

“LIKE A STORM.”

(The Russian Led Invasion of Israel)

Over the last few decades, storm forecasting has become a vital study. With the help of modern technology, organisations such as *'The Storm Prediction Centre,'* in Oklahoma give advanced warnings of dangerous weather activity, helping people prepare for some of nature's worst. But no matter how good their forecasting skills are there is one storm coming that will not appear on their radar screens: the Russian led invasion of Israel which will take place in the last days. Through Ezekiel the prophet (approx. 600BC), the Lord God of Israel describes this event as a terrifying storm on the horizon. *"You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you..."* (Ezk.38:9). The forecast is given and the clouds appear to be gathering. This may be a good time to refresh our memories regarding a most important prophecy found in Ezekiel 38-39.

Confirming the report

Let's be honest. Talk of a Russian invasion of Israel and it sounds sensational in the least. At best it sounds like a hangover from the Cold War era. Does the Bible really teach such a thing? I believe it does, and so do many reputable Bible teachers of both the past and present. The great Matthew Henry mentions this view (although he looked for an historic interpretation), showing that it predates the last century by a long way. And John Gill, a former pastor of Spurgeon's church in London, held this view, again confirming that it is neither new or novel. It certainly isn't a case of 'seeing reds under the bed.'

The text itself gives us the main reason to believe that Russia is in view here. Ezekiel was told: *"Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him..."* (v2). Gog is the title given to the leader from 'Magog', a term apparently used in some Arabic texts for the steppe dwellers of Russia, which may give us our first clue. But the phrase "Rosh" gives us a more identifiable link. The Hebrew word *rosh* can mean 'head' or 'chief', but many Bible translations believe it to be a name here and print it as such. Some Bible teachers, such as Arnold Fruchtenbaum, believe this is a primitive form of the name "Russia," which is easy to grasp. And the associate names of "Meshech, and Tubal," are almost certainly references to the leading cities of Russia, Moscow and Tobolsk. As if that was not enough, in v15 the Lord says to these invaders, *"Then you will come from your place out of the far north..."* which seems to settle it. Put your finger on a map of Israel and trace it to the far north and where do you come to? Russia! The report seems to be confirmed with a good deal of support, that Russia is where the storm is coming from. How interesting when there are many signs that Russia is returning to her old ways under her current leadership....

Time Check

But what reason is there for saying that this is an *end time* prophecy? After all, Ezekiel prophesied many things that are now in the past. There are several answers to that question (more than we can print here for space). First there is the positioning of this prophecy with other end-time events such as the regathering of Israel in chapter 37 and the building of the Millennial Temple in chapter 40-48. This whole unit of Ezekiel is clearly end times stuff, suggesting to the reader that this is when it will be fulfilled. Israel is back in the land now – even occupying “*the mountains of Israel,*” (39:2) since 1967 - but the Millennial Temple (not to be confused with the antichrist’s temple of 2 Thess.2) has not been built. The prophecy will come to pass somewhere between these two events, as its positioning suggests. Not only that, but we can see this prophecy has to do with the end times because, very simply, it has never ever been fulfilled! When we review God’s dramatic answer to this invasion in a moment (including fire from heaven), it will be clear to almost everybody that this particular invasion has never taken place. It is *future* prophecy rather than *fulfilled* prophecy. “*It will be in the latter days...*” (38:16). That should cause us to sit up and take note. Things are happening in that part of the world which could be preparing the way for this prophetic storm to strike. “*Surely it is coming, and it shall be done,*” says the Lord God....” (39:8).

The Axis of Evil

The significant element in this text for many prophecy readers is the co-operating nations who invade Israel with Russia. Their list is surprisingly modern. “*Persia (Iran), Cush (Ethiopia/ Sudan), and Put (Libya) are with them...Gomer (Armenia or even Germany, in some commentaries)..the house of Togarmah (Turkey)...many people are with you.*” (38:5-6) None of these nations were the traditional enemies of Israel in the Old Testament like, say, the Philistines or the Assyrians were. In our day these nations are mostly Islamic, causing some prophecy buffs to call this war, ‘The Last Jihad.’ However, the strength of numbers against Israel here clearly brings this invasion to a super-storm status. No wonder the Lord says that they will, “*cover the land.*” (38:16).

(Actually, what is interesting is who *isn’t* mentioned in this list. For instance, Syria isn’t mentioned here and neither are the nations of Psalm 83. This may be an indicator that the wars of Isaiah 17 and Psalm 83 will precede this one - something which would explain why Israel, “*dwells safely*” in the land (38:11). People often say that this safety is because Israel has made a peace treaty with the antichrist. There are problems with that view, and to be honest, Israel has had peace treaties before and they haven’t made her feel safe. In fact, some of them have even served to help Israel’s enemies against her. Let’s be honest, the only thing that will make Israel feel safe is when her immediate enemies are thoroughly defeated – even destroyed. Something the Isaiah 17 and Psalm 83 wars achieve. However, the alliance in Ezekiel 38 is one she may not see coming....)

