

Is the World About to See Biblical Prophecy Unfold?

The following is an exclusive excerpt from my new book The Armageddon Code: One Journalist's Quest for End-Times Answers. The content comes from chapter 15, which is titled, "Syria's Current Unraveling and Its Tie to Biblical Prophecy."

Is the world also about to see biblical prophecy come to fruition in Syria? Among others, Joel Rosenberg has questioned whether events inside the war-torn country in recent years are also related to prophecy, especially in light of what's found in Old Testament Scriptures like Isaiah 17 and Jeremiah 49.

"We're watching Damascus unravel ... is that the prelude to the completion of those prophecies?" he rhetorically asked. "We don't know, but Damascus is the oldest continuously inhabited city on the planet ... so the fact that it is coming apart is quite extraordinary."

Following Russia's air strikes targeting rebels in Syria in October 2015, questions began reemerging in evangelical circles about whether events surrounding the country's ongoing civil war, which began in 2011, were tied in any way to biblical prophecy.

Rosenberg published a blog post in the wake of the air strikes claiming that Russian president Vladimir Putin is "working hand-in-glove with Iran's government" in formulating operations in Syria. It came the same week as reports that Iran was waging a ground attack, while Russia was carrying out assaults from the air.

Rosenberg, as he did in interviews for this book and past exchanges with TheBlaze on this same subject, specifically referenced the Old Testament in addressing the matter, invoking many of the themes that we dissected in previous

chapters.

"The Hebrew prophet Ezekiel wrote 2,500 years ago that in the 'last days' of history, Russia and Iran will form a military alliance to attack Israel from the north," Rosenberg wrote. "Bible scholars refer to this eschatological conflict, described in Ezekiel 38–39, as the 'War of Gog & Magog.'" He added, "Are these sudden and dramatic moves by Moscow and Tehran ... simply coincidental, or [do they] have prophetic implications?"

Rosenberg's question is at the center of the very debate surrounding Iran, Syria and Russia and their perceived involvement in the end times—one that has attracted a great deal of attention both in Christian circles and in media over the years.

The military alliance between Russia and Iran was also discussed by Pastor Greg Laurie, who said that the "entrance of Russia ... as an ally of Syria and Iran, and this alliance between Russia and Iran is a special interest in the Bible."

He called the current alignments between Russia and Iran particularly notable, though he said that it is important to differentiate between the details he's certain of and those that he cannot definitively speak to.

"I'm very careful when I teach Bible prophecy to not paint myself into a corner and say things that I can't be certain of," Laurie told me. "Do I know with 100 percent certainty that Gog is Russia? No, I do not."

But despite not being able to say with complete and utter confidence the identities of Gog and Magog, there are some elements surrounding Ezekiel that Laurie said he is most confident about. "Do I know that a force called Gog and Magog will march against Israel? Yes, I do. That's the way I teach it," he said. "I offer my views, but I always give myself a little wiggle room, because clearly people have thought other

things in the past and have been wrong, so we want to be very careful to not say this is absolutely the interpretation unless the Bible is completely clear on the topic.”

Back in 2013, I first began dissecting this subject in a series for TheBlaze, speaking with experts about what role, if any, they believe Syria will play in eschatological scenarios. I noted at the time that there’s one particular Bible passage that’s rekindling the entire discussion surrounding how Syria might fit into end-time theology: Isaiah 17:1-3.

It reads, “See, Damascus will cease from being a city; it shall be a ruinous heap. The cities of Aroer are forsaken; they shall be for flocks, which shall lie down, and no one shall make them afraid. The fortress also shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Aram; they shall be as the glory of the sons of Israel, says the Lord of Hosts.”

The Syria example is perhaps a perfect paradigm to see how those with different theological viewpoints approach the same texts in very different ways. Consider that the first portion about a “ruinous heap” has some wondering if the present Syria crisis was prophesied in the Bible, but some scholars have countered that Damascus was already destroyed and that this verse refers to an attack by the Assyrians that unfolded in 732 B.C.

Specifically noting Isaiah 17:1-3 and Jeremiah 49:23-27, Rosenberg explained in a separate 2013 blog piece that—despite some experts referencing the Assyrian attack—Damascus’ destruction has not yet happened. Jeremiah 49:23-27 pledges judgment upon Damascus, proclaiming that it has “become helpless” and that a fire will be kindled in its walls.

“These prophecies have not yet been fulfilled. Damascus is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities on earth. It has been attacked, besieged and conquered,” Rosenberg wrote. “But

Damascus has never been completely destroyed and left uninhabited."