

GOD'S PLAN FOR RUSSIA

Dr. George O. Wood

Tonight's message has been entitled "God's Plan for Russia." Last week in announcing this message I made reference to my brother's first pastorate in Missouri where he announced that his text for that evening would be "When God fights Russia." I looked forward as a kid to hearing what he was going to say about that great event. When I came home I was really disconcerted to hear at the dinner table his asking my mother "Now, where is that in the Bible?" He was going to look it up hurriedly that afternoon and prepare his message. It turns out that my mother pointed him to the book of Ezekiel, chapter 38. That's where I'm going to point to you this evening to look at this theme of When God Fights Russia.

My message this evening will be in several parts. The first thing I'd like to do is give you a current popular interpretation of Ezekiel 38. Also 39 but mainly we'll focus on Ezekiel 38. There is a part of me that is analytical. Then we're going to look at a biblical principle of interpreting scripture with scripture and how to understand not only Ezekiel 38 but what may be being said about it today.

There are actually about seven things that speak of Russia and Israel in Ezekiel 38 and 39 according to the popular scenario and we'll run through this.

First thing we see in Ezekiel 38 is what might be called Gog's army. Verses 1-9. "The word of the Lord came to me, 'Son of man, set your face against Gog, the land of Magog.'" Gog is seen as a northern leader country dwelling far to the north of Israel which if you'll get out a map you'll see that far to the north of Israel, past Syria and ultimately up in the north is Russia. An ancient name could be Gog or Magog. Gog being the prince, Magog being the land. The chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. We know that Magog was the second son of Japheth who was one of the three sons of Noah. So Magog himself was a grandson of Noah, settled in the area of Russia. Prince of Meshech. The word in the Hebrew for "prince" is *rosh*. Which sounds very much like "rus" or Russia. Some think there's a connection between the Hebrew word for prince – *rosh* of Meshech and the modern contemporary name for Russia.

Meshech is not like Magog the second son but Meshech is the sixth son of Japheth. They have the same father. Perhaps Meshech is simply an ancient name for Moscow. The two words sound very similar to one another. Maybe Meshech if it represents Moscow represents the European side of Russia.

Many people are not aware that Russia is the single largest country on earth land wise. Half of Russia takes up half of Europe. The other half takes up two-fifths of Asia. Moscow would be the European part of Russia according to this scenario. So Rosh of Meshech and Tubal "...prophesy against him. This is what the sovereign Lord says, 'I am against you O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army. Your horses, your horsemen fully armed and a great hoard with large and small shields all of hem brandishing their swords. Persia [which is contemporary Iran] Cush [which is biblical Ethiopia to the south of Egypt] and Put which is Biblical Libya to the west of Egypt. Including also parts of Algeria and Morocco. In other words North Africa. And Persia, Cush and Put will be with them all with their shields and helmets. Also Gomer.'" Gomer

GOD'S PLAN FOR RUSSIA

is another son of Japeth. This passage has three different sons of Japeth. Magog, Meshech and Gomer. Gomer being the firstborn, the oldest son of Japeth, the son Noah.

It's thought that the descendants of Gomer settled in the area from the north of the Black Sea and spread south and west from the Black Sea. It is felt by some anthropologists that these people became the Cimmerians that populated eastern Europe. Therefore these people represent the – eastern block in alignment with Russia, with Iran, with parts of north Africa like Libya, Algeria, and Morocco and biblical Ethiopia which is today is in the communist block. Actually biblical Ethiopia is now Sudan which is a nation which is going through a civil war. And then south of Sudan, Ethiopia.

Then Togarmah son of Gomer. It's commonly thought that Togarmah represents Armenia which also an indo European kind of people in the land area that is now contemporary Turkey. So those that look at this passage say, Here we have the alliance that is going to invade Israel from the north. Gog the leader of Magog or leader of Meshech and Tubal from the land of Magog with their allies in Iran, in Turkey, in eastern Europe, in Libya, in Ethiopia, in the Sudan. These areas are going to come together in a Pincher movement, coming from the north and obviously they have southern allies as well and they're going to move upon the land of Israel.

“Get ready (verse 7), be prepared. You and all the hordes gathered about you and take command of them. After many days you will be called to arms. In future years you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people have been gathered from many mountains to the mountains of Israel which have long been desolate.” Obviously Israel has long been desolate and now you've got the people re-gathered in the land. It's after the 67 war. After 73 war, etc.

