

## **Russia, Russia, Russia!**

Ezekiel 38: 1-6; 14-16; 39:1-8

It seems these days we keep hearing about Russia. It was just a few years ago, this was not the name of the area of the world- it was called The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. This consisted of Russia, Moldova, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Georgia and the Ukraine. Do you remember the ad that was run by the presidential campaign of Ronald Reagan? "There is a bear in the woods. For some people, the bear is easy to see. Others don't see it at all. Some people say the bear is tame. Others say it's vicious and dangerous. Since no one can really be sure who's right, isn't it smart to be as strong as the bear? If there is a bear." This was in reference to the great bear of Russia. Well, the bear has awakened and is no longer hibernating. The most dangerous bear is not the polar, the grizzly, the brown or black bear – it is the mother bear who has been robbed of her cubs. The Scriptures mention the fury of a bear robbed of her cubs in II Samuel 17:8 and Proverbs 17:12.

In 2005, Russian President Vladimir Putin said, "First and foremost it is worth acknowledging that the demise of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century. As for the Russian people, it became a genuine tragedy. Tens of millions of our fellow citizens and countrymen found themselves beyond the fringes of Russian territory." Putin has not changed his mind. There's a bear in the woods who is bent on getting back her cubs and is willing to work with whomever is willing to work with her and remove anyone who stands in her way. The cold war has heated up with Putin speaking to a crowd of applauding Russians, referring to their supersonic warheads: "Their ability to move around missile shield intercepts make them invincible for all current and projected anti-missile and anti-aircraft systems."

### **I. RUSSIA REVIVED**

Ezekiel 38:1-6

At the end of time, we see the world divided into three major power blocs: the Western Confederacy led by the Antichrist (Daniel 7:7,8), the Kings of the East (Revelation 16:12; 9:14-16) and the Northern and Southern Coalition comprised of Russia and a group of Middle Eastern and North African nations (Daniel 11:40-41; Ezekiel 38: 1-6). In this message we will be dealing with Northern and Southern Coalition led by a leader from the North.

Let's identify God's "most wanted list" as given here in Ezekiel 38. The name "Gog" occurs eleven times in Ezekiel 38 and 39. This refers to a person, the leader of the confederation. The battle looming is "The Battle of Gog and Magog" -- we might say it is when "Gog meets God." In Hebrew the word "Rosh" has been translated "Chief Prince." Most Bible scholars believe this to be a proper noun, indicating a location, not a common noun. The proper noun would indicate "Rosh" as modern "Russia."

Magog: the Jewish historian Josephus records this area inhabited by the ancient Scythians comprising the northern nomadic tribes who inhabited the territory from Central Asia and the southern plains of modern Russia. Magog would today be represented by nations of the former Soviet Union: Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. Afghanistan could also be part of this territory. C. I. Scofield believed Meshech and Tubal to be the Russian cities of Moscow and Tobolsk. Dr. Mark Hitchcock has written, "Meshech and Tubal are mentioned two other times in Ezekiel (27:13; 32:26). In Ezekiel 27:13, they are mentioned as trading partners with ancient Tyre. It is highly unlikely that ancient Tyre (modern Lebanon) was trading with Moscow and the Siberian city of Tobolsk. The preferred identification is that Meshech and Tubal are the ancient Moschoi and Tibarenoi in Greek writings, or Tabal and Musku in Assyrian inscriptions. These ancient locations are present-day Turkey." Persia had a name change in March, 1935 to Iran. Then in 1979 it was changed to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Ethiopia comes to us from the word "Cush" and this area would include modern day Sudan. Libya would be modern day Libya and could possibly include modern Algeria and Tunisia. Gomer has often been identified with Germany, particularly East Germany, however this is the area where the ancient Cimmerians lived which would be modern Turkey. The house of Togarmah would be again in modern Turkey.

## II. RUSSIA AT WAR

The question is, "When will the war, i.e., The Battle of Gog and Magog take place?" The key to understanding "when" is found in the phrases "latter years" (Ezekiel 38:8) and "latter days" (Ezekiel 38:16). Then also the phrase "...they shall dwell safely..." (Ezekiel 38:8), "...them that are at rest, that dwell safely..." (Ezekiel 38:11). "...In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely..." (Ezekiel 38:14). There would be a short period of peace from the time of a covenant with the Antichrist and Israel (Daniel 9:27) and the revelation of the Man of Sin (II Thessalonians 2:3). This places the time between the rapture of the Church and the Abomination of Desolation. It is not the same as the Battle of Armageddon; that comes later.

Another question may also be begged, i.e., "Why this war?" (1) For the land (Ezekiel 38:8). (2) For the wealth (Ezekiel 38:12). (3) Because of Anti-Semitism (Ezekiel 38:10,16). (4) As an ultimate power-play, to draw the Antichrist and the western confederation into confrontation. (Daniel 9:27).

## III. RUSSIA REMOVED

Ezekiel 38:15-Ezekiel 39:13.

This conflict will be sudden and horrendous. God's fury will be released (Ezekiel 38:18). Earthquakes will take place (Ezekiel 38:19, 20; Matthew 24:7). God will turn the enemy against one another (Ezekiel 38:21). Cataclysmic destruction from heaven will take place (Ezekiel 38:23; 39:6). Five sixths of Russia appears to be destroyed! (Ezekiel 39:1-5). The devastation will be so severe it that will require seven years to remove the debris of war (Ezekiel 39:9) and seven months to bury the dead (Ezekiel 39:11, 12).

Conclusion:

God is announcing to the world that He is Lord alone and there is none other.

Isaiah 43:11: "I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no Saviour." God is also declaring that Israel is and always shall be His covenant people. Zechariah 2:8: "For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye."

The purpose of the study of the last days is to prepare you, not scare you. A study such as this has the ability to build confidence that no matter how out of control our world may get – God is in ultimate control. Then also, the study of prophecy will serve as a purifying principle. I John 3:3: "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

-Pastor Pope-