

SELECTED EXPERT PERSPECTIVES ON EZEKIEL 38–39
RELATED TO CURRENT WORLD EVENTS
WITH RESULTING INFLUENCE ON MINISTRY PRACTICES

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Doctor of Ministry
Dallas Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Stanley A. Maughan

May 2012

Accepted by the Faculty of the Dallas Theological Seminary in
partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Doctor of Ministry

Examining Committee

(original signed by Stephen Bramer)

(original signed by Mark Hitchcock)

ABSTRACT

SELECTED EXPERT PERSPECTIVES ON EZEKIEL 38–39 RELATED TO CURRENT WORLD EVENTS WITH RESULTING INFLUENCE ON MINISTRY PRACTICES

Stanley A. Maughan

Readers: Stephen J. Bramer, Mark L. Hitchcock

The purpose of this research project was to ascertain current thinking related to the prophecy given in Ezekiel 38–39, commonly known as the war of Gog and Magog. Respected experts in the area of biblical eschatology were interviewed regarding their perspectives on this prophecy, with the interview questions focusing on three primary areas: 1) their understanding of current world events that may indicate the possible soon fulfillment of the prophecy, 2) their theological understanding of the passage and where this prophesied war fits in connection with other end times events, and 3) how their thoughts and position on this have influenced their ministry practices.

A large part of the research project focused on examining events going on in the world today that could be setting the stage for the fulfillment of this ancient prophecy. An extensive literature review, combined with the interviews, reveals many factors converging in the world today that alert us to the possibility that Ezekiel's war may be approaching soon. Most if not all of the requirements given in the text have already been met in the current world situation.

Another major focus of this study revolves around the question of timing, for which there are many positions. The various clues given in the biblical text are examined for help in answering this question. While every position has its problems, it is the conclusion of this researcher that the most likely time for the fulfillment of this prophecy is before the Tribulation begins, either before or after the rapture.

The last major focus of this study was on how one's views on this subject have impacted their ministry practices in three primary areas: 1) teaching, speaking and writing, 2) vision for new ministry, and 3) renewed urgency in presenting the gospel. The research showed that those who saw the possibility of a near fulfillment of this prophecy did indeed have their ministries impacted in those three areas.

CONTENTS

Chapter

1. Introduction.....	1
Rationale	1
Problem to Be Addressed.....	10
Research Question	10
Hypothesis.....	10
Research Method	10
What Results Were Anticipated.....	11
Preview of Remaining Chapters	11
Conclusion	12
2. Previous Research and Literature Review	14
Introduction.....	14
Hypothesis.....	16
The Identification of the Nations Involved.....	17
Gog.....	17
Magog	18
Rosh	19
Meshech	21
Tubal	22
Persia.....	23
Cush	23
Put	23
Gomer	24
Beth Togarmah.....	25
Many Nations.....	25
Notable Exceptions from Ezekiel’s List	26
Sheba.....	28
Dedan	28
Tarshish.....	28
The Young Lions	29
The Relationship of Current Events to Ezekiel’s Prophesied War	30
The Return of the Jews to the Land	30
The Restoration of Nationhood.....	32
The Restoration of the Land	33
National Security	34
Prosperity	40
Russia’s Animosity toward Israel	42
Modern Alliances.....	45
Islam: The Common Link.....	51
Islamic Eschatology	53

Iran’s Animosity toward Israel	55
Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions.....	58
Iraq’s and Egypt’s Current Position toward Israel.....	64
The Absence of Material Support for Israel from Other Nations	65
Israel in Unbelief.....	68
Various Views of the Timing of Ezekiel’s Prophesied War.....	70
Israel Will Be Living in Safety	80
This Will Occur in the Latter Years.....	85
In the Earthquake Every Wall Will Fall	89
How Might This Coordinate with the Bird’s Feast at the End of the Tribulation?	90
It Will Take Seven Months to Cleanse the Land	90
It Will Take Seven Years to Burn the Weapons	92
The Influence of Islam Will Be Diminished.....	96
How Might This Coordinate with the Persecution of the Jews During the Last Half of the Tribulation?.....	97
How Might This Coordinate with the Spiritual Restoration of the Jews?.....	99
How Might This Coordinate with the Final Return of the Jews to the Land?.....	100
How Might This Impact the Doctrine of Imminency?.....	100
Consideration of the Consequences of this War	105
Tentative Conclusions.....	111
The Impact on Ministry Practice.....	113
Conclusion	118
3. Procedure and Research Method	119
Introduction.....	119
Research Subjects	121
Table 1. Interviews Conducted	126
Table 2. Interviewee Publications Reviewed.....	127
Research Instrument.....	128
Research Procedures	132
Conclusion	136
4. Results.....	137
Hypothesis.....	137
Introduction.....	137
Section 1: The Research Subjects’ Understanding of Current World Events That May Indicate the Soon Approaching Fulfillment of This Prophecy	138
Could This War Be Approaching Soon?	138
Key Factors in the World Today.....	140
Modern and Prophetic Alliances.....	143
Russia’s Attitude toward Israel.....	144
Current Events in Iran.....	145

Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions.....	146
Islamic Thought	148
Islamic Eschatology	149
Section 2: The Research Subjects’ Understanding of How This War	
Fits In with Other End Times Events.....	151
The Prophetic Timeline.....	151
Specific Timing Factors	153
Israel’s Security	156
The Latter Years: A Tribulation Event?	158
The Doctrine of Imminence	161
Seven Months of Burial and Seven Years of Burning	164
The Antichrist’s Covenant	166
The Impact of the Earthquake.....	168
The Persecution of the Jews.....	169
The Diminished Influence of Islam	170
The Final Return of the Jews to the Land.....	172
The Third Temple	173
Section 3: How the Research Subjects’ Thinking on This Has	
Impacted Their Current Ministry, Specifically in the Areas of:	
A) Teaching, Speaking and Writing; B) Vision for New Ministry;	
and C) Renewed Urgency in Presenting the Gospel.....	174
The Impact on Speaking, Teaching and Writing	174
The Impact on Vision for New Ministry.....	179
The Impact on Evangelism	182
Evaluation of the Expected Results	185
Evaluation of the Accuracy of the Hypothesis	187
5. Conclusions and Implications for Further Study	189
Cautions to Keep in Mind While Evaluating This Prophecy.....	189
We Must Not Ignore This Prophecy.	189
We Must Look at Events through Scripture, Not the Other	
Way Around.....	191
Final Proof Must Await Fulfillment.	191
Every View Has Strengths and Weaknesses.....	192
We Must Hold Our Positions with Humility.	193
Theological Considerations of the Timing of Ezekiel’s War	193
What Are the Different Positions That Are Held?.....	193
What Are the Major Positions to Be Considered for	
Evaluation?	194
What Are the Various Factors to Consider?	195
Conclusions.....	201
Current Events That May Indicate the Possible Soon Fulfillment of	
This Prophecy	207
What Are the Relevant Factors?	207
Conclusions.....	209
Implications for Ministry Practice	210
How Is This Relevant for All Who Study This Prophecy?....	210

How Is This Relevant for This Student?.....	213
Implications for Further Study.....	216
APPENDICES	218
1. Interview Request Letter.....	218
2. Interview Questions	219
3. Interview Questions Numbering.....	223
4. Interview Transcriptions	
a. Introduction.....	227
b. Charles Dyer	229
c. Arnold Fruchtenbaum	242
d. Mark Hitchcock	253
e. Tommy Ice	269
f. Dwight Pentecost	287
g. Randall Price.....	297
h. Ron Rhodes.....	309
i. Joel Rosenberg.....	324
j. Jon Ruthven	335
k. Phil Steyne	351
5. Maps.....	361
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	372

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Rationale

Although it has been over 2500 years since Ezekiel prophesied the war of Gog and Magog,¹ we know with assurance that this war will one day take place. Ezekiel 39:8 assures us, “It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign Lord.” Ezekiel also tells us that it will happen “after many days,” and after Israel has been regathered to her land...which, of course, has now become a historical reality.² Ezekiel 38–39 gives one of the most detailed prophecies of a future end times event that we have in all of Scripture. Because of the level of detail given in God’s Word, and the prophetic significance of this as yet unfulfilled prophecy, it is safe to assume that this is something about which the Lord wants us to know. If it was irrelevant for believers to understand, there would have been no purpose for God to reveal it, or cause it to be included in his Word.

¹ The book of Ezekiel is filled with chronological references, starting with “the fifth year of the exile” (Ezek 1:2), and ending with “the twenty-fifth year of our exile,” (Ezek 40:1), which would correspond to dates ranging from 593 B.C. to 571 B.C. The exilic date of Ezekiel has been defended by Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), pp. 368-76; and John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1969), pp. 13-20.

² The return of the Jews to the land immediately following the exile could not be the restoration Ezekiel had in mind, as he was clearly addressing a return that would take place in the distant future. Also, Ezekiel describes this return as coming from many nations among which the Jews were scattered; but the return after the exile was primarily from Babylon. The return that began around the start of the 20th century continues to this day, and for the first time in around 2000 years there are now more Jews living in the land of Israel than remain scattered around the world.

Yet, in spite of its importance, and the measure of detail given to it, this prophecy remains largely unknown and little understood to most Christians today.³ This is amazing, especially considering the resurgence of interest in biblical prophecy in recent decades. Many believers in the average American evangelical church today have some knowledge about end times details including the rapture, the Antichrist, the Great Tribulation, Armageddon, and the return of Christ. However, if you were to ask them about the War of Gog and Magog, most would have no clue what it is about, assuming they have even heard about it at all. For most believers, it falls into that dark bucket of mystery regarding the end times. Many in ignorance might wrongly assume it is simply part of the end times conflict surrounding the campaign of Armageddon. To be fair, the reason for much of the ignorance about this prophecy is because few American pastors know about it themselves, and thus cannot or do not teach about it in their local churches. If there is ignorance or silence about this in the pulpit, certainly there will be ignorance in the pew.

In some ways then, this prophecy could almost be regarded as a “lost prophecy” within much of the evangelical church. For some reason, while other major end times prophecies are widely known and understood, there remains a general unfamiliarity with this prophecy—and it could be the closest of all. Part of that ignorance may be because of the lack of consensus as to the timing of fulfillment, making it harder to place on a timeline. Also, since it describes an end times conflict involving Israel, many may have simply considered it as part of the Armageddon campaign. Many other end times prophecies are familiar to believers because they are taught in the New Testament, but this one is not. Sadly, few believers spend time reading in the Old

³ Over the course of several years in preparing for and carrying out this study, this student had opportunity to describe the scope of study to many believers. While a few were familiar with the prophecy, a great many were not. This was true among clergy as well as with laymen.

Testament, and fewer still in what many consider to be the confusing and uninteresting prophetic books. That produces a blind spot in the thinking and understanding of many believers. Part of the purpose of this study is to draw attention to this widely overlooked but immensely important end times prophecy. Thanks to the good study and ministry of many prophecy experts, there is starting to be increasing attention given to Ezekiel's Gog and Magog prophecy.⁴ This is so important, especially as we may be drawing close to its fulfillment.

Any study of end times prophecy has got to begin with and be firmly grounded in the Word of God.⁵ We must resist any temptation to start with what is happening in the world, and then working backwards to read it into the Bible. However, it is equally foolish to study the Word of God, but then refuse to consider any possible correlation with world events. This is especially true for those believers who find themselves living near the end of the age. Indeed, it could be argued that such prophecies were recorded especially for those living at or near the time of their fulfillment. True, we must be careful not to jump to dogmatic conclusions prematurely, as some have done, resulting in embarrassment to the body of Christ. This also produces a response where some may reject any correlation of prophecy with modern events, effectively blinding people to the relevance of biblical prophecy in the modern world.

But, if any major end times prophecy is indeed approaching fulfillment, then that is when of all times believers should be paying attention. They need to understand the Word of God, and they need to understand the times in which they live. One calls to mind the sons of Issachar, "men who understood the times, with knowledge of what

⁴ Some popular authors who have devoted attention to this subject and helped raise awareness about it include Mark Hitchcock, Tim LaHaye, Joel Rosenberg, and Ron Rhodes.

⁵ This study is presupposing the divine inspiration and inerrancy of the original autographs of the biblical text, and adopts a normal literal/historical/grammatical method of interpretation.

Israel should do” (1 Chr 12:32).⁶ Thus it is this student’s conviction that, as Billy Graham used to say, we need to pay attention with the Bible in one hand, and a newspaper in the other.⁷ God never intended his Word to be read in a vacuum, divorced from the world in which we live. The Word of God *is* relevant, and it is our job as servants of God to help people see how it is so. If we fail to make those connections, then we are doing the people given to our charge a disservice.

With regard to this particular prophecy in Ezekiel 38–39, some Bible scholars believe that there are in fact many details in current world events which point to the possibility that it may soon be fulfilled. Some of those details will be referenced in this study. Indeed, on almost a daily basis one can pick up a newspaper and read about events going on in the world that may be part of the gathering storm of Ezekiel’s war. It only stands to reason that at some point in history, things will begin to fall into place for the fulfillment of this prophecy. If that time is now, it is very important for us to be paying attention. Even if it is yet some distance away, there is still no reason to maintain our ignorance and refuse to pay attention. Jesus himself said that as believers, we are not walking in darkness, that such things should overtake us as a thief. Referring to the day of the Lord, Jesus clearly expected his followers to be alert and aware of what is going on in the world around them (1 Thess 5:4). Part of the purpose of this study is to make some correlation between Ezekiel’s prophecy and current events which could possibly presage its approaching fulfillment.

The timing of the war of Gog and Magog is debated, as this study will reveal. Many good Bible scholars have studied this and come to different conclusions as to when

⁶ All biblical quotations will be taken from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

⁷“The Fight over Billy Graham’s Legacy.” *Newsweek*, May 15, 2011, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2011/05/15/the-fight-over-billy-graham-s-legac.html> (accessed February 27, 2012).

this war will take place. It is this student's opinion that we must be careful about being overly dogmatic in this area, because there are good arguments for and against each position. While in the past the most common placement of the war has been during the Tribulation period, there are a growing number of scholars who now place the war before the Tribulation. Some insist it must be after the rapture, while others argue that it could possibly (but not necessarily) precede the rapture. If that is the case, the church could still be around to witness it. A consideration of these various arguments will be part of the scope of this study.

The Lord explicitly told us to be looking for and expecting his return⁸ at any time. However, that does not mean that no end times events can occur before the Tribulation or even before the rapture of the church. But if the Lord had foretold some event that had to occur before the rapture of the church, it would have contradicted the doctrine of imminency. Take for example the restoration of the nation of Israel: if we had been told that had to occur before the rapture, then for the better part of 2000 years the church could not have expected the imminent return of our Lord. Yet since 1948 it has become clear to most that the restoration of the nation of Israel has in fact occurred prior to the rapture. Likewise, if we had been told that the war of Gog and Magog had to occur before the rapture, then throughout most of history we could not have expected the imminent return of the Lord. But like the restoration of Israel, that prophecy could also end up being fulfilled prior to the rapture of the church. As with the restoration of Israel, the Lord may have chosen not to reveal the precise timing of that event, so that the church could live with the constant expectancy of his imminent return. This all serves as a warning to Bible scholars to be careful about being overly dogmatic about the timing of

⁸ The rapture is a signless event, whereas the second coming of Christ to earth at the end of the tribulation will be preceded by many signs. Therefore, when we are told to expect his return at any time, it must be referring to the rapture.

this war. We can look at the evidence and come up with our best guess, but only the Lord knows how that will play out in actual history.

A study of this subject has relevance in this student's own ministry, as the pastor of a local church. Desiring to be a faithful scholar and expositor of God's Word, this study has already helped immensely in his own ministry of teaching and preaching. In fact, while preaching a sermon series that included an in-depth examination of this prophecy, this study garnered a greater response and higher degree of interest than any other sermon series in his 25 year preaching ministry. There was also a high degree of interest from non-Christians, proving the value of Bible prophecy in the ministry of evangelism. At some point in the future this student hopes to put some of this material in book form, to help the wider body of Christ gain a greater understanding of this major end times prophecy. There is also the possibility of teaching on this subject at the local Bible college, or of presenting it as a series of messages in other settings.

In a similar manner, other pastors, teachers, or Bible scholars may be helped by this study. Much more teaching on this subject is needed in the local church and other settings, and this study may help equip pastors and teachers to do so with a higher degree of confidence. Part of the research question focuses on how an understanding of this prophecy can impact our actual ministry. One assumption of the author of this study is that when someone in Christian ministry gains an understanding of this prophecy, and how it relates to current events, that it will generate a positive impact in their own ministry. It can produce a clearer understanding of the whole prophetic picture, and more confidence in teaching and preaching on Bible prophecy, and this prophecy in particular. It can also produce a greater degree of urgency and zeal in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. For some, it may prompt them into specific action to help prepare believers for this coming war, or even to make preparations to help those whom this war will directly impact in Israel and the Middle East. Far from being a dusty academic exercise, a study

of this subject can produce great fruit in our ministry for the Lord. Thus this student believes this study could prove helpful for pastors and teachers in the local church, teachers and professors at Bible colleges and seminaries, as well as others with any kind of speaking, teaching, or writing ministry within the wider body of Christ. It is hoped that this could prove especially helpful for those who speak or teach on areas of Bible prophecy.

One passage of Scripture seems especially significant in light of this prophecy, and that is Ezekiel's exhortation to the watchmen given in Ezekiel 33:1-9:

The word of the Lord came to me: "Son of man, speak to your countrymen and say to them: 'When I bring the sword against a land, and the people of the land choose one of their men and make him their watchman, and he sees the sword coming against the land and blows the trumpet to warn the people, then if anyone hears the trumpet but does not take warning and the sword comes and takes his life, his blood will be on his own head. Since he heard the sound of the trumpet but did not take warning, his blood will be on his own head. If he had taken warning, he would have saved himself. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes the life of one of them, that man will be taken away because of his sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for his blood.' "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself.

This is a serious exhortation to any whom the Lord may place in the position of the watchman. Who are God's watchmen today? Clearly, they are any spiritual leaders who have a leading, teaching or shepherding responsibility over others in the body of Christ. For example, in Acts 20:28, the elders of the church were to "keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God." Likewise, in Hebrews 13:17, the leaders are described as "those who keep watch over you as men who must give an account." It is our job to study the Bible, learn spiritual truth, discern the times, and speak about it to those under

our care. Ezekiel's warning to the watchmen conveys a sense of urgency about their role, and the dire consequences if they fail at their God-given task. While this is certainly applicable in all areas of biblical prophecy, it may be especially true of this one, which may well be drawing close to fulfillment. And if one considers even the possibility that this event could find fulfillment prior to the rapture of the church, then the role of the watchman as regards to this prophecy could stand second only to teaching about the rapture of the church. Many teachers, pastors, and speakers have done well in teaching the church about the Antichrist, the Great Tribulation, the campaign of Armageddon, the second coming of Christ, the coming millennium, and more, but all of those follow the rapture of the church, when we will either not be here to worry about it, or for which we will have been directly prepared by the Lord himself. In teaching on those subjects, our role as a watchman applies only to those who are not yet followers of Christ. But if perchance the Lord brings about the fulfillment of the Ezekiel 38–39 prophecy before the rapture, then the church of Jesus Christ would be here to witness it. As such, one could make the case that teaching about this particular prophecy could be even more important for believers than teaching about anything that happens during the Tribulation period.

We need to be prepared. Whenever this prophecy finds fulfillment, it could usher in the greatest soul harvest the world has ever seen. It will be dramatic proof to the watching world that the Lord is God, that he holds incredible power to save and destroy, and that he certainly does intervene in the lives of men. It will show God's power to bring judgment and destruction on those who disobey him, and to protect and deliver those he loves. The passage itself tells us that all Israel will know, and the whole world will know, that the Lord is God (Ezek 38:23; 39:6-7,22,27-28). Obviously, that does not mean that the whole world, or even all Israel, will at that point become true believers in Jesus Christ—but many will. We need to be prepared to take part in the great soul harvest that will occur at that time, if we happen to still be here. The better we understand this

prophecy ahead of time, the better we will be able to answer people's questions and direct them to Jesus when the Lord himself paves the way. Whenever this prophecy comes to fulfillment, it will be a very sobering time of judgment upon all who reject the Lord, but also a very exciting time of deliverance for the people of Israel, and all who put faith in God in the aftermath. Currently, most of the church has very little understanding of this coming war, one of the greatest of all end times events headed our way. Sadly, the vast majority of the church is also woefully unprepared to lead people to Christ when given the opportunity. On both counts, we need to be prepared.

Jesus himself exhorted believers to be discerning of the times in which they live (Matt 16:3). If ever there was a time when we need to be alert to these things, it is now; and the people who most need to be aware are believers in Jesus Christ. Therefore, this student has interviewed selected authorities in the field of biblical prophecy concerning their understanding of this prophecy, and current world events that may indicate its approaching fulfillment, as well as the influence of those views on their ministry practices. The authorities this student sought to interview are prominent and respected authors, professors, and pastors who have addressed this subject in their public ministry.⁹ The interview questions focused on: 1) their understanding of current world events that may indicate the possible soon approaching fulfillment of this prophecy; 2) their understanding of how this war fits in with other end times events; and 3) how their thinking on this has impacted their current ministry, specifically in the areas of: a) teaching, speaking and writing; b) vision for new ministry; and c) renewed urgency in presenting the gospel.

⁹ As it turns out, almost all the men discovered who fit these criteria are also conservative evangelicals. This student was not able to discover any liberal or non-evangelical experts who have addressed this subject in their public ministry. Interest in biblical eschatology and this subject in particular seems much more prominent among conservative evangelicals.

Problem to Be Addressed

The issue of this research is to determine how the ministry practices of selected authorities in the field of biblical prophecy are impacted by their understanding of the possible soon fulfillment of Ezekiel's war of Gog and Magog. The ministry practices specifically addressed are in the areas of teaching, speaking and writing, vision for new ministry, and renewed urgency in presenting the gospel. In order to ascertain the impact upon their ministry practices, it is necessary to first determine their understanding of Ezekiel's prophecy.

Research Question

How are the ministry practices of the selected authorities in the areas of teaching, speaking and writing, vision for new ministry, and renewed urgency in presenting the gospel impacted by their understanding of the possible soon fulfillment of Ezekiel's war of Gog and Magog?

Hypothesis

There is an association between the selected authorities' understanding of the possible soon fulfillment of Ezekiel's war of Gog and Magog and their ministry practices in the areas of teaching, speaking and writing, vision for new ministry, and renewed urgency in presenting the gospel.

Research Method

The methodology for this study used in-depth interviews with selected authorities in the field of biblical prophecy. This student sought out well known experts and authors in the field of biblical prophecy, and interviewed them by telephone in most cases, or in person or via Skype in some others. He prepared and used a standard list of interview questions. Where appropriate, he has employed follow-up questions that have differed from interview to interview.

What Results Were Anticipated

This student expected to find a strong consensus that current world events do point to the approaching fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophesied war. Regarding the timing of that war, he expected to find a variety of opinions as to whether that war will precede the Great Tribulation or be fulfilled during or after it. He also expected to find that those who see a possible soon fulfillment of these things will have their ministry practices impacted in the areas of teaching, speaking and writing, vision for new ministry, and renewed urgency in presenting the gospel. He did not anticipate finding many, if any, who see no correlation between current world events and Ezekiel's prophecy. However, if there were any, he would have expected to find negligible impact in their ministry practices as listed above.

Preview of Remaining Chapters

Chapter 2 will begin examining the hypothesis of this research project, which requires probing the understanding of the research subjects related to the possible soon fulfillment of Ezekiel's war of Gog and Magog. The pertinent literature that has already addressed this subject will be summarized, including wherever possible writings by the research subjects, with interaction by this student, presenting some preliminary conclusions based on the literature.

Chapter 3 will cover the procedures and research methods used in answering the research question. The general nature of the interview questions addressed with each expert in the area of biblical prophecy will be introduced. (The actual interview questions will be in the appendices.) The background and ministry of those selected experts will be briefly reviewed as it pertains to biblical prophecy, in order to give some foundation for why they should be considered experts.

Chapter 4 will explain the results of the study as it relates to the hypothesis. The perspectives of those interviewed will be summarized as it relates to each interview

question, producing an overview of the thinking about this prophecy among the selected experts. How the interviewees responded to each question about the impact upon their ministry will also be summarized, and how that either supports or disagrees with the hypothesis. The student will determine whether the hypothesis was accurate or inaccurate as it relates to the research question.

Chapter 5 will evaluate and discuss the implications of this study as it relates to current events and the future fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophesied war of Gog and Magog. This student will review some cautions to keep in mind while evaluating this prophecy. The theological considerations of the timing of Ezekiel's war will be reviewed, looking at the different positions that are held, and the factors to consider. The student will evaluate and interact with the varying views held regarding the timing of this war, and give his own conclusions. The student will evaluate whether current events indicate the possible soon fulfillment of this prophecy, while keeping in mind that the final proof of that must wait until the actual fulfillment. The student will also interact with the implications of all this upon current ministry practices, and what impact it does or should make as he and others seek to serve the Lord effectively in this present age of world history. Finally, some implications for further study will also be listed.

Conclusion

Because this is a Doctor of Ministry dissertation, the theological considerations raised cannot be separated from their impact on ministry. Part of the ultimate goal behind this project is to equip and spur on both this student and others to more effective ministry. Because the Doctor of Ministry program integrates theological and ministry studies with actual ministry itself, the tenor of this dissertation will be somewhat different from how the same subject would have been addressed as a Ph.D. dissertation. That, combined with the fact that this student is a preacher and a pastor both at heart and by vocation, produces a work that is inclined to have more exhortations and

consideration of ministry applications. This student makes no apology for that, believing that theological knowledge alone is of little value if separated from ministry and real life. While it is hoped that this project will be of value to all scholars interested in this subject, the real goal behind it all is that it will impact the way we live and serve the Lord.

A study of this particular prophecy in light of current events is relevant and appropriate, because Jesus Christ himself encouraged his followers to be wise discerners of the times in which they lived. In particular, this study is applicable for a Doctor of Ministry project, because in Scripture, a knowledge of the prophetic future always had implications upon present ministry. The focus of this project is not on theological study alone; it is also directly related to the practice of ministry. If indeed we are approaching the end of the age, and the fulfillment of these end time prophecies, it should make a profound impact upon the way we serve the Lord. Thus for this student, the theological considerations cannot be divorced from the practical applications, and those will be addressed in this study. It is the goal of this student to be a capable watchman, spokesman, pastor and teacher regarding these things about which God has told us long beforehand. It is my hope that this study will effectively prepare me and others to serve the Lord more fully in these times where God has privileged us to live.

CHAPTER 2

PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Over 2500 years ago the prophet Ezekiel laid out a series of prophecies that would be fulfilled in the last days. In Ezekiel 36–37, he talked about a physical and spiritual restoration of the nation of Israel, where God would call them back from the distant corners of the globe and reestablish them as a nation in the land of Israel. He describes how the barren and desolate mountains of Israel will be transformed into an abundant and fruitful land, and how the ancient cities, once in ruins, will be rebuilt and reinhabited. With the reestablishment of the state of Israel in 1948, this portion of the prophecy began to be fulfilled. Jews from around the world continue to return to land, the nation has prospered greatly. The once-forsaken land has truly been restored to a land of milk and honey. However, while the nation has been restored physically, their spiritual restoration is yet future, as the vast majority of Jews are still in unbelief. This two stage restoration is precisely the picture given in Ezekiel 36–37.

Ezekiel prophesies in Ezekiel 38–39 that after the nation has been restored to her land, and is living in safety,¹ an overwhelming invasion from a host of nations will attack. These armies are led by a man identified as Gog, of the land of Magog, and accompanied by armies from Persia, Cush, Put, and other nations. In modern terms, these nations include Russia, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Turkey, and other predominantly Muslim

¹ The meaning of this term is widely debated, and will be addressed at length later in this study.

nations.² With Israel facing almost certain destruction, their only support from the rest of the world is a lame diplomatic response. No other nation comes to their aid. But God himself intervenes with a miraculous deliverance, destroying all the invading armies, such that the whole world will know that the Lord is God. In the aftermath of the war, Israel spends seven months burying the dead bodies, and seven years burning the fallen implements of war. God will use this invasion and the miraculous deliverance to begin turning the hearts of the Jews back to him.

God's ultimate goal is to restore the hearts of the Jewish people completely back to himself (Rom 10:1), but this will not be fully accomplished until the end of the Tribulation and the return of Christ (Rom 11:26). Yet it is part of the prophetic picture described even in Ezekiel 36–37. A study of the whole context makes it clear that the restoration comes in two stages: first the physical restoration, then the spiritual restoration. This is clear in the Ezekiel 36–37 passage. We are living at a stage in history between the two parts of that restoration. The state of Israel has been reestablished,³ the land is being restored, and the Jews are returning to their ancient homeland, yet for the

² The identification of the modern nations correlating to the biblical designations will be addressed later in this study.

³ Some would argue that the current state of Israel is not necessarily the reestablishment of the nation described in Scripture, because not every detail is yet in place. Also, it is possible that the current state of Israel could be completely destroyed, and there could be a yet more distant restoration of the nation that fulfills the prophecies of Scripture. While this student would agree with that possibility, and that we cannot really know for sure if what we are seeing in the world today is the actual fulfillment of prophecy until the final details fall into place, it seems unlikely that what we are seeing in the world presently has no connection with end times prophecies given in Scripture. In fact, this student would argue that exercising caution too far could almost approach a position of unbelief. Given that so very many details of Ezekiel 36–37 have already been fulfilled (at least apparently), as never before in history, and that there is a convergence of so many “signs of the times” that indicate we may be rapidly approaching the end of the age, it prompts the question, how much more do we need to see to believe that prophecy may be being fulfilled right in front of our eyes? Yes, the final proof must still await future events, but Jesus exhorted us to wisely discern the times. This student does believe it is prudent to employ the frequent use of words such as “might,” “may,” “could,” “possible,” “if,” and so forth, and those words will appear frequently in this paper. But such caution, if taken too far, can also result in a refusal to consider the work of God taking place around us in the times in which we live. The wisest approach is to recognize the cautions, but also be open to the possibility that we are living in an age where end times prophecies may begin to be fulfilled.

most part, the spiritual restoration of the Jews is yet to come. Ezekiel 36–37 will not be completely fulfilled before the events of Ezekiel 38–39 take place. In fact, God will use the events of Ezekiel 38–39 to further awaken the hearts of the Jewish people and bring them back to himself.

