

Is This a Dress Rehearsal for Ezekiel 38?

In my entire life, I've never seen the leaders of Russia, Iran and Turkey pictured together in the same place at the same time.

But there they were: Russia's President Putin, Iran's secular leader President Raisi and Turkey's President Erdoğan, all at a meeting of menacing allies, earlier this week in Tehran, Iran (formerly the ancient land of Persia).

Putin has a nominal Russian Orthodox background, while Raisi and Erdoğan are Islamic. Putin seems to want to restore Russia's expansive empire of Peter the Great, while the two followers of Mohammed want to reestablish an Islamic Caliphate, like the 400-year Ottoman Empire. All three seek access to the warm waters of the Mediterranean Sea, and are antagonists of the modern nation of Israel, for historical and religious reasons.

With Putin's five-month-old, unprovoked invasion of sovereign Ukraine and his clear aspirations for rebuilding the Russian "homeland," it is not surprising that one of Russia's political parties is reportedly promoting an upgrade in titles for Mr. Putin. They suggest changing from "president" to an archaic, authoritarian term for ruler, that of "pravitel."

It is understandable that Bible students and teachers are seeing this recent conflagration of leaders as a prophetic "harbinger" of a significant end-times war, described to us in Ezekiel 38 and 39. Like robins and tulips are harbingers of spring, seeing these three specific nations joining as rogue allies is both alarming and affirming at the same time.

Learn "The Story"

The Hebrew prophet Ezekiel introduces us to the people and places in a unique story and uncertain gathering for war against God's people, Israel. In Ezekiel 38:1-6, God singles out a leader named "Gog, of the land of Magog." He is "the prince of Rosh, Meshek and Tubal." Other nations are also named: Persia, Ethiopia and Put. They join with Gomer and Beth Togarmah "of the north quarters" and the many peoples who seem to be allied with them.

We will get to speculations of who these nations are today, but first, note that all these people groups have a historic hatred of God's people, the Jews. The actual season of battle is reserved for when Israel is reestablished as a "land of unwalled villages" and dwells safely "without walls and having neither bars nor gates" (38:10-12). Israel today is a modern miracle of national restoration and the context and locale for our story.

In Ezekiel 38:16, God tells Gog, "...you shall come up against My people of Israel as a cloud to cover the land. It shall come about in the latter days that I will bring you against My land so that the nations may know Me when I shall be sanctified in you, O Gog, before their eyes." That righteous goal of the nations knowing "that I am the Lord" is repeated multiple times in the two prophetic chapters, 38 and 39.

In the end, God's sovereign fury, anger, jealousy and wrath shall be shown in judgment on Gog, with a great earthquake, "pestilence and blood," and "overflowing rain and hailstones, fire and brimstone." (See chapter 38:17-23.) The real-world reality of these extreme events is more plausible with each passing plague, climate calamity or destructive disaster.

The allied armies of Gog will fall upon the open fields and mountains of Israel and "ravenous birds of every sort," along with the beasts of the field, will be allowed to devour them. The dead bodies and bones of Gog and his allies will be searched out for seven months and collected in a mass grave in

a large valley to the east of the (Dead) sea to “cleanse the land.” Israel will also collect and burn the armaments and weapons of war for seven years! (See 39:9-11.)

In this way, God will magnify Himself in the eyes of all the peoples and sanctify (set apart) Himself in the eyes and hearts of His chosen people, the Jews of the kingdom age to follow. That’s “The Story.”

Know the People and Places Today

The details of this great battle of Gog of Magog are yet to unfold. The characters are yet to be discerned and described. It is not surprising how each historical period has personalities and events which may seem to reveal just a little bit more of this phenomenal, prophetic period, as well as open some of us to added speculation.

I would invite you to read my prior series of teachings on this theme, entitled “Are You Ready for War?,” Part 1, Part 2, and Part 3.

As to who Gog is and where Magog is as well as the other nations mentioned, some have tried to apply current leaders and regions to fit the question. Some have sought to identify “Rosh, Meshek and Tubal ” to regions of Russia since it was in the “far north” from Israel. Others have seen them to be geographical settings mentioned in modern Turkey. Its capital, Ankara, is in fact due “north” of Jerusalem, when viewed on a globe, rather than a flat map.

Reviewing the “Table of Nations” in Genesis 10 will reveal many of these names we see in Ezekiel 38 and 39. Persia wasn’t known as modern Iran until 1935. Ethiopia has always been connected with North Africa and near Egypt. Ancient Libya (and perhaps part of Egypt) was inhabited by the descendants of Noah’s grandson, named Put. Some say modern Germany was ancient Gomer and Turkey was ancient Beth Togarmah—each one northwest of Israel, possibly indicated as the “north

quarters" in 38:6.

The closer we get to these events, the clearer we will understand the seasons and be able to apply these Scriptures. (See Dan. 12:4, 9.) We must be careful not to set dates or make definitive proclamations regarding the end of days (Matt. 24:42-44). Instead, let us lead others to watch for scriptural fulfillment and be ready for spiritual opportunities to serve and honor our returning Lord.

Let us align ourselves with God's will and ways in these last days, as He aligns the peoples and nations to be judged on that Day! May we make ourselves pure and holy in His sight, as He is increasingly magnified among the people who will know that He is the awesome Creator God, maker of heaven and earth.

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