

Prophecy in Perspective

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An Email Newsletter

Our Times - Prophecy in current events

Can a Leopard change its spots?

Many students of prophecy see the readying of an attack by Russia and her allies against Israel as a leading indicator of the approaching return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Scriptures indicate that this attack will be short and that the Lord will directly intervene and destroy Russia, Iran, and all of Russia's allies when they seek to carry out Israel's destruction and to take over their rich resources. Many of these prophecies are found in Ezekiel 38-39. Growing numbers of prophecy scholars believe that this battle, which is not the same as the latter Battle of Armageddon, could even happen before the rapture of the church.

At this time in Israel's history, Russian President Vladimir Putin is visiting with Israel's and Palestine's leaders. Secular analysts view this as a good will gesture. Those who understand Bible prophecy are inclined to believe Putin may be getting ready to make his move against Israel after he wins Israel's trust. If this is the case, it will be a practice-run for a latter move by the Antichrist who will utilize similar tactics to win Israel's trust in order to confirm a seven year covenant of peace with them (Daniel 9:27).

An article in the *Jerusalem Post* reports about this visit by Putin to Israel:



As Israel prepares for Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit here today, it is impossible to ignore the many points of dispute between the nations. Despite the strong relations between Jerusalem and Moscow, the Kremlin provides crucial support to countries extremely antagonistic toward Israel – particularly Syria and Iran.

Russia has reportedly supplied Syria with cruise missiles and other arms paid for in large part by Iran and sometimes transferred to Hezbollah; Russia's only military base outside

the former Soviet Union is located in Syria; and Russia has provided Iran with crucial nuclear know-how – most notably a \$1 billion reactor in Bushehr.

Russia has, in short, succeeded in developing significant economic and military ties with Israel's archenemies, and this goes a long way toward explaining Moscow's strident opposition to both the ouster of Syria's Bashar Assad and to more crippling sanctions aimed at stopping the Islamic Republic's nuclear program – two Israeli interests.

Notwithstanding these developments, there has been a dramatic improvement in Israeli-Russian relations over the past two-and-a-half decades. During the Cold War, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics not only supported the enemies of the Jewish state, it was openly inimical [*hostile*] to Israeli interests.

Israel has much to offer Russia, particularly in the field of military technology. Moscow has showed interest in Israel's pilotless planes and drones. And Russia is interested in developing a pilotless plane of its own in conjunction with Israel. Another possible "carrot" that Israel could offer Russia is cooperation in the distribution and sale of natural gas discovered off Israel's coastline. Such cooperation would significantly upgrade economic ties between the two nations.

But in the final analysis, Putin will develop policies in the region that he sees as serving Russian interests. [*This is the understatement of the year!!!*] Russia wants good relations with both Muslim states and Israel, but will pursue its own interests even if this means snubbing Israel by, for example, selling arms to Syria or pushing a diplomatic solution on Iran.

The Russians have acquiesced to Israeli requests – most notably when it stopped shipment of S-300 long-range missiles to Iran. But it is unlikely that Russia will budge on more principled positions.

Still, Israel must make it clear to Putin that all options are still on the table. If Putin does not want Israel to reach the point where it feels cornered, the newly reelected Russian president would do well to use his influence with the Islamic Republic to stop its nuclear quest before it is too late.

In a similar fashion, centuries ago, the King of Babylon sought to learn everything about the kingdom of Israel and sent envoys as friends to search out the realm:

At that time Berodach-Baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick. And Hezekiah was attentive to them, and showed them all the house of his treasures—the silver and gold, the spices and precious ointment, and all his armory—all that was found among his treasures. There was nothing in his house or in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them (Isaiah 20:12-13).

Then, the prophet Isaiah asked Hezekiah a brief series of convicting diagnostic questions which exposed the King's lack of wisdom in trusting, without verifying Israel's visitors from Babylon. The King's answers led to a prediction of future unhappy events for Israel because of Hezekiah's carelessness in using fleshly diplomatic methods in a vain effort to appease Israel's enemies:

Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah, and said to him, "What did these men say, and from where did they come to you?" So Hezekiah said, "They came from a far country, from Babylon." And he said, "What have they seen in your house?" So Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them."

Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD: 'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,' says the LORD. 'And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon'" (Isaiah 20:12-18).

There should be no doubt that Russia is using this opportunity to "size up" the "enemy of Russia's friends," which is Israel. It is concerning to me, as I have written previously, how Israel is too easily drawn into friendly relations with those who are so cozy with enemies who have sworn to destroy the Jewish nation at the earliest opportunity. Here is Ezekiel's prediction of the absolute unfolding of events when Russia and her allies, including Iran, make their move against Israel. This war may occur at any time!

Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, (These refer to the nations north of Israel) **the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal,** (Rosh=Russia, Meshech= Moscow, and Tubal= Tobolsk) **and prophesy against him, and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal...** (Ezekiel 38:3)

Prepare yourself and be ready, you and all your companies (Russia and her allies) **that are gathered about you; and be a guard for them. After many days you will be visited. In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely. You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you**(see Psalm 83).