“They have been brought out from the nations and now all of them live in safety. You and all your troops and the many nations with you will go up. Advancing like a storm. You will be like a cloud covering the land.” That's Gog's army. A formidable instrument of war.

This leads to the second part of this passage which is Gog's plan. Verses 10-13. He not only has an army but he has a plan. It's what the Lord had planned for him. “This is what the sovereign Lord says, ‘On that day thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil scheme. You will say, “I will invade a land of unwalled villages. I will attack peaceful and unsuspecting people all of them living without walls and without gates and bars.” Doesn't sound like they're security conscious, does it? “I will plunder and loot and turn my hand against the resettled ruins and the people gathered from the nations rich in livestock and goods, living at the center of the land. Sheba and Dedan [Sheban and Dedan are biblical areas described in Genesis 10:7. They are the great grandsons of Ham, one of the other sons of Noah. They settle evidently in the Arabic areas east of Israel in what is now Jordan or Saudi Arabia it is thought. But the passage doesn't say whether Sheba and Dedan are allies of this confederacy coming in or simply observers or maybe even friends of Israel. That's left uncertain. They along with the merchants of Tarshish...

Tarshish is a difficult place to identify as well. In biblical times it was thought to be the outmost western center of civilization. Many identify it with Spain. However some have identified it with England and say that it represents an alignment against the north confederacy led by Russia. Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish and all her villages. Although some ancient translations say “Tarshish and all her young lions.” This conveniently fits in to a prophetic

GOD'S PLAN FOR RUSSIA

scenario that says Tarshish is not Spain at all but it's England. And her young lions are none other than America, Canada and Australia which "whelped" from England a long time ago.

So here you have the classic outline of World War III. World War III triggered by an invasion on Israel from Russia and you've got a confederacy fighting against Russia and her allies. Namely England along with America, Canada and Australia. Grouping together to fight in this tremendous battle of World War III.

"These allies – Sheba, Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish and their villages will say to you, 'Have you come to plunder? Have you gathered your hordes to loot, carry off silver and gold, to take livestock and goods and to seize much plunder.'" It's obvious, the reason for the invasion is to take wealth. Israel has become very wealthy, living in security. Therefore the idea is let's come in and replenish our stock with their wealth.

A third part of the passage is Gog's advance verse 14-16 "Therefore son of man, prophecy and say to Gog 'This is what the sovereign Lord says. In that day when my people Israel are living in safety will you not take notice of it? You will come from your place in the far north, you and many nations with you, all of them riding on horses....'" The contemporary ones have an argument here in prophetic interpretation as to whether or not you can substitute the word "tanks" for "horses" in looking at this. Some will say, yes it is legitimate to do that because in the prophetic motif the means of war is not as important as the fact that the biblical writers were they then describing war as they then were able to visualize it or image it. Others would say, No if it says "horses" it means *horses*. Therefore the Cossacks in southern Russia have the largest cavalry of any particular army segment or regiment in the world and to stun humanity in this present time you are going to see a massive cavalry invasion of Israel coming down from the north, from Russia.

"You will advance against my people Israel like a cloud that covers the land in days to come. Oh Gog I will bring you against my land so that the nations may know me when I show myself wholly through you before their eyes."

Then you have Gog's defeat described. Verses 17-23, the fifth part of the outline of these two chapters. Basically without reading this passage in its entirety it is very clear that God rises to the defense of Israel. Israel really doesn't defend itself. Israel has no means of defense since it has been living in insecurity, in unwalled villages without locks and bars. We live in a society that depends a great deal upon security. Israel is seen as dwelling in security so who's going to defend them? God himself is going to defend his people against the invasion. And he is going to fight with earthquake, weapons that God can fight with. Earthquake, sword, plague, rain, hailstones, burning sulfur. Whether this is atomic warfare or not can be anybody's guess but God is perfectly capable of making nuclear fission and nuclear fusion and all kinds of funny things involving the word "nuclear." I suspect there's some things about nuclear that man has not yet found out.

But Gog is going to be defeated with its allies.

