

EZEKIEL 38 AND 39
Part XXX
by Thomas Ice

In this final installment of this series on the invasion of Israel by Gog and his allies as prophesied in Ezekiel 38 and 39, I want to summarize my conclusions that have been presented and defended throughout the detailed handling of this passage. I will not be rehashing the items and views with which I disagree, instead, I will present a synopsis of my conclusions about this text.

THE PLAYERS

The invaders appear to be a band of non-Arab Muslims who are lead by a Russian. Gog, who is their leader, is said to be from the land of Magog, who is also the prince of Rosh (Ezek. 38:2). These descriptives were seen to be references to be clear references to a Russian leader who will head up the invasion.

Next I examined the list of invaders that will team up with Gog. Meshech and Tubal are always used together in the Bible (Ezek. 38:3). They lived in the area we know today as Turkey. Persia is easy to identify since she is referred to often in the Bible and is known in our day as the country of Iran (Ezek. 38:5). Ethiopia is a reference in the Bible to Cush, which is just south of Egypt in what is the modern nation of Sudan (Ezek. 38:5). Put is near the Sudan is refers to the modern country of Libya (Ezek. 38:5). The modern descendants of Gomer and Beth-togarmah also comprise the central and western parts of Turkey (Ezek. 38:6). The invasion will come from the north in their effort to attack Israel.

It is also possible that other nations not specifically identified as players in this attempted invasion of Israel could also be involved. It could also be possible that those peoples identified in Ezekiel could bleed over into an adjoining nation. We see this illustrated by the Kurds, who are a people group that live in parts of Iran, Turkey and Iraq.

ISRAEL'S STATUS

At the time of this invasion Israel is said to have been restored from the sword (Ezek. 38:8), which could only refer to her current situation or after our present day. Restoration from the sword would have to refer to Israel's defeats in A.D. 70 and 135–36, when their long Diaspora began along with "gathered from many nations." Coupled with the phrases "after many days" and "in the latter years" (Ezek. 38:8), it appears clear that this is still a future event that is likely linked to the tribulation period.

Israel is said to be living securely in the land when the invasion takes place (Ezek. 38:8). I believe that this is the greatest hurdle to my view that this invasion will take place after the rapture of the church but before the beginning of the 70th week of Daniel or the tribulation. Some have tried to equate the notion of "living securely" with "living peacefully." It is said that what is described in this passage is a situation where Israel is at peace with all their neighbors and no one is a treat to them. This is not supported by the word *betah* or the context. "Nowhere in the entire text does it speak of Israel as living in peace. Rather, Israel is merely living in security, which means 'confidence,' regardless of whether it is during a state of war or peace," notes Arnold Fruchtenbaum. "There is nothing in the various descriptions of Israel given in this passage that is not true of Israel today."ⁱ

It appears that Israel will have been back in the land for a period of time since they are described as dwelling securely in their land and having produced great wealth, which is the reason for the invasion by the alliance (Ezek. 38:10–12). This is certainly the situation in Israel today. In fact, in the current global economic downturn, Israel has fared better than any other nation in the world.

THE TIMING

As noted above, I believe the invasion has to be associated with the tribulation period, which is why I believe that the coalition's attack will take place after the rapture but before the tribulation. The rapture ends the church age, but does not start the tribulation. The seven-year tribulation begins when the Revived Roman antichrist makes an agreement to protect Israel (Dan. 9:24–27). Thus, the interval could be days, weeks, months, or years in length in order to fully set the stage for the events of that seven-year period.

Ezekiel 39:9 says: "Then those who inhabit the cities of Israel will go out, and make fires with the weapons and burn them, both shields and bucklers, bows and arrows, war clubs and spears and for seven years they will make fires of them." The fact that these weapons will be burnt for seven years provides a time indicator that could help us discern when this battle will take place on God's prophetic timeline. "These seven months of burying seven years of burning are crucial in determining *when* this invasion occurs," declares Fruchtenbaum. "For any view to be correct, it must satisfy the requirements of these seven months and seven years."ⁱⁱ It seems unlikely that the seven-year burning could lapse into the thousand-year kingdom period after our Lord's second coming. Dr. Randall Price expounds upon these issues as follows:

If this battle takes place after the Rapture but before the seventieth week begins, there would be ample time and the freedom of movement even through the first half of the Tribulation (the time of pseudo-peace for Israel under the Antichrist's covenant) to accomplish this job. Moreover, the statement about not needing to gather firewood from the forests (verse 10) would make more sense than after the first trumpet judgment when one-third of the trees were burned up (Revelation 8:7). If this battle were to take place at any point in the Tribulation the people would run out of time to complete this task, before the intensified persecution of the final 42 months (Matthew 24:16-22) that drives the Jewish Remnant into the wilderness to escape the Satanic onslaught (Revelation 12:6). While there is no reason why the burning of weapons for firewood could not continue into the Millennial Kingdom, since during this time other weapons will be converted to peaceful and productive uses (Isaiah 2:4), the renewal of nature and increased productivity of this age (Isaiah 27:6; Zechariah 8:12; Micah 4:4) could argue against this necessity.ⁱⁱⁱ

STORM CLOUDS

Dr. Ron Rhodes has recently written an excellent book about Ezekiel 38 and 39 called *Northern Storm Rising*.^{iv} Dr. Rhodes likens the current preparation for the events of Ezekiel's prophecy to the gathering of dark clouds prior to a rainstorm. So it is! We are witnessing in our own day preparations and positioning by the nations scheduled to invade Israel.

The last few years have witnessed the fact that Iran and Russia have been working together to help Iran become a nuclear power. Clearly, it is Russia that has enabled Iran to build their nuclear reactor and is also helping them develop and assemble nuclear bombs. For the first time in history, it was reported that Russia and Iran are planning joint military exercises together.^v There can be no mistake about Iran's goal for her nuclear development, since Iran's President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad regularly issues statements of his intent of wiping Israel off of the map.

A suggested scenario, assuming we could be near the time of this invasion and given the current situation with Israel and Iran, perhaps the "hook in the jaw" of Gog could be an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. Just such a successful raid by Israel could result in a temporary sense of security, since they will have removed Iran's nuclear threat. However, Iran could then appeal to Russia and her allies that it is time for them to get involved in order to wipe out the Jewish people who are dwelling securely in their land and to take spoil while they are at it. After all, Iran might argue to Russia, the world's other superpower, the United States, has intervened in the region twice in the last twenty years and is still engaged. Why could not Russia do the same thing on behalf of her allies?

Currently Turkey is not alienated with Russia and Iran since it technically became a secular state with a Muslim heritage after the breakup of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. Turkey has long been a member of NATO and has desired to identify with Europe rather than Asia, most likely for economic reasons. Turkey has applied for membership in the European Union, however, since membership in the EU would mean that anyone within the Union are able to move freely to any other part of it. The rest of the EU is concerned that if they admit Turkey then it will be a conduit through which Muslims would be able to flood into the rest of Europe. Even though they are still going through the motions of application, it is certain that the EU will eventually reject Turkey's admittance. Once they are rejected, Turkey will seek alignment with Russia and their Islamic brethren.

The last few years has seen an Islamic majority emerge in Turkey's Parliament and an Islamic Prime Minister is now in place. The breakup of the former Soviet Union included the independence of five Islamic republics: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kirghizia, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. Turkey sees itself as the economic developer of the vast natural resources like gold, silver, uranium, oil, coal, and natural gas that are found in these five new states. Once Turkey is spurned by Europe, she will have motive enough to enter into league with Russia and their Islamic brethren that will set the stage for the fulfillment of this prophecy. Maranatha!

END OF SERIES

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Press, [1982] 2003), p. 117.

ⁱⁱ (Italics original) Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps*, p. 117.

ⁱⁱⁱ Randall Price, "Unpublished Notes on The Prophecies of Ezekiel," (2007), p. 43.

^{iv} Ron Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising: Russia, Iran, and the Emerging End-Times Military Coalition Against Israel* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2008).

^v DEBKAFfile, "Russia's first Persian Gulf naval presence coordinated with Tehran," June 2, 2009, www2.debka.com/headline.php?hid=6095.