Rosh: An Ancient Land Known to Ezekiel,” *Grace Theological Journal* 6 (1985): 67-89.

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<sup>11</sup> Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 434. While Block believes this is the best translation based on the LXX and Masoretic pointing, he adopts the common noun view for Rosh based on the Hebrew grammar and the fact that no ancient nation named Rosh can be identified (ibid., 434-35).

<sup>12</sup> Concerning the possibility of a Russian/Islamic invasion of Israel in the end times, C. Marvin Pate and J. Daniel Hays say categorically, “The biblical term rosh has nothing to do with Russia.” C. Marvin Pate and J. Daniel Hays, *Iraq–Babylon of the End Times?* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 69. And later they state dogmatically, “These positions are not biblical. . . . A world government is not coming to Babylon, and a Russian-led Muslim invasion of Israel is not about to take place” (ibid., 136).

<sup>13</sup> Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 434.

<sup>14</sup> Gesenius, 752.

<sup>15</sup> Billington, “Rosh People (Part One),” 62-63.

<sup>16</sup> Billington, “Rosh People (Part Two),” 145-46.

<sup>17</sup> James D. Price, “Rosh: An Ancient Land Known to Ezekiel,” *Grace Theological Journal* 6 (1985): 71-73.

<sup>18</sup> Clyde E. Billington Jr., “The Rosh People in History and Prophecy (Part Three),” *Michigan Theological Journal* 4 (1993), 59, 61.

<sup>19</sup> Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Foes from the Northern Frontier* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1982), 20.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 24-27.

<sup>21</sup> *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), 469.

<sup>22</sup> T. G. Pinches, “Cush,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1939), 2:768.

<sup>23</sup> “The Kingdom of Kush,” *National Geographic*, November 1990, 98-104.

<sup>24</sup> James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3d ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 308. Fruchtenbaum identifies Put as modern Somalia (*Footsteps of the Messiah*, 108).

<sup>25</sup> *Brown-Driver-Briggs*, 806.

<sup>26</sup> *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 3:510.

<sup>27</sup> Yamauchi, *Foes from the Northern Frontier*, 49-52.

<sup>28</sup> Josephus *Antiquities* 1.6.1.

<sup>29</sup> Clarence E. Mason Jr., “Gog and Magog, Who and When?” in *Prophecy in the Seventies*, ed. Charles Lee Feinberg (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 221.

<sup>30</sup> Gary DeMar, *End Times Fiction* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 12-15.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 13

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<sup>32</sup> The Hebrew word *'acharith* (end, last, or latter) when used in reference to time means “latter part” or “close.” The standard Hebrew lexicon says, “in the end of the days, a prophetic phrase denoting the final period of the history so far as the speaker’s perspective reaches . . . it often equals the ideal or Messianic future.” *Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius*, 31. Horst Seebass says that the Hebrew term “last days” or “end of the days” (*'acharith hayyamim*) is a technical term in Dan 2:28; 10:14; Hos 3:5, and Ezek 38:16 not just for the future in general but for the end of time. He says it refers to “how history will culminate, thus its outcome.” Horst Seebass, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 211-12.

<sup>33</sup> Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah*, 121-22.

<sup>34</sup> *Brown-Driver-Briggs*, 1052-53.

<sup>35</sup> Manfred Kober, “What is ‘Gog and Magog’ in Regard to Biblical Prophecy?” in *The Gathering Storm*, ed. Mal Couch (Springfield, MO: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Press, 2005), 174.

<sup>36</sup> John F. Walvoord, *The Nations in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 113–15.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>38</sup> Arno C. Gaebelin, *The Prophet Ezekiel* (Reprint, Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1972), 252–53.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>40</sup> As far as I know Dr. Hoehner has not written on this topic, but he expressed his view of Ezek 38–39 in a Ph.D. seminar at Dallas Seminary.

<sup>41</sup> Ralph H. Alexander, *Ezekiel* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), 127-29

<sup>42</sup> John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 303.

<sup>43</sup> David J. MacLeod, “The Fifth ‘Last Thing’: The Release of Satan and Man’s Final Rebellion (Rev. 20:7-10),” *BSac* 157 (2000): 209.

<sup>44</sup> Walvoord, *Nations in Prophecy*, 116.

<sup>45</sup> Jon Mark Ruthven, *The Prophecy That is Shaping History: New Research on Ezekiel’s Vision of the End* (Fairfax: VA: Xulon Press, 2003), 33.

<sup>46</sup> DeMar, *End Times Fiction*, 11.

<sup>47</sup> Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah*, 114.

<sup>48</sup> *Enhanced Global Intelligence Brief*, 9/30/2005.

<sup>49</sup> *The Weekly Standard* (8/9/05), 35.

<sup>50</sup> Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah*, 111.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>53</sup> W.A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on the Book of Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 212.