However, the nation has to be physically restored (Ezekiel 36–37) before she can be physically attacked (Ezekiel 38–39). Thus with the reestablishment of the nation of Israel, that condition for the fulfillment of this prophecy has been met. Examining the details of this prophecy and comparing them with current events taking place in the world today leads many Bible scholars to believe that Ezekiel’s prophesied war of Gog and Magog may be approaching. There are a variety of interpretations as to where this event will fall in relation to other end time events. But if indeed the fulfillment of this prophecy is close at hand, it should make a profound impact upon the ministry of those serving the Lord today. A review of the literature addressing these subjects will consider the interpretation of these two chapters, as well as the theological and eschatological framework in which they are viewed. It will also reveal an awakening interest in these things by many who are experts in biblical prophecy, as they consider the possibility of the approaching fulfillment of this prophecy.

Hypothesis

There is an association between the selected authorities’ understanding of the possible soon fulfillment of Ezekiel’s war of Gog and Magog and their ministry practices in the areas of teaching, speaking and writing, vision for new ministry, and renewed urgency in presenting the gospel.

To research this hypothesis, we must probe the understanding of the research subjects related to the possible soon fulfillment of Ezekiel’s war of Gog and Magog. This requires a review of the literature addressing the interpretation of Ezekiel 38–39, from both a hermeneutical and historical perspective. It also requires examining the literature

for insights into how current events may be setting the stage for the fulfillment of this prophecy. Based on that foundation, the literature will be examined for clues as to how that impacts the ministry practices of the authors. This student will summarize and interact with the pertinent literature that has already addressed this subject.

The Identification of the Nations Involved

This section will examine the identification of the nations Ezekiel names in his prophecy. While some of those nations are easily identified with today's political maps, other nations and people groups named are not quite so clear. While there is some disagreement, a review of the literature shows a broad consensus regarding the primary people groups involved, especially as it applies to the modern nations. This determination is essential if we are to understand how modern alliances both existing and forming may portend the fulfillment of the alliance described by Ezekiel.

Gog

The first and most important name on the list is not the name of a nation but of a person. He is identified simply as Gog, the prince (or chief prince) of Rosh⁴, Meshech and Tubal. It is unclear whether Gog is his name, his title (like a Pharaoh or a Czar), or some other designation of his identity.⁵ His nationality is almost universally recognized in the literature as Russian, or at least as leader of the Russian people. This is derived from two sources: his role as prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal (discussed below); and also from the fact that Russia is the land, indeed the only land, to the far north of Israel, from which Gog will come (Ezek 38:15, 39:2). The first reason is

⁴ The interpretive debate of whether to translate as "prince of Rosh" or as "chief prince" will be addressed below.

⁵ Mark Hitchcock, *The Coming Islamic Invasion of Israel* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 2002), 30; also Joel Rosenberg, *Epicenter 2.0: Why the Current Rumbblings in the Middle East Will Change Your Future* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2008), 83.

debatable, as the word for Rosh can be taken either as a place name or as an adjective, and also because Meshech and Tubal are not universally recognized as place names in Russia, but possibly in Turkey. However, there is almost no debate⁶ that the land of the far north (NASB: “remotest parts of the north”) has to refer to Russia. Indeed, as one goes to the far north from Israel, there is no other alternative. As will be seen, Russia is not only a powerful nation capable of leading a large coalition against Israel, but she also has a long term and historic enmity with the nation of Israel. In the present day she also has growing alliances with all the other nations listed by Ezekiel—the first time in history that that has been true.

Magog

Magog is the region of southern Russian between the Black and Caspian Seas. 150 years before the rise of Russia as a major world power, the French philosopher Voltaire was convinced that the Russians were identified with Magog.⁷ The ancient Jewish historian Josephus identifies Magog as the Scythians.⁸ They were people who settled north and east of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Today that region includes southern Russia, and also the former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. The region would also include parts of northern Afghanistan. Officially atheist when part of the Soviet Union, it is important to

⁶ Except for J. Paul Tanner, who sees this as a reference to the direction from which the invaders will come, and thus might refer to some other country closer than Russia. J. Paul Tanner, “Rethinking Ezekiel’s Invasion by Gog,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39, no. 1 (March 1996), 35.

⁷ Voltaire, *The Philosophical Dictionary*, cited by Joel C. Rosenberg, *The Ezekiel Option* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005), 232.

⁸ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, trans. William Whiston, Book One, Chapter 6, Paragraph 2 in *Josephus: The Complete Works* (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), 42.

realize that today this area is almost completely Islamic. Some 60 million people live in this region today.

Rosh

There is much debate in the literature over whether this word should be identified as a proper noun, and thus a place name, or as an adjective modifying “prince,” thus “chief prince.” James Price argues the grammatical foundation for taking the word as a proper noun, rather than as an adjective.⁹ This debate over whether to take it as a noun or an adjective is reflected in the Bible translations, where, for example, the NASB uses “Rosh,” and the KJV, RSV, and NIV use “chief prince.” Historically, this debate began when the Jewish translator Aquilla incorrectly identified *rosh* as an adjective, which was in turn picked up by Jerome in his Latin Vulgate, and thus passed on into many modern translations.¹⁰ In addition to the grammatical arguments over the use of the word, are the historical arguments. Dyer argues that “*Rosh* never appears as a nation in any other biblical list of place names while all the other names are well attested.”¹¹ It is argued that in Ezekiel’s day there was no nation or people group identified as Rosh¹², thus he would not have used that term. However, that argument by itself does not settle the question, because it denies the possibility that Ezekiel could have prophetically identified the name of some yet future nation that would one day attack Israel. There are other examples in Scripture of God prophetically revealing a name ahead of time—as in Isaiah 44:28–45:1,

⁹ James D. Price, “Rosh: An Ancient Land Known to Ezekiel,” *Grace Theological Journal* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 67-89.

¹⁰ Randall Price, “The Prophecies of Ezekiel,” (unpublished commentary, received via email from the author), 33.

¹¹ Charles H. Dyer, “Ezekiel,” In *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1299.

¹² Tanner, “Rethinking Ezekiel’s Invasion by Gog,” 31.

where Cyrus is mentioned by name more than 150 years before he becomes king¹³.

However, Thomas Ice concludes that “there is considerable historical evidence that a place known as Rosh was very familiar in the ancient world.”¹⁴ Among that evidence is the likelihood that the place name *Tiras* in Genesis 10:2 is a variation of the word *Rosh*, as well as at least twenty other ancient inscriptions listing a place known as *Rosh*, with various spellings.¹⁵ Ice also identifies Egyptian inscriptions dating from 2600 B.C. and 1500 B.C. which identify a place north of Egypt that could be Ezekiel’s Rosh.¹⁶ Clyde Billington has concluded:

Historical, ethnological, and archaeological evidence all favor the conclusion that the Rosh people of Ezekiel 38–39 were the ancestors of the Rus/Ros people of Europe and Asia. . . . The Rosh people who are mentioned in Ezekiel 38–39 were well-known to ancient and medieval writers by a variety of names which all derived from the names of Tiras and Rosh. . . . Those Rosh people who lived to the north of the Black Sea in ancient and medieval times were called the Rus/Ros/Rox/Aorsi from very early times. . . . From this mixture with Slavs and with the Varangian Rus in the 9th century, the Rosh people of the area north of the Black Sea formed the people known today as the Russians.¹⁷

Gesenius, in his Hebrew lexicon, concluded that Rosh is “undoubtedly the Russians, who are mentioned by the Byzantine writers of the tenth century, under the name *the Ros*, dwelling to the north of the Taurus.”¹⁸ The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament completed only three centuries after Ezekiel was written,

¹³ John A. Martin, “Isaiah.” In *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1099.

¹⁴ Thomas Ice, “Ezekiel 38 and 39,” part 4, *Pre-Trib Perspectives* VIII, no. 44, April 2007, 6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.* See also Clyde E. Billington Jr., “The Rosh People in History and Prophecy,” part 2, *Michigan Theological Journal* 3, no. 2, 1992, 145-46.

¹⁷ Clyde E. Billington Jr., “The Rosh People in History and Prophecy,” part 3, *Michigan Theological Journal* 4, no. 1, 1993, 59, 61.

¹⁸ Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament.*, quoted in Rosenberg, *The Ezekiel Option*, 234.

translates *rosh* as the proper name *Ros*.¹⁹ If accepted as a proper noun, much has been made of the linguistic connection between “Rosh” and “Russia.” Rosenberg points out that “the name *Rosh* is linguistically related to the words *Rhos*, *Rus*, and *Ros*, all of which were ancient names for Russia.”²⁰ Ruthven argues persuasively that Ezekiel’s designation has actually contributed indirectly to the name of Russia today.²¹ The linguistic connection is not spurious or the figment of overactive imaginations; it is real and well attested. When one considers other evidence in the text of the identification of Russia as the land to the far north, and of Magog as a region currently in the nation of Russia, it is preferable to understand Ezekiel’s use of the term as a proper noun, and as referring to what we know as present day Russia. J. Dwight Pentecost has concluded that “the identification of Rosh as modern Russia would seem to be well authenticated and generally accepted.”²²

Meshech

The identification of this name is debated and divided between two groups: those who see it as a reference to modern day Moscow, and those who place it as a region in western Turkey. The linguistic argument sees a connection between the names “Meshech” and “Moscow.”²³ Gesenius wrote, “Meshech was founder of the Moschi, a barbarous people, inhabiting the Moschian mountains.”²⁴ He connected the Greek name

¹⁹ Hitchcock, *The Coming Islamic Invasion of Israel*, 38–39.

²⁰ Rosenberg, *The Ezekiel Option*, 234.

²¹ Jon Ruthven and Ihab Griess, *The Prophecy That Is Shaping History: New Research on Ezekiel’s Vision of the End* (Fairfax, VA: Xulon Press, 2003), iv, 9.

²² J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 328.

²³ Arno C. Gabelein, *The Prophet Ezekiel: An Exposition* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1918), 258, cited from the 1972 edition.

²⁴ Gesenius, quoted in Rosenberg, *The Ezekiel Option*, 235.

Moschi with the city of Moscow. However, that city would not have existed yet in Ezekiel's day, and it is argued that Ezekiel would have referred to historical places known in his day, not to modern place names.²⁵ In the fifth century before Christ, Herodotus wrote of a people group related to ancient Meshech that lived in the mountains southeast of the Black Sea, in modern day Turkey.²⁶ Josephus connected Meshech with the Mosocheni who lived in ancient Cappadocia, which would be the northeastern part of modern Turkey.²⁷ While the argument given earlier about prophetic use of a name for a place not yet existing in Ezekiel's day could also be applied here, since there was a historic place known as Meshech, it seems more logical to identify it with the region we know as being in modern Turkey today.

Tubal

The arguments here are similar to those given for Meshech. The linguistic argument sees a connection with the city of Tobolsk in eastern Russia, at the junction of the Itrysh and Tobol rivers.²⁸ But the most recent scholarship connects Tubal, sometimes called Tabal, with eastern Anatolia, just west of ancient Meshech, also in modern Turkey.²⁹ On the other hand, Ezekiel 39:1-2 identify Rosh, Meshech and Tubal all with "the remotest parts of the north," which argues more strongly for an identification with Russia rather than Turkey. Still, from the perspective of Israel, Turkey is in the remote north.

²⁵ Dyer, *Ezekiel*, 1299-1300.

²⁶ Herodotus, *Histories*, 3.94; 7.78. Cited in Mark Hitchcock, *After the Empire: Bible Prophecy in Light of the Fall of the Soviet Union* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1994), 57.

²⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, vol. 1, vi. i.

²⁸ See Rosenberg, *The Ezekiel Option*, 235.

²⁹ Hitchcock, *After the Empire*, 58-59.

Persia

This is one of the easiest nations to identify, which beyond any doubt is the modern day country of Iran, which only changed its name from Persia to Iran in 1935. As a prominent partner in the coming coalition against Israel, the significance of current events in Iran related to the possible approach of Ezekiel's war cannot be overstated. In contrast to the identification of Rosh and other nations coming from Israel's north, Persia would be coming from Israel's east.

Cush

Biblical Cush is easily identified with modern day Sudan and parts of Ethiopia. Ancient Jewish historian Josephus connected the Cushites with the land of Ethiopia.³⁰ While often translated simply as "Ethiopia" (as in the KJV), this is somewhat misleading. It refers to the region south of Egypt, which is the modern nation of Sudan. Cush would be attacking the land from the direction of Israel's south.

Put

Referring to the land and people west of Egypt, this would be the modern nation of Libya in North Africa. Josephus wrote that "Phut also was the founder of Libya."³¹ The nations of Algeria and Tunisia may also be included.³² Put would be attacking Israel from the direction of the west, rounding out the four points of the compass. Clearly, this invasion identifies nations to the north, south, east, and west of

³⁰ Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, book 1, chapter 6, Paragraph 2.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Joel C. Rosenberg, *Epicenter 2.0: Why the Current Rumbblings in the Middle East Will Change Your Future* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2008), 129.

Israel, reinforcing the defenselessness of Israel's position as "surrounded" on all sides by its enemies.³³

Gomer

Voltaire believed that the Gomerites migrated to the region of France and Spain.³⁴ Others connect them with the Ashkenazi people of Germany.³⁵ Pentecost also writes that "there seems to be evidence to support the view that *Gomer* refers to modern Germany."³⁶ Gabelein also concurs with this identification: "Valuable information is given in the Talmud; Gomer is there stated to be the Germani, the Germans. That the descendents of Gomer moved northward and established themselves in Germany seems to be an established fact."³⁷ However, the connection between Gomer and Germany is less popular today, especially following the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Josephus, the ancient Jewish historian, connected Gomer with the Galatians, who lived in what we would call central Turkey: "Gomer founded those whom the Greeks now call Galatians, but were then called Gomerites."³⁸ There is also evidence connecting Gomer with the Cimmerians, who once lived in the area of modern day Ukraine, but then migrated back into modern Turkey.³⁹ While there is debate over the identification of some of the other names in Ezekiel's list, no matter what position one chooses, it still yields the same list of modern nations. The identification of Gomer is the only exception, as there is

³³ Randall Price, "The Prophecies of Ezekiel," 34.

³⁴ Voltaire, *The Portable Voltaire* (paperback), ed. Ben Ray Redman (New York: Viking Penguin, 1977), 101.

³⁵ Rosenberg, *The Ezekiel Option*, 244.

³⁶ Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 330.

³⁷ Gabelein, *The Prophet Ezekiel*, quoted in Rosenberg, *The Ezekiel Option*, 244.

³⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 42.

³⁹ Hitchcock, *After the Empire*, 61.

no other name in Ezekiel's list that could possibly be understood as referring to Germany. One wonders if the inclination to consider Gomer as Germany might be driven partially by Germany's role in two world wars and their extreme persecution of the Jews. If Germany is included, it would also be the only nation in the list that does not have a strong Islamic connection. Based on these factors, and giving preference to Josephus' identification, it seems best to understand Gomer as another reference to modern day Turkey.

Beth Togarmah

According to prophecy scholar Harry Rimmer, "Togarmah has always been the land which we now call Armenia. It is so named in the records of Assyria. . . . Indeed, all Armenian literature refers to the land and its people as The House of Togarmah."⁴⁰ Louis Bauman concluded that Togarmah is "the Turkoman tribes of Central Asia, together with Siberia, the Turks, and the Armenias."⁴¹ Dwight Pentecost concluded that Togarmah "is generally identified as Turkey or Armenia."⁴² It seems most likely that Beth Togarmah would be in the area we know today as eastern Turkey.

Many Nations

Ezekiel 38:6 includes the reference to "many nations with you." This may refer to the list of nations already given, as a summary statement of the entire coalition; or it may refer to other nations not included in the list. Did Ezekiel intend his list of nations to be exhaustive, with those and only those nations coming against Israel in this attack? Given the broad coalition that it seems to be, it is likely that there would also be

⁴⁰ Harry Rimmer, *The Coming War and the Rise of Russia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdman's, 1940), 62, quoted in Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 330. See also Rosenberg, *The Ezekiel Option*, 242.

⁴¹ Louis Bauman, *Russian Events in the Light of Bible Prophecy* (Philadelphia: The Balkiston Co., 1942), 38, quoted in Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 330, and by Rosenberg, *The Ezekiel Option*, 242.

⁴² Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 330.

other nations not mentioned that would take part in the invasion. As almost the entire coalition is made up of nations from the Islamic world, there could perhaps be other Islamic nations contributing their forces. For example, Syria and Lebanon, both under the influence of Iran, would be likely participants. However, not all Islamic nations will participate, as the reference to Sheba and Dedan makes clear. Morocco, a moderate Islamic nation with a possible connection to Put (Libya) is one question mark, but some have considered it an unlikely participant.⁴³ However, even that situation could be changing, as the recent expulsion of Christian missionaries may indicate a shift toward a more hard-line stance.

Notable Exceptions from Ezekiel's List

While including most of the currently Islamic nations surrounding Israel today, there are several notable exceptions worth considering, including Iraq, Egypt, and Jordan. Both Iraq and Egypt have been major long term enemies of Israel, and both are strongly Islamic. Their absence from Ezekiel's list is noteworthy, and worth questioning. Egypt's absence from the list was pondered even back in 1974 by McCall and Levitt: "Curiously, Egypt is not mentioned among the antagonists. Will something happen to Israel's perennial enemy before the conflict?"⁴⁴ If this war is indeed approaching soon, could recent history in Egypt and Iraq give plausible explanations why they do not partake in this war against Israel? Under President Hosni Mubarak, Egypt has honored a peace treaty with Israel for many years, although the present situation and the removal of Mubarak holds much uncertainty regarding Egypt. The ouster of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and the U.S. role in creating a democracy in that country, may give some explanation as to why Iraq is not involved. Jordan, a much smaller country, but in close geographic

⁴³ Rosenberg, *Epicenter*, 291-293.

⁴⁴ Thomas S. McCall and Zola Levitt, *The Coming Russian Invasion of Israel* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 27.

proximity to Israel, raises a similar question. Perhaps it is left off the list simply because of its size and relative insignificance. However, Jordan's current peace treaty with Israel may also provide an explanation, if Ezekiel's war is coming soon. Further discussion about these possibilities will be given later in this study.

Bill Salus proposes another reason why these and other countries do not take part in Ezekiel's war. In his book *Israelestine*, he argues that Psalm 83 prophesies a different war intervening before the Ezekiel 38–39 war, at which time Israel's closer neighboring nations are defeated. This "Israeli conquest over the inner circle of the core surrounding Arab populations of Palestinians, Syrians, Saudi Arabians, Egyptians, Lebanese, and Jordanians"⁴⁵ effectively removes these nations from participating in the later Ezekiel 38–39 conflict. Salus explains,

We can safely presume the execution of the judgments upon the surrounding Psalm 83 nations will occur before the coalition in question forms. We deduce this by recollecting that the Russian-Iranian-led coalition will attempt to invade a militarily secure Israel. This condition of security becomes a reality only subsequent to the judgments executed upon the surrounding Psalm 83 nations.⁴⁶

Prophecy scholars have varying views on Salus' position. Tommy Ice, for example, sees no reason to take Psalm 83 as a prophecy of a separate war at all, while Jimmy DeYoung views it as part of the Ezekiel 38–39 war.⁴⁷ However, it is an interesting proposal in that the lists of nations in Psalm 83 and Ezekiel 38 are mutually exclusive, with the "near" nations described in Psalm 83 and the "far" nations in Ezekiel 38. If Salus is right, it would explain why the near nations are absent from the Ezekiel 38 conflict.

⁴⁵ Bill Salus, *Israelestine: The Ancient Blueprints of the Future Middle East* (Crane, MO: High Way, a division of Anomalos Publishing, 2008), 6.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁷ Comments made during the Pre-Trib Study Group conference during the evening session on December 6, 2011, in Dallas, TX.

Sheba

Ezekiel mentions a few places that offer a lame diplomatic challenge to Gog's planned invasion, one of which is Sheba. Sheba is easily identified with the Arabian Peninsula, including modern day Saudi Arabia, and perhaps also such smaller modern nations as Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Oman. Their challenge to the Russian-Iranian alliance against Israel may be because Saudi Arabia absolutely detests Iran, and is very afraid of Iran's current president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Kuwait is very friendly to the West, which may explain its challenge also. It is interesting, in the light of modern realities, that Sheba and Dedan are part of the diplomatic protest against the Russian/Islamic invasion. In the words of Mark Hitchcock, "What is the one Middle Eastern nation that constantly sides with the West against the radical Islamic elements in that region of the world? The obvious answer is Saudi Arabia—ancient Sheba and Dedan."⁴⁸

Dedan

Dedan is always closed tied with Sheba, referring the to the peoples and region of the Arabian Peninsula. Therefore it may effectively be viewed in the same light as Sheba, discussed above.

Tarshish

We do not know exactly where Tarshish is located, except that it is someplace far to the west of Israel. Because of that, some identify it with Spain. Others say that it refers simply to the western side of Europe in general. Phillips postulates that "as historic Tarshish took in the mainland of Europe, reached to Britain and on to the new world, so

⁴⁸ Hitchcock, *The Coming Islamic Invasion of Israel*, 86.

prophetic Tarshish probably does the same.”⁴⁹ While a precise location cannot be pinned down with certainty, it is probably fair to connect this designation with the West, in contrast to the Islamic world mostly aligning against Israel.

The Young Lions

One of the most enigmatic references in the whole prophecy is to the “young lions” of Tarshish. If Tarshish was the western part of the then-known world, including western Europe, who would the “young lions” belonging to this region be? It could refer to the leaders of those nations. It could also refer to colonies established by those western nations. If so, it could even include the United States. Thus this might be the only reference to the United States in all of Scripture. The connection is weak, but possible. This must be considered as one considers the possibility of a soon fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy, where the United States might participate in lodging a weak diplomatic protest against this Russian led invasion. Ice believes that this phrase “refers to the colonies of Western Europe and the nations that have subsequently arisen from them. This would include North America and the United States.”⁵⁰ However, one must recognize that since the connection here is weak, it might not be an allusion to the United States at all. That, for example, is the assessment of Ron Rhodes.⁵¹ There are many reasons why America may not be a relevant player in the last days, but such discussion is outside the scope of this study.⁵²

⁴⁹ John Phillips, *Exploring the Future: A Comprehensive Guide to Bible Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2003), 323.

⁵⁰ Thomas Ice, “Is America in Bible Prophecy?” Available online at www.pre-trib.org. (accessed December 8, 2010).

⁵¹ Ron Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising, Northern Storm Rising: Russia, Iran, and the Emerging End-times Military Coalition against Israel* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2008), 121.

⁵² See Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 117-129, and Mark Hitchcock, *The Late Great United States: What Bible Prophecy Reveals About America’s Last Days* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2009).

Maps

To aid in considering the implications of this Russian led invasion, maps of the likely locations of the participants are included in the appendices.

The Relationship of Current Events to Ezekiel’s Prophesied War

Many events in current world history point to a “setting of the stage” for the fulfillment of this prophecy. When all the props and actors are on the stage and in their proper place, it is only logical to conclude that the curtain is about to go up and the drama is about to begin. While we cannot know God’s timing with certainty until the actual events take place, it is only reasonable to conclude that a prophecy of this magnitude, with the vast geopolitical implications involved, would show numerous signs of its approaching fulfillment. Since this is also one of the most detailed major prophecies in Scripture, God has given us in advance many details we can monitor as we consider the approach of this war, which most certainly will come. This section will examine some of those details as discussed in the literature, which yield the conclusion that this war may indeed be fast approaching.

The Return of Jews to the Land

Ezekiel 38:8 makes clear that “after many days” this invasion will come against a land “whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel.” According to John Hagee, even in the days of Christ, most Jews lived outside of the land. “The historical fact is that three out of four Jews did not live in Israel when Jesus began His ministry.”⁵³ For the better part of 2000 years this most basic requirement for the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy remained unfulfilled. The mountains of Israel remained desolate, with very few Jews living in the land. Indeed, the Jews remained

⁵³ John Hagee, *Jerusalem Countdown: A Prelude to War* (Lake Mary, FL: Front Line, 2007), 102.

scattered far and wide across the world, with a homeland in Israel only a distant dream. Yet against all odds, the Jews retained their national identity, even over two millennia of dispersal; a matter completely without parallel among any other dispersed people group in the world. Yet always they have carried this hope, that maybe “*Next year in Jerusalem!*” they would finally come home. And now—in this day and age—that promise has finally been coming to fruition, and the “*aliyah*” or immigration of Jews back to Israel continues. In the late 19th century, the first Jews began to trickle back into the land from abroad. In the 20th century that trickle turned to a flood. “They have come back from Europe, Russia, Ethiopia, America, the nations of the former Soviet Union, and a host of other countries to which they were scattered,” writes Patrick Neff.⁵⁴ Today, for the first time in thousands of years, there are more Jews living in Israel than anywhere else in the world.⁵⁵ Ezekiel 36:8 predicted that God’s people Israel would one day come home. Then in 36:10 he promised to multiply the number of Jews living once again in the land. In 1917, only 25,000 Jews lived in Palestine.⁵⁶ In 1948, when the nation was born, it had grown more than thirty fold, to around 800,000.⁵⁷ An Israeli website reported in 2010 that Israel had 7.4 million citizens—80% Jews, 20% Arabs.⁵⁸ Since its establishment, some 2.7 million Jews have immigrated to Israel from some 130 different countries.⁵⁹ This partial fulfillment of Ezekiel 36–37 sets the stage for the fulfillment of Ezekiel 38–39. Even

⁵⁴ Patrick Neff, “The Russian-Persian Alliance.” *Israel My Glory* (September/October 2009), 25.

⁵⁵ Mark Hitchcock, *The Apocalypse of Ahmadinejad: The Revelation of Iran’s Nuclear Prophet* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 2007), 126.

⁵⁶ Tim F. LaHaye, *The Coming Peace in the Middle East* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 62.

⁵⁷ Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 78.

⁵⁸ Israel Facts and Figures. http://www.goisrael.com/Tourism_Eng/Tourist+Information/Discover+Israel/Population.htm (accessed December 8, 2010).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel, recently remarked that Ezekiel 36–37 had been fulfilled.⁶⁰ The prophetic significance of this return to the land is earthshaking.

The Restoration of Nationhood

Ezekiel gives numerous hints in his prophecy that not only will the Jews be living in the land, but that they will also once again have their own nation. The land will have recovered from war and the people will live in safety (Ezek 38:8). Their security and prosperity most likely derive from their independence. As an independent state, they would no longer be in a helpless position where they have to rely on somebody else to provide their security. Their land is known as “the land of Israel” (Ezek 38:18). The “house of Israel” is presented as having autonomy over the land (Ezek 39:12). They are “brought back from captivity” (Ezek 39:25) and given “their own land” (Ezek 39:28). It hardly seems possible that this prophecy could be fulfilled without Israel existing as an independent state. However, Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 586 B.C., and even 20 years before that, they had fallen under the control of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Even though the people came back to the land after 70 years of captivity, they were never again an independent nation, except for a brief period under the Maccabees.⁶¹ They were either under the control of Babylon, or Persia, or Greece, or Rome, or Turkey, or Britain, or somebody, but even in New Testament times, they were not an independent nation. So from 606 B.C. to A.D. 1948, a strong, secure, prosperous, independent state of Israel did not exist—over 2550 years! All that changed on May 14, 1948, when after thousands of

⁶⁰ Joel Rosenberg weblog, posted January 29, 2010. <http://flashtrafficblog.wordpress.com/2010/01/29/netanyahu-at-auschwitz-says-prophecies-of-ezekiel-37-have-been-fulfilled> (accessed December 8, 2010).

⁶¹ Israel under the Maccabees cannot be the restoration described by Ezekiel, for several reasons: it is nowhere near “the latter days” or the end of the age; the land had not been desolated to nearly the extent that it would be later; the Jews had not been dispersed to many nations around the world; it was not a time when city walls were no longer relevant; it was not a time when the nation enjoyed great wealth; and no invasion fitting the picture of Ezekiel 38–39 took place.

years, biblical prophecy was fulfilled with the rebirth of the nation of Israel. Ezekiel's war cannot take place until Israel has been restored as a nation, which is the largest of all "signs of the times" that point to the end of the age. Furthermore, Ezekiel's prophecy specifically targets the mountains of Israel. As Fruchtenbaum points out, "Only since 1967 have the mountains *of* Israel been *in* Israel, thus setting the stage for the fulfillment of this prophecy."⁶²

The Restoration of the Land

Integral to this prophecy is the truth that not only have the Jews returned to their ancient land and gained independence as a nation, but that their land has also been restored. This is explicit throughout Ezekiel 36–37, as well as in Ezekiel 38:8, describing Israel as a land "which had long been desolate." Up until fairly recently, the ancient land of Israel was one of the most God-forsaken places on the planet. It was mostly depopulated. For many hundreds of years, very few people lived there. The place seemed to be just a perpetual ruin. The land was completely denuded of any forests. Even the once fertile ground was basically turned into a desert. This land had been deliberately destroyed by the enemies of the Jews, who had encouraged destructive overgrazing of the land by goats, removing the ground cover, and allowing for widespread erosion of the topsoil. Under Turkish rule property was taxed based on the number of trees on it, ensuring the eventual deforestation of the entire region. But since the return of the Jews, the land has been restored. Pentecost points out that at the time of this war "the land will

⁶² Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Press, 1982), 75. Some might argue that while Judea and Samaria are under some degree of Israeli control, they have not been annexed into the state of Israel proper, so conditions are still not quite ready for the execution of this war. Future events could yet change that equation. However, even apart from the mountains in the West Bank area, there are many other mountainous areas solidly under Israeli sovereignty, so Fruchtenbaum's comment is not completely accurate. The prophecy does not delineate specifically which mountainous areas of Israel are in view. It is possible that the prophecy could be fulfilled within the mountainous areas already under Israeli control.

be reforested (39:10).”⁶³ When Pentecost wrote that in 1957, this had not happened yet. It has now. Forests have been replanted; fields have been resown; orchards and vineyards are growing. This tiny little country, only the size of New Jersey, has according to Chuck Smith, become the third largest exporter of fruit in the world today.⁶⁴ This once barren wasteland has turned into an incredibly fruitful, productive land. The difference can even be seen from space, where the boundaries between the West Bank and Israel are clearly visible, with green land apparent in Israeli territory, and brown land obvious throughout Arab territory. Travelers to the land of Israel can plainly see how the land is being restored to a land of milk and honey, with changes continuing to progress from year to year. All this, of course, contributes to the wealth of the land, a prize coveted by the invaders who will come against Israel. Ezekiel also describes Israel’s ruined cities as being rebuilt. In the mid-1800's, Jerusalem had a population of about 15,000; today it is about 3/4 of a million. And many of the ancient cities of Israel have been rebuilt—Jaffa, Nazareth, Tiberias, Bethlehem, Haifa, Jericho, Hebron and more, are all large, bustling cities today. This is exactly the picture described by Ezekiel.