This leads us to a fifth part of the passage which is Gog's destruction and burial, verses 1-16, a rather long segment that the carnage against Gog and its armies in Israel is going to be so great that Israel will be able to use the weapons of war for 7 months as kindling wood to heat the

GOD'S PLAN FOR RUSSIA

nation. Not only that the loss of life of Gog and its allies will be so great that it will take seven months to bury the dead. So a tremendous massive carnage happens in the land.

One of the problems you get into when you're dealing literally with prophecy is this particular view that I'm talking about deals with. Sometimes the word "seven" in the scripture is used more to express a thematic idea than a chronological idea. That is "seven" is always the number of completion. So the devastation, its completeness, may be seen by some as so thorough that it doesn't matter the chronological time that is involved. It's that the number itself represents totality.

There are so many interpretive questions as you deal with this that each one can get a separate sub paper for any class.

Magog itself is burned with fire and is made a wasteland. Its armies are destroyed. Its armies lie on the mountains of Israel unburied for seven months. Take seven months to complete it. And Magog itself back in the homeland is destroyed and becomes a wasteland.

The sixth part of this passage is that Gog becomes banquet food in God's display of glory, 39:17-20. A very prophetic passages, themes of which are picked up in the New Testament and expanded upon that in prophetic metaphor or simile the idea is made that this defeat has become a banquet table for God to call various flesh eating animals, creatures, to come and dine upon the devastation that he has accomplished. It is a prophetic metaphor to show the severity of the defeat and the rejoicing of God and the allies of God over the victory which has occurred.

The seventh part of these chapters are then the restoration of Israel from chapter 21-29. Israel is going to be displaying God's glory among the nations. They're going to now settle in and live in their land, purged and cleansed. God is going to pour out his Spirit on the house of Israel declares the sovereign Lord.

Using contemporary ideas of this passage where many biblical prophetic people are placing these two chapters is anytime between now and the beginning of the tribulation. Or anytime between now and Armageddon. Some would hold that this World War III so to speak is going to kick off the tribulation period. And therefore it will start immediately after somebody makes a covenant with Israel which causes them to dwell in safety in the land.

Others would say no this is World War III and it can happen at any moment. But as soon as it's all done you get ready for sure. The tribulation countdown is going to begin and the tribulation period will culminate then in Armageddon where God will again bring all the armies of the world, not just the armies from the north and certain other sectors, but all the armies to fight in the battle of Megido. This 200 miles long stretch of valley that spans maybe 10-15 miles in width and there as Revelation says the blood will flow to the horse's bridle.

One has to apply to this scenario some deep and searching interpretive questions. One question I have is, is this World war III? My response has to be no. Frankly, no. Because of certain things within the passage itself.

For one thing Israel is seen as peaceful and unsuspecting. 38:11. There are many such references in these 2 chapters. Any one who has ever traveled in Israel today knows that it is the most suspicious, security country in the world. You will never enter any country in the world

GOD'S PLAN FOR RUSSIA

including the communist block where the security preparation for just a lone traveler coming in will be more intense. Israel is not today a country of unwalled villages, people dwelling without locks or bars. Per capita it is the most heavily militarily armed country in the world. Per capita it spends more on defense than any country in the world per capita it has the greatest amount of time that each man and woman citizen must spend in the armed forces. Per capita it has the highest rate of mobilization of any army in the world. The Israeli army can be fully mobilized in 72 hours. Everybody under 55 years of age can be called up and get to the battlefield. The army is fully mobilized within 72 hours. It is a security conscious nation. That kind of part of it there that it is dwelling in safety and secure doesn't match the contemporary moment.

Israel also is seen as wealthy, verses 12-13. It's wealth that motivates Russia to come in. If you're looking at the contemporary situation today it will not be wealth that would motivate a contemporary Russia to come into Israel if Russia were looking for wealth it would go for Saudi Arabia. It would go for Iran. It would go for Libya. It would not go for Israel.

What would it get if it went for Israel? It would get the nation that is the most heavily taxed per capita in the world. It would get the nation that has the greatest inflation rate in the world. Over 400% this year and that's a slowdown. It would get the nation that is spending more imports than it is getting in its exports. It has the largest per capita trade deficit. It is the country that is most dependent upon foreign aid from another country. It is a country which cannot even trust its own currency because the shekel is worthless and the American dollar is what really drives the country even the technical money is the shekel. It has enormous financial problems and it is not a wealthy country such as Iran or Libya or some of the other spots. But the scripture specifically says, It will be Israel's wealth that sucks in the invader.