Thus says the Lord God: "On that day it shall come to pass that thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will make an evil plan: You will say, 'I will go up against a land of unwalled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates'— to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places that are again inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land. Sheba, Dedan, (probably Arab nations allied with Israel) the merchants of Tarshish, and all their young lions (refers to the widely settled nations of the Japhethies consisting mainly of Europeans and Americans) will say to you, 'Have you come to take plunder? Have you gathered your army to take booty, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to take great plunder?''' (These nations will take a relatively passive position regarding Israel's endangerment, which is very indicative of America today under present leadership.)

Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog, 'Thus says the Lord God: "On that day when My people Israel dwell safely, will you not know it? Then you will come from your place out of the far north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great company and a mighty army. You will come up against My people Israel like a cloud, to cover the land. It will be in the latter days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me, when I am hallowed in you, O Gog, before their eyes." Thus says the Lord God: **"Are you he of whom I have spoken in former days by My servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied for years in those days that I would bring you against them? (Ezekiel 38:7-17)**



Iranian officer looks at Strait of Hormuz

It is reported that Iran, Russia, China, and Syria plan the largest war game ever in the near future!

Iranian media outlets reported on Tuesday that Iran, Russia, China and Syria are to conduct joint military exercises in Syria next month. The report appears to have originated on Arabic language Syrian media outlet ShamLife, which said the war-games were scheduled in less than a month's time. Other Iranian media outlets, including the Revolutionary Guards-linked Mashreq News and Mehr News, which is owned by the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization, also carried the same report on Tuesday, but did not cite any Iranian official sources confirming it.

Fars admitted that there has as yet been no official announcement confirming the war-games, but cited an unnamed Syrian official had declared that a joint exercise between those four countries would be carried out "soon." Preparations for those exercises would be carried out in the next few days, Fars quoted "informed sources" as saying, adding that the exercises would involve ground troops, air forces

and naval forces. Meanwhile, the ShamLife report said "sources" had confirmed previous leaks about the wargames, and that preparations for the military exercise were being carried out at an "accelerated pace." According to ShamLife, China had gained Egyptian approval to allow 12 Chinese ships carrying military equipment to pass through the Suez Canal, and that these vessels would reach the Syrian ports of Tartous and Latakia in two weeks' time.

ShamLife said Syrian air defense missiles and its coastal defense would be put to the test in the military exercises, and that 90,000 troops from the four countries would be involved in the war games along with 400 aircraft and 1,000 tanks and "hundreds of rockets." The exercises would be carried out after Syrian troops had "cleansed" several cities where "armed groups" - meaning Syrian opposition forces fighting against government troops loyal to President Bashar Assad - were gathering. Last week, the US accused Russia of sending attack helicopters to Syria to support Assad's regime, which Russia denied.

It certainly appears that Israel's enemies are gearing up for a showdown. The Lord's return truly seems to be nearing.

The Church Today - Doctrine and Prophecy

An Index of Leading Doctrinal Indicators

A great departure from truth is predicted for the church of the latter days. Peter prophesied these sobering words that we need to take seriously today as a warning to the church and to preachers of God's truth:

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber (2 Peter 2:1-3).

There are, I believe, six key leading doctrinal indicators that show the latter day church apostasy is well under way:

1. Departure from the Word of God as our absolute authority.
2. Desire to integrate the world's corporate methods into church leadership.
3. Direction within the churches to use worldly entertainment to attract people.
4. Deception of false teachers whom fewer and fewer of general church membership can recognize as promoting error in their teaching.
5. Deliberate attempts to change the Word of God to undercut the finality of God's revelation of Scripture and to soften the convicting impact of the Bible upon false religions.
6. Delusions among professing Christians to use their profession of faith in Christ to support and promote godless preachers, political movements and candidates who are pro-abortion, pro-same gender marriage, and pro-Marxist in their underlying philosophy. These will generally be the first to react when a Bible teacher takes a stand against godlessness in church and government leadership.

Please pray that growing numbers of preachers will take a stand against the rising tide of doctrinal deception that has infiltrated many churches in America today, as well as around the world. We need more men who

will fearlessly preach and live the truth of God's Word. We also need members of the Body of Christ who will stand for truth in church, government, family and especially in their personal lives.

Many today cannot endure sound doctrine. They are seeking teachers who will tickle their ears. This is why Paul told young preacher Timothy:

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears (2 Timothy 4:1-3).

I believe God is calling up prophets for today who will unflinchingly stand for the truth of God's Word that speaks to every area of the Christian's life, church, family, politics, leadership, etc. Will you be one of those few who will stand alone when everyone else is departing from the faith and the truth of God's Word? I pray you will be one. I know that is my desire... to be faithful to the One who has always been faithful to me: my soon coming King, the Lord Jesus Christ!

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(Note: If you would like to interact with Dr. Downing concerning this newsletter, views, etc. you can "blog" with him at prophecyinperspective.com. If you would like to subscribe to this newsletter at no charge, please send your email address to: sgdowning@bellsouth.net. Also, you can purchase his book, "Good News From a Far Country", a study in the book of Daniel [\$15] by contacting him. You can also purchase his latest book, "Becoming Mighty in Spirit...through Revelation's Prophecies [\$10] by contacting him.)