National Security

Ezekiel makes clear that at the time of this war, Israel will have “recovered from war” and “live in safety” (Ezek 38:8). She will be “a land of unwalled villages...a peaceful and unsuspecting people—all of them living without walls and without gates and bars” (Ezek 38:11). Interpreting these statements is a point of major divide among the interpretations spelled out in the literature, with the positions falling into three main camps: 1) those who say this cannot and will not be possible until Antichrist establishes his covenant with Israel, placing the war in the first half of the Tribulation; 2) those who

⁶³ Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 336.

⁶⁴ Chuck Smith, speaking at Epicenter Conference in San Diego, April 4, 2009.

say this can only truly apply until after the return of Christ, placing the war near the beginning of the millennium; and 3) those who say this could describe conditions in Israel today, putting the war possibly even before the Tribulation.⁶⁵ A fuller discussion of these positions will be addressed later when considering various views concerning the timing of Ezekiel's war.

Those who argue that these conditions do not exist today point to the numerous wars that have been fought in Israel's history—the War for Independence in 1948, the Six Day War in 1967, the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the wars in Lebanon in 1982 and 2006, and the war in Gaza in 2008–2009. Added to this are the Gulf War in 1991, and the Iraq war that began in 2003, and there have indeed been many wars and rumors of wars surrounding Israel. The Palestinian question has been going on for years, with little hope of any true resolution. Terrorism on Israeli soil has been a more or less constant threat, along with various Palestinian uprisings and intifadas. Israel has never been able to drop her guard, and knows full well that many of her neighbors would like nothing better than to see her wiped out of existence. That very point has been a core doctrine of Hamas, Hezbollah, the PLO, and the governments of many surrounding Islamic states, most notably recently that of Iran, and her vocal mouthpiece Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Israel is described as an armed camp,⁶⁶ with peace and safety only an elusive dream. In view of this, many believe that Israel will never experience any true security until the Antichrist signs a peace covenant with Israel. In the literature surveyed this has been the predominant view discovered among those writing on this subject. Most scholars who hold this view place Ezekiel's war of Gog and Magog during the first half of the Tribulation period, during the false peace existing under the Antichrist's covenant

⁶⁵ A partial listing of those who hold the various positions will be given later under discussion of the timing of the war.

⁶⁶ John F. Walvoord, "Russia: King of the North." *Fundamentalist Journal* 3, no. 2 (February 1984), 25.

with Israel. Some go so far as to say that even those conditions do not meet the requirements of the passage, and place the war after the Great Tribulation has concluded with the return of Christ, near the beginning of the millennial period.

Those who argue that these conditions could describe the situation in Israel today point out that the passages in Ezekiel do not require an absolute freedom from all conflict or concerns, but describe a period of relative safety and security for Israel's inhabitants, which the Jewish people have not known for a long time. There is a widespread misunderstanding of this passage, that it calls for conditions of peace, when in fact the Hebrew word *shalom* is not even used in the passage. The passage does not call for peace; it calls for conditions of security, which is not the same thing. Thus it is a straw man argument to say that peace does not exist today, ruling out any possibility of the war coming soon. According to Rosenberg, "Note that the Hebrew prophet does not go so far as to say there will be a comprehensive peace treaty between Israel and all of her neighbors, or that all or even most hostilities in the Middle East will have ceased."⁶⁷ Fruchtenbaum holds a similar position:

This is not a security due to a state of peace, but a security due to confidence in their own strength. This . . . is a good description for Israel today. The Israeli army has fought four major wars since its founding and won them swiftly each time. Today Israel is secure, confident that her army can repel any invasion from the Arab states. Hence, Israel is dwelling securely.⁶⁸

Referring again to Israel's current state of security, Fruchtenbaum further states,

There is nothing in the various descriptions of Israel given in this passage that is not true of Israel today. So, as far as where Israel stands today, she completely fulfills all the requirements given in the description of Israel in this passage. From

⁶⁷ Rosenberg, *Epicenter*, 67.

⁶⁸ Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 121.

this standpoint, the invasion can occur at any time, including some time before the Tribulation.⁶⁹

Thus Ezekiel's picture of safety and security could describe the state of Israel right now. It has been better than 35 years since Israel truly had to fight for its life, and Israelis feel more secure than ever before. Every time their enemies attacked with the goal of throwing Israel into the sea, the armies of Israel have soundly defeated them. Israel right now truly has one of the strongest militaries in the world. They are building shopping malls and schools and resorts all over the country. This student has personally observed young children hitchhiking around the country on their own, with little concern and the full blessing of their parents. While we would not dream of allowing that in America, it is commonplace in Israel, because they are experiencing a level of safety and security that they have never known. Rosenberg reported that "Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert is...convinced that Israel is more secure than at any other time in its modern history."⁷⁰ Rosenberg also reports a discussion with Major General Yaakov Amidror, former head of assessment for Israeli Military Intelligence, who pointed to a number of recent developments:

- The Soviet Union has collapsed.
- Saddam Hussein and his regime are gone.
- Yasser Arafat is dead.
- Israel has a formal peace treaty with Egypt.⁷¹
- Israel has a formal peace treaty with Jordan.
- They Syrians are withdrawing from Lebanon.
- Israel has a strong, well-trained, well-equipped army.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 77.

⁷⁰ Rosenberg, *Epicenter*, 76.

⁷¹ After the overthrow of the Mubarak government in the spring of 2011, the future of Egypt's peace treaty with Israel remains in doubt. With hard-line Islamists winning elections in Egypt in December 2011, Egypt may once again become a major threat to Israel.

- Israel has the most advanced and effective air force not just in the region but in the world.
- Israel's Arrow missile defense system is steadily improving.
- Through better intelligence, targeted assassinations of Palestinian terrorist leaders and operatives, the security fence around Gaza, and the partially completed security fence in the West Bank, Israel has become increasingly successful at stopping suicide bombings and other attacks.
- The U.S. is a strong and steady ally and has a forward strategy against terrorists and state sponsors of terrorism in the Middle East.
- Israel's economy is healthy and growing.⁷²

In the meantime, terrorist attacks have dropped nearly 70 percent between 2001 and 2005.⁷³ In November 2010 Israel's outgoing military intelligence chief, Major General Amos Yadlin, addressed the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee about Israel's current state of security. As reported by Rosenberg, citing a November 3, 2010 article in Haaretz,

ISRAEL IS MORE SECURE THAN EVER BEFORE — “The recent security calm is unprecedented,” Yadlin told the parliamentary committee. Despite emerging and serious threats from Iran and her Radical Islamic allies, for the moment Israel is enjoying a period of remarkable calm in light of the peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, almost no terrorism emanating out of the West Bank, relative calm in Gaza in the aftermath of Operation Cast Lead, relatively calm borders for the last four years with Lebanon and Syria, and a regime change in Iraq that led to a nascent but improving democracy.⁷⁴

This student believes it is important to recognize that our American perspective is somewhat warped. We picture our homeland as a place of peace and security, but Israel

⁷² Ibid., 68-69.

⁷³ Total attacks in 2001: 7,634. Total attacks in 2005: 2,365. Suicide bombings specifically have dropped from a peak of 60 in 2002 to 7 in 2005. See “Palestinian Terrorism in 2005,” Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Center for Special Studies (Israel), December 31, 2005, 17; www.intelligence.org.il (accessed March 16, 2006), quoted in Rosenberg, *Epicenter*, 363.

⁷⁴ Joel Rosenberg's weblog, posted November 22, 2010, <http://flashtrafficblog.wordpress.com> (accessed December 7, 2010).

as a place torn by violence and terror attacks. But the reality is just the opposite. The crime rate is very low in Israel, and the number of serious incidents has been plummeting. Meanwhile, back here at home, violent crime is skyrocketing. Terrorist attacks are starting to be regular news here. The media coverage is very slanted. If a small crowd of Muslims in Israel creates a disturbance and throws some stones, especially if it is near some Jewish holy site, it is widely reported in the American media. But back here in the U.S., we have something like 50 murders a day. Even factoring in differences in size, the murder rate in America is much higher than it is in Israel.⁷⁵ It could be argued that people are much safer in Israel than they are here in America. Even while U.S. media is full of headlines about unrest in Israel, causing prospective tourists to fear for their safety during a trip to Israel, those living in Israel go about their daily business as if nothing were going on—which for the vast majority of them, is exactly the case. People living in Israel today are enjoying an unprecedented period of safety and security.

It should also be pointed out that Ezekiel specifically describes a time in Israel when people are living in unwalled villages. For thousands of years, up until close to the modern era, the norm in Israel has been for cities to be surrounded by defensive walls. However, as Walvoord points out, in Israel today “one will not find a single new city with a wall built around it.”⁷⁶ In another article, Walvoord states, “The cities of Israel are . . . unwalled, which corresponds to the modern situation when walls no longer keep out invaders.”⁷⁷ It is only as recently as the mid-1800’s when the city of Jerusalem began to

⁷⁵ The murder rate in America (4.8 per 100,000 in 2010), even though it is currently at its lowest level in 50 years, and less than half of what it was 20 years ago (9.8 per 100,000 in 1981), is still over twice as high as the murder rate in Israel (2.1 per 100,000 in 2010). “List of countries by intentional homicide rate,” Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_intentional_homicide_rate (accessed March 3, 2012). “Crime in the United States,” Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crime_in_the_United_States (accessed March 3, 2012).

⁷⁶ Walvoord, “Russia: King of the North—Part I,” 38.

⁷⁷ John F. Walvoord, *Major Bible Prophecies: 37 Crucial Prophecies that Affect You Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 333.

expand outside the city walls. Modern methods of warfare minimize the defensive shield that walls can provide around a city, rendering them useless and thus no longer necessary. At the time Ezekiel penned his prophecy, such a development was thousands of years into the future.⁷⁸ Again Walvoord argues, “Unwalled villages point to Israel’s situation today.”⁷⁹ This is one more indicator that the time of Gog’s invasion may be drawing close.

Prosperity

According to Ezekiel, much of the motivation for the attack on Israel comes from a desire to seize plunder, as the land has become rich in livestock and goods (Ezek 38:12-13). In Ezekiel 36:11 we read, “I will increase the number of men and animals upon you, and they will be fruitful and become numerous. I will settle people on you as in the past and will make you prosper more than before.” At the time of Ezekiel’s war, this nation is no longer living in poverty. As a nation, poverty will have been replaced by prosperity. In fact, they will have become the envy of all these nations that surround them. This is true even now. Their standard of living vastly exceeds that of most of the nations that surround them. In 2011, the GDP per capita in Israel was about \$32,300. By comparison: Lebanon, their neighbor to the north, was \$10,500; Iran was \$6,300; Jordan, their neighbor to the east, was \$4,500; Iraq was about \$3,300; Syria to the northeast was

⁷⁸ Some might argue that Ezekiel’s reference to unwalled villages is meant to imply that there are no security issues whatsoever about which to be concerned. However, this is reading more into the passage than is there. The nation is enjoying a sense of security, but that does not mean the complete absence of any threats. Someone might feel secure behind a walled compound with securely locked windows and gates, but that does not imply the absence of all threats. The literal meaning of Ezekiel’s statement is that, for whatever reason, the villages in Israel no longer have defensive walls. The fact remains that for the first time in history, that situation is now a reality.

⁷⁹ Walvoord, “Russia: King of the North—Part I,” 38.

\$3,000; Egypt, their neighbor to the south, was \$2,900.⁸⁰ None of Israel's neighbors enjoy a level of prosperity even close to that enjoyed by the people of Israel. Most of those neighboring nations have existed for a long time. Some of them have huge oil reserves, but it has not increased the standard of living of the average citizen. Israel, by contrast, is the new kid on the block. But, compared to her neighbors, she has done very well. God promised he would prosper Israel, and by all appearances, God has made good on that promise today. As McCall and Levitt point out, "There is very real wealth in Israel. The country is small, but enjoys a vigorous economy."⁸¹ Israel's technological resources rival that of any nation in the world. There is great untapped mineral wealth in the Dead Sea, which according to Rhodes, could be worth trillions of dollars.⁸² According to a British report produced in the early 20th century,

The value of the minerals of the Dead Sea is estimated at five trillion dollars. This estimate appears to be optimistic but it is supported in part by the report of the Crown Agents of the British Colonies entitled "Production of Minerals From the Waters of the Dead Sea". . . . This official report estimates the minerals, except oil, in 1925 as follows: Magnesium Chloride, 22,000 tons, value 600 billion dollars; Potassium Chloride, 20,000 tons, value 75 billion dollars; other minerals valued at 1,200 billion dollars; or a total of about three trillion dollars, exclusive of oil.⁸³

New discoveries of oil and natural gas could yield untold wealth for the nation.⁸⁴ Rhodes remarks, "A recent and unexpected major oil discovery in Israel may be among the

⁸⁰ These figures are according to the International Monetary Fund 2011 estimate. "List of countries by GDP (nominal) per capita," Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_\(nominal\)_per_capita](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)_per_capita) (accessed March 3, 2012).

⁸¹ McCall and Levitt, *The Coming Russian Invasion of Israel*, 33.

⁸² Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 139.

⁸³ The Rothschild's Palestine, All Roads Lead to Jerusalem. <http://www.matterofprinciple.net/011/11/rothschilds-palestine.html> (accessed December 15, 2011). Although there is a wide variation of estimates, many different sources estimate the mineral wealth of the Dead Sea in the trillions of dollars.

⁸⁴ Rosenberg, *Epicenter*, 53-60.

motivating factors for the future Ezekiel invasion.”⁸⁵ God has restored the fortunes of Israel today. They have a prosperous and growing economy. Of course, prosperity always breeds envy and greed. “You’ve got it, and I don’t, so I want to take the things that you have.” Human nature hasn’t changed much in thousands of years. People and nations are still motivated by the same things today. Coupled with their desire to push Israel into the sea, the surrounding nations will be motivated by their desire to seize her wealth. This is one more current world situation that could foreshadow the approach of this great war.

Russia’s Animosity toward Israel

As this war is led by invaders from Russia, the prevailing attitude of that nation toward Israel and the Jews in recent history will reveal a consistent and prolonged animosity, coupled with military attempts to destroy the nation of Israel. Russia has opposed the nation of Israel from the very beginning. Even before the rebirth of the state of Israel, under Lenin and Stalin terrible pogroms were carried out against the Jews in Russia, in which hundreds of thousands, even millions, of Russian Jews died. In repeated wars fought against Israel, although Russia was not directly involved, many of the arms and supplies came from Russia. Randall Price states, “[Russia] has maintained support of Israel’s enemies, equipping them in their past invasions of the Jewish State.”⁸⁶ According to McCall and Levitt, in the 1956, 1967, and 1973 wars, “Russia [was] fully allied with the Arabs.”⁸⁷ Rhodes states that “historical records prove...that during the 1967 Six-Day War, the Russians were poised to attack Israel and had been preparing to do so for a substantial time.”⁸⁸ In the 1973 conflict, Russians were engaged as tank commanders and

⁸⁵ Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 66.

⁸⁶ Price, “The Prophecies of Ezekiel,” 41.

⁸⁷ McCall and Levitt, *The Coming Russian Invasion of Israel*, 38.

⁸⁸ Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 173.

pilots, and Russian paratroopers were preparing to enter the battle.⁸⁹ It has long been Russia's plan to destroy Israel, and seize power in that region. Walvoord points out, "The geographic significance of the Middle East alone would be worth a real effort on the part of Russia to have this portion of the world under her control."⁹⁰ Even recently, they have planned direct Russian invasions of Israel. According to McCall and Levitt, "In late October 1973 the American military went on "Alert" in an announced response to Russian troop movements. It was said that Russia was planning to move combat troops into the theatres of the Yom Kippur War."⁹¹ In 1982, according to Rosenberg, "then-Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin went public with a story that prior to that time had been known only to the upper echelons of Israeli and U.S. intelligence."⁹² While the Israeli Defense Forces had been fighting in Lebanon, they discovered a massive, gigantic cache of Soviet weaponry hidden in deep underground caverns and tunnels in Lebanon. "The weapons appeared to have been pre-positioned by Moscow for the launching of a full-scale invasion of Israel."⁹³

The haul . . . included 4,000 tons of ammunition, 144 armored vehicles and tanks, 12,500 pieces of small arms, 515 heavy weapons, 359 sophisticated communications devices, and 795 "optical instruments" (including night-vision goggles and field glasses) . . . [It required] a fleet of 10-ton trucks, working day and night for six weeks, to haul [all this captured weaponry] back to Israel.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Chuck Smith, speaking at Epicenter Conference in San Diego, April 4, 2009.

⁹⁰ Walvoord, "Russia: King of the North—Part II," 24.

⁹¹ McCall and Levitt. *The Coming Russian Invasion of Israel*, 13.

⁹² Rosenberg, *Epicenter*, 147.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ "Begin Describes Soviet Arms Cache." *Washington Post*, July 7, 1982, quoted in Rosenberg, *Epicenter*, 147. A photocopy of the original *Washington Post* article may be found at http://archive.glennbeck.com/realstory/11-01-06/israel_USSR.pdf (accessed March 3, 2012).

Tim LaHaye adds, “One cave near Sidon was literally a Soviet military base with sufficient stores to supply an army of 100,000 soldiers. The Israelis also found maps and documents showing Russian plans to invade Israel on August 4, 1982.”⁹⁵ Even an army of this size could be too low of an estimate. “Some estimates of eyewitnesses to the network of caverns and tunnels have gone as high as ‘military equipment for an army of between 500,000 and a million men. . . .’ In one underground bunker alone, Israeli soldiers captured 70,000 Russian Kalashnikov assault weapons.”⁹⁶ He adds that all this “suggests that Israel’s assault on Lebanon thwarted a Soviet attack that would have been launched in August—just two months later.”⁹⁷ The sheer size and scope of the discovery was staggering. In the words of LaHaye, “the question arises, Was Russia planning to use this weaponry for the invasion of Israel prophesied in Ezekiel 38–39?”⁹⁸ The Israelis had known the Russians were arming Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Liberation Organization. That was why Israel had invaded Lebanon in the first place. But no one had any idea that the Soviets themselves were actually preparing for a massive ground assault against Israel. There was no other explanation for the quantities of weapons they found. Russia wants to control Israel; and ultimately they want to control this whole region. And it must be kept in mind that while the war of Gog and Magog involves mostly Islamic nations, it is masterminded and commanded by Russia. If Russia can control the Middle East and the wealth of the world’s oil that is there, she can control the whole world. No one should count Russia as down and out. Very clearly, she is rising to power once again.

⁹⁵ Tim F. LaHaye, *The Coming Peace in the Middle East* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 55.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 180-181.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

LaHaye warns, “We learn a major lesson from the capture of the Russian arms and documents: It is later than we think.”⁹⁹

Coupled with Russia’s deep-seated animosity toward Israel is its current dethronement from world power following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Hitchcock describes Russia as a wounded bear, the most dangerous kind of bear at all.¹⁰⁰ He argues, “The current economic, political, and social scenario in Russia is ripe for a nationalistic, power-crazed leader like Gog in Ezekiel 38–39 to burst on the scene and seize control. . . . The Russians desperately crave a leader who will rescue them from the death grip of poverty and restore their lost empire.”¹⁰¹ There has never been a time in history before now when so many factors are falling into place for the possible fulfillment of Ezekiel’s great prophecy.

Modern Alliances

As Ezekiel prophesied that many nations that would come together in this alliance against Israel, an examination of the world today shows that almost all those alliances are in place or forming today—some of which have never existed in human history prior to today. As Rhodes states, “The unique alignment of nations described in Ezekiel 38–39 has never occurred in the past, but it *is* occurring now.”¹⁰² Hitchcock concurs, “Never have so many biblically relevant factors converged more clearly. . . . These alliances and activities could be the direct fulfillment of Ezekiel 38–39!”¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Ibid., 183.

¹⁰⁰ Hitchcock, *After the Empire*, 41.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 45-46.

¹⁰² Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 90.

¹⁰³ Hitchcock, *After the Empire*, 4-5.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, many said, “The bear is dead!” But the Russian bear did not die; it simply went into hibernation for a while. “Today it has awakened with great fury as Prime Minister Vladimir Putin attempts to restore the former glory of Mother Russia,” writes Patrick Neff in *Israel My Glory* magazine.¹⁰⁴ The Russian “bear” has been busy making new friends, most notably, in the Middle East. Russia is rapidly forging new alliances with Islamic nations that are bent on Israel’s destruction. This is a key part of Russia’s plan to restore the power she once enjoyed. In 2008 Russia was in the news when it invaded neighboring Georgia (which lies just above Turkey, and not far from the border of Iran), and seized control there. After the invasion, Robert Baer wrote in *Time* magazine about how Russia wants an empire:

Russia’s invasion of Georgia has less to do with South Ossetia than with a Russia that never reconciled itself to losing an empire—or to being treated like a second-rate power all these years. . . . The question now is what else Russia is prepared to do to make up for those 17 years of humiliation. One thing we should pretty much count on is that Moscow right now is casting an eye toward Iran, the most direct route to restoring its influence in the Middle East.¹⁰⁵

The Russian-Iranian alliance is what’s driving the politics of the whole region. Iran is placed very prominently in the list of allies taking part in this invasion. But according to Rosenberg, “Never in the last 2,500 years have Russian and Iran had a military alliance.”¹⁰⁶ These two countries have hated each other forever. They have never worked together on anything, until today. And for the first time in the 2600 years since Ezekiel gave this prophecy, these two nations now have a strong alliance with each other. This has only developed in very recent years. After the Iran-Iraq war, which ended in

¹⁰⁴ Patrick Neff, “The Russian-Persian Alliance,” *Israel My Glory*, September/October 2009, 25.

¹⁰⁵ Robert Baer, “The Russian Empire Strikes Back,” *Time*, August 12, 2008, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1831857,00.html>, accessed December 11, 2010.

¹⁰⁶ Rosenberg, *Epicenter*, 104.

1988, leaving over a million people dead in the region, Iran had money, but desperately needed to re-arm. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union had collapsed. They had lots of weapons, but no money. In words of Rosenberg, “It was a match made in hell.”¹⁰⁷ Money went from Iran to Russia; weapons went from Russia to Iran—billions of dollars worth. According to Rhodes, “Iran has now become the third-largest recipient of Russian arms with an estimated annual trade of \$500 million.”¹⁰⁸ Vladimir Putin had a big hand in this. Russia also sold nuclear materials to Iran, and trained Iranian nuclear scientists. Meanwhile, Russia repeatedly blocked U.N. sanctions against Iran. When Ahmadinejad came to power in 2005, things really began to heat up. In 2007, Vladimir Putin himself went to meet with Ahmadinejad in Iran. In the summer of 2009, right after Ahmadinejad’s hotly disputed re-election in Iran, his very first order of business (the very next day) was to take a trip to Moscow, to strengthen the alliance that is growing between Russia and Iran.¹⁰⁹

Iran has also been building alliances with Sudan (ancient Cush). For years Sudan was armed by the Soviets. But there has never been any connection between the Sudan and Iran, until now. But a radical Islamic jihadist government has emerged in Sudan, and Ahmadinejad has been there to cultivate an alliance.¹¹⁰ When Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir visited Tehran in April 2006, Ahmadinejad stated, “The Iranian and Sudanese nations and governments have a joint enemy that is constantly creating obstacles in the way of their advancement, and hatching plots against them.”¹¹¹ During a

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 106.

¹⁰⁸ Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 45.

¹⁰⁹ From a conference telephone call with Joel Rosenberg, this student and others, June 18, 2009.

¹¹⁰ Hitchcock, *The Apocalypse of Ahmadinejad*, 17.

¹¹¹ *What Makes Tehran Tick: Islamist Ideology and Hegemonic Interests* (Washington, DC: Iran Policy Committee, 2006), 113, quoted in Hitchcock, *The Apocalypse of Ahmadinejad*, 18.

speech in Khartoum, Sudan, Ahmadinejad said, “We have to pay attention to the devils [U.S. and Israel] who want to cause divisions among us.”¹¹² Today these two countries are the best of friends. Ezekiel predicted it 2600 years ago. Ahmadinejad has also been cultivating relationships with other countries named in Ezekiel’s prophecy. According to Hitchcock, “During the summer of 2006 he visited Turkmenistan and Tajikistan to improve Iranian relations with these neighbors.”¹¹³ Adding to the strength of the alliance in the region, Ethiopia, portions of which were also part of ancient Cush, has a communist government with ties to Russia. All these connections could come into play as Ezekiel’s prophesied alliance comes into reality.

Libya (ancient Put), formerly ruled for many years by Moammar Ghaddafi, has long been allied with Russia. According to Grant Jeffrey,

Russia maintains fourteen major air bases in Libya alone with more than five-hundred and fifty Russian combat aircraft....Russia now has more air force jets in Libya than the total combined air forces of England, West Germany, and France. In addition, Russia has prepositioned a staggering sixteen thousand tanks and armored cars in Libya.¹¹⁴

As far back at 1973, “Libya’s Muammar Gaddafi [demanded] an all-out condemnation of Israel.”¹¹⁵ Libya is also home of the Lockerbie bomber, who killed 270 innocent souls, and is now a hero and once again a free man in the land of his birth. It’s not hard to imagine this country joining an alliance with the Russians and the Iranians. Ancient

¹¹² Hitchcock, *The Apocalypse of Ahmadinejad*, 65.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Grant R. Jeffrey, *Final Warning* (Toronto, Ontario: Frontier Research Publications, 1995), 114.

¹¹⁵ “Decade of Destiny,” *Time*, June 11, 1973, 44, quoted in McCall and Levitt, *The Coming Russian Invasion of Israel*, 29.

Libya also included Tunisia and Algeria, “both of which have long histories of hatred toward Israel and close ties to Moscow and Tehran,” according to Rosenberg.¹¹⁶

The country of Turkey, according to Ezekiel, will also be a key player in the coalition that will come against Israel. Until very recently, this has been a bit of a puzzle, as Turkey for over 50 years has been aligned with the West. It is a long-standing member of NATO, one of our allies. The U.S. has a military base in Turkey. Turkey has also for many years been Israel’s closest and really only ally in the Islamic world. They have had trade agreements together. They have conducted military exercises together. They have been good friends. But in the summer of 2010 that changed very rapidly. An email from Rosenberg in October 2009 told stories about escalating tensions between Turkey and Israel. According to Rosenberg, over the previous 10 days or so before his email:

Turkey has canceled a NATO military exercise because Israel was invited to participate. Turkey has aired a drama on state-run TV portraying an Israeli soldier walking up to a Palestinian child and barbarically shooting her point-blank. Turkey has made moves to draw closer to Iran and Syria, including choosing to engage in military exercises with Syria instead of Israel. Turkey has made moves to draw closer to Russia.¹¹⁷

All this was before the infamous confrontation with a Turkish ship attempting to break Israel’s blockade of Gaza on May 31, 2010. Contrary to how this was portrayed in the mainstream media, this event had nothing to do with humanitarian aid, but everything to do with the politics of the region. Through this event, Turkey turned on Israel quite viciously, and relations between the two countries have almost completely fallen apart. This could be one more indication that the war of Gog and Magog is drawing close. It demonstrates a major change of direction for the country of Turkey. Turkey had applied

¹¹⁶ Rosenberg, *The Ezekiel Option*, 242.

¹¹⁷ Joel Rosenberg’s Weblog, “Turkey Turns on Israel,” posted October 19, 2009, <http://flashtrafficblog.wordpress.com/2009/10/19/is-turkey-turning-against-israel> (accessed December 11, 2010).

for admission into the European Union, but Europe has rejected them. Now Turkey is moving from being officially a secular government to becoming an Islamic republic, like Iran.¹¹⁸ Frank Gaffney reports that Turkey is transitioning from “a secular democracy with a Muslim society into a state governed by a radical Islamic ideology hostile to Western values and freedoms.”¹¹⁹ In late May of 2010 the top leaders from Russia, Iran, and Turkey met together at a summit in Turkey to discuss strengthening the ties and alliances between them as nations. So right before our eyes, Turkey seems to be shifting its alliance from the West to the very nations Ezekiel lists in this confederacy. Turkey now endorses Iran’s nuclear program and international defiance, and is joining in in denouncing Israel.

It is hard to ignore the striking resemblance between modern alliances that are forming and the picture described by Ezekiel. It is certainly possible that we are in the gathering storm for Ezekiel’s war. Rhodes concludes,

What all this means is that, ultimately, the northern military coalition prophesied by Ezekiel is slowly but surely coming together in our day—with alliances or strategic agreements forming between Russian, Iran, Turkey, Libya, Syria, various former Soviet republics, and others. This, combined with the fact that the other preconditions for the invasion . . . are either met or could easily be met in the near future, indicates the stage may indeed be being set for the Ezekiel invasion. . . . If things keep on their present course, we have good reason to suspect that “the day draweth nigh.”¹²⁰

Fruchtenbaum writes, “While present events concerning these nations appear to be lining them up in such a confederacy, such current events may quickly change. It is too early to say ‘this is it.’ It is necessary to wait for exact fulfillment before identifying

¹¹⁸ Joel Rosenberg’s Weblog, “Israeli Vice Prime Minister Warns Ahmadinejad to Choose ‘The Bomb’ or ‘Survival,’” posted June 20, 2010, <http://flashtrafficblog.wordpress.com/2010/06/27/cbn-reports-on-israeli-vice-prime-ministers-address-to-the-epicenter-conference> (accessed December 15, 2010).

¹¹⁹ Frank Gaffney, *War Footing* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006), 164, quoted in Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 177.

