

# Gog and Magog

by Keith Malcomson

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*The sermon explores the biblical prophecy of Gog and Magog, examining its implications for current geopolitical tensions involving Israel and Russia.*

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 23:7, Jeremiah 31:8, Ezekiel 38:2-39

**Topics:** "End Times", "Ezekiel Prophecy"

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## Description

Keith Malcomson delves into the prophecy of Ezekiel 38 and 39, exploring the invasion of Israel in the last days led by a great northern power, Gog, in confederacy with other nations. The identity of Gog and Magog is debated, with traditional views pointing to Russia and more recent interpretations suggesting a Muslim union of nations in the Middle East. The regathering of Israel from many nations, particularly from the 'north country' of Russia, plays a significant role in preparing for Ezekiel's War, a conflict that could potentially happen any day based on current world events.

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## Transcript

Ezekiel 38:2-3, "Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal."

Ezekiel's War is an invasion of Israel in the last days which is led by a great northern power in confederacy with several other nations and many other peoples. As we read Ezekiel 38 and 39 it becomes evident that Gog is to be a great leader and Magog is a land or region. But who is this leader and where is this land? Many have traditionally considered that these verses speak of Russia to the far north of Israel. More recently however there has been a strong swing away from this idea in order to teach that Gog and Magog is situated within the Middle Eastern region, south of Russia, in order to identify that this united military force will be entirely fulfilled by a Muslim union of nations.

### Magog

The first mention of Magog is in Genesis 10:2, "The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras." From this we see that Magog was the Grandson of Noah and the second son of Japheth. He was a noted person and leader who gave birth to one of the main peoples and nations of the earth. This led to the raising up of a people who later settled a land or region which was called Magog.

It is believed by most scholars, ancient and modern, that the initial dwelling place of the descendents of Magog was just to the north of where present day Turkey and Iran meet. This is the area between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. This people and land was certainly known to the ancient peoples of the Middle East right down to the days of Ezekiel (6th century BC), as well as Alexander the Great (4th century BC), and Josphesus (1st century AD).

Josphesus, the Jewish historian, wrote that, "Magog founded the Magogians, thus named after him, but who were by the Greeks called Scythians." The name Scythian was used to describe the many tribes who dwelt near the Russian Steppes to the north of Turkey and Iran. Ancient Scythia was the region to the north and east of the Black Sea covering a large area.

This is the reason why so many biblical scholars have believed that Magog represents present day Russia. Other scholars who disagree with this specific designation, who want to move away from a Russian thesis to a Muslim thesis, suggest that the land of Magog is better identified as the former Soviet Union republics of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which are jointly known today as Asia Minor. Each of these 'stan' nations is predominantly Muslim. This region was indeed most likely a portion of the ancient homeland of the Scythians and up until recent times was a vital part of the USSR and Russia. A few scholars who are still not happy with these ideas try to bring the identity of these nations further south into the region of Turkey, Syria, Iraq or Iran. But this is very unlikely. In the same passage where Gog and Magog are mentioned in Ezekiel 38, Turkey and Iran are clearly defined as distinct nations and peoples, separate from Magog.

#### Picture

The north is mentioned three times in this prophecy: Ezekiel 38:6, "...the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee", 38:15, "And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army", 39:2, "And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel."

The Hebrew word used here for "quarters" or "parts" can mean the uttermost part, the far north, the furthest coast. The word for "north" means the dark or gloomy region. So from this it seems that there is a strong hint that this army not only comes from the north but from far to the north.

It is of great interest that Jeremiah and Ezekiel both prophesied that Israel would be scattered among all nations and then regathered from all nations to their own land (Eze.34:13, 36:24, 39:27). This was not referring to Israel's captivity in Egypt, Babylon or Assyria, as these captivities were in individual nations. This regathering of Israel to her own land is from a great many nations and is vital in order to prepare the way for Ezekiel's War. This War cannot or could not take place until Israel had regathered to her land. Jeremiah says, "Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth...a great company shall return thither" (Jer.31:8). He goes further by saying that a day will come when they will no longer speak of the LORD who brought them up out of Egypt but of the LORD who brought them "...out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land" (Jer.23:7-8).

I believe that this regathering from the nations began in a noticeable way at the beginning of the 20th century but became very marked when Israel was birthed as a nation again in 1948. The Second World War and the German Holocaust was the means by which millions of Jews were stirred up to return to their

ancient homeland. With the fall of the old Soviet Union in 1989 the way was suddenly open for Jews to return from Russia. In just one decade between 1989 and 1999 about 800,000 immigrants arrived from Russia to Israel to seek citizenship. Since the year 2000 it has been noted that 20% of Israel's population were born in Russia and still speak Russian in their Israeli homes. It is the third national language spoken after Hebrew and Arabic but English is widely used as a second language to most. Israel is now known as a nation regathered from many nations but especially from the "north country" - Russia. This reveals that it is not a strange thing to think of this attack from Magog, the land of the north, being fulfilled by present day Russia.

A new smaller exodus of Jews returning from Russia to Israel began in 2015 as a result of Putin's tightening regime. There are still about 2 million Jews in Russia, 7 million in America, and 1 million in Europe of which half are in France. Ezekiel prophesied that this War led by Gog will bring a final return of the people from all remaining nations to the land of Israel: "...but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there" (39:28).

Picture

Gog

In Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39 Gog is mentioned nine times. It is clear from these references that Gog is not only a man but the leader of this mass military attack upon Israel. It is clear that God is against Gog and calls upon Ezekiel to prophecy against him. There will be a specific person who will fulfil this prophecy. Gog is not necessarily his name but rather a title or an explanation of his role in this invasion of Israel. It is clear that Gog is identified with the "land of Magog." He will be a Russian leader. Several other nations are mentioned in this passage but none of their leaders are specifically noted. The focus is upon Gog of the land of Magog.