Thirdly, the result of the battle will be that the nations will know that Jehovah is Lord. Jehovah himself is going to fight for Israel. If the tribulation is to occur immediately after World War III and this describes World War III what then happened in this fact is the nations will then know that God fought for Israel. If the nations are turning right around and embracing antichrist then it would negate this passage saying, When the battle is all said and done everybody's going to open their mouth and say, God did it for Israel!

In fact the tribulation is going to bring in a time and sponsor a time of tremendous anti-Semitism, the likes of which the world has never seen and the nations of the world are going to be convinced that God has abandoned his people altogether.

The fourth result is that Israel itself will know that the Lord is Lord. The Lord is Yahweh. That's going to be the fourth result. Verse 22, 29 of chapter 39. When it's all said and done Israel will see itself who God is.

But if the tribulation follows World War III there is still in the prophetic time table a considerable segment of time where Israel continues in its unbelief. And it is not brought to belief until the end of the tribulation period.

So there are a lot of other questions but I think these are four just off the top that have to be raised when people say this is World War III.

Is this the battle of Armageddon then? There are some differences between this battle in Ezekiel 38 and 39 and the battle in revelation 19 and 20, speaking of Armageddon in this battle we have

GOD'S PLAN FOR RUSSIA

Gog and specific allies named. With Armageddon all the nations of the world are involved Zachariah 14 and Revelation 16. Here only certain nations are named. In the battle here the leader is Gog. In Armageddon the leader is the antichrist. Some would say Gog and the antichrist are one and the same person, just different names. That could be. But just note that that difference exists.

Third, with God the end comes by the Lord's intervention. With Armageddon the end comes with the Lord's personal return. Maybe his return is the intervention.

Fourth, with God the battles take place on the mountains of Israel. Whereas with Armageddon the battle takes place in the valley of Megiddo – Armageddon.

You may argue that mountainsides are a part of a valley and there is really only one long valley that stretches north to south in Israel and that the valley Megiddo. Therefore if there is going to be a battle in the valley there's certainly going to be people on the hills. But that's there as a comparison.

There are some similarities between the two. Both end with the Lord victorious. Both end with a banquet motif. Ezekiel 39 and Revelation 17 and 18 both show the carrion and the flesh eaters coming and dining of the banquet of God's enemies. Both Armageddon and this battle and in the restoration of Israel. It may be what we have, my own personal guess although I can't say this with any certainty, is what we have in Ezekiel 38 and 39 is just simply another way of looking at Armageddon from a moment of time before the word "Armageddon" was introduced as a word in the biblical text.

There's such a thing called "prophetic overlay." I use this kind of a concept when I'm teaching gospels. I think you can illustrate it even when you're doing color reproductions. You've got to take the yellows out and it's a separate plate. Then you take the greens on it. Then you put a red on top of it. Then you put a blue on top of it. That's the four colors. When you get all the four colors together you get the full dimensional color. It may well be that this is the yellow plate and another scripture is the blue plate and another scripture is the red plate and another scripture is the green plate. You put all four of them together and you get the whole thing. But no one of the color frame so to speak tells everything about that event. It's that when all four are together it lends a full Technicolor to the event itself. That would be my own personal guess about what's happening here. Therefore I would locate these chapters more toward the very end. Rather than suggesting they're World War III passages which we may expect any moment to happen.

Lay that aside for a moment and look with me at something even more important and that is how do you biblically interpret scripture? That's what this issue is about. What you cannot do in interpreting scripture is just dive bomb into Ezekiel and snatch out and rip out two chapters and say here it is. Sin dealing with scripture a fundamental law of scripture is that scripture must be interpreted with scripture. In order to understand Ezekiel 38 and 39 you must also know what is in Ezekiel 1 through 37 and what is in Ezekiel 40 through 48. Ezekiel 38 and 39 are not an island. They belong to a whole.

Not only that you must look and see if the New Testament sheds any light on this passage. Because in biblical interpretation the New Testament always interprets the Old Testament. Not vice versa. So we need to just take a moment to do that and interpret Ezekiel 38 and 39 by means of looking at the prophet Ezekiel itself.