¹²⁰ Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 178.

fulfillment.”¹²¹ His point is well taken, that the world situation could indeed change, and present alliances could fall apart, awaiting a future realignment before the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy. Still, as Bible students seek discernment of the times in which we live, it is fair to say that current alliances strongly foreshadow what the Bible predicts of the coming war. While caution in declaring prophecy fulfilled is prudent, we must not be so timid that we refuse to see the hand of God at work until the final details have fallen into place. While acknowledging that only God knows the future, Hitchcock emphasizes that:

We need to know and understand biblical prophecy in order to more wisely discern the role of current world events in shaping the future. I believe current events in Iran and the Middle East are part of the stage setting for the end time drama. We are witnessing a growing alliance of Muslim nations and Russia that is strikingly similar to the group of nations that will swoop down to invade Israel in the latter days, according to Ezekiel 38–39. This is a sign of the times that indicates we are likely near the beginning of the Tribulation.¹²²

Islam: The Common Link

Although the birth of Islam was well over a thousand years into the future at the time Ezekiel wrote, it seems more than coincidental that this entire invading coalition is made up of nations that today are strongly Islamic. Even Russia, though officially atheistic, is almost completely Islamic in the regions mentioned by Ezekiel. Phillips states, “Muslims make up one of the fastest-growing non-Russian minorities in the former Soviet republics.”¹²³ Furthermore, the nations listed are currently among the most radical Islamic states on earth. There is little doubt about Islam’s influence in shaping and motivating the players in this alliance. One tenet of Islam is eventual world domination,

¹²¹ Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 71.

¹²² Hitchcock, *The Apocalypse of Ahmadinejad*, 125.

¹²³ Phillips, *Exploring the Future*, 330.

and once a land has been under Islam's sway, it is anathema to the Islamic mind that such a land could be "lost." According to one student of Islam, "Under Islam, land once possessed by Islam, if subsequently lost to an invader, remains land that is holy to Islam. It is especially imperative that such lost lands be restored to the rightful rule of Islam."¹²⁴ Thus the very existence of a Jewish state on Islamic soil is an affront to Islam, an insult that cannot be overlooked. Although the desire for plunder is part of the invading coalition's motivation, it is not the only motivation. According to Ezekiel 38:12, Gog will say, "I will...turn my hand against the resettled ruins and the people gathered from the nations." Thus it is not simply their possessions the invaders are after, it is also the people themselves. They will advance against God's people like a cloud (Ezek 38:16). Though the religious motivation of the invaders is not explicit in the text, God's is: "I will make known my holy name among my people Israel. I will no longer let my holy name be profaned, and the nations will know that I the Lord am the Holy One in Israel" (Ezek 39:7). Indeed, the religious motivation of the invaders is likely one of the biggest factors to be considered that gives rise to this intended war of extermination. In the eyes of the Islamic nations participating, this is the "war to end all wars" against the Jews.

It must be realized that violence is at the heart of Islam. From the very beginning, Islam expanded its reach not by winning the hearts and minds of its converts, but by the sword: convert or die. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, amazingly, American politicians were tripping over themselves to declare Islam a religion of peace. Nothing could be further from the truth. And the more committed a Muslim is, the more devoted to obeying the Qur'an, the more violent and extreme they must become. That is why almost every terrorist act on the planet is committed at the hands of Islamic radicals. There is a very influential Muslim theologian in Iran by the name of Ayatollah

¹²⁴ Lambert Dolphin, "A Short Summary of Islamic Beliefs and Eschatology," <http://ldolphin.org/islam.shtml> (accessed March 3, 2012).

Muhammad Taghi Mesbah-Yazdi. Mesbah-Yazdi has become Iran's leading clerical voice proclaiming the coming of the Mahdi (the Islamic messiah) and the urgency of preparing the way for his arrival and appearance on the earth. This man is also a mentor and close personal friend of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Mesbah-Yazdi is a fierce proponent of violent jihad as a means of preparing the way for the Mahdi's arrival. He has argued, "We must wipe away the shameful stain whereby some people imagine that violence has no place in Islam. We have decided and are determined to argue and prove that violence is at the heart of Islam."¹²⁵ This, coming from their own mouths, gives insight into the coming war of extermination against Israel.

The rise of militant Islam is also related to the collapse of the former Soviet Union, whose official position of atheism at least partially squelched the influence of Islam within her borders. As Hitchcock explains,

The fall of the Soviet Union has also left a great power vacuum in central Asia and the Middle East, and this vacuum is being filled by a militant fundamentalist Islam. I believe that these events are happening in preparation for the great invasion of Israel in the end times foretold by the Jewish prophet Ezekiel twenty-six hundred years ago.¹²⁶

Islamic Eschatology

Going even deeper into the Islamic motivations for this war are the implications of Islamic eschatology, particularly among Shiite Muslims. They believe in a coming Islamic messiah known as the "Mahdi," or the "Twelfth Imam," or the "Hidden Imam." They believe that this Mahdi is a divinely appointed man who disappeared as a young boy way back in the year A.D. 874. God has kept him in hiding ever since that time, thus the title, the "Hidden Imam." And Shiite Muslims believe that Allah will bring him forth at the end of the age to step onto the world platform and usher us into a golden

¹²⁵ Rosenberg, *Inside the Revolution*, 163.

¹²⁶ Hitchcock, *After the Empire*, 2.

era of Islam. They believe the end of the world is approaching, indeed that it is imminent, right at the door. The expectation of this coming Islamic messiah is at a fever pitch among Shiite Muslims today. They believe that the Mahdi will appear on the scene suddenly, with a voice from the skies announcing his reappearance. His face will glow, and he will appear with a cloud moving above his head.

The Ayatollah Khomeini and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran are Shiite Muslims, and adhere to these beliefs. Further, they believe they can hasten the coming of their Mahdi. They believe he is waiting for them to get things ready for him, that there are certain conditions that need to exist on earth first, and then he will appear. They believe that the Mahdi will appear at a time of great global crisis, carnage, chaos and confusion. One sign of his coming will be “the death of 80 percent of the world’s population in a massive war.”¹²⁷ In their understanding, there are two great satans in the world that must be destroyed, and then the end will come. The Great Satan is the United States, because they perceive it as the epicenter of Christianity. The Little Satan is the nation of Israel, because Israel of course is the epicenter of Judaism. In their belief system, the Islamic messiah cannot and will not come until Israel has been destroyed, and the United States along with her. From the Islamic perspective, that will likely be a major factor that will be a driving force for this war.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad believes he is on a mission from Allah. He believes he has been personally called by God himself to prepare the way, and hasten the arrival of this messiah, and the end of the age. He sincerely believes that he is like a modern-day John the Baptist, called of God to prepare the way for the coming messiah. He boldly claims that he is in direct communication with Allah himself, getting directions from him

¹²⁷ Yossi Melman and Meir Javedanfar, *The Nuclear Sphinx of Tehran: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the State of Iran* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2007), 44, quoted in Hitchcock, *The Apocalypse of Ahmadinejad*, 52.

on how to proceed.¹²⁸ Both he and the Ayatollah Khamenei believe they can hasten the coming of the Mahdi by destroying the two great satans, bringing chaos and carnage to the planet, and then their messiah will come. They are hell-bent on this task, and they believe it will be accomplished. This is what drives the leaders of Iran today. Dore Gold states, “For Ahmadinejad, the destruction of Israel is one of the key global developments that will trigger the appearance of the Mahdi.”¹²⁹ In Ahmadinejad’s own words: “We don’t shy away from declaring that Islam is ready to rule the world. We must prepare ourselves to rule the world.”¹³⁰ “Our revolution’s main mission is to pave the way for the reappearance of the Twelfth Imam.”¹³¹ The leaders of Iran in particular are driven by their end times beliefs, making their participation in the coalition against Israel particularly significant.

Iran’s Animosity toward Israel

One of the chief partners in Russia’s invading coalition is Persia, the modern day country of Iran. Several prophecy scholars writing before the Islamic Revolution recognized that things would have to eventually change. McCall and Levitt wrote in 1974, “Iran is not officially aligned with Russia at the moment, though such an alliance in the future would not be surprising.”¹³² In Fruchtenbaum’s 1982 book, he commented that “though Iran has generally been pro-western and pro-Israel, this must eventually

¹²⁸ A. Savyonand and Y. Mansharof, “Ahmadinejad’s Messianic Policy,” *Israel My Glory* (September/October 2009), 19.

¹²⁹ Dore Gold, *The Fight for Jerusalem* (Washington: Regency, 2007), 232, quoted in Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 31.

¹³⁰ Hitchcock, *The Apocalypse of Ahmadinejad*, 1.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹³² McCall and Levitt, *The Coming Russian Invasion of Israel*, 35.

change.”¹³³ A footnote explained that this was “written before the Khomeini Islamic revolution.” And of course, things did change—just as the Bible predicted. The same footnote goes on to say, “As of now Iran is anti-western and anti-Israel but not as yet within the Russian sphere of influence.”¹³⁴ That now has also changed, as Russia and Iran have forged a strong alliance together. Ever since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Iran has been crystal clear about its intentions to destroy the United States and Israel. The Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Supreme Leader of Iran after the death of the Ayatollah Khomeini, is quoted as saying, “It is the mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to erase Israel from the map of the region.”¹³⁵ Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iran’s current president, has been especially bold and vocal in declaring this, as recognized in much of the more recent literature.¹³⁶ “Israel is destined for destruction and will soon disappear.”¹³⁷ “Israel must be wiped off the map.”¹³⁸ “They say how could we have a world without America and Zionism? But you had best know that this slogan and this goal are attainable, and can surely be achieved.”¹³⁹ “God willing, with the force of God behind it, we shall soon

¹³³ Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 70.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Kenneth R. Timmerman, *Countdown to Crisis: The Coming Nuclear Showdown with Iran* (New York: Crown Forum, 2005), 42, quoted in Rosenberg, *Inside the Revolution*, 156.

¹³⁶ See especially books by Rosenberg, Rhodes and Hitchcock.

¹³⁷ Hitchcock, *The Apocalypse of Ahmadinejad*, 66.

¹³⁸ *Middle East Research Institute*, December 15, 2006, no. 307, quoted in Hitchcock, *The Apocalypse of Ahmadinejad*, 70

¹³⁹ This quote is widely reported, with slightly varying translations. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, text of address to “A World Without Zionism” conference, Tehran, reported by the Iranian Students News Agency, October 26, 2005, cited by MEMRI, Special Dispatch Series – No. 1013, October 28, 2005, quoted in Rosenberg, *Inside the Revolution*, 169. See also Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 40; also Hitchcock, *The Apocalypse of Ahmadinejad*, 71; also “A World without Zionism or America,” *E-Zion Israel News*, October 27, 2005.

experience a world without the United States and Zionism.”¹⁴⁰ In September 2005 Ahmadinejad was in New York to address the United Nations General Assembly. He shocked the delegates by ending his speech with a prayer to Allah to hasten the coming of the Islamic messiah, the Mahdi: “O mighty Lord, I pray to you to hasten the emergence of your last repository, the Promised One, that perfect and pure human being, the One that will fill this world with justice and peace.”¹⁴¹ He began telling people that “he believed the end of the world was just two or three years away and that the way to hasten the coming of the Mahdi was to annihilate two countries: Israel and the United States.”¹⁴² He started boasting, according to one widely respected Iranian journalist, “that the Imam [the Ayatollah Khamenei] gave him the presidency for a single task: provoking a ‘clash of civilizations’ in which the Muslim world, led by Iran, takes on the ‘infidel’ West, led by the United States, and defeats it.”¹⁴³ The current leaders of Iran would like nothing better than to join in with an invading force committed to the destruction of Israel. They have already been fighting proxy wars with Israel through their arming of terrorist groups in Syria, Lebanon, and Gaza. The rhetoric coming out of Iran is not mere bluster; it is the clear stating of their desires and intentions. That is driving the nation to produce ever better weapons, missile systems, and ultimately, nuclear weapons.

¹⁴⁰ “Iranian leader: Wipe out Israel,” *CNN World*, posted October 27, 2005, http://articles.cnn.com/2005-10-26/world/ahmadinejad_1_israel-jerusalem-day-islamic-world?_s=PM:WORLD (accessed March 3, 2012). The original quote was reported by the Islamic Republic News Agency.

¹⁴¹ President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, address to the United Nations General Assembly, New York City, September 17, 2005, translated and distributed by the Islamic Republic News Agency, posted on www.globalsecurity.org, quoted in Rosenberg, *Inside the Revolution*, 168.

¹⁴² Rosenberg, *Inside the Revolution*, 168.

¹⁴³ Amir Taheri, “The Frightening Truth of Why Iran Wants a Bomb,” *Sunday Telegraph*, April 16, 2006, quoted in Rosenberg, *Inside the Revolution*, 168.

Iran's Nuclear Ambitions

Iran has for many years desired to acquire nuclear weapons. In 1995 Grant Jeffrey wrote, "Intelligence reports from Germany confirm that Iran purchased four nuclear weapons from Islamic Kazakhstan in 1992. Iranian intelligence agents acquired two Russian produced forty-kiloton nuclear warheads that were designed to be used with ballistic missiles."¹⁴⁴ In the news daily for years now has been Iran's continued drive to obtain nuclear weapons. Iran has recently been caught secretly building a second uranium enrichment facility carefully hidden from prying eyes, clearly built for purpose of creating nuclear weapons. In a recent interview with Ann Curry of NBC News, four times Ahmadinejad refused to rule out the building of nuclear weapons.¹⁴⁵ A.Q. Khan, the father of Pakistan's nuclear weapons development program, has admitted selling advanced nuclear weapons blueprints to Iran years ago for millions of dollars.¹⁴⁶ According to multiple sources, Iran currently has enough enriched uranium already to begin the construction of nuclear bombs. On August 31, 2009, Dore Gold, senior advisor to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, "noted that a careful reading of the IAEA report indicates Iran now appears to have enough uranium to produce at least two nuclear bombs."¹⁴⁷ Around the same time, Glyn Davies, Washington's chief envoy to the IAEE said, "Iran is now either very near or in possession already of sufficient low-enriched

¹⁴⁴ Jeffrey, *Final Warning*, 135. This incident is also referred to in Hitchcock, *After the Empire*, 73.

¹⁴⁵ Ann Curry, "Ahmadinejad refuses to rule out weapons," *NBC News*, September 18, 2009, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/32877416/ns/world_news-mideastn_africa (accessed December 15, 2010). The transcript of the entire interview can be found at "Transcript: Interview with Iran's Ahmadinejad," http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/32913296/ns/world_news-mideastn_africa/print/1/displaymode/1098 (accessed December 15, 2010).

¹⁴⁶ John Hagee, *Jerusalem Countdown: A Prelude to War* (Lake Mary, FL: Front Line, 2007), 40.

¹⁴⁷ Email from Joel Rosenberg, September 1, 2009.

uranium to produce one nuclear weapon.”¹⁴⁸ Caspar Weinberger, in an interview with Joel Rosenberg, said, “I think they probably already have gone nuclear . . . I think they have probably equipped themselves to construct some types of nuclear weapons and . . . I think they could probably do quite a lot of damage right now.”¹⁴⁹ Meanwhile, Iran keeps testing longer and longer range missiles that could be used to deliver such bombs. Much of Iran’s missile technology comes from North Korea, with whom Iran has been working closely for about ten years.¹⁵⁰ In May 2009, the Associated Press reported that “Iran tested its longest-range solid-fuel missile. . . . The missile was said to be capable of striking Israel, U.S. Mideast bases and Europe.”¹⁵¹ Iran keeps getting closer and closer to possessing nuclear weapons, with the missiles to deliver them. And the rest of the world seems unable or unwilling to do anything about it.

That has prompted some to question whether a nuclear Iran would be all that bad. Media mogul Ted Turner characterized President Bush’s demand that Iran abandon its nuclear weapons program as “a joke.” “They’re a sovereign state,” Turner said of Iran. “We have 28,000 [nuclear weapons]. Why can’t they have 10? They aren’t usable by any sane person.”¹⁵² Such a statement betrays a woefully ignorant understanding of the situation as it applies to Iran. This is a totally different picture than the nuclear standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union during Cold War. There, we each had many times more than enough weapons to obliterate the other nation off the face of the planet. Each side knew that. So the threat of Mutually Assured Destruction, or “MAD” as

¹⁴⁸ Fox News, September 9, 2009. <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,548161,00.html> (accessed September 9, 2009).

¹⁴⁹ Rosenberg, *Epicenter*, 119.

¹⁵⁰ From a telephone call with Joel Rosenberg, June 18, 2009.

¹⁵¹ “Launch Confirmed,” *The Associated Press*, May 21, 2009.

¹⁵² Daniel Trotta, “Ted Turner Says Iraq War among History’s ‘Dumbest,’” *Reuters*, September 20, 2006.

it was called, successfully prevented any kind of nuclear exchange between our two countries, because both sides wanted to live. That is not the case with Iran. Their leaders are just fine with the prospect of dying. In fact, in their eyes, that would be a good thing, because that guarantees them a straight ticket to Paradise, in line with Islamic theology. That is why even one nuclear weapon in the hands of an Islamic Radical is far more dangerous than ten thousand held by the former Soviet Union. In a Washington Post editorial by George Will, the author quoted the words of the Ayatollah Khomeini, father of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, spoken in 1980: “We do not worship Iran, we worship Allah. For patriotism is another name for paganism. I say let this land burn. I say let this land go up in smoke, provided Islam emerges triumphant in the rest of the world.”¹⁵³ On NBC’s *Meet the Press* on April 2, 2006, Senator John McCain said, “there’s only one thing worse than using the option of military action, and that is the Iranians acquiring nuclear weapons.”¹⁵⁴ If that were to happen, McCain said, “I think we could have Armageddon.” Jonathan Schanzer, former White House counterterrorism analyst, speaking at a Friends of Israel prophecy conference, said, “Ten years ago, Iran said it wanted to test its nuclear weapons—not underground, but on Tel Aviv.”¹⁵⁵ Writing over 25 years ago, LaHaye said, “It is frightening conceivable that some mad terrorist or Idi Amin-type of dictator could gain control of a nuclear bomb and threaten to destroy the world.”¹⁵⁶ In light of the current world situation, LaHaye’s words seem almost prophetic, as that is precisely the scenario with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s relentless pursuit of acquiring nuclear weapons.

¹⁵³ George Will, “Netanyahu’s Warning,” *Washington Post*, August 18, 2010.

¹⁵⁴ Quoted in Rosenberg, *Epicenter*, xx.

¹⁵⁵ Lori Van Inen, “Speaker: Israel Security Threatened,” *Intelligencer Journal/Lancaster New Era*, September 15, 2009.

¹⁵⁶ LaHaye, *The Coming Peace in the Middle East*, 176.

The current U.N. sanctions against Iran are toothless and will likely accomplish nothing. Iran has no intention of scaling back their nuclear ambitions, and continues to thumb its nose at the world. According to Uri Lubrani, advisor to Israeli Vice Prime Minister Moshe Yaalon, “Iran is on the warpath, and has been for some time.”¹⁵⁷ The current U.S. administration has shown no willingness to take the tough steps necessary to produce any real change, and the United States has no stomach to enter yet another sphere of conflict. In the end, nobody will do anything about it, except Israel, and sooner or later they may have to. If the West lacks the willpower to stop Iran from getting the bomb, Israel might soon feel compelled to launch a preemptive strike against Iran.¹⁵⁸ Hagee writes, “As Iran prepares nuclear weapons, there are few doubts those weapons may be used on Israel first. But Israel is not obligated to commit national suicide for world peace.”¹⁵⁹ Speaking at the 2010 Epicenter conference in Philadelphia, which this student attended, was Israel’s Vice Prime Minister Moshe Yaalon. When asked about possible U.S. military intervention against Iran, Yaalon said that according to Jewish tradition, righteous people hope that the job might be done by others. But he also referred to another old Jewish saying, “If I’m not for myself, then who is for me? So we should be ready.”¹⁶⁰ Discussing the possibility of an Israeli preemptive strike, Rosenberg reported in June 2009 that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently said that he believes

¹⁵⁷ Joel Rosenberg’s Weblog, “*Year End Analysis of Iran Threat*,” posted December 16, 2010, <http://flashtrafficblog.wordpress.com> (accessed December 16, 2010). Lubrani was speaking at a conference in Washington, D.C. on “Confronting the Iran Threat,” organized by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, on December 9-10, 2010. Lubrani previously served as an Iran advisor to the Israeli Ministry of Defense and was Israel’s Ambassador to Iran before the revolution in 1979.

¹⁵⁸ This subject was discussed in a conference call with Joel Rosenberg, this student, and others, on February 11, 2010.

¹⁵⁹ Hagee, *Jerusalem Countdown*, 106.

¹⁶⁰ Moshe Yaalon, speaking at Epicenter Conference, Philadelphia, June 26, 2010. Reported by Erick Stakelbeck, “Exclusive: Israeli Vice PM Moshe Yaalon on Iran, Turkey, U.S. Relations.” <http://blogs.cbn.com/stakelbeckonterror/archive/2010/06/26/exclusive-israeli-vice-pm-moshe-yaalon-on-iran-turkey-us-relations>, accessed June 30, 2010.

he has been put on this earth to stop the next Holocaust.¹⁶¹ So the big question is, are they going to do it, and if so, when? Rosenberg reported recently that the former head of the Mossad, the Israeli spy agency, is saying it is time now for a preemptive military strike against Iran.¹⁶² Israeli Major General Yaakov Amidror, former head of the IDF's Research & Assessment Division, said in December 2010, "I believe it is almost impossible to stop Iran without military force."¹⁶³ Pressure for that is building. Such an attack by Israel, which many in the world have been considering very likely and imminent, could well launch a chain of events that would lead to the war of Gog and Magog. Lt. General Jerry Boykin, a retired three star general and former Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence, has said at a recent Epicenter conference,

If Israel were to strike Iran...you would see it accelerate the relationship between Russia and Iran. I think Russia would then come to the aid of...the Iranians and I think you would see that relationship solidify with increased military cooperation and military support, the sale of additional military equipment and even military advice. And that sets the stage for ultimately what is described in Ezekiel 38 and 39.¹⁶⁴

From the perspective of Rhodes, "An Israeli attack might give radical Muslims in multiple Middle Eastern countries all the justification they need for launching an all-out attack against Israel."¹⁶⁵ Hitchcock has the same thought: "If Israel were to take out the Iranian nuclear plants in the near future, this would plant seeds of hatred against Israel

¹⁶¹ From a telephone call with Joel Rosenberg, June 18, 2009.

¹⁶² Joel Rosenberg's Weblog, "Countdown: Netanyahu's Secret Trip to Moscow over Iran Threat Confirmed," posted September 10, 2009, <http://flashtrafficblog.wordpress.com/2009/09/10/countdown-netanyahus-secret-trip-to-moscow-over-iran-threat-confirmed> (accessed December 15, 2010).

¹⁶³ Joel Rosenberg's Weblog, "Year End Analysis of Iran Threat," posted December 16, 2010, <http://flashtrafficblog.wordpress.com> (accessed December 16, 2010).

¹⁶⁴ General Jerry Boykin, Epicenter Conference, San Diego, April 4, 2009.

¹⁶⁵ Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 51.

that could easily precipitate such an invasion in the very near future.”¹⁶⁶ In 2007 Hagee wrote,

If Iran’s nuclear facilities are attacked, you can be reasonably sure that Iran will counterattack. . . . If Israel attacks, there doubtless will be a vast pan-Arabic Islamic army assembled to attack Israel and attempt to drive the Jews into the Dead Sea. . . . The coming nuclear showdown with Iran is a certainty. The war of Ezekiel 38–39 could begin before this book gets published.¹⁶⁷

This evaluation of the situation is also shared by many others in the world. On January 29, 2011, the Associated Press reported, “A diverse panel of decision-makers and experts from the United States, Europe and the Middle East found common ground on just one thing when it comes to dealing with the Iranian nuclear program Friday: A military strike could well spark a devastating counterattack.”¹⁶⁸ It is at least possible that such a “devastating counterattack” could be the very war predicted by Ezekiel over 2600 years ago.

It is interesting to note that while Iran’s acquisition of nuclear weapons appears imminent, with every reason to believe that they would use such weapons against Israel, the Ezekiel passage does not give any hint of a nuclear war. In fact, a nuclear attack and a conventional invasion (as described by Ezekiel) would seem to be mutually exclusive. Why invade if you can wipe them out with nukes? And if you have wiped them out with nukes, who would want to invade? Thus while the nuclear threat against Israel from Iran is real, the Scriptures do not seem to indicate that Israel will be successfully attacked with nuclear weapons. This only increases the speculation that Iran’s nuclear ambitions will be stopped, most likely by some type of Israeli pre-emptive

¹⁶⁶ Mark Hitchcock, *Iran the Coming Crisis: Radical Islam, Oil, and the Nuclear Threat* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 2006), 188.

¹⁶⁷ Hagee, *Jerusalem Countdown*, 52-53.

¹⁶⁸ Associated Press, “Davos panel sees huge response to Iran attack,” *Lancaster Intelligencer-New Era*, January 29, 2011.

attack. And it is logical to assume that such a pre-emptive attack could lead to a retaliation which could be the war described by Ezekiel. As Hitchcock states, “An Israeli attack against Iran could push the world to the brink of World War III and set the stage for the Battle of Gog and Magog predicted in Ezekiel 38–39.”¹⁶⁹

When Ahmadinejad spoke again to the U.N. in New York in the summer of 2010, he began by praying again for Allah to hasten the coming of the Islamic Messiah, which according to his theology requires the destruction of Judeo-Christian civilization as we know it. Humanly speaking, war is coming. Very quickly, this end times alliance against Israel could become a reality. One by one, the pieces are falling into place.

Iraq’s and Egypt’s Current Position toward Israel

While the coalition against Israel is almost exclusively Islamic, one must consider why such close, major and historic enemies of Israel, such as Egypt and Iraq, which are also Islamic, do not appear in the list of nations that will come against Israel. It is very curious that these two countries are left off the list. Rosenberg writes, “If any group of countries was about to attack Israel, historically speaking you’d have to expect Egypt and Iraq to be at the front of the line, right? But they’re not. The question is, why?”¹⁷⁰ There have been three major wars fought against Israel since her founding, in an attempt to destroy her: in 1948, 1967, and again in 1973. Every time, both Egypt and Iraq took part in a coalition of nations with the goal of wiping Israel off the map. Every time they failed. If indeed the war of Gog and Magog is approaching soon, why would these two nations not take part? Current events may provide the answer to that as well.

For Iraq, the recent U.S.-led war has dramatically altered the direction of that country. Under Saddam Hussein, many Scud missiles were launched into Israel. But a

¹⁶⁹ Hitchcock, *The Apocalypse of Ahmadinejad*, 112.

¹⁷⁰ Rosenberg, *The Ezekiel Option*, 264.

new day has dawned in Iraq, and things are different now. Could it be that our victories in Iraq explain why they do not participate in this next war against Israel? Here we are entering the realm of speculation, but the thought is intriguing.

What about Egypt? The last time Egypt fought against Israel, it was an utter disaster for Egypt. Not only did Egypt's armies fail to achieve victory against Israel, but Israel's army marched within a few miles of Cairo. The Egyptians were devastated and terrified. Apparently following a "three strikes and you're out" policy, in 1979 Egypt ending up signing a lasting peace treaty with Israel, known as the Camp David Accords.¹⁷¹ Peace was restored, Egypt got the Sinai back, and these two countries remain at peace today. This could be an explanation from current events why Egypt is notably lacking from this next attempt to destroy Israel.

A very similar argument could also be advanced for the country of Jordan. Though a much smaller nation, it is right next door to Israel, and many wars have been fought between the two countries over the centuries. Jordan also currently has a stable peace agreement with Israel. Jordan is not mentioned in Ezekiel's list of coalition participants. While it could be part of the "many nations" with Gog, it is also possible that Jordan will sit this conflict out.

The Absence of Material Support for Israel from Other Nations

As this coalition prepares to launch its invasion, Ezekiel records only a lame diplomatic challenge from other parts of the world. "Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish and all her villages will say to you, 'Have you come to plunder? Have you gathered your hordes to loot, to carry off silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods and to seize much plunder?'" (Ezek 38:13) According to this prophecy, that is all the support Israel can expect to receive from the rest of the world, as she faces this

¹⁷¹ Rosenberg, *Epicenter*, 39.

overwhelming horde threatening her destruction. Israel will stand alone against her enemies who wish to destroy her. The only active defender she will have on her side will be God, who of course comes to her aid when no one else will. This situation is not far from reality right now. LaHaye writes,

Unfortunately for Israel, instead of meeting Communist force with force, the western democracies will meet the invasion with diplomacy. This historically represents the weak response of the democracies in both the world wars and in almost every conflict since. Instead of sending help at the moment when Israel needs the support of her allies, they will send a diplomatic note (perhaps through the United Nations).¹⁷²

There is growing worldwide anti-Semitism and animosity toward Israel, and she increasingly stands alone among the nations. In the United Nations, there is a real and growing possibility that the nuclear spotlight will shift away from Iran and on to Israel. The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohammed El Baradei, said recently, "Israel is the number one threat to the Middle East given the nuclear arms it possesses."¹⁷³ There is a large proportion of the world that thinks Israel is the biggest problem the world has to deal with today. Following the Gaza blockade confrontation in 2010, predictably, the whole world condemned Israel. But their blockade is totally justified and many other nations have blockades just like it, including the United States. After the Cuban missile crisis back in 1962, when Cuba set up missiles aimed at the United States, we imposed a blockade saying no, you can't do that. To this very day that blockade is still in effect. From Gaza better than 10,000 missiles have been fired at Israel over the past few years, until finally Israel intervened militarily to stop it. They imposed a

¹⁷² LaHaye, *The Coming Peace in the Middle East*, 136.

¹⁷³ Joel Rosenberg's Weblog, "Warning: Israel in Danger of Being Blindsided by Two New Grave Threats," posted October 6, 2009, <http://flashtrafficblog.wordpress.com/2009/10/06/warning-israel-in-danger-of-being-blindsided-on-two-new-threats> (accessed December 15, 2010).

blockade to keep the missiles from coming in to Gaza. But then when Israel takes action to enforce that blockade, the whole world condemns them.

Even the United States, under the Obama administration, is starting to fail Israel in this. As Israel's greatest friend in the world, one would surely have expected the United States to strongly support their ally Israel in this matter, defending their right to defend themselves. But she did not. All that came from the White House was a statement of regret over the loss of life—very lukewarm support at best, if it can even be called that. However, this is consistent with the obvious and dramatic change in tenor of U.S. policy toward Israel under President Obama. According to one poll, during the Bush administration 88% of Israelis believed the U.S. President was on their side, but only 4% of Israelis believe that is still true today.¹⁷⁴ Beginning with President Obama's June 2009 speech to the Muslim world from Cairo, Egypt, it has been widely perceived that he has offered his friendship to the Muslim world, while offering nothing but condemnation for the Israelis. Hard as it is to fathom, from a nation that has been Israel's best friend in the world from the very beginning, eventually even U.S. support for Israel will fade. Although not supported by many in Congress or the American public, the Obama administration has already clearly backed away from support of Israel. On April 18, 2010, Fox News reported that the Obama administration would no longer automatically stand with Israel in U.N. Security Council decisions.¹⁷⁵ If the United States is still around whenever the Gog-Magog invasion begins to form, she will offer little support to Israel other than mere words. According to Hagee, "When America sees Russia and the Arabs

¹⁷⁴ Lori Van Inen, "Speaker: Israel Security Threatened." *Intelligencer Journal/Lancaster New Era*, September 15, 2009.

