

## **ESCHATOLOGY (97)** **(Russia)**

3) Russia will attack when Israel is prosperous. 38:12

“Cattle” and “goods” were two key items of economic prosperity during Ezekiel’s day.

When Russia attacks Israel, she will be flourishing economically. Many Jews are going to move back to Israel and the commerce and prosperity of those living in that land will be noticed by godless nations of the world.

Since our belief is that these events occur about half-way through the Great Tribulation, we conclude that even though much of the world has suffered the seal judgments of God (Revelation 6:1-17—especially note verses 1-8), Israel has been somewhat protected and continues to blossom. When we consider that Russia has food shortages now and realize this will get much worse during the Tribulation, we may easily see how she could begin to think in terms of attacking and looting Israel, a place to the south that is thriving. What we may expect to see is that Israel will prosper and Russia will become less and less prosperous.

4) Russia will have communication with and the support of other nations. 38:13

Sheba and Dedan have generally been identified by students of prophecy as Arabs. For example, Dr. John Walvoord and Dr. Charles Ryrie both identify these as being Arabs (*Prophecy Knowledge Handbook*, pp. 193-194; *Ryrie Study Bible*, NASV, note 38:13, p. 1324).

This verse suggests that when Russia begins her move against Israel, some Arab countries will take a real interest in this move and want to know her plans. They will be particularly interested to know whether or not Russia is going to demolish Israel and take away her wealth. The implication is that they want that wealth too and more than likely will become Russia’s allies. Prophetically speaking then we may expect the Arabs to enter into some peace negotiations with Israel and to initially appear to be in peace with her until these events unfold and then Arab nations will turn against her. Brother (Ishmael) will be against brother (Isaac). As Russia moves from the north, many Arab nations will join with her.

One other point is worth noting from this verse. It is known that Sheba and Tarshish are two places that will honor God and Israel during the Millennium (Isaiah 60:6, 9-14). This would seem to suggest that there will be those Arab people who will not turn against Israel during the Tribulation. These will be allowed to enter the Kingdom at the judgment of the nations (Matthew 25:31-46). It is clearly known by dispensational students of Scripture that the central issue that determines who enters the Kingdom and who doesn’t is the treatment of the Jew during the Tribulation (Matthew 24:21; 25:40). We may assume that a few Arabs will learn of Russia’s evil plan to destroy Israel and will actually reach out to help and minister to the Jews. It will be this act that will enable those Arabs to enter the Kingdom. This is good news for those who live in Sheba (southwest Arabia) or Tarshish (possibly Lebanon or Spain). However, for Dedan (Persian Gulf region), the news is not good for she is destined for judgment and doom (Ezekiel 25:13; Jeremiah 25:23 (vv. 12-27)). These people hear the same news—Russia is attacking Israel—but respond differently to it. Some seek to honor God and some don’t and pay the price.

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**Ezekiel 38:14-16** - In these verses, we get further explanation of the events between Russia and Israel.

**Verse 14** tells us that in the day Russia attacks Israel she will know what she is doing. This powerful verse implies that Russia, who bills herself as an atheistic nation, will not only know Israel is at peace in the land, but she will also know that Israel is the nation of God. Russia will admit and know that there is a God and she will know that this God has a nation, Israel.

“Gog” represents a powerful atheistic Russian ruler (38:2), who will know there is a God and will purposely decide to attack God’s people. During the Tribulation period, God is going to do several things that will testify to the whole world that He is God and these Tribulation judgments are coming directly from Him (Revelation 6:12-17). During this time the leader of Russia will himself acknowledge this reality. When she decides to attack Israel, she will know she is attacking God and His people. Gog is a proud egotist who will be condemned.

**Verse 15** makes it clear that when Russia invades Israel, she will come with many allies and will cover the land like a cloud. There will be many nations who will come with this nation of the far north as Dr. Pentecost observes: “It was predicted that allied with Magog there would be ‘many peoples with you’ (Ezekiel 38:15). The first nation federated with Russia will be Persia (38:5). This has reference to the ancient domain of Persia, now known as Iran. The second ally is called Ethiopia. This name is used in Scripture to refer to the area in Africa and to refer to a land, a portion of Arabia. The third mentioned ally is Libya, or Put. The fourth ally mentioned is Gomer. There seems to be evidence to support the view that this refers to modern Germany. The fifth ally of Russia is said to be Togarmah. This is generally identified as Turkey or Armenia. How far this extends beyond Turkey or Armenia cannot be positively determined, but it could include Asiatic peoples federated with Russia. From the prophecy in Ezekiel it is learned that there will be a great confederacy, known as the northern confederacy under the leadership of one who arises in the land of Magog–Russia. Allied with Russia will be Iran (Persia), certain Arab states (Put or Ethiopia), Germany, and some Asiatic peoples known as Togarmah, which may include an extensive coalition of Asiatic powers . . . that will resist Israel and the Roman empire in the last days” (*Things To Come*, pp. 329-331).

