

## **EZEKIEL 38-39**

### **GOG & MAGOG: RUSSIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST**

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#### **In Ezekiel 38-39 as supposed by many:**

Magog is current Russia because “Rosh” sounds like Russia and clearly the geography is that of Russia. Further, both “Meshech” and Tubal were sons of Japeth (Gen. 10:2) and their descendants lived north in what is now Russia.

There are other nations that will participate in the attack of Israel and they are listed in **Ezek. 38:5, 6.**

**Persia** - the nation known as **Iran**.

**Ethiopia** – Not to be confused with modern day Ethiopia, Ezekiel is describing land directly south of Egypt and would correspond to modern **Sudan**.

**Libya** - remarkably corresponds to the modern country of Libya. It has not change names in over 2500 years.

**Gomer and Togarmah** – located in modern day **Turkey**.

Thus, the four countries which will align themselves with Russia to invade Israel are these: **Iran, Sudan, Libya, and Turkey.**

#### **EZEKIEL 38-39: THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT**

According to Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins (*Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth's Last Days* by, Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1995), the great enemy from the north spoken of in Ezekiel 38-39 is modern-day Russia (p.14).

##### **1. THE WORDS**

- a. Just because the Hebrew word *rosh* (Ezek.38:2) sounds like modern day *Russia* does not make it so.
- b. *Strong's Concordance* has “Rosh” as used 598 times in the Old Testament and primarily meaning, “head, chief, top, or captain.” Not once does it refer to a geographical location like Russia.
- c. Meshech doesn't sound like Moscow; and Tubal doesn't sound like Tobolsk which is strange if Rosh is to be Russia for the way it sounds.

##### **2. THE WEAPONS**

- a. The soldiers are riding **horses (38:4, 9, 10; 39:20)**; wielding **swords (38:4)**, and carrying “**bows, arrows, clubs, spears**” (**39:3, 9**).
- b. How is it that LaHaye and Jenkins and others are able to turn horses, clubs, swords, bows and arrows into war planes, missiles, nuclear-equipped fighter bombers and chunks of burning twisted steel smashing to the ground?

##### **3. THE WORLD**

- a. Russia is clearly north of Israel but so were other nations that would have made a lot more sense to Ezekiel and the original audience.
- b. The **Assyrians** were north and brought disaster (Zeph.2:13).
- c. **Babylon** is described as north of Israel and bringing disaster (Jer.1:13-15; 3:18; 6:1, 22; 10:22; see also Zech.2:6-7).
- d. The **Persians** were also in the north (Isa.41:25; Jer.50:3) and brought disaster.

### **EZEKIEL 38-39: THE LITERAL ACCOUNT**

1. Both Ezekiel and Esther, refer to the **same time** frame and to the **same war** attacking Israel in “unwalled towns” (Ezek. 38:11; Esth. 9:19) from all the provinces of Persia. Why ignore something as plain as this?
2. In **Esther 9:3-5**, the Persian Empire was in control and they came to Israel from the north but the Jews struck all their enemies with the sword killing and destroying. Remember the battle in Esther was for the most part a single-day battle much like described in Ezek. 38:18, 19; 39:8, 13.
3. Ezekiel 38:5-6 describes the enemies as coming from Persia, Ethiopia and Put ... from the north ...” Everyone listed is well within the realm of the Persian Empire of the day (See **Esther 8:9** when the Persian Empire extended from India to Ethiopia and included 127 provinces).
4. If this view is correct, then the chronology would work as follows: Ezekiel 34-37 would be describing the first return of the exiles under Zerubbabel and implies the rebuilding of the physical Temple. Remember that Esther’s story took place during the reign of Darius, king of Persia after the initial rebuilding of the Temple under Zerubbabel and shortly before the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem by Nehemiah (see Ezek. 39:27-29). Ezekiel 38-39 then describes the attack of Gog (who could be Haman—*chief* of Magog) and his confederates against the Jews.

### **EZEKIEL 38-39 AS A “LAST DAYS” TEXT**

1. Many people have not yet realized that texts that use the terms “last days” do not all refer to the final days before Christ’s final return to earth. Ezekiel **38:16** which uses the phrase “**the last days**” does not automatically put us in Christ’s final return to earth time-frame.
2. **Jer.29:10, 14; 30:24**; Dan.9:2, uses “latter days” to refer to the seventy years of Babylonian captivity, after which the fortunes of Moab were to be restored “in the last days” (**Jer.48:47**) and the fortunes of Elam were to be restored “in the last days” (**Jer.49:39**). Compare **Ezek. 39:25**.
3. The “restoration of fortunes” to Israel is to happen in the “latter days” of the seventy-year exile period (Ezek. 39:23-25). Thus, the prophecy of Ezekiel has been fulfilled. It is not talking about Russia’s future war with Israel.

### **CONCLUDING APPLICATIONS**

1. Let us be careful to interpret God’s word accurately and to always check scripture with scripture (See **Acts 17:11**).
2. Let us remind ourselves and teach our kids that the, “sounds like” game that many interpreters use is not biblical interpretation. God’s word is always reliable but the “sound like” game is not.
3. Not only do Ezekiel 38-39 not deal with modern-day Russia, they also don’t deal with modern-day Middle East. Some will agree that Gog doesn’t refer to a future leader of Russia but then seek to make it refer to an Antichrist in the Middle East. They miss the point: these chapters do not refer to any modern-day nations attacking Israel. It refers to the plunder of the Jews in the book of Esther where God faithfully rescued his people so Mary could be born to give birth to Jesus born of a Jewish virgin.
4. Finally, Russia is not spoken of in biblical prophecy. The leader of Russia is not invading Israel. Neither is “the Antichrist” being raised up to create a covenant with the nations surrounding Israel and usher in the days before Christ’s final return to earth. Ezekiel 38-39 and Esther 8-9 are referring to the same past events, not to our future! They are referring to the attack of Gog (Haman) and his confederates on the Jews.