

The Russians Are Coming! • Eze. 38:1-16

INTRODUCTION • Read Vs. 14-17

1. The msg today is a little slice of what we'll take a **closer** look at this coming Wednesday; **MUCH CLOSER**.
2. Time doesn't allow me to go into the detail I'd like to; so if you're interested come back Wed. or pick up a copy of the study next Sunday.
3. Let me begin with this:
 - a. While Bible prophecy scholars & students see Eze 38-9 happening at different times,
 - b. A growing number understand the great battle described here as occurring BEFORE the Tribulation;
 - c. And that **this is what's next** on the prophetic calendar for the Last Days.
 - d. That happens to be my view.
4. So, let's dive in to this fascinating passage that's the focus of so much attention around the world today.

Set the Scene

1. First, a little background.
2. You'll remember from last Sun, ch. 33 marks THE turning point in Ezekiel's ministry as a prophet.
 - a. His 1st 8 yrs were spent **announcing Jerusalem's doom**.
 - b. Well, the report of the City's destruction finally came to the Jewish Exiles in Babylon where Ezekiel lived.
 - c. So he **switched** to pointing them to **Israel's glorious future restoration**.
3. As we'll see Wed, in chs. 36-7, God says He'll **regather** the Jews from the nations where they've been scattered -- back into their land.
 - a. The forests will grow, the flowers blossom, & the fields produce bumper crops.
 - b. Though hedged in by enemies, Israel will be safe & secure, enjoying great prosperity.
4. You don't need to be a Bible scholar to realize the amazing fulfillment of this prophecy.
5. In the mid-2nd C, the Romans finally had enough of Jewish revolts.
 - a. They expelled all Jews from Jerusalem, renamed it **Aelia Capitolina**,
 - b. Sold 10s of thousands into slavery,
 - c. And **renamed** Israel **Palestine** in an attempt to **erase** all evidence of the Jewish homeland.
 - d. The Roman conquest of Israel led to every tree being cut down for their siege-works.
 - e. But deforesting the land **altered the ecosystem**, & turned Israel into an arid wilderness for the next 1800 years.
6. Then in May 1948, the modern State of Israel was **reborn**, literally 'in a day.'
7. Its existence is nothing less than a miracle!
 - a. Israel is 1/20th the size of CA w/a population of almost 8 million.
 - b. It's surrounded by $\frac{1}{2}$ **billion** Muslims in **22** nations, most of which hate her & want to see her driven into the sea.
 - c. Israel has already fought several bitter wars & though out-manned & out-gunned, has managed to defeat her attackers time & again.
8. Despite all this **against** her, tiny Israel is a world-center of **innovation & technology**.
 - a. Microsoft, IBM, Intel, & Sun Microsystems all have major research & production facilities in Israel.
 - b. The latest chip designs come out of Israeli labs.
 - c. Israel is a major food **exporter**, sending many tons of fruit, vegetables & flowers to Europe.
 - d. Farmers from all over the world travel to Israel to learn new food production techniques.
 - e. What was once desert is today a garden – just as prophecies in Eze. 36.
9. The rise of the modern State of Israel **out of the ashes** of WWII & the Holocaust is an apt fulfillment of the prophecy in Ch. 37:11-12 where we read –

¹¹ Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!' ¹² Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

Ch. 38: 1-6

1. Then in ch. 38, **after** describing Israel's return & prosperous rebirth, Ezekiel goes on in chs. 38 & 9 to describe a **massive** Last Days invasion by an alliance of nations.

¹ Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ² "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, ³ and say, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I *am* against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. ⁴ I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company *with* bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords. ⁵ Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them *with* shield and helmet; ⁶ Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah *from* the far north and all its troops—many people *are* with you.

1. Wow! What is it with all these names? // Again—we'll go deeper to see where these names come from Wed.
2. For now; let me just say that these are the ancient names for modern nations.
 - a. Ancient historians help us who's being referred to here.
 - b. The Greek father of History – Herodotus, along w/Josephus & Philo identified these people & where they lived.
3. **Gog** is a man; the **ruler** of **Magog** where **tribes** known as the **Rosh**, the **Meshech** & the **Tubal** live.
 - a. **Magog** was a vast region to the **far north** of Israel where the ancient **Scythians** lived.
 - b. The Scythians were the ancestors of the ethnic **Russians**.
 - 1) Their tribes included the **Rosh**, from which the word "**Russia**" derives,
 - 2) The **Meshech**, which evolved into **Muscovi** & the name of **Moscow**, capital of Russia.
 - 3) And the **Tubal**, who lived on the **East** & gave their name to the city of **Tobolsk** in Russia.
4. WHY God determines to **judge** this ruler of Russia will become clear in a moment.
 - a. For now, just note that he comes with a **huge army**.
 - b. I hate to keep doing this to you, but on Wed we'll take a closer look at the **words** used to describe this force.
 - c. Ezekiel describes a **modern military force** more than an ancient army here.
5. What I want to draw your attention to this morning is **WHO** joins Gog in this campaign.
 - a. Taking the lead in the alliance after Magog/Russia is **Persia** = modern Iran.
 - b. The north African nations of **Ethiopia & Libya** come next.
 - 1) Your Bible might say **Cush & Put** –
 - 2) Those are the old names for Libya & Ethiopia, which used to include **all of Sudan**.
 - c. Then **Gomer & Togarmah** are a 3rd tier of the alliance.
 - 1) The descendants of Gomer were the Cimmerians who settled in **West Anatolia**/Turkey
 - 2) Togarmah became the Turkic people who settled in **East** Anatolia.
 - 3) Both are mentioned as having "troops" because they produced a bunch of different tribes that all shared the same language & a similar culture.
 - 4) The descendants of Gomer & Togarmah are the ethnic hodge-podge found in the modern Nations of Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Chechnya, & NE Iran.