**Verse 15** reveals that these nations will come “riding on horses.” Since the Tribulation features great economic distress and since God is pouring out His wrath on proud, arrogant man, it is very probable that these nations have been humbled and literally are traveling by horses. The fact that they come over Israel like a cloud indicates that from all human perspectives, there will be nothing to stop this massive army from overtaking Israel. **Nothing, except God !**

**Verse 16** is critical for it shows that God is the One who is orchestrating all of this. He is the One who has brought Russia and her allies into His land against His people. The reason He will do this is so that all the other nations recognize His holy character and power. God intends to show Himself and His power to the entire world. He will do this by bringing all these nations against His nation Israel and then destroying them.

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From an accountability standpoint for Russia, this move is evil and is designed to destroy Israel (38:10-11), but from God's sovereignty perspective, this prophetic move is designed to glorify Him. God "sanctifies" (sets apart) things for Himself. God has set apart the nation Israel (Ezekiel 20:41; 28:25). God intends to show the entire world that Israel is His nation. He will not do this because of Israel's faithfulness, but because of His holiness (Ezekiel 36:21-24). God's name is at stake and He will vindicate her.

From a national perspective, once God again takes up His program with Israel, He will show that Israel is His nation. He will do this because His name is at stake and He is a Holy God who cannot lie. The way He will show that Israel is His special nation is by bringing Russia and her allies down from the north in an attempt to destroy Israel. From a human perspective, Israel will be defenseless. There will be no logical or military reason why Russia with all her allies will not succeed. She will be big and powerful and impressive, but she will not succeed because of One Person-God! Dr. Charles Dyer entitled Ezekiel 38:1-16 as "The Invasion by Gog," and he entitles Ezekiel 38:17-39:29 as "The Judgment of God" (Dyer, pp. 1300-1301). This outlined analysis is very accurate, for clearly when we come to verse 17, God very carefully describes what He intends to do in judging Russia for her move against Israel.

**Ezekiel 38:17-39:10** - In these verses we get a precise statement as to what God will do to Russia.

Verse 17 has caused great controversy among Bible interpreters. The reason for the controversy is that until one comes to these verses in Ezekiel, there appears to be no previous mention of or prophecies against Gog and Russia and yet this verse seems to suggest that there were prophecies by other prophets of Israel.

The solution to this matter is that God has previously revealed in many prophetic writings what He will do to nations who attempt to destroy Israel. As Dr. Walvoord said, "The specifics of this prophecy had not been previously mentioned, but many chapters in the prophets dealt with the nations about Israel and God bringing judgment upon them" (John Walvoord, *Prophecy Knowledge Handbook*, p. 194).

What God is basically saying is that I have previously stated in My Word what I will do to nations who come against my nation Israel, and in the remaining verses He carefully describes what He will do to Russia.

**Ezekiel 38:18** - God will become very angry with Russia when she moves against the land of Israel. The word "fury" is a very strong Hebrew word which implies a hot anger that is poisonous, which leads to God's wrath. Russia's move against Israel will cause a heated, poisonous anger to arise to the face of God and when that happens, Russia is doomed.

**Ezekiel 38:19-20** - The results of His anger are now delineated and the first evidence that Russia is experiencing the wrath of God will be a terrible earthquake.

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Dr. Walvoord makes an important observation when he writes: “The remarkable aspect of this prophecy is that the Scriptures do not reveal any opposing army attacking the invaders. Rather, it will be a time when God, Himself, by supernatural actions destroys the army. The first step will be a great earthquake in the land of Israel” (*Ibid.*, p. 194). The earthquake will be felt all over the world. At this time the whole earth will shake and mountains will fall. Contextually we must assume that these are the same mountains referred to in verse 21, which would seem to suggest the northern mountainous areas to the north of the land of Israel. Another key point is that the land of Israel is called the “land of unwalled villages” (38:11). Since verse 20 refers to walls falling down at the collapse of the mountains, this must not be referring to all the mountains of Israel, but specifically to mountainous regions of the north, probably the Zagros Mountains and Mount Ararat.