¹⁷⁵ Fox News, "Obama and Israel: Showdown at the UN?" posted April 19, 2009, <http://liveshots.blogs.foxnews.com/2010/04/19/obama-and-israel-showdown-at-the-un/> (accessed February 14, 2011).

going into Israel, it will be simply a war above and beyond its national will to respond.”¹⁷⁶ There will be only a lukewarm diplomatic protest that accomplishes nothing. Nobody will really stand up for Israel. They will be all alone. That is almost exactly what happened with the Gaza blockade incident. Not even the U.S. stood up for Israel, when in the eyes of this student, we should have. It appears to be a foreshadowing of biblical prophecy that could take place very soon. In the words of Rosenberg, “God may be weaning Israel off of the U.S. There will arrive a point prophetically where Israel will look only to God for help and support. Right now they’re looking squarely at the U.S.”¹⁷⁷ Jonathan Schanzer, former White House counterterrorism analyst, recently said, “What we’re watching now is that Israel is increasingly isolated.”¹⁷⁸

Israel in Unbelief

According to Ezekiel 36–37, the restoration of Israel will take place in two stages—first a physical restoration to their land, and then later a full spiritual restoration to the Lord. The events of Ezekiel 38–39 appear to fall between those two stages. At the time of the invasion by Gog, their spiritual restoration will be yet future. God uses the miraculous deliverance of Israel by God to open the eyes of Israel to the Lord (Ezek 39:22, 27-28). God will use this war to begin turning the hearts of Israel back to him. But at the time of the war itself, their spiritual restoration will be yet future. Fruchtenbaum declares that “Israel in this passage is regathered in unbelief, for only after the invasion do many in Israel turn to the Lord.”¹⁷⁹ Hitchcock concurs with the understanding that

¹⁷⁶ Hagee, *Jerusalem Countdown*, 145.

¹⁷⁷ From a telephone call with Joel Rosenberg on June 18, 2009.

¹⁷⁸ Lori Van Inen, “Speaker: Israel Security Threatened.” *Intelligencer Journal/Lancaster New Era*, September 15, 2009.

¹⁷⁹ Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 72.

Israel must be gathered in unbelief at the time this war takes place,¹⁸⁰ as does Hoehner.¹⁸¹ That is precisely the point in history where we find ourselves living today. Although a trickle of Jews has begun to put their trust in Christ, the flood is yet to come. With the Jews back in the land—but not yet trusting Christ, the stage is set for the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy.¹⁸²

By way of summary, here is an interesting tidbit of information: a group of Jewish rabbis in Israel recently made the connection between all these current events and the approaching War of Gog and Magog.¹⁸³ That is earthshaking. Through a conference call with Joel Rosenberg this student was able to ask him about that, and whether there is much awareness in Israel of how current events might be foreshadowing that approaching war. Rosenberg responded that there has not been, primarily because Jewish understanding of end time events is totally different from the way we understand it. “We’re not even on the same page.”¹⁸⁴ So for this group of rabbis to come forward and connect the dots about this really is big news. Even observant Jews in Israel are starting to make those connections.

Various Views of the Timing of Ezekiel’s Prophesied War

¹⁸⁰ Hitchcock, *After the Empire*, 94-96.

¹⁸¹ Hoehner, “The Progression of Events in Ezekiel 38–39,” 91.

¹⁸² There is a tension between this passage in Ezekiel, where the Jewish return to the land begins in unbelief, and Deuteronomy 30:1-10, where the return to the land *follows* a return to the Lord. This tension is apparent even in Ezekiel 39:25-28, where God will “now” (after the war) bring Israel back to the land (:25), but he also brings them back and *then* shows himself holy through them; i.e., through the events of this war (:27). This tension can best be explained by seeing the return to the land beginning in unbelief, before Ezekiel’s war, but then being fully accomplished later, at some time after Ezekiel’s war. Thus the return takes place both before and after the war, and in both unbelief and belief.

¹⁸³ Joel Rosenberg’s Weblog, “Israeli Rabbis Say Current Events Could Lead to ‘War of Gog and Magog,’” posted June 3, 2010, <http://flashtrafficblog.wordpress.com/2010/06/03/israeli-rabbis-say-current-events-could-lead-to-war-of-gog-and-magog> (accessed December 15, 2010).

¹⁸⁴ Phone call with Joel Rosenberg, June 16, 2010.

How and where Ezekiel's war fits in with other end time events is the subject of much debate and different schools of thought. As there are also many differences of opinion related to other end time events, it will be helpful to review this student's understanding of a basic end times timeline. We are currently living in the church age, which extends from the day of Pentecost until the rapture of the church, when all true believers in Christ are taken to heaven. Sometime after that, the Antichrist, the coming world ruler, will make a peace treaty or covenant with Israel, which marks the beginning of a seven year period known as the Great Tribulation. This is also the 70th week of Daniel, when God is once again dealing specifically with the nation of Israel. During the first 3½ years of that time, Israel will experience a period of relative security because of the Antichrist's covenant (although great destruction will be taking place on earth through the events of the early Tribulation period). At the midpoint of the Tribulation the Antichrist will break his treaty with Israel, and unleash a persecution such as the world has never known. Through the whole seven year period, billions of people will die. It will be a horrible time of trial. Had it continued on much longer, no one would have survived. But it is ended by the return of Christ in glory, who sets up his kingdom on this earth, ushering in a thousand year period of peace and blessing known as the millennium. Near the end of the millennium, Satan will be unleashed to foment one final rebellion against the Lord, deceiving the nations of the earth—Gog and Magog—and gathering them for battle (not to be confused with Ezekiel's war of Gog and Magog). At that time the Lord will destroy the present heavens and earth with fire and make a new heavens and earth.¹⁸⁵

Where on that timeline does Ezekiel's war of Gog and Magog take place?

There are three primary views held today among evangelical scholars, that it will most

¹⁸⁵ Scripture references to support each of these points have been omitted, as it is not the purpose of this study to present a complete defense of this entire end times chronology. Such a defense would be outside the scope of this study.

likely fall: 1) before the beginning of the seven year Tribulation period (either before or after the rapture)¹⁸⁶; 2) during the Tribulation itself, either during the first half, during the false peace created by the Antichrist's covenant with Israel¹⁸⁷, near the end of the Tribulation¹⁸⁸, or spread out during the whole period¹⁸⁹; or 3) after the return of Christ, near the beginning of the millennium.¹⁹⁰ Others, generally from a non-evangelical perspective, equate it with the Gog-Magog invasion near the end of the millennium,¹⁹¹ a position that will be considered only briefly in this study. These views will be surveyed briefly, before a fuller discussion of the various time factors to be considered.

The predominant view among the literature surveyed is that Ezekiel's war will most likely fall during the first half of the Tribulation. John Walvoord, very influential scholar in the field of biblical eschatology that he was, held this view, stating, "We believe that the first important event will be Christ's coming for his own."¹⁹² There are

¹⁸⁶ Supporters of this view include Arnold Fruchtenbaum 77; D.L. Cooper 80-81; Thomas Ice (see Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 182); Grant Jeffrey, *Final Warning*, 126 ("After God's supernatural destruction of these invaders [Gog and Magog], Israel will tragically sign a seven-year treaty. . ."); Tim LaHaye (in the *Left Behind* series LaHaye places Ezekiel's war prior to the rapture, but Thomas Ice has reported, "Tim LaHaye has told me personally that even though they represented a pre-rapture position on Ezekiel 38 and 39 in their novel, he tends to place it after the rapture but before the Tribulation," see Thomas Ice, "Ezekiel 38 and 39," part 1, *Pre-Trib Perspectives*); Randall Price 40-41; Ron Rhodes (whose first choice is after the rapture, but before the Tribulation), 192-193; and Joel Rosenberg.

¹⁸⁷ Supporters of this view include Jimmy DeYoung, *Revelation: A Chronology* (Chattanooga, TN: Shofar Communications, 2010), 88-89; also in "Prophetic Perspective on the News: China, Russia, And Iran Will Remain Aligned Together," *Until Newsletter* Volume 16 Issue 4 (Dec 2011): 6, where DeYoung states "These nations will attack Israel at the beginning of the 7 year Tribulation period"; Charles Dyer, *World News and Bible Prophecy*, 173; Mark Hitchcock, *The Coming Islamic Invasion of Israel*, 68; Dwight Pentecost 346; John Philips 361; Charles Ryrie; and John Walvoord.

¹⁸⁸ Supporters of this view include C.L. Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 218; A.C. Gabelin, *The Prophet Ezekiel*, 252-255; H.A. Ironside, *Expository Notes on Ezekiel the Prophet*, (New York: Loizeaux, 1949), 265.

¹⁸⁹ Supporters of this view include Harold Hoehner.

¹⁹⁰ Supporters of this view include Ralph H. Alexander and J. Paul Tanner.

¹⁹¹ Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 189. See also Dyer, *Ezekiel*, 1300.

¹⁹² Walvoord, "Russia: King of the North—Part II," 27.

two major factors leading to the conclusion that Ezekiel's war will take place during the first half of the Tribulation. One is the belief that Israel will never experience conditions of peace and security until the Antichrist's covenant with her at the beginning of the Tribulation. Most Bible scholars who put the war in the Tribulation usually put it right before the end of that first 3½ years, because the second half of the Tribulation will not be a time of peace and safety for Israel, as Ezekiel requires. The other major reason why many scholars place the war in the Tribulation is based on the conclusion that Ezekiel's phrase "the latter years" must refer to the period of the Great Tribulation. If the war falls at this point on the timeline, it would explain why Iraq is not part of the invading coalition, because the Antichrist will have his capital in Babylon, and the Antichrist does not break his treaty with Israel until later. Hitchcock believes the coalition against Israel is the same as the invasion of the king of the north and the king of the south described in Daniel 11:40-45, which would provide further support for the view that the war will take place approaching the middle of the Tribulation.¹⁹³

Harold Hoehner adopts a variation of this view, seeing Ezekiel's description as "describing events that are spread over a period of time," rather than occurring at one time.¹⁹⁴ Thus "chapter 38 refers to events in the *middle* of the Tribulation, and chapter 39 refers to events at the *end* of the Tribulation."¹⁹⁵ Ezekiel's account begins when Israel is living in apparent safety during the first half of the Tribulation, but ends in conjunction with the battle of Armageddon at the end of the Tribulation. He sees the feast of the birds feeding on the fallen warriors as the same as that described in Revelation 19:17-18 at the end of Armageddon. Mark Piland in his doctoral dissertation comments, "This is a

¹⁹³ Hitchcock, *After the Empire*, 88-90, 138.

¹⁹⁴ Hoehner, "The Progression of Events in Ezekiel 38-39," 87.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

reasonable way to harmonize the different data that have resulted in conflicting time proposals.”¹⁹⁶

In counterpoint to connecting Ezekiel’s war with Armageddon, however, Fruchtenbaum gives many good arguments for distinguishing the two:

First, in Ezekiel there are definite allies mentioned and they are limited in number while other nations stand in opposition. In the Campaign of Armageddon all nations are allied together against Jerusalem without exception. Secondly, the Ezekiel invasion comes from the north, but the Armageddon invasion comes from the whole earth. Thirdly, the purpose of the Russian invasion is to take the spoil; the purpose of the Armageddon campaign is to destroy all the Jews. Fourthly, in the Ezekiel invasion there is a protest against the invasion; in the Armageddon Campaign there is no protest since all the nations are involved. Fifthly, the Ezekiel invasion is destroyed through the convulsions of nature; the Armageddon invasion is destroyed by the personal second coming of Jesus Christ. Sixthly, the Ezekiel invasion is destroyed on the mountains of Israel; the Armageddon Campaign is destroyed in the area between Petra and Jerusalem. Seventh, the Russian invasion takes place while Israel is living securely in the land; but the Armageddon Campaign takes place while Israel is in flight and in hiding.¹⁹⁷

For those who wish to place the invasion at the end of the Tribulation in conjunction with Armageddon, there are numerous interpretive obstacles to overcome. The participants are different, the locations are different, and the destruction of the armies is different. The chief, and seemingly insurmountable obstacle, however, is that Israel will be experiencing the total opposite of security and rest at that time. As Rhodes explains, “The Jews at the end of the Tribulation (when Armageddon will occur) will not be living in security and at rest, for they will be enduring great persecution at the hands of the Antichrist.”¹⁹⁸ That alone seems to make it impossible for the timing of the fulfillment of this prophecy.

¹⁹⁶ Mark A. Piland, “Program Development, Implementation and Evaluation of “Armageddon and Beyond: Multimedia Presentations” (D.Min. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2002), 17.

¹⁹⁷ Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 78-79.

¹⁹⁸ Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 187.

Others place the war after the return of Christ. Ralph Alexander adopts the view that “these events occur in the end times when Israel has been restored to the land, when the Messiah is present, and when Israel’s covenants are fulfilled.”¹⁹⁹ Alexander postulates “a transition period between the second advent and the official establishment of the millennium” when the events of Ezekiel 38–39 could take place.²⁰⁰ Paul Tanner holds a similar view, that the security of Israel in Ezekiel 38 is “a description of messianic security after Israel’s restoration . . . a compelling argument for the position that the invasion of Gog is after the second coming.”²⁰¹ Alexander, while being a proponent of this view, acknowledges a weakness in his position, “that the biblical data to explain a transition period between the Tribulation and the millennium is virtually nonexistent.”²⁰² However, the fatal flaw of this view is that all unbelievers will be slain at the time of Christ’s return, and thus there will be no one left to carry out this attack at that time. Pentecost argues, “Since no unsaved person, whether Jew or Gentile, will enter that kingdom, it is impossible to think of such an apostasy of saved persons who would fulfill the prophecy of Ezekiel.”²⁰³ In addition, Isaiah 2:4 describes the millennium as a time when the nations “will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks,” and when “nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.” It seems incomprehensible that such a war could take place so soon after Christ’s return to earth and the establishment of his throne here.²⁰⁴ To counter this

¹⁹⁹ Ralph H. Alexander, “A Fresh Look at Ezekiel 38 and 39.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 17, no. 3 (Sum 1974), 159.

²⁰⁰ Alexander, “A Fresh Look at Ezekiel 38 and 39,” 164.

²⁰¹ Tanner, “Rethinking Ezekiel’s Invasion by Gog,” 39.

²⁰² Alexander, “A Fresh Look at Ezekiel 38 and 39,” 165.

²⁰³ Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 340.

²⁰⁴ Fruchtenbaum gives other arguments against this view in *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 79.

argument, Tanner explains that “having a battle after the onset of the millennium is not absurd, despite such statements as Isa 2.4. It is obvious from Rev 20:7-9 that there will be another war after the second coming, whether or not this is one and the same with Ezekiel’s vision of Gog.”²⁰⁵ That may be true, but that war is clearly 1000 years later, not right after the return of Christ. Tanner’s argument here seems weak.

Some equate Ezekiel’s war of Gog and Magog with the war by the same name that occurs at the end of the millennium, mentioned in Revelation 20:7-9. However, whereas Ezekiel’s war is started by an invasion of specific nations, the war in Revelation appears to come from all over the world.²⁰⁶ In addition, as Fruchtenbaum points out, “This earth is done away with soon after the invasion is mentioned in Revelation, not allowing any time (or place!) for seven months of burial or seven years of burning.”²⁰⁷ Tanner shares a similar thought: “If this battle occurs at the end of the millennium and the eternal state immediately follows, how do we account for seven years of burning the weapons?”²⁰⁸

Another possibility is between the rapture and the Tribulation. Randall Price gives a detailed list of the merits of this view:

The pre-tribulational view also finds support from a comparison between the modern situation and the conditions set forth in Ezekiel 38:8-13 concerning Israel and the nations. The people and Land of Israel at the time of the invasion the people are described as those who have been “gathered from many nations” to a Land described as having previously “been a continual waste,” “now inhabited,” was “restored from the sword (foreign domination),” and is now “living securely” (verses 11, 14) with enviable economic resources (verses 12-13). All of these conditions describe the present State of Israel since 1967 when it occupied the “mountains of Israel” (verse 8c, 21; 39:2-3, 17-19). Today the modern State of

²⁰⁵ Tanner, “Rethinking Ezekiel’s Invasion by Gog,” 41.

²⁰⁶ Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 80.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ Tanner, “Rethinking Ezekiel’s Invasion by Gog,” 42.

Israel has been populated by Jewish immigrants from many nations of the world (verse 8b,d), has restored the barren and denuded lands in this region and elsewhere (the result of 400 years of Turkish domination), verse 8c, lives without walled cities (only the Old City of Jerusalem has a wall and the modern city since the late 1800's has existed outside these walls), verse 11. Israel's security is based on the strength of its military . . . , which is acknowledged as one of the best in the world and which has defended the country against overwhelming odds in numerous past invasions. This defense has also contributed to Israel's unprecedented technological advancements and economic prosperity that makes it the envy of other countries in the Middle East (verses 12-13).²⁰⁹

Price goes on to say, "conditions exist at the present time sufficient to permit the fulfillment of the Gog Prophecy. In other words, there is no reason to relegate the invasion to a mid or post-tribulational setting, when the present pre-tribulational setting meets these conditions."²¹⁰ Ice also holds the pre-tribulational view, saying, "It will be during the interval of days, weeks, months, or years between the rapture and the start of the seven-year Tribulation."²¹¹ The Bible does not tell us how much time there is between the rapture of the church and the beginning of Great Tribulation. We assume they are very close together, and they may well be, but we do not know for sure. The world will be in chaos following the rapture. The U.S. will be devastated, not able to come to Israel's aid. Her enemies may seize that moment to attack. If so, the devastation of Russia and the Islamic world at the end of the war would open the way for the rise of the Antichrist. Ice supports this view as he states,

I have always thought that one of the strengths of this view is the way in which it could set the stage for the biblical scenario of the Tribulation. If the Tribulation is closely preceded by a failed regional invasion of Israel (by Russian and her Muslim allies), then this would remove much of the Russian and Muslim

²⁰⁹ Price, "The Prophecies of Ezekiel," 40.

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, 41.

²¹¹ Thomas Ice, "Ezekiel 38 and 39," part 1, Pre-Trib perspectives. Available online at www.pre-trib.org, quoted in Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 182. There appears to be some inconsistency in Ice's position, as Ice also argues that the phrase "the latter days" equals the Tribulation period, thus placing the invasion during the Tribulation.

influence currently in the world today and allow a Euro-centric orientation to arise.²¹²

It should be noted that this argument would hold just as true if the invasion comes before or after the rapture. One problem with placing the invasion between the rapture and the Tribulation, however, is the seeming necessity of a multi-year gap between the rapture and the Tribulation to account for the seven years of burning, which seems a little bit hard to fathom. LaHaye comments on this saying,

The closer we get to the actual occurrence of these events [the rapture and the covenant which begins the Tribulation], however, the more we are inclined to believe they could happen in close succession. If they do occur in close proximity or simultaneously, the church will still be on earth when Russia invades Israel and is destroyed by God.²¹³

Since the purpose of the rapture is to deliver us from the wrath to come, it gets to be a stretch if the deliverance of the rapture comes a long time (years) before the start of the wrath. This is a problem for placing the war between the rapture and the start of the Tribulation. However, as that interim period is a time of further preparation, when other things could fall into place before the Tribulation begins, it is not impossible that the interim might be a longer period than we currently assume. For example, holding to imminency before 1948, one would have had to say that the nation of Israel would have had to be established during that interim. Only hindsight makes it clear that that was not necessary. Such could also be the case with the Gog-Magog war, without destroying the doctrine of imminency.

Yet another possibility is that the war could come prior to the rapture of the church, when the church will still be around to witness it. LaHaye writes, “Ezekiel 38 and 39 are not to be confused with Armageddon. Instead, they occur ten or more years earlier,

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Tim LaHaye, “Russia on Edge,” in *Foreshadows of Wrath and Redemption*, ed. William T. James (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1999), 168.

prior to the Tribulation period.”²¹⁴ This is the view postulated in LaHaye’s fictional *Left Behind* series, and also in Rosenberg’s fictional series beginning with *The Last Jihad* and including *The Ezekiel Option*, which speculates in detail how such a scenario could develop in the current world scene. Rosenberg has also produced the major non-fiction work *Epicenter* which looks at many aspects of how this prophecy could be approaching fulfillment today. Bible scholars Fruchtenbaum and David Cooper²¹⁵ also support the view that the war will come before the Tribulation, either before or after the rapture. Some of the reasons for holding this view will be presented in the discussion following below.

While some hold to their position fairly dogmatically, others, recognizing the ambiguity in the text, the wide variety of positions and the lack of solid consensus among Bible scholars, present their conclusions more gently and tentatively. As Alexander points out, “The plethora of interpretations for this passage caution the student concerning dogmatism in his conclusions.”²¹⁶ Rhodes adds, “Many fine scholars have debated this issue back and forth through the centuries, and that fact alone calls for humility in the face of this interpretive difficulty. All of us should examine the issue and come to our own conclusions, but we should show grace to those who hold to different positions.”²¹⁷ Clarence Mason recognizes the danger of being dogmatic in this regard: “One thing is certain; no teacher should speak dogmatically on a prophecy like that of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38–39. So many different views have been offered that it is

²¹⁴ LaHaye, *Foreshadows of Wrath and Redemption*, 164.

²¹⁵ David L. Cooper, *When Gog’s Armies Meet the Almighty* (Los Angeles, CA: Biblical Research Society, 1940), 80-81. Cooper states the war “must...be located before the Tribulation....There will be a time between now and the beginning of the Tribulation when the Jews will be dwelling in the Land in unwallled cities and will be at rest.”

²¹⁶ Alexander, “A Fresh Look at Ezekiel 38 and 39,” 157.

²¹⁷ Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 165.

difficult to sift, discard, and retain. . . . It is the details, particularly as to the time of action, regarding which there is disagreement.”²¹⁸ Rhodes recalls a conversation with John F. Walvoord and says, “We were talking about the timing of the rapture, and even though he was a thoroughly convinced pretribulationist (who believed the rapture will occur before the Tribulation period), he commented, “Anyone who thinks his or her prophetic position has no problems simply hasn’t studied prophecy very carefully.”²¹⁹ Considering the wide range of interpretations, even among scholars coming from the same theological background,²²⁰ and the fact that there are good arguments for each position, it is the opinion of this student that it is wise to recognize the difficulty in determining the timing of this war definitively. What the Lord has made clear, let us state clearly; what the Lord has not made perfectly clear, let us present with gentleness and grace. The Scriptures do not give us the luxury of absolute assurance as to the timing of this war. Following are factors which must be taken into account when considering the possible timing of this war, along with interaction with discussions of this found in the literature.

Israel Will Be Living in Safety

Ezekiel 38:8 describes Israel as “a land that has recovered from war. . . . Now all of them live in safety.” Ezekiel 38:11 (NASB) says, “I will go against those who are at rest, that live securely. . . .” The same verse in the NIV describes them as “a peaceful and

²¹⁸ Clarence E. Mason, Jr. “Gog and Magog, Who and When?” In *Prophecy in the Seventies*, ed. Charles Lee Feinberg (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 221; quoted in Hitchcock, *Iran the Coming Crisis*, 178.

²¹⁹ Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 165.

²²⁰ For example, Fruchtenbaum, Walvoord, and Hoehner have all studied or taught at Dallas Theological Seminary, but have come to widely divergent conclusions on the timing of this war.

unsuspecting people.” Interpretation of what this means has led to widely diverging opinions of when this war will take place. Does it exist today, or could it prior to the start of the Tribulation? Will it never be true until the Antichrist establishes his peace covenant with Israel? Or must it wait until Christ himself has come back and begun his reign on the earth?

The most commonly held view in the literature is that Israel will not have this security until the covenant of the Antichrist, which for most places the war sometime during the Tribulation period. The argument is that Israel has always been on the alert because of her Arab neighbors, and never really been able to let her guard down. Iran’s Ahmadinejad is constantly making threats about wiping Israel off the map. The Palestinian question has been going on for years, with little hope of any true resolution. In view of this, many believe that Israel will never experience any true security until the Antichrist signs a peace covenant with Israel, which will then set the stage for this war. However, one problem with this view is that if Israel is under the Antichrist’s protection, how could this coalition attack her at that time? The Antichrist will not break his covenant of protection for Israel until the middle of the Tribulation. A large scale invasion taking place while Israel is under Antichrist’s protection does not make sense. This would require Antichrist to abdicate his own treaty prior to the midpoint of the Tribulation, at which time he will break it himself. This student has found no discussion or explanation of this in the literature. Those who argue that the condition of Israel’s security is not met today, because of the existence of outside threats, would also have to answer how that situation would be any different during the Tribulation period, with the massive outside threat of the Russian/Islamic coalition forming against her. The reality is that even during a time of relative security, whether before or during the Tribulation, that serious threats to Israel’s existence will always be there, peace treaties notwithstanding. Even with the Antichrist’s covenant, the first half of the Tribulation will certainly not be a “true security.”

While arguing for the position that Israel's present conditions do not fit the picture of Ezekiel's prophecy, Walvoord says, "Certainly Israel is not at rest today. Israel is an armed camp."²²¹ Hitchcock has a similar view: "Israel is the most militarily alert nation in the world."²²² In counterpoint to that, this student would argue that strength of arms contributes to a nation's sense of security, rather than detracting from it. By far the most militarily powerful nation in the world is the United States, but no one would argue that that contributes to a sense of insecurity among Americans. Quite the contrary. At the time of this writing America has been involved in two long wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and America is also the most heavily armed nation in the world, with active military bases all around the country and across the globe, bristling with arms, ammunition, and a military of millions. Yet despite the fact that we are a nation at war, conditions of peace and security exist for the vast proportion of our population. The same is true for Israel today. Their strength of arms actually contributes to their feelings of security. To understand this better, consider it this way. Who would likely feel more secure: a weak man in a dark alley with nothing to defend himself, or a strong man in a dark alley packing a multitude of knives, guns, and other weapons? Even Israel's enemies in the region have been forced to reckon with Israel as with a strong, heavily armed man. The Israelis know this, and their position of military superiority, combined with many almost unbelievable military victories, has caused Israelis to feel more secure in their land than ever before.

Another view is that this could describe conditions in Israel today, as discussed in detail earlier. As Rosenberg points out, "The Hebrew prophet does not go so far as to say there will be a comprehensive peace treaty between Israel and all of her

²²¹ Walvoord, "Russia, King of the North—Part II," 25.

²²² Hitchcock, *After the Empire*, 96.

neighbors, or that all or even most hostilities in the Middle East will have ceased.”²²³

Fruchtenbaum also argues that this describes conditions today:

This is not a security due to a state of peace, but a security due to confidence in their own strength. This . . . is a good description for Israel today. The Israeli army has fought four major wars since its founding and won them swiftly each time. Today Israel is secure, confident that her army can repel any invasion from the Arab states. Hence, Israel is dwelling securely.²²⁴

Hoehner concurs that the term “‘security’ . . . does not have the idea of ‘peace’ but instead means ‘to feel secure, to be unconcerned.’”²²⁵ Randall Price states, “the Hebrew term *betach* from the root *batach* meaning “trust,” “reliance,” confidence” looks at a mental attitude that believes it is secure because of its present conditions. . . . Therefore the term in and of itself does not imply the absence of threat but the presence of confidence.”²²⁶

Fruchtenbaum, in reviewing a book by Hitchcock, writes, “Hitchcock, while holding to a mid-tribulation placement of the war, recognizes that the condition of ‘living securely’ would not argue against a pre-tribulational view since that is also a time that Israel could be living in security, keeping in mind that the word for ‘peace’ is never used.”²²⁷ It should be pointed out that Ezekiel does not say that absolute peace prevails in the land. As Fruchtenbaum points out, “nowhere in the entire text does it speak of Israel as living in peace. Rather Israel is merely living in security which means “confidence,”

²²³ Rosenberg, *Epicenter*, 67.

²²⁴ Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 121.

²²⁵ Hoehner, “The Progression of Events in Ezekiel 38–39,” 88.

²²⁶ Price, “The Prophecies of Ezekiel,” 37.

²²⁷ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, “A Review of *After the Empire* by Mark Hitchcock,” presented at the conference of the Pre-Trib Study Group, 1995, 6. However, Fruchtenbaum references pp. 137-142 of Hitchcock’s book, where these positions attributed to Hitchcock were not directly mentioned.

regardless of whether it is during a state of war or peace.”²²⁸ What the text does state is that the inhabitants of the land are a peaceful people (Ezek 38:11). A people can be peaceful, peaceable, and peace-loving without enjoying conditions of absolute peace. We must avoid the danger of reading more into the text here than it actually says. The very fact that this war could even take place eliminates the possibility of it being a time of absolute peace.

The text states that the land “has recovered from war” (Ezek 38:8). While this implies that the nation is not currently at war, it also makes it clear that the land has experienced war in perhaps the not-so-distant past. Threats, challenges, unrest, even terrorist attacks are not the same as being actually at war. But the point of the passage is that the devastation and disruption of life involved in war has at least for the moment moved into Israel’s past. Anyone who has been to the land of Israel any time in the last several decades can testify that ongoing threats notwithstanding, Israel is a land that even today has recovered from war. The nation has recovered, and indeed is very prosperous. The people live in conditions of greater safety and security than they have known for many lifetimes.

LaHaye wrote in his 1984 book, *The Coming Peace in the Middle East*, about a future peace treaty that he believed would take place before the Tribulation period begins, when this war would take place. He states,

I believe that the next major event on the prophetic calendar will be the peace treaty between Israel and the Arab world. This cessation of hostilities may likewise signal a short time of peace throughout the whole world. For example, in speaking of the end time and the coming of Christ, 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 says that the day of the Lord will come “while people are saying, ‘Peace and safety.’” Further, “Destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.” This indeed suggests that before the holocaust

²²⁸ Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 77.

known as the Tribulation period, a time of peace and safety will encompass this earth, interrupted only by Russia's invasion of Israel.²²⁹

Thus in his view, even if conditions of peace do not currently prevail in Israel, they will at some time prior to the Tribulation, when Ezekiel's war will take place.