GOD'S PLAN FOR RUSSIA

Ezekiel lived at the time of the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon about the sixth century before Christ. He and Daniel were carried off into Babylon about eleven years before Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians. Jeremiah, their contemporary remained in Jerusalem.

The people that remained in Jerusalem were saying, God's going to come through yet. We know that we've lost some of our best people 900 miles away to Babylon. But we've got a king still on the throne. He may be a puppet king but he's working on a deal. He's got a foreign treaty going with Egypt. The Pharaoh is going to come through. We know he was once our enemy. But political alliances change. China used to be our enemy too. Now they're becoming our friend. Germany used to be our enemy. Now they've been long time friends. Pharaoh's going to come through. If we can just hold on long enough we'll see God vindicate his people.

Jeremiah is having to stay in the country and say to them, it ain't so. It's going to fall. God's going to bring it all down. Ezekiel especially is over there 900 miles or so away on the river canal bank and God has given him the same message. Ezekiel's message is to the exiles that are over there in Babylon. Ezekiel has been told to tell the exiles You ain't coming back! You're going to stay here.

It's not 444 days as hostages in teriran, or however many days it was. It's going to be like years and years and years and you're not coming back. And your kids may not get back. Real popular message. Ezekiel just won all kinds of community awards. So did, obviously, Jeremiah.

God had the prophets sometimes do strange things. He told Ezekiel of Israel in exile were briars and thorns and scorpions. These are things that prick or bite. That's no fun spending a lifetime, spending your efforts on that kind of a group. But that's what he was called to do. Before he said a word he was told to be quiet and he sat down for seven days absolutely overwhelmed. When he was sufficiently overwhelmed and caught the impact of what he was to say then he could begin.

His methods were most unorthodox. He was told in 3:24-27 to shut himself inside of his house – this is at the beginning of his prophetic ministry – tied up. Tie yourself to a chair, to a bed. Stay tied up and let the roof of your mouth stick until God would open it in rebuke. I now just stay there and be quiet until I give you something to say.

Then after that in chapter 4 he was told to take a clay tablet and draw a scale model of the city of Jerusalem on it and create a siege against it. through this kind of clay “fun” he was to tell the exiles this is what God's going to do to Jerusalem. He's going to reach down and break it all up.

Then he was told to lie on his left side for 390 days to represent each day a year of Israel's sin. 390 years of Israel's sin. Then he was to lie on his right side for 40 days to represent the 40 years of Judah's sin. During this time he was to bake his food or bread in front of the people using human excrement as a fuel supply, as a symbol that the people would eat defiled food while they were in captivity. This was even too much for Ezekiel. He asked God, I can't use human excrement for fuel. God relented on that and let him use animal excrement.

He had to take a sharp sword to his beard and hair and completely shave it off. His hair was weighed on scales. A third of it was burned. A third was struck with a sword. And one third of his hair was scattered to the wind. By these analogies he was indicating that so this was going to

GOD'S PLAN FOR RUSSIA

happen back in Judah – a third would be burned, a third would be struck with the sword, and a third would be scattered to the wind. There would be a few strands tucked in his robe but even some of them, which represented those who would be saved, even some of them had to be thrown into the fire to represent the complete purging of God's judgment.

In the spirit he was carried away in Ezekiel 8 to Jerusalem where he saw the priests, the leaders of Israel behind closed doors in the temple engaged in detestable practices. He saw the glory of the Lord leave the temple, Ezekiel 10. He knew that God could scatter, Ezekiel 11, but he would gather a remnant by and by with a new heart and a new spirit.

He was told as he was eating to use role modeling and he was told to tremble as he ate and shudder as he drank water to let the people know that they should have the same attitude towards those who were still living in Jerusalem. Because horrible things were coming upon them and the deal with Egypt was going to work out at all.

God even used Ezekiel's wife to speak to the house of Israel because his wife died and he was forbidden to mourn or weep for her. God had told him he could not weep. The reason why he couldn't weep was his own personal tragedy was to represent the tragedy in the country. That the tragedy was too deep and stunning for any expression of grief to prove adequate. Their mourning would be out of place in the presence of a disaster so complete as what God was going to do to Jerusalem. Ezekiel 24.

Since Ezekiel keeps rather accurate track of his prophecies we know that his wife died on the 9th year, the 10th month and the 10th day of his exile in Babylon. He is told after that moment not to open his mouth regarding Israel until the city of Jerusalem fell. Ezekiel 24.