Three times he is spoken of as, "Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal" (38:2, 3; 39:1). This is obviously given in order to identify him. Although he is from the land of Magog, to the north, he is said to be the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. Those who have taught that Magog was Russia have often gone on to say that Meshech was Moscow, the capitol city of Russia, and that Tubal was Tobolsk, a province in Russia. They have also frequently said that the word "chief", which is rosh in Hebrew, has been translated wrong in our English Bible. They say that it should have been translated as a country name rather than as a title for a leader. By this means they argue that Gog is revealed as the leader of Rosh, or Russia. I must say that I am not at all convinced by these arguments. We will explain the correct meaning of Meshech and Tubal in the next article on the names of nation's. I believe that Meshech and Tubal identify a different country that will be joined closely aligned to Russia and will allow Gog to lead their military forces in this War.

The Hebrew word rosh is used almost 600 times in the Old Testament. To find its true meaning we must take good note of its usage in these references. It is almost always translated in these references as head (literal or figurative), top, beginning, or chief. If we were to translate rosh as a country name in Ezekiel's prophecy it would be the only place in the entire OT where this is done. It is more accurate to consider it a word that defines the person or thing that is the source, the head, or the leader.

Gog is called the "chief prince". This word "prince" means exalted one, king, or leader. So this term, "chief prince", would seem to mean that Gog actually leads the king of Meshech and Tubal in this military action.

If what we are saying is true then Russia will be united in a strong military bond to several Middle Eastern nations when this War does take place. The leader of Russia at that time will also gain such influence in the Middle East that he will be the main leader behind this military force and will be the main instrument behind this attack upon Israel.

In twenty five years of studying Bible prophecy I have never once thought that we could potentially be on the verge of Ezekiel's War until 2016. I believe that in 2016, but especially in the latter half of that year, things began to happen in such a remarkable way that drew my immediate attention in a way it had never done previously concerning the potential near fulfillment of this prophecy. The actions of Russia, the alignment of Middle Eastern nations with Russia, the weakening influence of the West (the USA and the EU) in the Middle East, and Israel's present condition, all led me to take particular note of this prophecy. This War could of course still be a decade or more in the future but I am convinced that things are already so aligned that it could potentially happen any day.

Russia, Israel and World Affairs

Picture

The Soviet Union under Stalin was initially a supporter of the birth and existence of the state of Israel when it was birthed in 1948. But that soon changed. Russia aligned with Israel's many Arab-Muslim enemies, by arming them, training them, and supporting them, in several major conflicts. Throughout this period America increasingly became Israel's greatest ally and supporter. It was only at the end of the Cold War in 1991 that the USSR resumed diplomatic relations with Israel. This relationship between Russia and Israel dramatically changed with the election of Vladimir Putin as President of Russia in the year 2000.

Putin made it his goal to make Russia a major player in the Middle East by improving relations with each nation whether friend or foe. He has also sought to become a key player in the peace initiatives between Israel and the Arab States hoping to replace American and Western influence in peace talks. In recent years Putin has initiated the signing of trade, military, and economic, agreements with Israel taking good note that a million inhabitants in Israel originally came from Russia. In August 2016 he suggested that Israeli-Palestinian peace talks should be held in Moscow. October 2016 marked the 25th anniversary of restored relations between Russia and Israel which was used to strengthen their ties even further. Putin has met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu four times and held phone conversations with him several times during 2016. Putin said that the friendship between Russia and Israel has now reached a high point. Netanyahu has visited Moscow in Russia more times than any other national capitol in the world.

During President Obama's presidency American support for Israel has seriously weakened. Relations between Russia and the West have also seriously declined over the previous two years. There has also been a massive swing from American to Russian influence in the Middle East just in the year 2016. During 2016 tensions were raised to such a pitch that Putin and Russia said that things had gone far enough! Putin claimed that Obama had been provoking Russia with the Middle East situation by his words and actions for too long. He strongly warned the West that Russia was being forced into a position of armed conflict.

The whole conflict within Syria has led to a serious International crisis. It has left half a million people dead, several million displaced as refugees, and the near destruction of the city of Aleppo in the north of Syria. In early October 2016, 40 million Russian's were put through training for nuclear attack, Putin

placed strategic weaponry in Syria to stop American interference. The Black Sea, which is above Turkey called "the Russian Lake" because of Russian military activity on it was a hive of activity. At the same time Russia pulled out of several disarmament agreements. Putin moved his greatest naval force yet into the Mediterranean, American generals publicly threatened a strong military response to Russia. The EU found itself at its weakest political state in decades, while Russia moved 330,000 troops to its western border with Europe. In response NATO placed 4,000 troops within the border countries of eastern Europe. Nothing like this had been seen since the end of the Cold War in 1991.

This all happened during the two months leading into the American elections in November. The American public had never been so distracted as during those months of political theatrics between Clinton and Trump, while Russia used the opportunity to position itself strategically and militarily. Putin utterly detested Hilary Clinton. He was convinced that if Clinton was elected she would take action in forcing him into armed conflict. He believed that Trump would be better for peaceful world affairs and relations between Russia and the US. Putin has aligned all his activities and timed them to coincide with the outcome of the American elections. Never had America been so distracted and divided, Europe so disunited, and Russia so strategically placed for armed conflict. Upon Trump's election these particular fears came to rest as hopes for good relations between Putin's Russia and Trump's America greatly increased.

Only at the beginning of April 2017 were these fears raised again with the American airstrike against Syrian airfields. All of these events continue to potentially pave the way for Ezekiel's War when Russia will invade Israel.

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