One final word to consider from Ezekiel's text is the NIV's use of the word "unsuspecting" (Ezek 38:11). This is rather a poor translation, as it implies innocence, unwariness, or obliviousness to any possible dangers around them. This certainly does not describe the current state of Israeli government, which has one of the best intelligence agencies on the planet. Other Bible versions translate the Hebrew phrase more accurately as "live securely" (NASB); "dwell safely" (KJV); or "dwell securely" (ESV). In the NASB the Hebrew word is translated 38 times connoting the concepts of "security" or "safety," but only twice as "unsuspecting." The Hebrew word *betach*, according to the Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon, has a primary meaning of security.²³⁰ While the word can communicate the idea of being careless or unsuspecting, that is not the primary use of the word, nor supported by the context of this passage. One's security need not rest in the absence of any threats arrayed against you; it can also be rooted in perceived strength or readiness to face any would-be attackers. In that, Israel is currently well prepared. She has one of the strongest and best equipped militaries in the world.

This Will Occur in the Latter Years

²²⁹ LaHaye, *The Coming Peace in the Middle East*, 148.

²³⁰ Francis Brown et al. *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985), 105.

Also to be considered are some of the terms used to describe the war as coming in the latter or last days, and whether or not those terms confine the conflict to the seven year Tribulation period. Ezekiel 38:8 (NASB) reads: “After many days you will be summoned; in the latter years you will come into the land. . . .” There’s no debate that this is referring to the end times. Such a war has never happened before, and almost all evangelical scholars consider it an end times event. Randall Price explains:

Verse 8 describes the time for Gog’s invasion as occurring “after many days” and “in the latter years,” designations of a future time. Verse 16 makes this future time more explicit by stating “it will come about *in the last days*” (Hebrew *be‘archarit hayamim*) and verse 18 says “it will come about *on that day*” (Hebrew *bayom ha-hu*) both common prophetic designations for the future. Therefore, in keeping with the eschatological context in which it is set, the Gog War will find its fulfillment in the final period of time known as the *eschaton* or time of the end.²³¹

But there is debate over what precisely is meant by the phrase “*in the latter years.*”

Harold Hoehner says,

The familiar expressions “after many days,” “in the latter days” (38:8), and “in the last days” (38:16) refer to the time of the Tribulation (Deut. 4:27-30; Dan. 2:28; 8:19, 23; 10:14) and/or the millennial restoration (Isa. 2:2-4; Mic. 4:1-7). The context must determine the setting. Here in Ezekiel 38–39 it must refer to the time of Great Tribulation for Israel.²³²

Hoehner goes on to argue that “the context of chapters 38–39 is the latter days of Israel and not the latter days of the church.”²³³ Pentecost also says that “this has specific reference to the latter years and days of God’s dealing with the nation Israel, which . . . must place it during God’s dealing with Israel in the seventieth week of Daniel’s

²³¹ Price, “The Prophecies of Ezekiel,” 35.

²³² Harold W. Hoehner, “The Progression of Events in Ezekiel 38–39,” in *Integrity of Heart, Skillfulness of Hands*, edited by Charles H. Dyer and Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1994), 84.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 85. Cf. Pentecost, “Where Do the Prophetic Events of Ezekiel 38–39 Fit into the Prophetic Picture?” 337; and Dyer, *Ezekiel*, 1300.

prophecy.”²³⁴ Pentecost also states that “it is impossible to make Israel’s latter years apply to the latter years of the church, as it would do if this is fulfilled prior to the rapture.”²³⁵ Ice refers to Deuteronomy 4:30 which reads, “When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days, you will return to the Lord your God and listen to His voice.” Ice points out that the English word *distress* comes from the Hebrew word for *tribulation*, and thus uses this verse to argue that the phrase *latter days* is equivalent to the future Tribulation period.²³⁶ However, Ezekiel does not explicitly specify to what the latter years apply, so we should be cautious in forcing them to apply to either the church or Israel. If Ezekiel does not specify the application of his phrase, neither should we. There is nothing in the context of Ezekiel’s prophecy that would force the phrase to refer specifically to the Tribulation period. It may simply be the latter years of the age before the return of Christ. One must beware of taking a precise, technical meaning of a phrase as used in some contexts, and applying that same template where the phrase may be used in other contexts. This is the hermeneutical error known as “illegitimate totality transfer.” “The error, arises when the ‘meaning’ of a word” as derived from its use elsewhere is then automatically read into the same word in a foreign context.²³⁷ Ezekiel uses this phrase only in this chapter of his book, and he may not be attaching such a technical meaning to the term. The average reader of his book would not likely understand that from the text, but would instead have their mind drawn to some future period near the end of the age, without defining it more precisely than that.

²³⁴ Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 336.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 337.

²³⁶ Thomas Ice, “Are We Living in the Last Days?” Available online at www.pre-trib.org, cited in Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 167.

²³⁷ James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 218. Referenced by Andy Woods in a paper titled “Jesus and the Rapture,” presented at the Pre-Trib Study Group conference in Dallas, TX, on December 6, 2011, 44.

Rosenberg explains this understanding in his novel *The Ezekiel Option*: “Whenever the Hebrew prophets wrote about the last days, they were always referring to the last days *before* Messiah would come to set up His kingdom on earth. . . . It refers to events that will occur *before* the return of Christ.”²³⁸ Randall Price supports this view: “while the expression “latter days” may refer to the Tribulation period, it is not a technical term for such, since its contextual settings and varieties of usages allow it to be employed in different ways, including the transitional period between the Rapture of the Church and the Tribulation.”²³⁹ Just because this phrase sometimes refers to the Tribulation period, it does not mean it always refers just to those seven years. The phrase could simply refer to anytime near the end of the age, before the establishment of the millennial kingdom. In referring to “the latter years,” Phillips says “that expression alone automatically rules out the *greater part* of the church age”²⁴⁰ [emphasis added]. This student would agree, but that does not mean it rules out *any* part of the church age. Fruchtenbaum argues, “The term ‘latter days’ need not be limited to just the Tribulation. It is a general term for the last days which could include the days preceding the Tribulation, as well as the days following the Tribulation.”²⁴¹ In another work he writes, “These terms simply apply to the whole period of the end times when prophecy is again being fulfilled, and so it can very easily apply to the closing days of the Church Age as well.”²⁴² Whether the war is just preceding the Tribulation, or during it, is probably only a difference of a very few years anyway, which would require a very fine slicing of the phrase “in the latter years” if one wishes to argue that the term applies to the Tribulation period only. Even if the war

²³⁸ Rosenberg, *The Ezekiel Option*, 228-229.

²³⁹ Price, “The Prophecies of Ezekiel,” 40.

²⁴⁰ Phillips, *Exploring the Future*, 358.

²⁴¹ Fruchtenbaum, *A Review of After the Empire by Mark Hitchcock*, 4.

²⁴² Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 83.

shortly precedes the Tribulation period, it would still be directly connected with that period, even if not within the seven years of the Tribulation itself. There is no evidence in Ezekiel that the prophet intended a precise application of his phrase to the seven years of the Tribulation only. Rosenberg states, “It is reasonable to conclude that the term *the last days* refers to an indeterminate period of time leading up to the second coming of Jesus Christ. This period includes—but is not limited to—the seven years of the Tribulation.”²⁴³

One must be careful taking a meaning in one context and applying that identical meaning in another. For example, if I tell my wife I am going to be home late tonight, it might mean I am going to work an extra twenty minutes before I head home for dinner. Or, it might mean I am going to be out all evening for a long meeting, and she should not expect me home till long after she has gone to bed. The same phrase does not always mean exactly the same thing in every situation. While lending support to the view that Ezekiel’s war falls during the Tribulation period, the argument is not conclusive by itself.

Although even further removed from the context in Ezekiel, it should be noted that in the New Testament similar phrases referring to the last days include time periods preceding the Tribulation period. Rosenberg points out that Peter in 2 Peter 3:3 uses the phrase “the last days” to refer to the period in which he was living, and that the apostle John in 1 John 2:18 also referred to “the last hour” as including the day in which he lived.²⁴⁴

²⁴³ Rosenberg, *Epicenter*, 284.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

In the Earthquake Every Wall Will Fall

Another clue for the timing of this war is the fact that when God shows up, there will be a devastating earthquake. Ezekiel 38:19-20 tell us, “There shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. . . . Every wall will fall to the ground.” This great earthquake which levels every wall at the close of the war must be accounted for, and the impact of that earthquake on whatever building is standing on the Temple Mount at that time. Surprisingly, this student has discovered no other reference to this in the discussions in the literature related to the timing of this war. Taking the text literally, the phrase “every wall will fall” means that *every wall will fall*. One might argue that that refers just to defensive walls, and not to the walls of buildings, but if an earthquake is powerful enough to destroy a defensive wall, it would also be powerful enough to destroy a building. Furthermore, the text explicitly states that this war comes at a time when Israel is living without walls, so it can hardly refer to the destruction of such walls. The point is that this will be an extremely severe earthquake that will bring widespread destruction. So, if it is still standing at that time, what would this do to the Dome of the Rock? It would almost assuredly knock it down. God himself may reduce it to rubble, very possibly paving the way for the construction of the Jewish temple. The problem of how the way can be cleared for the construction of that temple, with the Dome of the Rock standing on the site, is one that has perplexed scholars for many years, resulting in several possible scenarios. But we do know that a new temple will be built in Jerusalem sometime soon, because the Antichrist will enter and desecrate it at the midpoint of the Tribulation. If the war of Gog and Magog precedes the Tribulation, this would provide a very reasonable solution for how that might come about.

If the war comes near the midpoint of the Tribulation, when the temple must have already been rebuilt, one must answer the question of what happens to it during this devastating earthquake, when “every wall will fall.” If indeed the destruction of this earthquake is so severe that every wall will fall, then this time it would have to be the

temple that crumbles to the ground. However, that can hardly be, because precisely at the midpoint of the Tribulation, which would have to be after this war, the Bible says the Antichrist is going to enter that temple and desecrate it. This would be impossible if it has just been reduced to a pile of rubble.

This appears to be a strong argument that the war will come earlier, before the Tribulation period. Prior to the Tribulation then, the Dome of the Rock is demolished; the powers of Islam are subdued, or possibly even wiped out; and the Jews are turning their hearts back to God. If ever there was a time to rebuild the temple, that would be it. And interestingly, when you turn the page from Ezekiel 39 to Ezekiel 40, you launch into a lengthy description of the building of a new temple. It could be coming sooner than we know.

How Might This Coordinate with the Bird's Feast at the End of the Tribulation?

Many commentators have pointed out the similarities between Ezekiel 39 and Revelation 19 in the feast of the birds invited to come feed on the flesh of men. Most acknowledge the similarity but recognize it as two different events. Some, however, see it as just one event, and use it as a clue to help identify the timing of Ezekiel's war in connection with the book of Revelation. Harold Hoehner, for example, sees the two events as one and the same, influencing his interpretation that Ezekiel 39 is connected with the campaign of Armageddon.²⁴⁵

It Will Take Seven Months to Cleanse the Land

Another timing clue is in the seven months of burying the dead bodies in order to cleanse the land, and when that task could be carried out. Ezekiel 39:12 says, "For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land." The

²⁴⁵ Hoehner, "The Progression of Events in Ezekiel 38–39," 90, 92.

reason for doing this is stated right in the verse—to cleanse the land. Unburied bodies defile the land. The Jews living on the land to which they have recently been restored would not want the land to be defiled, providing the motivation to carry out this grisly task and cleanse the land. That requires that after the war, Jews will still be living in the land, and living in peace, with freedom to wander around, hunt for these unburied bodies, and cleanse the land. But if this war takes place right before the midpoint of the Tribulation, that would be impossible. From that point on the Jews will be fleeing for their lives, with no freedom to wander around the mountains of Israel looking for an unburied bone. If the invasion falls at the middle of the Tribulation period, Fruchtenbaum points out “that would require that the seven months of burying take place during the second half of the Tribulation, a time when the Jews are in flight and are not able to bury their own dead, let alone those of the Russians.”²⁴⁶ So at the very least if this war occurs during the Tribulation, it’s got to be over at least seven months before the midpoint. As Hoehner astutely points out, “How could Israel be burying its dead in the middle of the Tribulation when the people are told to flee (Matt. 24:16)?”²⁴⁷ This is a very big problem with the mid-tribulation placement of the invasion, for which this student has found no explanation or even recognition of the problem among those who place the invasion near the midpoint of the Tribulation. The seven months also argues against the invasion taking place either at the end of the Tribulation or the beginning of the millennium. Pentecost says that “such a picture seems impossible in view of the cleansing to be effected by the return of the Messiah.”²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 78.

²⁴⁷ Hoehner, “The Progression of Events in Ezekiel 38–39,” 90.

²⁴⁸ Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 339.

It Will Take Seven Years to Burn the Weapons

Another factor is the seven years of burning the implements of war, and how those seven years might or might not fit with the seven year Tribulation period. Ezekiel 39:9 says, “Israel will go out and use the weapons for fuel and burn them up. . . . For seven years they will use them for fuel.”

One unanswered question here is exactly what kind of weapons are being burned. The passage talks about bows and arrows, shields, and spears. Even in this modern age, it is not impossible that these ancient weapons are still used. Several scenarios could require it: an oil shortage or crisis of some kind, which forces militaries back into using ancient weapons; or possibly the use of some kind of electromagnetic pulse bomb, which has rendered every piece of modern equipment useless. But it could be that Ezekiel is simply using the terminology available to him to describe weapons that did not exist in his day. He would not have had many words to describe weapons such as a gun, tank, airplane, or a missile. They had no concept of such weaponry in those days. Perhaps Ezekiel was simply using language that would have made sense to the people of the day.

But no matter what kind of weapons they are, it will require seven years to burn them up. It is a crucial question to consider when would there be time to accomplish this. If this war takes place near the midpoint of the Tribulation, there are not even seven years left until the return of Christ. The burning could go on into the millennium, but that seems inconsistent with the restoration that Christ will bring when he returns. However, Walvoord, who places the invasion near the midpoint of the Tribulation, argues that “even after the second coming of Christ, life will go on and fuel will be necessary.”²⁴⁹ But it seems hard to imagine piles of weapons left lying around for several years during

²⁴⁹ Walvoord, *Major Bible Prophecies*, 336.

the millennium until they are all disposed of. In differentiating Ezekiel's war from Armageddon, LaHaye states,

It is certain that the Jews will not spend the first seven winters of the Millennium burning the implements of war left over from the Tribulation We can only conclude that Ezekiel 38 and 39 are not to be confused with Armageddon. Instead, they occur ten or more years earlier, prior to the Tribulation period Israel will enjoy seven years of peace *after* Russia is destroyed Russia will have to be destroyed *at least* 3½ years *before* the Tribulation begins, for the Jews to have seven years in which to burn the implements of war.²⁵⁰

Considering the mid-tribulation option for the war, according to Fruchtenbaum, "This view would require the Jews to be burning weapons during the second half of the Tribulation when Jews are fleeing out of the land. They would also have to continue burning them for 3½ years into the millennium, which is inconsistent with the Messiah's cleansing of the land and the renovation which results."²⁵¹

An even bigger question is how the task could be begun if the war comes near the midpoint of the Tribulation. For the last three and a half years of the Tribulation, the Jews will be running for their lives, with most having fled from the land. There will be no leisure time to gather up rifle stocks with which to build campfires. This is a major problem if you put this war anytime during the Tribulation. Seven years of relative peace are required to dispose of all these weapons by burning. As LaHaye writes, "Israel will enjoy seven years of peace *after* Russia is destroyed."²⁵² A more plausible scenario would be to put the war at least 3½ years prior to the Great Tribulation. As Alexander eloquently points out, "The burning of weapons seven years while being persecuted by the beast, and the burying of the bones of Gog's hordes in order to cleanse the land, while the abomination of desolation is transpiring and judgment is at its apex, is

²⁵⁰ LaHaye, *The Coming Peace in the Middle East*, 144-145.

²⁵¹ Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 78.

²⁵² LaHaye, *Foreshadows of Wrath and Redemption*, 165.

inconceivable.”²⁵³ Thomas Constable explains that it is “unlikely that the Jews could bury corpses for seven months and burn weapons as fuel for seven years following an invasion in the middle of the seven-year Tribulation. The last half of the Tribulation will involve unparalleled persecution for the Jews (Dan. 9:27).”²⁵⁴ Randall Price states, “if this battle takes place after the Rapture but before the seventieth week begins, there would be ample time and the freedom of movement even through the first half of the Tribulation (the time of pseudo-peace for Israel under the Antichrist’s covenant) to accomplish this job.”²⁵⁵

In discussing the possibility that the war may happen prior to the rapture, Hitchcock states that “under this view, the seven years in Ezekiel 39:9 corresponds with the seven-year period (“one week”) in Daniel 9:27. . . . If the Gog invasion occurs before the Rapture, the seven-year periods in Ezekiel 39:9 and Daniel 9:27 would parallel one another.”²⁵⁶ Rhodes states the parallel the same way.²⁵⁷ However, this student believes that this represents a misunderstanding of the pre-tribulation view, which argues for the necessity of seven years of *peace* to accomplish the burning, which is *not* parallel to the seven years of the Tribulation, the last half of which will be anything but peaceful. It also forces the conclusion of Ezekiel’s war, the rapture of the church, and the beginning of the Tribulation to all occur essentially simultaneously, in order to make the two seven-year periods parallel. However, this student has not discovered any authors who support the pre-tribulation view of the war who place all three of those events as occurring simultaneously.

²⁵³ Alexander, “A Fresh Look at Ezekiel 38 and 39,” 163.

²⁵⁴ Thomas Constable, Thomas Constable Bible Study Notes, “Ezekiel.” Available online at www.soniclight.com/constable. Quoted in Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 185.

²⁵⁵ Price, “The Prophecies of Ezekiel,” 42.

²⁵⁶ Hitchcock, *Iran the Coming Crisis*, 181.

²⁵⁷ Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 179.

In discussing the destruction of weapons for firewood, Hoehner points out that “Such an action is more likely to take place at the end of a war rather than in the middle of a war.”²⁵⁸ He also observes, “Military personnel preserve all the weapons they can in the midst of a battle.”²⁵⁹ While Hoehner applies that to his argument that Ezekiel 39 occurs at the end of the Tribulation, the same argument could be used to support placing the war before the Tribulation. It does argue against placing the war in the middle of the Tribulation, when war is on every horizon, and weapons of war would likely be saved for further use, rather than destroyed to build cooking fires. As Fruchtenbaum points out, “The problems the Jews will face during the second half of the Tribulation would cause them to try to preserve and salvage these weapons rather than to burn them.”²⁶⁰

Among those who argue for the placement of the war during the first half of the Tribulation period, there is a noteworthy absence of discussion about the time and freedom necessary to burn the weapons.²⁶¹ However, this is a crucial piece of data that must be considered. Rhodes acknowledges the problem but suggests no solution, short of perhaps a minority of Jews finding a way to burn some weapons.²⁶² Hitchcock is the only author this student has found who, adopting the mid-tribulation position, attempts an explanation: “However, it is also true that these Jews who will flee into the wilderness will need firewood for fuel during the Tribulation, and it is likely that the abundance of despoiled weapons will provide a ready source for them.”²⁶³ Nevertheless, it is hard to

²⁵⁸ Hoehner, “The Progression of Events in Ezekiel 38–39,” 90.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 85.

²⁶⁰ Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 78.

²⁶¹ For example, this student was able to discover little discussion about this matter in the writings of Pentecost, Ryrie, or Walvoord, all of whom place the war during the first half of the tribulation.

²⁶² Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 185, 194.

²⁶³ Hitchcock, *After the Empire*, 141.

imagine the Jews fleeing out of the land for their lives, and yet having the time and ability to gather and carry along all these weapons to use as firewood for the next several years. When the time comes to flee, Matthew records Christ's warning that they not even take the time to go and fetch their cloak (Matthew 24:15-18). As Fruchtenbaum correctly points out, "These seven months of burying and seven years of burning are crucial in determining *when* this invasion occurs. For any view to be correct it must satisfy the requirements of these seven months and seven years."²⁶⁴ In his estimation, the pre-tribulation view is the view that "best answers the problem of the seven months and seven years."²⁶⁵

The Influence of Islam Will Be Diminished

The destruction of all the invading armies and the impact of that upon the influence of Islam in the world must be considered. The one-world religion of the Antichrist seems to imply that the influence of Christianity and Islam are both diminished. The devastation from Ezekiel's war could nullify or destroy Islam, while the rapture would effectively take out the influence of Christianity. This could then clear the way for Antichrist's rise to power. With Russia effectively wiped out, and the Muslim world devastated, there would be a power vacuum aching to be filled. That could be precisely when the Antichrist rises to fill it. This scenario would fit with Ezekiel's war either preceding the Tribulation or occurring sometime during its first half. But since the Antichrist reaches the apex of power at the midpoint of the Tribulation, it argues more effectively for the earlier scenario, allowing the Antichrist time to consolidate his gains. If it occurred before the Tribulation, it could easily lead to the Antichrist's treaty with Israel. With Russia and the Muslim world just having tried to destroy Israel and having

²⁶⁴ Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 77.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

been wiped out, it would be a good time to put forward a peace treaty that would be accepted. Such a peace treaty would be much easier to accomplish with the world of Islam licking its wounds, and no longer willing or able to stand in the way. Ice summarizes this argument like this: “If God destroys the Muslim invaders prior to the beginning of the Tribulation, the Antichrist could more easily sign a peace pact with Israel (Daniel 9:27), guaranteeing that Israel will be protected. In other words, Israel will be easier to protect if the Muslim forces are already out of the picture.”²⁶⁶

How Might This Coordinate with the Persecution of the Jews During the Last Half of the Tribulation?

With the awesome destruction of Israel’s enemies at the close of Ezekiel’s war, it must be considered whether the world would immediately embark on another persecution of the Jews right on its heels, which is necessary if the mid-trib view is held. A terrible persecution of Jews begins at the midpoint of the Tribulation. Matthew 24:15-16 says, “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel . . . then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.” Verse 21 explains, “For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.” At that point, from the middle of the Tribulation on, the Jews will be fleeing for their lives. This is an important point to understand as we seek to place this war on our timeline. At mid-tribulation, the peace in Israel is shattered, and any Jew caught running around Israel after that will pay the price with their own life. Jesus himself warned them to get away in a hurry, and not turn back.

So the question is, would Antichrist persecute Israel *immediately after* God had just powerfully delivered them? Fire and brimstone from heaven has just destroyed

²⁶⁶ Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 183.

this entire coalition who came to annihilate Israel. Their bodies lie unburied all over the mountains of Israel. The whole world looks on in awe and fear. Is that the moment the Antichrist will choose to launch yet another attack against the Jews? Most of the world would likely be reluctant to join in to attack Israel right at that moment. A more understandable scenario would be for maybe a few years to go by first, so the people have time to “forget” about what happened last time, before they go after the Jews again. It does not make sense that this persecution would come right on the heels of this great deliverance. A gap of at least a few years would seem to make more sense, when people would have had time to forget. A modern example of this would be the reaction of the American people to the atrocities of September 11, 2001. There was a strong, immediate response, but after only a few years, most Americans seemed to have “forgotten” the impact of that day. Thus it would make more sense that Antichrist’s persecution of the Jews would not begin until at least a few years after God’s great deliverance of the Jews from the Gog-Magog invasion.

Pentecost, in supporting his view that the invasion will take place near the middle of the Tribulation, states that “some event must be necessary to cause the Beast to abrogate his covenant,”²⁶⁷ which he equates with this invasion. However, common sense would argue for just the opposite: God’s power demonstrated in the dramatic deliverance of Israel would be more likely to cause the Antichrist to enter into a covenant with Israel, rather than to break one. Would a bully be likely to attack a weak victim when some hero has just shown up to defend that victim? Not likely. More likely would be that bully giving the appearance of making friends with the victim, while waiting for some later opportunity to attack him again, when the hero is not around. This actually seems to be a

²⁶⁷ Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 343.

strong argument against placing the invasion just before the midpoint of the Tribulation, and placing it instead shortly before the Antichrist establishes his covenant with Israel.

One must also consider why God would deliver Israel right before her greatest persecution ever—delivering them one minute, and then throwing them into the fire the next. But if this war occurs near the end of the first half of the Great Tribulation, that’s exactly what happens. Fruchtenbaum argues, “It is hard to see why God would intervene at this point on Israel’s behalf and then immediately allow the events of the second half of the Tribulation to commence, doing a great amount of damage to Israel.”²⁶⁸ It seems more logical that the war would come earlier, with God’s great deliverance, giving Israel time then to regroup, finish returning to the land, and begin turning their hearts to the Lord, before the terrible last days of the Tribulation begin.

How Might This Coordinate with the Spiritual Restoration of the Jews?

In the aftermath of this war, many will turn to Christ. The nations will know, and Israel will know, that the Lord is God. That doesn’t mean everybody comes to Christ, but many will. LaHaye, in his *Left Behind* series, pictures God using this war prior to the rapture to reap a great harvest of souls who then go to be with the Lord when the rapture comes. If one adopts the interpretation that the war comes near the midpoint of the Tribulation, then that soul harvest would produce some of the multitudes who come to Christ during the Tribulation. One problem if you put this war before the rapture is that you cannot have a majority of Jews trusting Christ then, because then they are all gone in the rapture. Widespread revival among the Jewish people will not come until during the Tribulation itself. Dyer states, “In Ezekiel the battle is the catalyst God will use to draw Israel to Himself.”²⁶⁹ Whether that happens immediately, or occurs over a period of time,

²⁶⁸ Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 77-78.

²⁶⁹ Dyer, *Ezekiel*, 1300.

is not immediately clear from the text. Tanner argues, “In my opinion, Ezek. 39:22 [‘From that day forward the house of Israel will know that I am the Lord their God’] rules out an invasion of Gog in the first half of the Tribulation.”²⁷⁰ But the text does not force the conclusion that all Jews will turn to Christ en masse in the days immediately following God’s deliverance of Israel. It does, however, clearly set the stage for the spiritual restoration of the Jews. This could all be viewed in light of the larger picture of all that takes place in the period around the time of Christ’s return, when he will fully and finally accomplish the restoration of the Jewish people.

How Might This Coordinate with the Final Return of Jews to the Land?

One effect of this war is that it will lead to the final return of all Jews to the land. Ezekiel 39:28 says, “I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind.” Feinberg sees Ezekiel 39:25-29 as descriptive of events that happen after the conflict is over, stating, “Verses 25-29 teach that the complete return of Israel will occur after the defeat of Gog and his confederates.”²⁷¹ If the war occurs near the midpoint of the Tribulation, it does not give much time for any remaining Jews scattered around the world to make their way back to the land of Israel. The text seems to imply that after the war, there is still time and freedom for Jews to finish their return to Israel. This argument lends support to the view that the war will precede the Great Tribulation.

How Might This Impact the Doctrine of Imminency?

The doctrine of imminency teaches that we should be looking for the Lord’s return right now, referring to the rapture, being ready all the time, because he could come at any moment. Therefore we cannot say that this invasion *must* occur before the rapture, because that destroys imminency. But saying that it *could* is not the same as saying it *has*

²⁷⁰ Tanner, “Rethinking Ezekiel’s Invasion by Gog,” 43.

²⁷¹ Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel*, 231.

to. It is commonly stated that “the next great event on the Lord’s timetable is the rapture of the church.”²⁷² Walvoord describes the rapture as “the next event on God’s calendar,” and “the next event as far as prophecy’s concerned.”²⁷³ While that sounds good, we do not know that for sure. Just because there are no prophecies of Scripture that *have* to be fulfilled prior to the rapture does not mean that there are no prophecies of Scripture that *might* be fulfilled. As Rosenberg states, “It should be noted with regard to this doctrine [imminence] that while no major prophetic event *has* to happen before the Rapture, that doesn’t mean no such event *will* happen first. Perhaps the clearest evidence of this truth is the rebirth of Israel.”²⁷⁴ For example, someone who made the claim in the year 1947 that “the next great event on the Lord’s timetable is the rapture of the church” would have been wrong, because in 1948 there was a different great event on the Lord’s timetable—the rebirth of the nation of Israel, which obviously preceded the rapture of the church. While this student holds to the imminent pre-tribulation rapture of the church, there is a danger in our theological camp we need to beware of, which might be called “pre-trib blindness.”²⁷⁵ We say no major prophetic event *has* to happen before the rapture, and so we think that no such prophetic event *will* happen first. That is an error in our thinking that may blind us to the possibility of other great prophecies being fulfilled first, including possibly the war of Gog and Magog. For example, Pentecost argues against Cooper’s position that the war precedes the Tribulation because “the imminence of the rapture makes it impossible that an event such as this must first be fulfilled.”²⁷⁶ However,

²⁷² Dyer, *World News and Bible Prophecy*, 173.

²⁷³ Charles R Swindoll, John F. Walvoord, and J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Road to Armageddon: A Biblical Understanding of Prophecy and End Time Events* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1999), 25, 38.

²⁷⁴ Rosenberg, *Epicenter*, 284.

²⁷⁵ This is the student’s own term.

²⁷⁶ Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 337.

Pentecost makes an error in assuming that if the war precedes the Tribulation it must also precede the rapture. Likewise, Randall Price states, “The conditions for its fulfillment might exist in the Church Age, but its actual fulfillment would not properly take place until after the Rapture; otherwise it would violate the principle of immanency [sic] that attends this doctrine.”²⁷⁷ But there is no violation of imminency unless one claims the war *must* take place before the rapture. This student has not discovered any authors who say the war *must* precede the rapture. Philips states that “it has been suggested by some that the prophecy will be fulfilled *before the rapture of the church*,”²⁷⁸ and then he proceeds to reject that position because it destroys imminence. However, he lists no names of any who hold that position, leaving one to wonder if he is misrepresenting those who believe that the prophecy *could* be fulfilled before the rapture, without stating that it *must*. If that is the case, his is a straw man argument. It also reveals a bias against considering the possibility of any major end times prophecy being fulfilled prior to the rapture. In noting that the prevailing view among dispensational premillennialism is to place the invasion during the Tribulation period, Tanner comments that “so much emphasis has been placed upon an eschatological Tribulation period that it was almost assumed that Ezekiel 38–39 belonged there.”²⁷⁹ It is such an assumption that may blind interpreters to the possibility of the invasion preceding the Tribulation. Tanner goes on to explain further why many may assume Ezekiel’s war falls during the Tribulation: “Knowing that the Tribulation with its battle of Armageddon is fraught with warfare, it seems easy enough to relegate the invasion by Gog to this same period.”²⁸⁰ The return of the Jews to the land of Israel, the rebirth of that nation, and the restoration of that land which was once barren are all

²⁷⁷ Price, “The Prophecies of Ezekiel,” 35.

²⁷⁸ Philips, 357.

