

CONSISTENT BIBLICAL FUTURISM
Part XIII
by Thomas Ice

In this final installment of looking at a supposed Psalm 83 war, that would precede the campaign of Gog and Magog, I have attempted to demonstrate that such a view has more in common with a historicist interpretative approach than with the futurist system that those holding this view claim to hold theoretically. If this is a prophecy, then it most surely would be fulfilled in conjunction with the Campaign of Armageddon, since I demonstrated in the last installment the overwhelming evidence from some prophetic books that most of the nations listed in Psalm 83 will be judged at that time. It would be impossible for Bill Salus' version of a Psalm 83 fulfillment to occur before the prophecy of Ezekiel 38 and 39, resulting in a "greater Israel," and for the clearer statements in the Prophets to cite these nations' decline during a later event to also be true.

WHAT KIND OF PSALM?

As I have noted previously, Psalm 83 is "a national lament which includes prayer and imprecations."¹ It should be further noted that a national lament Psalm is usually composed of the following structure: 1) An introductory cry to God. 2) A lament. 3) A confession of the Psalmist's trust. 4) A petition. 5) A vow of praise or expression of praise.² Psalm 83 has all of these elements, except for the last item. The Psalm is divided as follows: 1) An introductory cry to God (83:1). 2) A lament or complaint to God (83:2-8). 3) A confession of the Psalmist's trust in God (83:9-12). 4) A petition or request of God (83:13-18).

Do you notice something missing from this Psalm? There is no response by the Lord to Asaph's request recorded in Psalm 83. Since there is no response by God then the Lord did not provide a prophecy in Psalm 83. The biblical text of Psalm 83 does not contain a prophecy no matter what some contend when they call it "the Psalm 83 war." Prophecy expert Mark Hitchcock notes,

We have to remember that the Psalms were written long before the prophets began to write and give specific prophecies concerning the nations. The prophets are where we look to find specific prophecies concerning the nations and end time events. There are certainly messianic prophecies in the Psalms, but I'm not aware of other specific prophecies in the Psalms concerning the Gentile nations in the end times. It may be that constructing a separate end time war out of Psalm 83 is reading too much into a text that is simply saying that Israel has been and always will be surrounded by enemies and that some day the Lord will finally deal with them. It could be that this national lament during the Davidic reign is raising the ubiquitous question for Israel—why does everyone hate us? When will it ever end? God's reassuring answer is, "don't worry; I will come some day to destroy them and make it right." God is bolstering and encouraging the nation at the very beginning of the Davidic kingship that He will ultimately prevail over His enemies and will protect His people from extinction.³

PROPHECY OR A REQUEST?

There is absolutely no doubt that Psalm 83 is 100% inspired by God, just like all the rest of Scripture. However, there is no prophecy in this Psalm, simply a petition to God by Asaph to judge those enemies that are against Israel. *I challenge anyone to show me a prophetic portion or statement in Psalm 83!* The Psalm is a detailed request by Asaph to judge the enemies surrounding Israel. God does not answer Asaph in Psalm 83. I believe that God will one day judge these enemies mentioned in Psalm 83, but I do not believe that based upon this Psalm. Actual prophecy relating to the nations of Psalm 83 and their judgment do appear in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, and others.

Obadiah is an entire book containing prophecies about the judgment of Edom. Six reasons for the judgment of Edom are given in verses 10–14. (Obadiah is a single chapter book.) Verse one says, “Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom—We have heard a report from the LORD, and an envoy has been sent among the nations saying, ‘Arise and let us go against her for battle’—.” This book by Obadiah claims to be a prophetic vision given him from the Lord about judgment upon Edom. We know it is prophetic because of the phrase “Thus says the Lord GOD.” Nothing like this is found in Psalm 83. Hitchcock says, “Salus and others construct a scenario based on deductions but without any firm foundation in the text of Psalm 83 itself. They conclude that since the nations in Psalm 83 are not specifically mentioned in Ezekiel 38 they must be destroyed earlier to pave the way for the climate of rest and security Israel enjoys. This is possible, but God could achieve his purposes in other ways.”⁴

When will Obadiah’s prophecy be fulfilled? Verse 15 says, “For the day of the LORD draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head.” The passage clearly says it will be fulfilled when “the day of the LORD draws near on all the nations.” Such an event is clearly scheduled to occur at the same time when Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, and others indicate that the nations will be judged at the end of the tribulation, during the Campaign of Armageddon. Once again, these later prophecies speak to when the Lord will apparently answer Asaph’s imprecatory request on behalf of Israel.