So he goes on after Ezekiel 24 through chapter 25-32 and he prophesies against other nations. Finally in Ezekiel 33 a man escapes in Jerusalem and arrives with the news that Jerusalem had fallen. This is the 12th year of exile, the 10th month and the 5th day. Five days short of 3 years after his wife had died. Now he is free to open his mouth again toward Israel. He had prophesied all those 9 years the city will fall, he had kept quiet for 3 years after his wife's death. Now his tongue again can speak concerning Israel and Jerusalem. That his prophecy had become a fact he's now free to talk.

He begins in chapter 33 by prophesying ruin on the people left in the land. Really a wonderful message he had to bear to these people! He pronounces woes upon the false shepherds who have allowed the sheep to be scattered. Ezekiel 34, the false religious leaders. Doom in Ezekiel 35 is pronounced on the ancient enemy of Israel, Edom, for their treachery against God's people. Then chapter 36 look forward to the time when Israel would return to the land cleansed from sin. Ezekiel 37 he would put his Spirit within them and settle them back in the land and both the north and the south, the latter part of Ezekiel 37, the stick of Ephraim and the stick of Judah which is representative of the two parts of that ancient nation, their basic split in old historical times, he's going to bring them back together as one land.

It makes no sense in Ezekiel's theology for the people of God to return to their land in the same uncleansed state they had when they left it. The whole idea is that the dispersion out of Judah, out of Jerusalem was done as a penalty for their sins. God would only restore them to the land when they came back in full covenant relationship with God. When they came back and they had been purged and their relationship with the Lord had been repaired then they could dwell in

GOD'S PLAN FOR RUSSIA

the land in complete and total security and God would defend them in the future and in fact they would never have to worry about the sharpness of their political alliances which this deal with Pharaoh anyway he counts for nothing. What's Egypt?

The whole point of Ezekiel, the later chapters of 40-48, is to show us the existence of Israel back in the land in this ideal day when they're in covenant relationship with God. With the comparison that Ezekiel 38 and 39 has with the rest of the book is to simply give the children of Israel a comparison. They were dispersed because of sin. But if while they are in dispersion in exile they will humble themselves before God and get a cleansed heart, God will bring them back to the land. And he will bring them back in fellowship with them.

There is going to come a day when a greater power than the power of Babylon will come against Israel. What Ezekiel does is he locates the points on the map that are to the depth of geographical distance from Israel. He goes as far north as the north went in biblical days to Magog and Meshech. And says an enemy will come from the far north and an enemy will come from the far south, down in Ethiopia and the parts about it in Libya and Algeria and Morocco. And the enemy will come from the far west, all the way to Tarsus, to the end of the western world. And the enemy will come from the east as well, from Persia, from Iran. In that day God will bring against Israel all four of these because while you're dwelling in the land in covenant fellowship with God your wealth will be restored and your security will be complete. But in that day I'll bring these against you. And you won't have to fear like the Babylonians came against you. Then you had to fear because you were in sin. But no more ill you have to fear for I will be with you and I will protect you. And Babylon's army was a nothing compared to the army that will come then. But you'll be so secure you'll last, you'll survive. I'll be with you.

That's the contextual identity of Ezekiel 38 and 39. It really has to do with a covenant that God makes with his people when they have come back into the land cleansed and in fellowship with him.

Anyone that studies or knows Israel today knows that this condition currently does not prevail in Israel. Israel by and large religiously is atheistic, certain secular in orientation.

Where does this leave Russia then in modern times? My friends have accused me of taking all the fun out of prophecy on occasion by trying to do biblical analysis of interpreting a chapter by its immediate context and by the larger context of biblical teaching. I'll accept that charge. I would rather have the truth in prophecy and the fun out of prophecy than to have the fun in prophecy and the truth absent. That's my own personal preference.

But where does all this leave Russia today and is there a coming invasion of Israel? Who knows? I don't know that. Where does Russia fit in the plan of God? I think I know that. There are four things that can be deduced as legitimate biblical principles.

