



RUSSIA PREPARES FOR HERSELF

Signing treaties and forming alliances

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This is the Bible in the News, brought to you once again with Paul Billington, speaking with you from Ontario in Canada.

We talk frequently on this programme about the prophecy of Ezekiel chapter 38, that is because it is a central hub as it were, of the many prophecies that revolve around the final crisis between the nations and the God of Israel. In Revelation chapter 16:14, at the end of the verse, this final crisis is called “the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” This is the battle described in Ezekiel 38. Here we read that a powerful leader, who is given the title of “Gog”, is to form an alliance of many nations and lead them in an invasion of the regathered nation of Israel in the latter days. This event—this prophecy—is reflected in many others, for as we read in Ezekiel 38:17, “Thus saith the Lord GOD; Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them?”



President Putin with the president of Uzbekistan sign treaty

So it is then that we find *this* prophecy of the final conflict paralleled in other parts of the Bible. Daniel chapter 2 (especially verses 44 and 45), Joel 3:1-2, Zechariah 14:1-3; Isaiah 14 and many other places.

In Ezekiel 38:2 we read of this leader as “Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.” As many will know, there are other—more accurate— translations of this. For example, the Revised Version which reads: “Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal.”

Now many have identified Russia here. Gesenius’ Hebrew Lexicon for example, says it is the name of a northern nation, mentioned with Tubal and Meshech; undoubtedly the *Russians*, who are mentioned by Byzantine writers of the tenth century...”

So then, when Russia appears in news headlines it is cause for us to take notice. That was the case this week when we read of a new treaty being signed by Russia and its southern neighbour UZBEKISTAN. The Associated Press reported: “Russia and Uzbekistan have signed a far-reaching treaty opening



Map showing Russia’s southern neighbours including Uzbekistan

the way for a Russian military deployment in the Central Asian nation that evicted U.S. forces and bristled at Western criticism of the brutal suppression of a May uprising. President Vladimir Putin and his Uzbek counterpart, Islam Karimov, signed the alliance treaty Monday... The Russia-Uzbek treaty says that one country would provide military assistance to another in the event of “aggression.” It also stipulates that either country could use military facilities on the other’s territory. “By signing this treaty...we showed once again with whom we will build our future.” Karimov said, “Russia is our most reliable partner and ally.””

Other analysts see far-reaching changes taking place in Russia. One report says: “Broad-ranging developments in the former Soviet Union indicate an evolution in thinking in the Kremlin. Russia is reaching out to regain its influence in the former Soviet world from the Central Asians, the Eastern Europeans, the West—and perhaps even China....

“• Russian President Vladimir Putin is in Uzbekistan to sign an “alliance” agreement which, according to some rumors, includes a military base for Russia in Uzbekistan.

“•Gazprom reached a five-year transit deal with Kazakhstan’s state natural gas transit company KazMunaiGas to transit 55 billion cubic meters of Turkmen and Uzbek natural gas a year, giving Gazprom monopoly control over all three states’ natural gas exports... All natural gas produced in the former Soviet Union comes from Gazprom, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan, with any natural gas-originating in a country ending in “stan” having to transit through Kazakhstan and Russia on its way to any market. The KazMunaiGas deal means that Gazprom—and by extension, the Kremlin—now owns *all* of that gas. Any state wanting to use Central Asian gas in order to get energy independence from Russia is now out of luck. This is particularly worrisome for states such as Ukraine and the Baltic States who now have no reasonable alternatives to Russian-owned natural gas. Russia has been bandying the threat of sharply higher energy prices around for years. Now it has finally taken the concrete step necessary to make that an arbitrary reality” (Nov. 14,05).

Now these moves that are being made by Russia in order to re-build its lost empire are very significant. First notice how Ezekiel 38:4 says that Gog will be “turned back” before the invasion takes place. Well Russia certainly was turned back when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. But following that set back, we read on to verse 7 and find that a *preparation* phase must follow when this Russian Gog assembles its alliance and acts as “guard” unto them. From the news reports that we have referred to it would seem that this phase is now beginning. Russia is preparing for herself. How long this will take we do not know—but she is on the move on several fronts—not least of which is the relationship that she is building with the European Union—and all this, mark you, is at the expense of United States influence.

Over 150 years ago, in his preface to the book *Elpis Israel*, John Thomas wrote the following words: “When Russia makes its grand move for the building-up of its Image-empire, then let the reader know that the end of all things, as at present constituted, is at hand. The long-expected, but stealthy advent of the King of Israel, will be on the eve of becoming a fact; and salvation will be to those who not only looked for it but have trimmed their lamps by believing the gospel of the kingdom unto the obedience of faith, and the perfection thereof in “fruits meet for repentance.”

So: Is the Bible in the News? It certainly is, and if Russia is preparing for herself—then we should be preparing for ourselves in a spiritual sense.

But the other event in the news this week concerns the other party mentioned in Ezekiel 38, and that is the nation of Israel itself. Israel’s political climate is heading for uncertainty after a previously unknown has become leader of the nation’s Labour Party. Amir Peretz won a Labour election last week and announced his intention to pull out of the governing coalition—and this almost certainly will bring down the Sharon Government, say news reports.



Amir Peretz, new leader of Israel’s Labour party

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There is talk of a General Election early in March.

There is so much going on in Israeli politics right now that it is difficult to know where things might lead—but again, the Bible must be our guide. The prophecy of Ezekiel 38 gives us a clear picture of conditions in Israel at the time just before Russia’s invasion. Verse 11 says that it will be a land of unwalled settlements which are at rest, dwelling safely without walls, bars or gates. Verses 12 and 13 indicate that Israel will have become prosperous. So however this may come to pass, this is what we look for.

We look for THE BIBLE in the News. So join us again next week when, God willing, we will have another look at it.