²⁷⁹ Tanner, “Rethinking Ezekiel’s Invasion by Gog,” 29.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 40.

prophecies spelled out in Ezekiel 36–37 which have clearly been fulfilled today. In fact, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently stood at the gates of Auschwitz and declared that the prophecies of Ezekiel 36 and 37 have come true: “Armed with the Jewish spirit, the justice of man, and the vision of the prophets, we sprouted new branches and grew deep roots. Dry bones became covered with flesh, a spirit filled them, and they lived and stood on their feet.”²⁸¹ Commenting on Netanyahu’s remark, Jan Markell, founder and director of Olive Tree Ministries, a Messianic Jewish ministry, adds that now that Ezekiel 37 has been fulfilled, chapters 38 and 39 are expected to follow.²⁸² Following the same line of reasoning, if Ezekiel 36–37 have been fulfilled prior to the rapture and the Tribulation, is it not possible that Ezekiel 38–39 might also be fulfilled prior to the rapture and/or the Tribulation?²⁸³

It is important to recognize that the pre-tribulation position for Ezekiel’s war does not require it to precede the rapture. It is the signing of Antichrist’s seven-year treaty with Israel that starts the Tribulation, not the rapture. We do not know how much time there is between the rapture and the beginning of the Tribulation, or what events may take place during that period. There are many pieces of the puzzle that must fall into place before the Tribulation, but that is not to say they must all fall into place before the rapture, or the imminency of the rapture is destroyed. Fruchtenbaum gives a clear example of this:

Could the Rapture have come before 1948? The answer is yes, because the Rapture is imminent. However, could the Tribulation have come before 1948? The answer is no, because there was no Jewish state and government to sign the covenant that would begin the Tribulation. Believing that Israel had to be

²⁸¹ Chad Groening, “Netanyahu: Ezekiel 37 Fulfilled,” *OneNewsNow* (February 16, 2010), <http://www.onenewsnow.com/Culture/Default.aspx?id=898508> (accessed February 17, 2010).

²⁸² *Ibid.*

²⁸³ Paraphrase of Joel Rosenberg from a phone call with this student on February 11, 2010.

established before the Tribulation was never an argument against imminency. Neither is the belief that the invasion comes before the Tribulation an argument against imminency.²⁸⁴

Continuing the same line of logic in a different source, Fruchtenbaum points out:

It is obvious, then, that a restoration of Israel would have to be pre-tribulational. This is not the same as saying pre-Rapture since the doctrine of imminence would simply mean that no one could know which one comes first: the Rapture or the re-establishment of Israel. Only by virtue of fulfillment do we now know that the establishment of Israel came before the Rapture.²⁸⁵

Hitchcock states that the pre-tribulation view must be rejected because “this view nullifies New Testament teaching of the imminence of the Rapture.”²⁸⁶ In the words of Fruchtenbaum, the objection that placing Ezekiel’s war prior to the Tribulation destroys imminency “is strictly a straw-man argument.”²⁸⁷ In laying out the various positions regarding the timing of Ezekiel’s war, Hitchcock equates “before the Tribulation period” with “before the Rapture,” but does not even mention the possibility of before the Tribulation yet after the rapture.²⁸⁸ This seems to be a misunderstanding of the possibilities within the pre-tribulation position. Furthermore, Hitchcock states that “those who hold this view believe the words ‘living securely’ . . . are explainable only if the Tribulation period has not yet begun.”²⁸⁹ This is another misunderstanding of the pre-tribulation position, where the phrase could apply either to a period before the Tribulation or the first part of the Tribulation period. Again there is the danger of presenting the pre-tribulation position as a straw-man argument.

²⁸⁴ Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 82.

²⁸⁵ Fruchtenbaum, *A Review of After the Empire by Mark Hitchcock*, 6.

²⁸⁶ Hitchcock, *After the Empire*, 128.

²⁸⁷ Fruchtenbaum, *A Review of After the Empire by Mark Hitchcock*, 6.

²⁸⁸ Hitchcock, *After the Empire*, 127.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Another related danger in our theological camp we must beware of is an escapist mentality. Looking for an imminent rapture, people falsely assume they need have no concern about any of the future trials likely to fall upon the world, believing they will be gone before anything bad happens, so they will not have to suffer. That is a dangerous misunderstanding and misapplication of imminency, setting believers up for trouble. Certainly that logic would not be sustainable with Christians who are suffering in North Korea or Sudan right now. Our wishful thinking has us going straight from our lives of comfort here to our home in glory there, with no possibility of major suffering in between. The Bible does not teach that. We need to be prepared for genuine persecution or hardship if it ever comes our way. For example, one reason why the United States may not stand up to support Israel as Ezekiel's northern invasion looms could be because the United States has already fallen. That could come from economic collapse, destruction by some foreign power, or one of many other scenarios.²⁹⁰ While a consideration of such possibilities is outside the scope of this study, we as believers need to be reminded that trouble is coming upon this world, and we had best prepare our hearts to be ready.

Consideration of the Consequences of this War

No matter where one places this war in the prophetic timeline, it has huge implications with other end times events. The final and complete return of the Jews to the land, their ultimate spiritual restoration, the possibility of a great soul harvest, clearing the way for the building of the Third Temple, removal of opposition to the Antichrist's consolidation of power, and even the preparation for the Antichrist's seven year covenant with Israel could all be involved, depending on when the war takes place.

²⁹⁰ Mark Hitchcock's *The Late Great United States: What Bible Prophecy Reveals About America's Last Days* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2009) outlines many such possible scenarios worth considering.

Ezekiel 39:25-29 seem to indicate that this war will precipitate the final and complete return of Jews to the land. Phrases such as “I will now bring Jacob back from captivity” (:25), and “I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind” (:28) imply that this will be a consequence of the war. While it is possible to take these verses as a summary of the whole conflict, and thus be referring to a regathering of the Jews that has already taken place, Feinberg is one who sees these verses as describing events that follow the war: “the complete return of Israel will occur after the defeat of Gog and his confederates.”²⁹¹ Thus the partial return that has taken place already would be sufficient to meet the requirements of the prophecy for the war to take place. But at the present time approximately half of the world’s Jews are still scattered among the nations. This war would serve to bring the rest of them home to Israel. However, as previously noted, this would require ample time with conditions favorable for the immigration of Jews back to the land. During the last half of the Tribulation, the Jews will temporarily be fleeing out of the land, a difficulty with placing the war near the midpoint of the Tribulation. If the war precedes the Tribulation, it is easier to see how this could be accomplished either before the Tribulation begins, or during the first few years of the Tribulation when the Antichrist’s covenant is still being honored.

The war will also be used by God to open the eyes and hearts of many Jews to the Lord. Israel will know, “and the nations will know that I the Lord am the Holy One in Israel” (Ezek 39:7). “From that day forward the house of Israel will know that I am the Lord their God” (Ezek 39:22). Dyer explains that “in Ezekiel the battle is the catalyst God will use to draw Israel to Himself.”²⁹² Charles Ryrie concurs: “The twofold purpose of this judgment is that the nations might acknowledge God’s glory and that Israel might

²⁹¹ Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel*, 231.

²⁹² Dyer, *Ezekiel*, 1300.

know God's grace."²⁹³ Randall Price postulates that if the war occurs between the rapture and the start of the Tribulation, "many Jews in Israel may come to true faith because of this event, among them the 144,000 (Revelation 7:4-8)."²⁹⁴ While certainly one outcome of this war will be the salvation of many Jews, it does not require the wholesale conversion of all Jews. The argument for this is based on the fact that the nations also will know that the Lord is God, but that obviously does not mean that all in the nations come to faith in Christ. It is better to understand this as a recognition among all that God is at work, without necessarily experiencing a genuine conversion. If preceding the rapture, obviously all those truly saved, including any newly-converted Jews, would be taken up at that time. But the salvation of all Jews cannot precede the rapture, as then there would be none left to meet the Bible's requirements for Jews living and coming to faith during the Tribulation period. Nevertheless, God will use the dramatic events of this war to help bring many Jews to faith, whether in the immediate aftermath, or in conjunction with other events during the period of the Great Tribulation.

In like manner, there will no doubt be a great soul harvest among the nations as they see God's hand at work delivering the Jews from assured destruction in this war. For many, it will be the final proof needed that God is real, alive, powerful, and working on behalf of his people today. This soul harvest may be especially fruitful in the Muslim world, where God is already doing great works in bringing revival to lands that have been closed to the gospel for many hundreds of years. Whether before or during the Tribulation, these will be part of the multitudes coming to Christ during this time. LaHaye is one who sees this as something that God would want to do before the rapture rather than after it. Furthermore, he states that:

²⁹³ Charles Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 1326.

²⁹⁴ Price, "The Prophecies of Ezekiel," 38.

the destruction of Russia will appear as a supernatural event that will cause all the world to know that God has acted. . . . In fact, the greatest soul harvest in the history of mankind may result from that moment of divine retribution. . . . I risk the criticism of colleagues when I suggest that Christ may rapture His church after the destruction of Russia. . . . I may be influenced by my yearning to see the mighty soul harvest.²⁹⁵

Rhodes states that:

Some interpreters suggest that this view is consistent with God’s heart for people coming to Christ as well as God’s grace and mercy. We have seen that when God destroys the massive northern coalition, He will also give a convincing testimony to His power, majesty, and glory before a watching world. As a result, many Jews and Gentiles will be converted. If this invasion takes place prior to the rapture, many people may come to Christ and be taken out of the world in the rapture, thereby being spared the horrible events of the Tribulation.²⁹⁶

Rosenberg shares a similar perspective as he writes, “But what if there was a great spiritual awakening first [before the rapture]? Would it not be just like God to do something like that first—*before* the Antichrist is revealed, *before* the Tribulation begins, *before* billions suffer and perish forever?”²⁹⁷ Rosenberg writes elsewhere,

It would certainly be consistent with God’s heart for humanity that he would cause this cataclysmic moment to occur *before* the Rapture in order to shake people out of their spiritual apathy and/or rebellion and give them at least one more chance to receive Christ as their Savior before the terrible events of the Tribulation occur.²⁹⁸

But no matter when this war occurs, for believers it should produce a time of rejoicing, as God uses it to bring many to faith in him. Anticipating that soul harvest, it is also something for which believers should be preparing.

It is intriguing to consider how this war, if it does precede the Tribulation, could pave the way for the rebuilding of the temple. Under this scenario: the earthquake

²⁹⁵ LaHaye, *The Coming Peace in the Middle East*, 150.

²⁹⁶ Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 180. Cf. Rosenberg, *Epicenter*, 251.

²⁹⁷ Rosenberg, *The Ezekiel Option*, 250.

²⁹⁸ Rosenberg, *Epicenter*, 283.

could demolish the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount; the influence of Islam would be greatly diminished, if not wiped out; Israel's enemies would be at least temporarily subdued from standing against her; many Jews would be turning their hearts to the Lord; and given all those conditions, it is only reasonable to conclude that many in Israel would decide the time had finally come to rebuild their temple. This would provide the answer for how the temple could be found standing on the Temple Mount during the first part of the Tribulation, when worship is once again being conducted there.

Depending on how soon other events followed, this could occur either before, during, or after the establishment of Antichrist's covenant with Israel. Given the placement of these chapters in the book of Ezekiel, the lengthy section beginning in chapter 40 describing the details of the millennial temple would seem appropriately placed. Rosenberg states, "One possibility is that the God of Israel will use the supernatural judgment involving a massive earthquake, hailstorms, and firestorms from heaven to destroy the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aksa Mosque, clearing the way for the building of a Holy Temple to worship him."²⁹⁹ Hitchcock, though not subscribing to the view that the war precedes the Tribulation, nevertheless states that

This view provides a reasonable explanation for how the Jewish people will be able to construct a temple on the temple mount in Jerusalem. If the armies of many of the major Islamic nations are decimated in Israel before the Tribulation begins, the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem could be accomplished with much less Muslim resistance.³⁰⁰

These events could also easily lead to the establishment of Antichrist's covenant with Israel. As LaHaye observes, "God's supernatural destruction of Russia, which cannot be far off, is the giant step that will unleash an incredible chain of events bringing on the Antichrist, the Tribulation, the second coming of Christ, and the

²⁹⁹ Rosenberg, *Epicenter*, 191.

³⁰⁰ Hitchcock, *Iran the Coming Crisis*, 181.

millennial reign of Christ.”³⁰¹ No doubt the events of this war will leave the world reeling, looking for someone to bring order from the chaos. It is just such an opportunity that may speed the Antichrist’s ascendancy. The world would be at a teachable moment, much more ready to make some sort of peace with Israel. Most of Israel’s enemies would already have been devastated by the outcome of the war. Seizing the opportunity, Antichrist may then vault onto the world stage by orchestrating the details of a final peace agreement with Israel. Indeed, most of the work will already have been done for him, but this would be a golden example of not letting a good crisis go to waste. As such, Antichrist could claim the credit for being the one to finally bring peace to a region where so many have failed before him. The world will be quick to look for someone to step forward and lead during this time of chaos, and the Antichrist may be just their man.

In like manner, conditions following this war would be ideal for the Antichrist’s consolidation of power. All resistance to his leadership coming from the Islamic world will have been effectively removed. Russia will be knocked down and out for the count. If the United States is still a world power at that time, the rapture will effectively knock her out of the picture. That leaves the European nations, the old Roman Empire, basically alone on the world stage, with Antichrist at her head. There will be little to stand in his way as he rises to become the most powerful figure the world has ever known. Walvoord concurs: “If Russia and her satellites are destroyed as military powers, the other side of the balance of power, represented by the Mediterranean confederacy, is then in a position to dominate the whole world.”³⁰²

³⁰¹ Tim LaHaye, *The Coming Peace in the Middle East*, 14.

³⁰² Walvoord, “Russia: King of the North—Part II,” 26.

Tentative Conclusions

There are many conditions that must be true to match this prophecy. Depending on the interpretation taken on a few key points, it is possible that they are all in place already. Certainly “many days” have passed from the time the prophecy was given. We may or may not be living in “the latter days,” depending on one’s interpretation of that phrase. The Jews have returned to the land, while most remain in unbelief. Israel has been restored, both as a nation, and as a land, and is prospering. The people are dwelling in security, more security than they have known for thousands of years, although there is a difference of opinion whether or not today’s conditions match Ezekiel’s prophecy. Russia, currently looking to restore her place of power in the world, has a deep-seated animosity toward Israel, and has shown a willingness to attack her. The exact alignment of nations foretold by Ezekiel is present today, for the first time ever in history. There are plausible reasons in the current world situation why some historic enemies of Israel, such as Iraq and Egypt, might not participate in the invading coalition. The motivation to destroy Israel is there in the form of Radical Islam. Islamic eschatology provides a religious motivation for a chaotic and devastating attack on Israel, to pave the way for the coming of the Islamic messiah. The expressed intent and desire to destroy Israel is certainly present in the Muslim states surround Israel. One of her most vehement enemies, Iran, is actively seeking more powerful weapons, which would likely be turned against Israel if given the opportunity, which the world seems impotent to prevent or forestall. Israel is increasingly isolated and alone in the world, with even such historic allies as the United States giving mixed signals about whether or not she will stand with Israel.

Of these many, many details, it could be argued that every one of them has fallen into perfect position today. The stage is set, and it would seem that it cannot be long until the curtain rises, and the drama begins. We do know without a doubt that this war will come. “It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign Lord”

(Ezek 39:8). Indeed, it would seem likely that God has given us such a detailed prophecy about this major end times event in order that discerning students of God's Word, with the Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other, will be able to see it approaching and prepare.

When will this war take place? On this matter we cannot be absolutely sure. The interpretation of "the latter days" as applying to the Tribulation period, coupled with the understanding that Israel will not know true security until the Antichrist has made his covenant with her, argue for the timing of this war to fall sometime in the first half of the Tribulation period. However, almost all the scholars who adopt this position completely overlook such problems as the seven months and seven years, giving little or no explanation of how those might fit the sequence of events. Many other factors point to some time prior to the start of the Great Tribulation: the possibility that every precondition for the fulfillment of the prophecy is present today and need not wait until after the start of the Tribulation; the impact of the great earthquake upon whatever building is standing on the Temple Mount; the conditions necessary to accomplish the seven months of cleansing the land and the seven years of burning the weapons; the conditions of peace that would make the burning of weapons be reasonable; the diminished influence of Islam which would open the way for the rise of the Antichrist; the setting of the stage for the rebuilding of the temple; the setting of the stage for the Antichrist's peace treaty with Israel; the difficulty of seeing a great deliverance of the Jews immediately followed by a great persecution; and the time and conditions following the war to all for the final return of all Jews to the land. The matters of the phrase "the latter years" and the precondition of security in the land can easily be explained in ways that would not rule out a pre-tribulation fulfillment of this prophecy. Taking all matters into consideration, it is the opinion of this student that the most likely time period for the fulfillment of this prophecy is before the Tribulation begins, when the church might possibly be still around to witness it.

The Impact on Ministry Practice

Whether the fulfillment of this prophecy comes before the rapture, after the rapture, or during the Tribulation, there is widespread agreement in most of the literature that conditions for the coming of this war are ripe, that its fulfillment could be close at hand, and that we may indeed be approaching the end of the age. If that is the case, then it would seem there should be an impact on the ministry practice of those who see this war approaching. Doctrine must always impact our lives. Repeatedly in Paul's epistles, he would expound correct doctrine, and then turn from there to show how that should be applied in our lives. God has assigned some of his people the role of the watchman. Andrée Seu, in a *World* magazine article, poetically described this role. Speaking of the Titanic disaster, she remarked, "Oddly, the first lifeboat launched contained only 28 people, despite a capacity for 65. There is always only a small subset of people who can see the meaning of small events at first—the child's marble, once stationary, now slowly rolling off the cabin table onto the deck floor."³⁰³ Understandably, those who devote much of their time and effort to the study of biblical eschatology, with a view to what is happening in the world around them, will see these things coming before the average layman. As such, it is their responsibility to sound the warning, and help prepare the church for what is ahead. Thus, in accord with the hypothesis of this research, this student would expect an association between the selected authorities' understanding of the possible soon fulfillment of Ezekiel's war of Gog and Magog and their ministry practices in the areas of teaching, speaking and writing, vision for new ministry, and renewed urgency in presenting the gospel.

It is the expectation of this research that those who view the possibility of this war approaching soon will have their ministry practices impacted as a result. In

³⁰³ Andrée Seu, "Guitar Lessons," *World*, April 11, 2009.

conducting the literature review, very little was found that addressed this subject specifically. However, the impact on ministry is seen directly in the literature itself and also in the broader scope of ministry carried out by those writing on the subject.

One obvious ministry practice is to be teaching, preaching, speaking, and writing on this subject. The very fact that authors are writing on this subject is a natural outcome of the understanding that this war is indeed approaching. Many are taking to heart the biblical role of the watchman, in seeking to inform and educate the church as a whole about what lies ahead. The very fact that there is much to read on this subject, indeed in the area of eschatology as a whole, is evidence to this. Also evidence is that much of the literature is written with the layman in mind, rather than being intended merely for academic circles. There is a broad and growing interest in the things to come, opening up many doors for ministry in this area. Prolific authors such as Mark Hitchcock, Tim LaHaye, and Joel Rosenberg have written many books dealing with these subjects, and others, such as Rhodes, have expanded their writing ministry to teach on the relevance of this topic. Rhodes quotes Christ's rebuke of the Pharisees in Matthew 16:3, "Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?" and applies it to us, who know the Scripture, and should be able to properly discern the times.³⁰⁴ Implicit in all these efforts is a desire to prepare the church ahead of time for what is approaching, so that believers are not taken unawares or unprepared.

When attending a book signing in conjunction with the release of Tim LaHaye's first novel in a new end times series, this student asked LaHaye about his understanding of the coming war of Gog and Magog. LaHaye laughed and declined to answer, stating that that would be the subject of the next book in the series to come out.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 200.

³⁰⁵ Personal interaction of the student with Tim LaHaye at Barnes and Noble Bookstore, Lancaster, PA, on April 21, 2010.

This subject matter has also proven to be fertile ground for Christian fiction, as for example in the end times series written by LaHaye and Rosenberg. That has proven to be a very palatable and successful platform for teaching large numbers of people many details of biblical prophecy. Both authors have also written non-fiction works giving more detail about the prophecies discussed in their fictional works.

Christian fiction with an end times focus is also a very fruitful platform for reaching unbelievers with the claims of Christ. Interest in things to come is not confined only to the Christian community, but is widespread among many who are not yet born again. This student has found it to be an open door for ministry with many who are intrigued, but do not yet know Christ. In the Christian fiction, for example, the plan of salvation is often clearly woven into the story line at some point. In non-fiction books on the subject, the authors will often include the plan of salvation clearly laid out as part of their work, as for example in chapter 13 of Hitchcock's book, *After the Empire*, chapter 15 of his book *Iran the Coming Crisis*, chapter 9 of his book *The Coming Islamic Invasion of Israel*, chapter 12 of LaHaye's book, *The Coming Peace in the Middle East*, Appendix 2 of Rhodes' book, *Northern Storm Rising*, and chapter 15 of Rosenberg's book *Epicenter*. Lindsey's landmark book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, for example, is one of the most popular books of all time, and was used of the Lord to lead a great many to Christ.

It goes without saying that authors writing on end times events who are also pastors will be preaching on these subjects in their churches. David Jeremiah, for example, has videotaped sermons given in his church and distributed them as part of a teaching curriculum in his *What In the World Is Going On?* DVD series. When this student, who is also pastor of a local church in Pennsylvania, preached an extended sermon series on this subject, it produced the greatest response of any sermon series preached in his entire 25 year ministry.

Experts in these subjects are in high demand for speaking engagements, seminars, and conferences, where they are given opportunity for further teaching. David Jeremiah, Joel Rosenberg, and many others are sought after in this regard. Rosenberg has orchestrated a successful series of Epicenter Conferences that have given specific attention to Ezekiel's prophecies.

Several authors viewing this war as perhaps coming soon indicate a renewed urgency in presenting the gospel. One of those is LaHaye:

Yes, I am inclined to believe that as members of the body of Jesus Christ we will see the destruction of Russia and have an opportunity to share in an unprecedented soul harvest. This is one reason why I challenge Christians everywhere to develop the practice of sharing their faith effectively and to appropriate the maximum means of communication in this day. . . . One reason why I have maintained a heavy load of work under intense pressure in recent years—including laying the foundation for a national television ministry—is because of the coming “memorable day.” If it occurs in my lifetime, I want to be working in the greatest medium known to mankind, communicating the gospel of salvation to an empty world.³⁰⁶

Phillips also states this explicitly:

As we today think of all the peoples who make up Russia, and if we think of what that nation has in store, surely we should weep. And we should pray that the Lord of the harvest might be pleased to visit that land with a spiritual awakening before the darkness finally descends.³⁰⁷

Hitchcock also expresses this urgency: “Knowing the truth of Ezekiel 38–39 and the coming Tribulation period should compel every believer to tell lost sinners about Jesus Christ.”³⁰⁸ This will be addressed more directly in the interview stage of this research. This war, whenever it comes, will undoubtedly produce a great soul harvest, and the

³⁰⁶ LaHaye, *The Coming Peace in the Middle East*, 152, 157.

³⁰⁷ Phillips, *Exploring the Future*, 370.

³⁰⁸ Hitchcock, *After the Empire*, 162.

church can prepare through training in evangelism, and teaching on this subject. God may use teaching on this subject ahead of time to bring growth to God's kingdom and his church.

Another area of possible ministry impact is a vision for new ministry. This might include preparing for the possibility of actual war, and making plans for helping people with food and basic needs if war should come. Joel Rosenberg, who has written and taught extensively on this subject, has been moved by his beliefs in this area to begin a ministry of reaching out to Israel and her neighbors, preparing for the possibility of a soon approaching war. This has included ministry to the poor and needy in Israel, and caring for victims of war and terrorism, with the establishment of the Joshua Fund to aid in these efforts. In Rosenberg's words,

Let us pray for peace (Psalm 122:6), but let us also prepare for war (Ezek 38:7). This is why my wife and I began The Joshua Fund in 2006—to mobilize Christians to bless Israel and her neighbors in the name of Jesus, according to Genesis 12:1-3. We are seeking to educate Christians around the world to the threats and the opportunities to serve the Lord in the epicenter. We are working with believers around the world to help provide food, clothing, medical supplies, and other relief aid to the poor and needy in Israel and the epicenter today, as well as stockpile supplies ahead of whatever war may be next. By God's grace and for God's glory, TJF has just acquired a warehouse in central Israel. This month we are purchasing nearly a half-million worth of food and supplies. We are hiring staff and buying delivery trucks in Israel. In 2009, by God's grace, we helped set up and expand four food distribution centers in Israel—two in the north near Lebanon, and two in the south near Gaza. In 2010, we are in the process of setting up five more food distribution centers throughout Israel. We just held an Epicenter Conference in Manila, Philippines to educate and mobilize more than 30,000 Christians to pray and fast for Israel and her neighbors. We are preparing for the 2010 Epicenter Conference in Philadelphia on June 25–26 to educate and mobilize thousands more Christians to do the same. We are in the process of organizing a Joshua Fund prayer and vision trip to Israel in May of 2011. Lord willing, we will also be hosting a two-day Epicenter Conference in Jerusalem in May of 2011. We're not

the only ministry seeking to bless Israel and her neighbors. We're simply trying to be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ in light of these threats.³⁰⁹

Another example of vision for new ministry because of one's view in this area would be David Jeremiah, with his speaking and teaching ministries related to eschatology and current events in the world.

Conclusion

God gave a surprisingly detailed foreview of this coming war, with the emphatic declaration that "It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign Lord" (Ezek 39:8). If indeed it is approaching soon, that will be becoming increasingly apparent as world events set the stage for the war to begin. Much as a volcanic eruption will be presaged by growing pressure, earth tremors, and other signs, this war will not be a complete surprise to those who understand the Word of God and are aware of the times in which they live. It is this student's growing conviction that we are currently experiencing the gathering storm of this war right now. According to Rhodes, "Such facts as these have led a number of biblical scholars to suggest that the stage may be being set for the eventual fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy of a northern military coalition invading Israel."³¹⁰ As Bible scholars and prophecy experts debate the timing of this war, one cannot be completely dogmatic, but there are a number of clues given in the text that must be taken into account. And as always, our doctrine must impact our practice. Among those who see this war approaching soon, how should it impact our lives and ministry? God gave this prophecy for a reason, and not merely to satisfy our intellectual curiosity. Those believers who find themselves living in the last days need to be alert and about the Lord's business, especially in light of the times in which they live.

³⁰⁹ Joel Rosenberg, "Israel, the Iran Threat, and Modern Day Lessons from the Book of Esther," a message presented at the National Religious Broadcasters convention, Nashville, TN, March 1, 2010.

³¹⁰ Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising*, 33.

CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURE AND RESEARCH METHOD

Introduction

The problem statement for this project is as follows: The issue of this research is to determine how the ministry practices of selected authorities in the field of biblical prophecy are impacted by their understanding of the possible soon fulfillment of Ezekiel's war of Gog and Magog. The ministry practices specifically addressed are in the areas of teaching, speaking and writing, vision for new ministry, and renewed urgency in presenting the gospel. In order to ascertain the impact upon their ministry practices, it is necessary to first determine their understanding of Ezekiel's prophecy.

The research question is as follows: How are the ministry practices of the selected authorities in the areas of teaching, speaking and writing, vision for new ministry, and renewed urgency in presenting the gospel impacted by their understanding of the possible soon fulfillment of Ezekiel's war of Gog and Magog?

The hypothesis for this research is as follows: There is an association between the selected authorities' understanding of the possible soon fulfillment of Ezekiel's war of Gog and Magog and their ministry practices in the areas of teaching, speaking and writing, vision for new ministry, and renewed urgency in presenting the gospel.

It is this student's assumption that the more one understands about the prophecy given in Ezekiel 38–39, and the more one sees the possibility of its soon fulfillment, the more that will directly impact one's ministry to others. If it is just a matter of understanding theology for its own sake, without it making any difference in our lives, something is seriously wrong. Because the subjects of the research will be authorities in the area of biblical prophecy, the most natural application of their knowledge will be in

ministry to others, rather than in some type of personal application. Although other areas of ministry could be addressed, the focus of this research will be on just three primary areas. The first of those can be lumped together as teaching, speaking and writing; in other words, how their understandings of this prophecy are communicated to others. The second area is their vision for new ministry. If one comes to a new and deeper understanding of this prophecy, and especially if one sees the real possibility of its approaching fulfillment, it may result in vision for new ministry that would not have taken place had they remained in the dark about this prophecy. The third area of application is a renewed urgency in presenting the gospel. This is often a wonderful by-product of an understanding of the end-times, and especially of the imminency of the rapture, and the possible nearness of the great tribulation and the return of Christ. Those are prophetic areas where we are directly affected, depending on whether or not we know Christ personally.

The war of Gog and Magog may not at first seem to have the same direct relevance for us, but a better understanding of that war can produce the same impact for us. If one places the war sometime during the tribulation period, and sees evidence that the war may be rapidly approaching, then that would mean that the rapture is even closer still. This would provide all the more motivation to get ready, and to help others get ready. If one sees the possibility of the war coming prior to the tribulation period, but after the rapture, it provides the same motivation. But if one considers the possibility of the war occurring even before the rapture, in addition to the motivations already mentioned, there may be even more. One would be a desire to get a better grip on the details of the prophecy, since we as the church may be around to witness it. Another would be consideration of how to minister to people, saved and lost alike, in the aftermath of that war. The prophecy explicitly states that one outcome of the war will be that the world will know the Lord is God. That does not mean that the entire world at the point will put their trust in Christ, but certainly it will be a golden opportunity, one of the

best opportunities ever, to lead people to faith in Christ. The Lord himself will have gotten the whole world's attention, provided the proof of who he is, and gotten people thinking about salvation and judgment. If we consider the possibility of being here for that, we ought also to consider how to ready ourselves to be used of God in reaping a great spiritual harvest at that time. If we are in the dark about all this, we risk being unprepared for perhaps the greatest evangelism opportunity since the resurrection of Christ.

That is a huge part of the motivation for this study, and directly relates to the hypothesis: There is an association between the selected authorities' understanding of the possible soon fulfillment of Ezekiel's war of Gog and Magog and their ministry practices in the areas of teaching, speaking and writing, vision for new ministry, and renewed urgency in presenting the gospel.

The methodology for this study will use in-depth interviews with selected authorities in the field of biblical prophecy.