Vs. 7-9

⁷ "Prepare yourself and be ready, you and all your companies that are gathered about you; and be a guard for them. ⁸ After many days you will be visited. In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword *and* gathered from many people [WHERE?] on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely. ⁹ You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you."

1. Let's summarize to make sure we're all tracking.
 - a. In chs. 36-7, God says He'll bring the Jews from the nations **back** into their land which has long been desolate.
 - b. The land will blossom and produce a great harvest & they'll be safe under His protection.
2. It's **THEN** that this alliance attacks.
3. And here it's quite plain; it comes "after many days . . . in the latter years" meaning, **the Last Days**.

4. Before we go on to see what happens, let's pause & consider this Alliance.
 - a. 1st **Who is Gog?**
 - 1) Well, just based on the text, we can conclude Gog is the **ruler of Russia**.
 - 2) That's all we can say with certainty; the rest is at best supposition/ a guess.
 - 3) So take this with a handful of salt.
 - 4) The current ruler of Russia is Vladimir Putin, whom I sure you all know just doesn't want to let go of control of Russia.
 - 5) A former agent of the Soviet KGB, Putin has made no secret of his ambition. Not just to return Russia to its former power & glory. But to surpass it and make Russia the dominant superpower in global politics.
 - 6) Looking to the West, Russia is checked by NATO & Europe.
 - 7) To the East is the economic & military powerhouse of China.
 - 8) To the North is the Arctic & the Pole, which Russia has already staked a claim to.
 - 9) The only direction to expand their influence is to the south, which they've done in their many alliances with the mostly Muslim nations of Central Asia.
 - 10) What Russia desperately needs is a warm water port, so for the first time in history, Russia has forged an alliance w/Iran, an historic **enemy**.
 - b. When Iran became an Islamic republic under Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979, they severed ties with the West and began looking around for a new sponsor.
 - 1) It took a while but eventually the relationship between Russia & Iran was tight.
 - 2) Russia lacks hard currency but has plenty of weapons, so Iran bought billions of dollars of weaponry from Russia.
 - 3) When Iran said it wanted to start a nuclear program, Russia assisted them.
 - c. The relationship between Putin and the Iranian president has been warm; they've met several times to forge even closer linkage between the 2 powers.
 - d. What is of interest to us, TODAY, is that this is the first time IN HISTORY that Russia & Iran have been allies = and an alliance between them is what Ezekiel foretold, 2500 yrs ago.
 - e. The **other nations** in this alliance, like Iran, are radical Islamist states that have made **official** their hatred for & opposition of Israel.
 - 1) **Libya**, as you know, was recently taken over by radical jihadists who attacked our consulate in Benghazi & killed our ambassador there.
 - 2) **Northern Sudan/** ancient Ethiopia, is ruled by Islamists pledged to Israel's destruction.
 - a) It was the home of Osama bin Laden & HQ of Al Qaeda for several years.
 - b) They especially hate Israel because the Israelis have trained & supplied the South Sudanese who've broken away to become an independent nation.
 - 3) The 1 piece of this alliance that doesn't fit is Turkey/Gomer.
 - a) Until recently, the military ruled Turkey & leaned toward Europe & the West.
 - b) But the Bible says they'll join this last days alliance against Israel, so we've been telling you to keep an eye on Turkey.
 - c) That diligence has been rewarded because those of you watching know that Islamists are rapidly gaining power in Turkey.
 - d) Their president is an Islamist whose ended Turkey's long friendly posture toward Israel.
 - e) It was Turkey that sponsored the flotillas that tried to run the Israeli blockade of Gaza.
 - f) And though Iran & Turkey have been at odds with each other for generations, there's been a recent thaw in their relations that's seen first-time ever cooperation btwn the 2 nations.
5. The point to glean from all this is that 2500 yrs ago the Bible foretold this alliance of nations in the last days.
 - a. There's been no other time in history when the people listed here have been poised for such an alliance.
 - b. This is the first time such an alliance was even possible.
6. So—let's see what becomes of it . . .