Another example of actual Bible prophecy against another player on the Psalm 83 roster is Assyria. Once again there is a whole prophetic book (Nahum) that was given to cover God’s judgment of Nineveh, which was the capital and center of the Assyrian empire. This book is said in the first verse of the book to be “The oracle of Nineveh.” An oracle in the Bible refers to a statement of judgment, which Nahum provides. The second verse of chapter one says, “A jealous and avenging God is the LORD; The LORD is avenging and wrathful. The LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies.” There is debate over whether this prophecy was fulfilled in 612 B.C. when the Babylonians overran Nineveh and thoroughly destroyed it or whether there is a future phase to it. But, either way, it could not fit into Salus’ Psalm 83 scenario.

CONCLUSION

While I consider Bill Salus and others who take this view to be friends and fellow protagonist within the field of Bible prophecy, however, there comes a time when friends must speak out against a friend when what they teach is not really found in the Bible. This is why I am sounding the alarm concerning the so-called “Psalm 83 war.”

It is clear to me that Psalm 83 is an imprecatory request on behalf of the nation of Israel by Asaph 3,000 years ago. This is the reason that Psalm 83 is classified as a national lament. There is no prophecy in the Psalm, however, as a result of the progress of God’s revelation, about 300 to 400 years later other prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah,

Ezekiel, Amos, Obadiah, and others did prophesy about the destiny of most of the nations mentioned in Psalm 83. Yet Bill Salus and others claim a whole new war scenario that should be added to our end-time prophecy charts based upon pure naked speculation. Salus says, "We deduce this by recollecting that the Russian-Iranian coalition will attempt to invade a militarily secure Israel. This condition of security becomes a reality only subsequent to the judgments executed upon the surrounding Psalm 83 nations."⁵

There will be no Psalm 83 war! There will be a judgment of the nations at Armageddon in conjunction with our Lord's second coming at the end of the tribulation and many of those mentioned in Psalm 83 are said by other prophets to be judged at that time. If Psalm 83 can be made into a separate war, different from tribulation events and the Gog and Magog invasion, then based upon the same logic, why not declare Psalm 2, or Psalm 79 and many others as separate phases of a much extended end-times? There would be nothing to stop such a multiplication of events. Instead, Psalm 2, which actually has prophecy in it, is usually seen as being fulfilled via events included in the 70th Week of Daniel or the tribulation period. Psalm 83, if there is to be a fulfillment, is also related to the tribulation as well.

In my opinion, those who are willing to base their end-time views on mere speculation and inference will suffer the same fate as others who have played this game for the last 2,000 years—disrespect and disdain. Those who engage in such speculation will only bring shame to the cause of Christ and will serve to discredit our views of Bible prophecy. Consistent biblical futurism limits speculation to scenarios that flow out of a proper understanding of what the Bible teaches about end-time events. Futurists should not speculate about the meaning of biblical texts, as proponents of a so-called "Psalm 83 war" have done. Maranatha!

(To Be Continued . . .)

ENDNOTES

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible: New American Standard Bible*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), Ps 83:1–18.

² Allen P. Ross, "Psalms," in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty*, 2 vols. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), vol. 1, p. 785.

³ Mark Hitchcock, pre-publication copy of a chapter on the Psalm 83 war for a forthcoming book, p. 8.

⁴ Hitchcock, forthcoming book, p. 5.

⁵ Bill Salus, *Israelestine: The Ancient Blueprints of the Future Middle East* (Crane, MO: HighWay, 2008), p. 20.