One, Russia like all other nations is part of the prophecy that Jesus makes against the nations, Matthew 24:7. When he says of all the nations there will be wars and rumors of wars. Nation shall rise against nation and kingdom shall rise against kingdom. Russia is that most recent expression of a kingdom or a nation that is arisen that causes war and is involved in war. A spirit that the world will never be cleansed of until Christ returns.

GOD'S PLAN FOR RUSSIA

Secondly I think it's fair to say that the Russian government has the Gog spirit. It may not be the actual Gog of Ezekiel 38 currently. The Kremlin may not be Ezekiel 38. But it has the same spirit. It is a spirit that has set itself against God's people. The current Russian government is anti Semitic as well as anti Christian. It wars on the old covenant people of God and the new covenant people of God. God will never let any nation indefinitely go on that has that kind of mentality and that kind of spirit. Ultimately that kind of nation will itself be brought to judgment. Because God will set himself against Gog and all who have the spirit of Gog.

In spite of Gog's best efforts by the way he has not been able to extinguish the church. And it never will be able to extinguish the church because God will always keep his people in covenant

Third, Russia, contemporary Russia may well be part of the end time drama that eventuates in Armageddon. Could very well be. But for anyone to say at this point certainly I would take a deep breath.

I could take you to the library and show you a book by a man I greatly admired, Oswald J. Smith, preached at the People's church in Toronto in the early 30s in which he gave a series of Sunday night messages on is Mussolini the antichrist? He had it all worked out. Did everything but say it. Two things that preachers are great about doing and that is tantalizing their audience about if this is so and if this is so and if this connection fits, and if this is true then don't you think that so and so is that who and so. That's very nice. You string four conditional clauses together with a conditional hypothesis and you come out with an affirmative fact. It's a marvelous way of logical entry into a subject. But he missed somewhere along the line. He was a good brother, a good Christian. I'm not criticizing at all his faith. But it's just that one has to be careful in looking at these things.

Fourth, I think it's possible that God may be close to being through with "the evil empire" of Russia. Isaiah 47:6-15 gives four things which characterize a nation upon which God brings his judgment. These are all qualities of ancient Babylon but they could be qualities transferred to any ungodly nation.

First is cruelty to God's people. Chapter 47:6 the nation consists that is cruel to God's people. God is going to write "finished" over it sooner or later.

Secondly, God was through with Babylon and he will be through with any nation that totally relies on self and its pride of position. It simply looks at itself and says we have no need for God. Babylon said, "I'll be a lady forever." I'll exist forever. No one will ever touch me. God is perfectly capable of writing on the inside of that kingdom, Your days are numbered and divided; your kingdom is done. It would not surprise me at all in practically one moment's time we would see the total dissolution of the Russian Soviet system. I think it could happen just that quick. If God wants to bring it about it would collapse. Who would have believe 2-3 years ago that the incredible changes that are happening in China today would be happening. It boggles the mind to think of what is happening in that country today.

Third, God will bring judgment upon any country that has a lack of accountability to himself. That says, I can do anything and I answer to no one for what I do. God will hold everyone and hold every nation accountable.

GOD'S PLAN FOR RUSSIA

Fourth, God will bring judgment upon a country that has a religious system that God will no longer tolerate. In Babylon the religious system degenerated to witchcraft and the occult. In Russia it has become an official policy of atheism which has been well developed over the years. there comes a point when God simply says, It's enough! I'm as sure as I'm standing here that God does have a plan for Russia. We may not know the where he's going to implement it, when he's going to implement it, how he's going to implement it. But believe me; he has a plan. Because he has a plan for all the nations. He's purposed to conclude all things in his Son, Christ Jesus who we know is most important than we'll ever do or know.

I hope this time has been informative for you.

Lord, we thank you for these moments we've shared together around your word. We're thankful for your word because as we turn to it we find not only ultimate answers for ourselves personally but we find the ultimate answer for the history of the world. Nothing every catches you by surprise. No nation has ever arisen by what in some way you don't make it fit your plan even against that nation's will. We pray today in cooperation with the scripture in obedience with the scripture for the peace of Jerusalem. We pray, Lord, that you will bring peace to that troubled region of the world and most of all that the Prince of peace will reveal himself to Jew and Arab alike. To Ethiopian, to Algerian, to Morocco. As well as to Russian and to German. To the whole world may Jesus Christ come as the Prince of peace. We ask your blessing upon our continued fellowship. In Christ's name. Amen.