Treasure Hunt

The Russian led coalition will invade Israel for a purpose. The text of Ezekiel reveals that they will gate-crash Israel's peace-party, *"to take plunder and to take booty,"* (38:12). This is different to the Battle of Armageddon in Zech.14 and Rev.16, where the object is clearly to destroy Israel herself. For this and many other reasons it is clear that these battles are not the same. No, Russia wants to get her hands on something here. True, her hostile-helpers may have their own anti-semitic agendas (especially if they are Islamic), but Gog seems to be greedy for gain. We can only speculate *what* he will set his black heart on, but several good suggestions have been made over the years. The minerals of the Dead Sea have often been sited, as have Israel's coastal ports to the Mediterranean (Russia has no warm water harbours of her own in this area). Or perhaps it is the spoil of oil. Israel's recent gas and oil finds have brought her some benefits that a big nation like Russia would certainly appreciate. Or it could even be something as basic as food and water. In the Old Testament Isaac fought battles over water and we could well see that type of thing again as basic needs increase. In the book of Judges, Gideon had to combat the raiding Midianites who were stealing their crops. Famine is a last days factor in many Bible prophecies, and it maybe the issue here. We will have to wait and see. But make no mistake about it, the storm on the horizon is a destructive one threatening those, *"who dwell in the midst of the land."* (38:12)

Touch Down

When a threatening weather event actually strikes, it is sometimes referred to as 'touch down.' In this prophetic storm the touch down, as it were, happens when the invaders realise Israel is most vulnerable. *"Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog, 'Thus says the Lord God: 'On that day when my people Israel dwell safely, will you not know it?'"* (38:14) This sounds like Russia's notorious spy network the SVR reporting that 'now is the perfect time to strike.' Somehow they know that Israel is off-guard (as she was in the Yom Kippur War of 1973) and report this back to Gog. Then suddenly, without warning, her enemies will strike in a pincer-style attack threatening to crush her. The Russian and northern armies will come down on the Golan Heights and into the Galilee area, while the North African forces will come up to the area around Judea. *"You will come up against my people Israel like a cloud, to cover the land..."* (38:16). Israel will be overwhelmed by the sheer size of this invasion, and for a brief moment it will look as if she is finally about to be destroyed. In fact, she would be were it not for one solitary factor: *"Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."* (Ps.121:4). Yes, the Lord God of Israel – the covenant keeping, Hebrew loving, Jehovah – will come to her defence.

Storm Meets Storm

When the Russian storm strikes Israel, another infinitely greater storm will strike back at them! The Lord revealed to Ezekiel: *"And it will come to pass at the same time, when Gog*

comes against the land of Israel,” says the Lord God, “that my fury will show in my face...” (38:18). When you and I get angry it shows in our faces, doesn't it? We sometimes go red and change our expression to one of extreme concentrated energy. Well, this is what will happen with the Lord when the forces of Magog provoke Him by attacking His ancient people, Israel. In His anger the Lord God will fight back at the invading forces with weapons they cannot match. Both creation and supernatural forces will do the bidding of Israel's Defender. *“Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel...”* (38:19). The last destructive earthquake in Israel was in 1927, measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale. The next one will possibly be when Russia and her forces invade the land. It will result in utter chaos. *“The mountains shall be thrown down, the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.”* (38:20). I wouldn't want to be standing near the Dome of the Rock when this earthquake strikes.... Then, military forces (presumably the IDF) will get their act together, because the prophecy goes on to say, *“I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all my mountains,”* (38:21). Rallying her reserve forces Israel will begin to give as good as she is getting. And, as if that were not enough, Exodus-style plagues start falling on the invaders: *“And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.”* (38:22). Make no mistake about it, this storm of God's judgment will be one of the most violent, devastating acts of deliverance that the world has ever witnessed. It will never be forgotten. In fact, if the King James Version is accurate in this passage (and I believe it is), only one sixth of the invaders will limp back to their homelands after this battle. *“I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee”* (39:2). Even by modern standards, this type of death-toll for a single conflict is unheard of. The survivors will wish that they had never even heard of Israel, yet alone agreed to Gog's plan for an attack. It will require new textbooks to be written and possibly even new maps to be made! *“And I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in security in the coastlands...”* (39:6). The Lord will come on *them*, 'like a storm.' And Israel will undoubtedly be reading Psalm 124 in their synagogues: *“If it had not been the Lord who was on our side,” Let Israel now say - “If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us, they would have swallowed us alive, when their wrath was kindled against us....Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us as prey to their teeth.”*

The Result

There is much, much more to say about this event than can be put into one brief article. Questions such as, *Will it take place before the rapture? What is the difference between this Gog and Magog war and the one mentioned in Rev.20? Why the references to ancient weapons such as horses and swords?*- will all have to be answered another day. We haven't even mentioned the remarkable burial procedures recorded prophetically in Ezekiel 39. However, the most satisfying thing for the child of God about this great event has to be that

the Lord will make His own Name great through this terrible 'storm.' Every day the Lord's people pray, *"Hallowed be Thy Name.."* And one cloudy day in the future that prayer will be answered in the Middle East. *"Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the Lord."* (38:23). People will be talking about more than the weather on that day. They will know that the Lord is the true God. Not the fake deities of other religions. Not 'science.' The Lord, the God of Israel. What an opportunity it will give those alive at that time to share their faith and spread the Word.

- Jon Ikin, August 2013

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