**Ezekiel 38:21** - This verse contextually implies that in the aftermath of this earthquake there will apparently be so much confusion that these allied armies will actually start fighting against themselves. One of the things that the earthquake will do is confound the armies to the point that they think they are fighting with an enemy, when in fact they will be killing their brother. It is very clear that God is causing all of this to happen and it is also very clear that the mountains are His mountains.

**Ezekiel 38:22** - If the earthquakes and pandemonium of allies killing each other are not enough, God will send His own plague upon Russia and her allies, which begins with a plague with blood and continues to feature a torrential rain and hailstones and fire and brimstone.

There have been times in history when God, literally Himself, killed Israel’s enemies. For example, He did this to the Assyrians (Isaiah 37:26). God, in Israel’s history, also sent hailstones to destroy the Amorites (Joshua 10:11). God also sent fire and brimstone to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24). These kinds of judgments are nothing new to Israel’s history, when God is working with the nation. What is unique here is that God fires them all against Russia. The purpose of God doing this is clearly stated in the next verse:

**Ezekiel 38:23** - God will use these judgments to magnify Himself and many nations will realize that Israel is God’s nation and you do not tamper with her (Ezekiel 39:7). The destruction of Russia and her allies will become a great statement for God, His program and His people. Many nations will recognize God is once again working in behalf of Israel.

Russia is destined to become one of the great evangelistic statements to the world for her destruction will testify of God’s greatness and His care of Israel. It is no coincidence that many Russians are coming to faith in Jesus Christ right now. God is bringing His Russian sheep into the fold, prior to the Tribulation that will feature this judgment.

Chapter 39 repeats and reiterates the judgments against Russia and gives further detail:

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**Ezekiel 39:1-2** - God is against Russia. Verse 2 makes it clear that God is the One who has caused Russia to come against Israel. Notice the geographic origination is from the “remote parts of the north.”

**Ezekiel 39:3** - God, through His own direct judgments, will have weakened Russia so greatly that before she can use her weapons against Israel, they have been taken out of her hand. Dr. Walvoord makes an interesting observation regarding bows and arrows: “Though bows and arrows are usually characterized as primitive weapons, they actually have played a part in modern warfare and were used extensively, for instance, in Vietnam. Because an arrow going through the air did not give away the location of the one who shot the arrow, it therefore was good for use in jungle situations” (*Prophecy Knowledge Handbook*, p. 196).

**Ezekiel 39:4-5** - Apparently, by the time Russia and her allies reach the mountain areas of Israel, she will be so weakened by God that those who even made it to the land will die in the mountains and fields. Birds and wild animals will literally eat the bodies. This once powerful nation and army that mocked God will end up being food for birds and wild animals. The end of verse 5 states that this most assuredly will happen because God has spoken and decreed it.

**Ezekiel 39:6** - God will also do one other thing; He will go to Russia and inflict a judgment on those who live securely in the land. Dr. Walvoord says this is a “special judgment” of God upon “the land from which the Russian army troops came” (*Ibid.*, p. 196). Russia, at this time in the Great Tribulation, will be totally doomed.

**Ezekiel 39:7-8** - Verse 7 informs us that God’s devastating judgment against Russia is something that establishes several things: **1)** It establishes that God is Holy. Notice that three times in verse 7 this word “holy” is repeated. **The critical point of this is that God’s judgment declares His holiness.** This principle of establishing God’s holiness through judgment is something that is to actually be demonstrated in God’s local church. Notice Paul’s words to the Corinthians— I Corinthians 5:5-8, 13. Clearly judgments make a statement about God’s holiness. From an individual perspective, the same is true in our own lives (I Corinthians 11:31). We may assume, from this text in Ezekiel, that in order for our lives to make a statement for God’s holiness, we must ferociously judge ourselves and anything sinful and eliminate it. When God demolishes Russia, His holy name will be known and when we demolish evil in our own lives, His holy name will be seen and known. **2)** It establishes that God is with Israel, which is critical at this part of the Tribulation. When God pours out His wrath on Russia and her allies, nations of the world will instantly realize God is closely connected to Israel. The sad reality of the theological world is that few realize this point. The demonic “Replacement Theology” teaches that God is no longer interested in Israel, but has replaced her with the Church.

**Ezekiel 39:9-10** - One of the results of this devastating judgment is that there will be so many weapons collected and accumulated by those living in Israel that they will be able to use them for fuel for seven years. There will be so much wood taken from these weapons that for the space of seven years there will be no need to cut wood from the fields or forests in the land of Israel. This certainly implies the size of the army which God destroys is massive.