Vs. 10-13

¹⁰ 'Thus says the Lord God: "On that day ["in that time"; that is "the latter yrs"] it shall come to pass *that* thoughts will arise in your [Gog's] mind, and you will make an evil plan: ¹¹ You will say, 'I will go up against a

land of unwallled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates' — ¹² to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places *that are again* inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land.

1. The ruler of Russia will gather his allies & stage a surprise attack on Israel.
2. Why? What plunder & booty could possibly attract Russia? // One word = **Wednesday!**

¹³ Sheba, Dedan, the merchants of Tarshish, and all their young lions will say to you, 'Have you come to take plunder? Have you gathered your army to take booty, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to take great plunder?' ” ”

3. 6 nations are given as part of the alliance that attacks Israel.
4. Here 4 groups are listed as **standing on the sidelines**, apparently protesting.
5. Who they are & role they play we'll take a closer look at in our mid-week study.
6. In preparation, just consider what Muslim nations around Israel **AREN'T** part of this alliance.

Vs. 14-17

¹⁴ “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*? ¹⁵ Then you will come from your place out of the far north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great company and a mighty army. ¹⁶ You will come up against My people Israel like a cloud, to cover the land. It will be in the latter days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me, when I am hallowed in you, O Gog, before their eyes.”

1. Then in the vs. that follow, God says what **HE** will do to this invading army. He'll obliterate it!

Justifying the Invasion

1. V. 12 says the **real reason** for this last days invasion of Israel by a Russian-Iranian led alliance is for commercial & economic gain.
2. But current events provide us a provocative scenario for **how** Russia & Iran might justify an invasion.
3. You'd have to have been living in a cave in outer Mongolia for the last couple years not to know that Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons has Israel & Western nations in a tizzy.
 - a. Iran's previous president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was a radical jihadist & a “Twelver”
 - 1) Meaning he's part of a group who believes in the 12th Imam – the Mahdi = AKA as the Muslim Messiah.
 - 2) As wild as this may sound, you need to know that Iran's **real ruler** isn't the president or even their Parliament. It's a man known as **The Supreme Leader = Ayatollah Khamenei**.
 - 3) Khamenei says that the 12th Imam has appeared & spoken to him & given him the marching orders for Iran.
 - 4) They're to build nuclear weapons, use them on the Big & Little satan, as they call the US & Israel, and it's that act of faith on their part that will prove to the Mahdi it's time for him to step onto the world stage & take over.
 - 5) Twelvers like Khamenei & Ahmadinejad believe get rid of Israel is their service & duty to God.
 - 6) This is why when he was president of Iran, Ahmadinejad repeated called for the destruction of Israel.
 - b. And why many heaved a huge sigh of relief when he was replaced recently with **Hassan Rouhani**.
 - c. Rouhani has been billed as a “**moderate**” so, in the hopes of opening negotiations w/Iran the Obama admin has pushed for an **easing** of US sanctions on Iran.
 - d. This scares the Israelis because as PM Ben Netanyahu has made clear—if the US doesn't apply pressure to Iran to halt its nuclear program, they'll have to take measures to do so themselves.
 - e. You see, President Rouhani was Iran's chief nuclear negotiator frm 2003-5.
 - 1) In response to international pressure he said Iran moth-balled its nuclear program.
 - 2) But later he bragged that was a lie to fool the West; that Iran had **accelerated** its program.
 - f. Rouhani's no reformer as some in the mainstream press label him.
 - 1) 686 candidates applied for Iran's presidential election.
 - 2) Only **8** were allowed by Supreme Leader Khamenei to run.

3) Rouhani's been at the center of the Islamic Republic since its beginning.

4) And lest anyone think him a moderate, at his inauguration, he gave thanks to the Mahdi, the 12th Imam!

g. Israeli PM Netanyahu said while the previous president Ahmadinejad was a wolf in wolf's clothing, Rouhani is a wolf in sheep's clothing.

h. And the Israelis now see the writing on the wall with Washington's recently call to back down sanctions on Iran as evidence that the US has been duped into more pointless "negotiations" while Iran uses the time to build bombs.

i. Netanyahu has made it clear that Iran is quickly reaching the red line that requires they take pre-emptive action to halt Iran's ability to produce a nuke.

1) Let's not forget that Israel has **already** flown bombing runs on Iraq & Syria to halt their ability to produce & deliver nuclear weapons.

2) They've done it before; they'll do it again if forced to.

j. With Rouhani's election & the seeming refusal of the US to get tough w/Iran, Israel has quickly come to the conclusion it's alone and has to look out for its interests because no one else will.

4. So, what happens if & when Israel sends in its jets to take out Iran's nuclear facilities?

a. Because of where Iran has placed those facilities near residential and commercial centers, civilians will be killed.

b. Because the Russians are up to their necks in the Iranian nuclear program, some of their personnel will be killed as well.

c. While many western nations will probably heave a huge sigh of relief that someone stopped Iran's nuclear ambition, publicly, they'll have to condemn Israel.

d. And against that backdrop, Russia & Iran will have the perfect excuse for their invasion.