Research Subjects

The subjects for this research will be selected living authorities in the field of biblical prophecy. For the most part, this will include prominent pastors, seminary professors and published authors who have written in the field of eschatology. The research requires a familiarity with Ezekiel's prophecy along with some awareness of current world events. If the intended interviewee does not have that familiarity, their input would be of little value toward the goals of this research project.

As the field of potential research subjects was evaluated, there was no attempt to limit the selection only to those of a particular theological persuasion. However, almost all the men discovered who have written and spoken publicly on this subject are also conservative evangelicals. This student was not able to discover any liberal or non-evangelical experts who have addressed this subject in their public ministry. Interest in

biblical eschatology and this subject in particular seems much more prominent among conservative evangelicals.

Because of the degree of knowledge required, both regarding the prophecy itself and also of current world events, the field of potential research subjects is a very narrow field. The average believer would likely not have enough familiarity with this subject and correlating world events to provide helpful input. Likewise, even a broad sampling of pastors or other Christian leaders would be less than fully helpful, as even a relatively small portion of them are familiar and comfortable enough in their knowledge of this prophecy to provide adequate input. This is rather disappointing, and hopefully will change over time. As this student chose this research topic and began work on the project, he would often be asked by other pastors about the subject of his doctoral research project. Starting with a short answer, “The war of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38-39,” it was interesting, but at times disheartening, to hear their responses. Occasionally someone would respond with, “Oh, that’s really interesting. Tell me more about it. What are your views on that?” But more often than not, you would see a look of confusion on their faces, and no further questions followed. The distinct impression was that they knew little to nothing about it, lacking enough knowledge to even know how to engage further on the subject. No one likes to be shown ignorant on any subject, so as the conversation quickly turned to other matters, it indicated that this was an area about which the other person knew little to nothing.

Given that many of these conversations were with other pastors and Christian leaders, this was at times rather disheartening. It’s no wonder the average Christian knows little about this subject, if their pastors and spiritual leaders are in the dark as well. Occasionally such conversations would reveal a rather lukewarm attitude toward the study of biblical prophecy altogether. Many, perhaps coming out of an allegorical approach to biblical prophecy, are so confused that they completely avoid the subject in their personal ministries. Some feel that it is an area where nobody can really know

anything for sure, so why bother with it? It is amazing to this student that in this age, where we are closer than ever to the fulfillment of so many end-times prophecies, and with a convergence of events in a multitude of areas that point to the approaching end of the age, that so many Christians, and even Christian leaders, know so little about this extremely important topic. A huge portion of the Word of God is devoted to prophecy about the things to come, so if are ignorant about that, we are forsaking a huge body of truth the Lord wants us to know.

As this student is a pastor at heart, it is tempting at this point to launch into a sermon about why God wants us to know the future. But that would perhaps be getting a little bit far afield from the present discussion, which is on the research subjects of this study. I am very grateful for some who have devoted themselves to study of the Word of God and what it says about the things to come. Especially in the last few decades, there has been a resurgence of interest in the end times, including Ezekiel's prophecy in chapters 38 and 39, with extensive scholarly study being done by a few. This is an area where we can greatly benefit from the labors of those who have gone before us, as it would be difficult or impossible to come up with all of the answers to all this on one's own. As such, this particular research project builds solidly on the foundation provided by so many others who have studied the details of this prophecy. The subjects of this study, by design and of necessity, are those who are considered experts in the area of biblical prophecy.

For the same reason, the subjects of this study need to be people involved in ministry. The research question seeks to determine how the ministry practices of the research subjects are impacted by their understanding of the possible soon fulfillment of Ezekiel's war of Gog and Magog. So someone who was familiar with this subject, but not involved in any kind of ministry, would not be an acceptable candidate for the purposes of this study.

It could be argued that there is a bit of a presumption involved with the research question: that the researcher is assuming anyone considered an expert in the field of biblical prophecy will be involved in ministry in some way. This is probably a true statement. Unless one's study of this subject was purely for the sake of their own personal benefit, they almost by definition will be involved in ministry. But this does not detract from the value of this study, as the question is *how* their ministry practices have been affected by their views.

Almost all the subjects of this study have been involved with teaching, preaching, speaking, and writing, with much of that ministry devoted to the subject of biblical prophecy. Their views on the end-times have already prompted them to be teaching others about it. These teaching, speaking, and writing opportunities form the core ministry of most of the people interviewed, and are being carried out in a wide variety of different ways. Some of the subjects will have begun new areas of ministry growing out of their study and knowledge of the end times. And probably all of them, to varying degrees, and in a variety of ways, are committed to communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ. Again, one purpose of this study is to see *how* that has been impacted by their views on this particular prophecy.

This research by definition focused on a limited number of participants, who are considered to be experts in the field of biblical eschatology. The initial goal, as recommended by John Reed, former chairman of the D.Min. Department at Dallas Theological Seminary, was to have at least eight interviews in order to gain sufficiently broad exposure to provide useful results. In the end ten interviews were accomplished. Each one was so enjoyable and helpful that this student wishes he had been able to conduct many more. Every interviewee provided new insights and perspectives on Ezekiel's prophecy, creating a much broader, deeper, and better understanding of all the various factors involved. As it relates to the impact on their ministries, there were some common themes that appeared, but also a wide variety of different applications. Although

the formal interview portion of this project is completed, it has awakened a thirst for continued study in this area, and a desire to gain the insights of others not able to be interviewed in the process of this research.

In the early stages of this study, and as the pertinent literature was being surveyed, this student began developing a list of some possible experts to interview in connection with this research. This list included: Charles Dyer, Mike Evans, Arnold Fruchtenbaum, John Hagee, Mark Hitchcock, Hank Hanagrad, Dave Hunt, Thomas Ice, Grant Jeffrey, David Jeremiah, Tim LaHaye, Peter Lalonde, Greg Laurie, Hal Lindsey, Chuck Missler, Dwight Pentecost, Randall Price, Ron Rhodes, Joel Rosenberg, Jon Ruthven, Charles Ryrie, Phil Steyne, and Paul Tan. It is recognized that any such list will always be incomplete, as there are many others who have done work on this prophecy and whose insights would prove beneficial.

In the process of developing this list, this student knew that he would not be able to interview all of them, for any number of different reasons. But the early research yielded enough possibilities to encourage the student that he would be able to accomplish his goal. Mostly using the internet, the contact information was researched, trying to come up with current addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses for each potential interviewee, which in some cases was difficult to accomplish. In mid-June of 2011, an introductory letter was sent out to twenty potential interviewees, introducing myself, explaining the nature of the study and the desire to interview them as part of the project. (See sample letter of introduction in the appendices.) This was followed up by phone calls and/or emails, to ascertain the subject's willingness to take part, and arrange a time and manner to conduct the interview.

In the end, interviews were conducted with slightly over half of those initially contacted, which this student considered a very favorable rate of return. There were a wide variety of reasons why it was not possible to conduct interviews with them all: inability to establish contact, age and health reasons, travels out of the country, or other

pressing ministry concerns which took priority. However, this student was very pleasantly surprised by the graciousness and willingness of so many to take time out of their busy schedules to talk with a student most of them had never heard of before. A good many of them expressed interest in learning more of the finished results of the study. This was so encouraging, and I am deeply grateful to all these men for their assistance in the project.

Following is the list of those with whom research interviews were conducted, the name of the ministry in which they have been involved (although some of their ministry involvements have now changed), and the date and means through which the interview was conducted:

Table 1. Interviews Conducted.

Name	Ministry	Date	Means
Dr. Charles H. Dyer	Moody Bible Institute Radio program "The Land and the Book"	9/13/11	Phone
Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum	Ariel Ministries	8/2/11	In person
Dr. Mark Hitchcock	Faith Bible Church, Edmond, OK	7/26/11	Phone
Dr. Thomas Ice	Liberty University Pre-Trib Research Center	7/19/11	Skype
Dr. Tim F. LaHaye	Tim LaHaye Ministries		Phone
Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost	Dallas Theological Seminary	7/19/11	Phone
Dr. J. Randall Price	Liberty University World of the Bible Ministries	8/1/11	Phone
Dr. Ron Rhodes	Reasoning from the Scriptures	8/9/11	Phone
Joel C. Rosenberg	The Joshua Fund	10/11/11	Phone

Dr. Jon Ruthven	Regent University School of Divinity	7/20/11	Phone
Dr. Phil Steyne	Columbia International University	7/20/11	Phone

Most of the interviewees are also authors, some of them prolifically so. The following is a list of their works reviewed in connection with this study. It is not an exhaustive list of all their publications. While only the titles are listed below, more information for each of the works listed can be found in the bibliography.

Table 2. Interviewee Publications Reviewed.

Name	Publications Reviewed
Dr. Charles H. Dyer	<i>Storm Clouds on the Horizon: Bible Prophecy and the Current Middle East Crisis</i> “Ezekiel” in <i>The Bible Knowledge Commentary</i> <i>World News and Bible Prophecy</i>
Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum	<i>The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events</i>
Dr. Mark Hitchcock	<i>After the Empire: Bible Prophecy in Light of the Fall of the Soviet Union</i> <i>Iran the Coming Crisis: Radical Islam, Oil, and the Nuclear Threat</i> <i>The Apocalypse of Ahmadinejad: The Revelation of Iran’s Nuclear Prophet</i> <i>The Coming Islamic Invasion of Israel</i> <i>The Late Great United States: What Bible Prophecy Reveals About America’s Last Days</i> <i>The Second Coming of Babylon</i>

	<i>The Truth Behind Left Behind: A Biblical View of the End Times</i>
Dr. Thomas Ice	“Ezekiel 38 and 39,” part 4, <i>Pre-Trib Perspectives</i> <i>The Truth Behind Left Behind: A Biblical View of the End Times</i>
Dr. Tim F. LaHaye	“Russia on Edge.” In <i>Foreshadows of Wrath and Redemption</i> <i>Global Warning</i> <i>The Coming Peace in the Middle East</i>
Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost	<i>Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology</i> “Where Do the Events of Ezekiel 38–39 Fit into the Prophetic Picture?” <i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
Dr. J. Randall Price	<i>The Prophecies of Ezekiel</i>
Dr. Ron Rhodes	<i>Northern Storm Rising: Russia, Iran, and the Emerging End times Military Coalition against Israel</i>
Joel C. Rosenberg	<i>Epicenter 2.0: Why the Current Rumbblings in the Middle East Will Change Your Future</i> <i>Epicenter: A Video Documentary</i> <i>Inside the Revolution</i> <i>The Ezekiel Option</i>
Dr. Jon Ruthven	<i>The Prophecy That Is Shaping History: New Research on Ezekiel’s Vision of the End</i>
Dr. Phil Steyne	

Research Instrument

The research instrument used in this study is a list of relevant and specific interview questions that were asked of each of the interviewees. (See interview questions

in the appendices.) Interview questions focused on three primary areas in order to meet the goals of this research: 1) their understanding of current world events that may indicate the possible soon approaching fulfillment of this prophecy; 2) their understanding of how this war fits in with other end times events; and 3) how their thinking on this has impacted their current ministry, specifically in the areas of: a) teaching, speaking and writing; b) vision for new ministry; and c) renewed urgency in presenting the gospel.

Although this is a D.Min. research project, with a necessary focus on the actual practice of ministry, in many ways the topic is more suited for Ph.D. work. The extensive study of the biblical text in question, the interpretation of the passage, the correlation with other end-times events, and even the correlation with current events that may show the possible approaching fulfillment of this prophecy are all more typical of Ph.D. work than D.Min. work. However, the impact on ministry practice is obviously more applicable to D.Min. work. In the end, the student designed the project in such a way that both aspects are combined into a single study.

This may be a rather unusual approach, focusing on both the theological and practical aspects of this particular topic, but the combination of theological study and practical application ideally suits the interests of this student. He has long had a strong interest in and love for theological and biblical studies, which must be the foundation of any solid ministry. But he also possesses the conviction that if we do not in some way put what we learn into practice, the study by itself is of little value. This combination project combines both aspects in a way that is ideally suited to the disposition, interests, and convictions of this student.

In order to ascertain the impact on ministry practice, the third section of the interview questions, it is necessary to first probe the theological understanding of this war, how it fits in with other end-time events, and what if any correlation is seen with current events which may presage the fulfillment of this prophecy. So the first two sections of the interview were necessary in order to be able to accomplish the third

section. The title of the project covers all three aspects addressed in the interview questions: “Selected Expert Perspectives on Ezekiel 38–39,” which identifies the subjects of the study and their theological understanding of this particular prophecy, “Related to Current World Events,” which ties the study in to possible correlations with what is going on in the world today, “With Resulting Influence on Ministry Practices,” which addresses the practical outworking of all this in their individual ministries.

Because of the limited amount of time available in an interview, it was impossible to get into a detailed discussion of every aspect of this 52-verse-long prophecy, along with every theological and biblical consideration that could be tied in with that. Thus the student had to be selective in choosing what questions to ask that would be relevant for this study. It is not intended to be an exhaustive study of the entire passage or all its theological implications.

The first section of the interview probed the subjects’ understanding of current world events that may indicate the possible soon approaching fulfillment of this prophecy. This student has tried to be very careful throughout the entire project about the words he has chosen to address this. Words such as “may,” “possible,” “could,” and “might” have been used in abundance, even when doing so creates sometimes rather cumbersome sentences, in an effort to avoid the error of declaring ahead of time a definitive correlation that may in fact not turn out quite the way we expect. When the prophecy is fulfilled, we can declare it as such; but until that happens, we must exercise caution about how we present it. Many students of prophecy have jumped to conclusions, and boldly declared those conclusions to a world eager to know the future, only to retreat in embarrassment later when things did not turn out as expected.

Nevertheless, the need for caution does not mean that we must avoid making any tentative correlations between what we see in prophecy and the world around us. Jesus exhorts his followers to be wise discerners of the times. Just as it is a mistake to presumptively declare a prophecy fulfilled before it comes to pass, it is also a mistake to

close our eyes to any possible connections between what the Lord has told us ahead of time and what we see in the world around us.

Therefore, the questions in the first section of the interview probe the insight of the selected experts regarding any tentative correlations they may see between Ezekiel's prophecy and current events. They are asked for specific indicators that shape their thoughts about all this. Questions are asked about any correlation between prophetic and modern alliances, the current climates in Russia and Iran, and Islamic thought and eschatology. Depending on how each interview progressed, sometimes the interviewer would ask follow-up or clarifying questions to further probe the interviewee's thoughts.

The second section of the interview probed the subjects' understanding of how this war fits in with other end-times events. The easiest way to start addressing this was to ask their thoughts of where this war fits in on the prophetic timeline at the end of the age. Their answer to this provided a snapshot of their views on this rather controversial area. From there the questions probed about specific factors that give clues about the timing of this war. The doctrine of imminence was addressed for any ways in which that affected their conclusions. There is significant debate in theological and prophetic circles about the timing of this war, and this section of the interview was very helpful in understanding all the various issues involved. One's view on this also impacts how one might apply this in the area of ministry practice. In order to keep each interview to a manageable length, many questions related to the timing of the war were pulled out and asked only if time allowed. Those optional questions about the timing of the war are presented as a fourth (optional) section of the interviews, but in reality that fourth section is a continuation of section two.

The third section of the interview probed how their thinking on this has impacted their current ministry, specifically in the areas of: a) teaching, speaking and writing; b) vision for new ministry; and c) renewed urgency in presenting the gospel. This gave feedback essential to answering the research question that underlies this

project. Other areas of ministry practice could have been addressed, such as, for example, what if any preparations believers ought to make for this war, either for themselves or on behalf of others, or addressing a need for training in eschatology or evangelism.

However, in the end it was decided to focus on just three primary areas, believing that these three would have application in the ministry practice of most of those interviewed for this project. It was also decided to combine teaching, speaking and writing together, as they all involve similar aspects of communicating to others about this prophecy.

One factor considered as preparation was made for the interviews was the amount of time that each interviewee would be able to grant. Obviously, a detailed interaction regarding every aspect of this prophecy was not possible. The preliminary list of interview questions developed was deemed to be much too long for most interviews. Thus some of those questions were scrapped, and others were moved to the end as optional questions to be addressed if time allowed.

Another possibility considered was to develop a pre-interview questionnaire, where some of the broader perspectives of the interviewees could be ascertained. This would have moved some questions from the interview itself to this pre-interview questionnaire. The purpose of this would have been to make better use of the time during the actual interview. However, it would have required the interviewees to make time in their schedules twice to help me in this project. In the end, that did not seem to be the best approach to the problem. It may have actually contributed to the failure of the project, if it proved to be more than the subjects of the study were willing to do. Since all of the subjects are very busy men, I decided to take the approach that would least encroach on the subjects' time and willingness to help.

Research Procedures

The methodology for this study used in-depth interviews with selected authorities in the field of biblical prophecy. Given the nature of the subject, this was

deemed the most appropriate method to use. A written survey would not allow for the depth of interaction desired. Case studies would not apply. Focus groups were impractical given the few number of qualified subjects for this research, and the impossibility of bringing them all together. There was no program to be developed or evaluated. The only practical approach was to carefully select subjects who would be able to address the subject from a position of expertise, and then interview them individually to address the research question.

Having selected potential interviewees and researching how to contact them, I sent an introductory letter first and followed up with a personal contact, as discussed above in the section on the research subjects. Arranging for the actual interviews proved more difficult.

My first choice was to conduct face to face interviews with as many subjects as possible, believing this would give the best opportunity for the give and take of soliciting responses during the interview. It would also provide the opportunity to begin a personal acquaintance with many of these men. It would take a significantly larger investment of time, money, travel, and effort, but the benefits made it worth considering. Initially, the contacts were grouped into geographic regions where I hoped to make different trips, interviewing several subjects on each trip. When first making personal contact with the interviewees, this was how I tried to set things up. Alas, the busy schedules and distances involved did not enable that to work out. Each of the men interviewed have much going on in their lives, and are heavily engaged in different kinds of ministry for the Lord. In addition, during the late summer, when these interviews were attempted, many of them were involved in travels away from their homes, further complicating the attempt. In the end the effort for the most part had to be abandoned, in favor of a simpler approach. Only the interview with Arnold Fruchtenbaum was able to be held face to face.

That did save a lot of money and time, but still the desire remained to meet many of these men in person. One solution to that came in the form of several invites to attend the Pre-Trib Study Group conference in Dallas, Texas, in early December 2011, where a number of the men interviewed were present and even presenting papers. This was a wonderful experience and hopefully will become a regular event for me in future years. This group has in the past addressed the Ezekiel 38–39 prophecy in detail, so there is a high degree of familiarity with it among those who are members.¹

One interview was held via a Skype video connection (with Tommy Ice). While it was good to be able to see each other through the means of this technology, the necessary audio recording was of a lesser quality. This proved problematic when transcribing the interview into print, because at times the quality of the recording made it difficult to clearly hear what had been said. Thus although later interviews could also have been made via Skype, I opted for a telephone call where it was easier to make a better audio recording. Thus most of the interviews were conducted over the phone.

After each interview, the recording was transcribed into print. I did some of these myself, but our church secretary Jean Bender was able to be a wonderful assistance in this regard, saving me a huge amount of time and effort. After she did each transcription, I would listen to the recording again, and seek to fill in any blanks she could not figure out. This produced a very helpful printed transcription of each interview, all of which are included in the appendices. It should be noted that there were a small percentage of places where for one reason or another we simply could not figure out exactly what was said on the recording, resulting in an occasional ellipsis, or possibly an error in the transcription.

¹ Papers presented during past meetings of this group are available at www.pre-trib.org.

Also during the transcription process, we discovered that most of us do not speak nearly as eloquently as we are able to write. The false starts, incomplete sentences, stumbling over words and so forth were not always included in the transcription, nor every “um” and “ah.” The transcriptions could probably be “cleaned up” even further, inserting better punctuation, sentence breaks, and so forth, especially if used in any further publication. However, they are presented here for the most part as they were transcribed. Question numbers have been inserted to make it easier to evaluate the responses on any specific subject area. Please see the appendix for an explanation of the question numbering.

After the appointment for each interview was set up, the intended questions were emailed out ahead of time. [See appendix for the interview questions, which comprise the research instrument used in this project.] There was no expectation that the interviewees would need to spend any time preparing for the actual interviews, but it let them know the intended direction for those conversations. Knowing the questions ahead of time did not in any way negatively influence their answers; if anything it improved them, giving them a chance to consider their answers ahead of time if they so chose. It also removed any risk of embarrassment by a question that may have caught them unprepared.

The nature of this research is such that it does not produce quantifiable data easily evaluated by statistical means. Nor is it easily reduced to charts, tabulations, or neat lists. Thus the interaction with information gained from the interviews, and the evaluation of the results, will be somewhat more subjective in nature. Each interview question will be examined sequentially, summarizing the range of answers given. Points of concurrence will be identified, as well as divergence of opinion. Significant points raised by the interviewees will be highlighted, especially if they contribute new thoughts or insights into the overall understanding of the prophecy under consideration. While this may not relate directly to the research question itself, it is part of the overall goals and

purpose of this study. When looking for the answer to the research question, the student will rely on the evaluations of the research subjects themselves, looking for patterns in how their ministry practices have been impacted by their understanding of the possible soon fulfillment of Ezekiel's war of Gog and Magog.

Conclusion

I trust that the actual interviews will prove stimulating and rewarding both for the purpose of this study, as well as for future ministry for which the Lord may give me opportunity. As I speak, teach and write on this subject in the future, I believe this contact with various experts in the field will prove invaluable. It may give rise to new areas of ministry in my own life. It also will impact my own presentation of the gospel message. I also trust that this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of this prophecy and its implications in the world today, for the benefit of the broader body of Christ. For those who wish to study the prophecy in more detail, this student hopes that this project will provide a valuable resource.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Hypothesis

There is an association between the selected authorities' understanding of the possible soon fulfillment of Ezekiel's war of Gog and Magog and their ministry practices in the areas of teaching, speaking and writing, vision for new ministry, and renewed urgency in presenting the gospel.

Introduction

Just as the interview questions are broken down into three primary sections, so will be this evaluation of the responses given in the interviews. These follow a logical order that has been pursued all through this project: the research subjects' understanding of current world events that *may* indicate the soon approaching fulfillment of this prophecy, their understanding of how this war fits in with other end times events, and then how their thinking on that has impacted their ministry practices. It should be noted here that the optional questions in section 4 of the interviews are really a continuation of the questions given in section 2, so will be evaluated together with them.

Each interview question will be examined sequentially, summarizing the range of answers given, and identifying points of concurrence as well as divergence of opinion. It will not be necessary here to list every single point brought up in the course of the interviews, but significant points raised by the interviewees will be highlighted, especially where they contribute to a broader understanding of the prophecy as a whole. This student will also interact with the responses where appropriate. In some of the interviews, some discussions ranged farther afield, into other areas not as closely related

to this research topic. While those discussions are included in the transcripts of the interviews given in the appendices, they will not be discussed here, where they are outside the scope of this project.

Note: In the material which follows in the remainder of this chapter, there are many references and quotes taken directly from the interviews which may be found in the appendices. These are not footnoted, as they are all easily located by name and question number in the attached transcriptions.

Section 1: The Research Subjects' Understanding of Current World Events That May Indicate the Soon Approaching Fulfillment of This Prophecy

Could This War Be Approaching Soon?

[Q1] Based on your familiarity with this prophecy, do you think it is possible that Ezekiel's war could be approaching soon? This question received a generally positive response. Most interviewees, in one way or another, answered yes, except for Fruchtenbaum, who refused to speculate. The positive response to this question was shaped by a broader consensus that the world is indeed approaching the end of the age. Most of the experts interviewed place this war either before or during the Tribulation, except for Ruthven, who did not know. Most or all also hold to a premillennial theology and a pretribulation rapture (although this student does not know Ruthven's position on those). As such, there is a broad consensus that the rapture and the Tribulation are fast approaching and could be very near, which in turn encompasses the various positions of the timing of Ezekiel's war, which would thus also be very near. Ice specifically identifies the imminent rapture with the possibility that Ezekiel's war could be approaching soon.

But it should be clarified that "soon" is not the same as "imminent." None of the interviewees used that word in connection with this war. In the theological sense, that word is reserved primarily for the rapture of the church. Whereas the rapture is a signless

event, that is not the case with Ezekiel's war. There are numerous clues in the Ezekiel passage that will give hints as to when this war is actually approaching. Every interviewee sees some of those clues manifest in the present day, giving rise to the belief that the war could be approaching soon. However, there was divergence of opinion as to whether all the preconditions for that war have been met at the current time. Therefore while there is concurrence on the possibility of it approaching soon, most would say that there are details yet to fall into place. Even Rosenberg, who has done much to raise popular awareness of the possibility of this prophecy being fulfilled soon, is cautious not to declare that with certainty. Rhodes likewise cautions against date setting. Also, since some of the interviewees believe the war cannot happen until after the rapture, which at the time of this writing has not yet occurred, they would be waiting at least for that event to happen before the prophecy regarding the war of Gog and Magog is fulfilled.

Several interviewees commented on the nature of biblical prophecies, which are given to help us interpret the times in which we live, and to anticipate their fulfillment as things begin to fall into place. Price states, "they are not meant to be veiled prophecies. I think the closer you get to the actual fulfillment, the clearer some of them become." Rhodes talks about what he calls "the convergence factor," where indicators of the approaching fulfillment of many prophecies indicate that the end may be near. He also talks about the fact that "prophecies cast a shadow before them," where it becomes gradually more clear that the stage is being set for the actual fulfillment soon to come. Rosenberg communicates the same thought through the analogy of a pioneer in the 1800's moving west across the country to California. He has been told there are mountains to cross, but as he crests each hill and sees a yet higher hill beyond that one, the reality of those mountains becomes more and more clear the closer he gets. He likens end times prophecy to those mountains, just as Jesus uses the analogy of birth pangs, which get closer and stronger as the actual event approaches. In like manner, most of the

interviewees see some correlation between world events and the approaching fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy.

Key Factors in the World Today

[Q2] What are some factors in the world today that cause you to come to that conclusion? Here is one of the few places where this research project can produce an actual list. Following are various factors mentioned in the course of conducting the interviews (not necessarily in response to this question alone), along with the respondents who mentioned them. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list. Nor does it draw from other sources where these factors may have been addressed by the interviewees, but only from the interviews themselves. The list below gives only key words, which will be explained in somewhat more detail following:

- current alliances: Dyer, Fruchtenbaum, Hitchcock, Ice, Price, Rhodes, Rosenberg, Ruthven, Steyne
- Russia: Dyer, Fruchtenbaum, Hitchcock, Ice, Pentecost, Price, Rhodes, Rosenberg, Ruthven
- Iran: Dyer, Fruchtenbaum, Hitchcock, Ice, Price, Rhodes, Rosenberg, Ruthven, Steyne
- Turkey: Dyer, Hitchcock, Ice, Price, Rhodes, Rosenberg, Steyne
- Libya: Dyer, Hitchcock, Price, Rhodes, Rosenberg, Ruthven, Steyne
- Sudan: Dyer, Hitchcock, Price, Rhodes, Rosenberg, Ruthven, Steyne
- Syria: Dyer, Rhodes, Steyne
- Islam: Hitchcock, Ice, Pentecost, Price, Rhodes, Ruthven, Steyne
- animosity against Israel: Dyer, Fruchtenbaum, Hitchcock, Pentecost, Price, Rhodes, Steyne
- Israel's prosperity and the desire to seize plunder: Dyer, Price, Rhodes, Rosenberg
- possibility of Israel attacking Iran: Dyer, Price, Rhodes, Steyne

- Islamic eschatology: Dyer, Fruchtenbaum, Hitchcock, Pentecost, Price, Ruthven, Rhodes, Steyne
- restoration of Israel: Price, Rhodes, Rosenberg, Steyne
- sense of security in Israel: Price, Rosenberg, Ruthven
- isolation of Israel: Rosenberg, Ruthven
- Arab Spring: Steyne
- Muslim Brotherhood: Steyne
- results of 1967 war: Price
- unwalled villages: Price

Most of these items have been discussed in more detail in chapter 2 of this dissertation, so only a brief review is necessary at this point. But among the many factors in the world today which point to the possibility that Ezekiel's war is approaching is the development of modern day alliances reflecting the Gog-Magog alliance described in Ezekiel 38. This is a major factor identified by almost all the interviewees. Key members of this alliance include Russia, Iran, Turkey, Libya and Sudan, whose roles and position in the world today were also mentioned by most of the interviewees. Though not specifically identified in Ezekiel, Syria was mentioned by many as hostile to the state of Israel, and a possible member of the "many nations" that would join in with the alliance against her. The influence of Islam as motivating and unifying many of these nations was another common theme. Shiite Islamic eschatology, particularly in the case of Iran, was seen as a significant factor by many. The extreme animosity toward Israel from almost all the other nations in the region was a frequently mentioned factor, reflecting the scenario described in Ezekiel. A couple experts went beyond that in mentioning Israel's increasing isolation in the world. Several mentioned Israel's increasing prosperity and strategic position in the oil-producing Middle East as part of the motivation for seeking plunder there. Several acknowledged the possibility that a pre-emptive strike by Israel against

Iran could well precipitate a broad Islamic response against Israel, and serve as a catalyst for Ezekiel's war. Four interviewees mentioned the historically recent restoration of Israel as a reason to consider the possible approach of the war of Gog and Magog. Three mentioned Israel's current sense of security in the land as factor which fits the Ezekiel 38–39 scenario. The fact that this is a highly debated matter is no doubt one reason why it was not mentioned more often. One individual highlighted the events of the recent "Arab Spring" as a significant factor. One other individual mentioned the results of the 1967 war, when the "mountains of Israel" came under Israeli sovereignty. Finally, one individual mentioned the fact that only in modern history has Israel been a land of unwalled cities, as described in Ezekiel.

It is somewhat surprising that only four of the experts mentioned the modern day restoration of the nation and land of Israel, as a reason to consider the possibility of an approaching fulfillment of the Gog war. Rhodes identified this as the "super sign" that the world is approaching the end of the age, and the fulfillment of many end times prophecies. But the rebirth of the nation, and the restoration of the land, is a primary subject of Ezekiel 36–37. In addition, Ezekiel 38 builds on that and specifically mentions the return of the Jews to the land, and the restoration of the land that was once desolate. Experts argue whether the prophecies of Ezekiel 36–37 have already been at least partially fulfilled, are in the process of being fulfilled, or whether the stage is being set for their future fulfillment, but it is hard to ignore the dramatic changes in the political and physical landscape that have taken place in 1948 and following. Furthermore, since the Gog-Magog war in Ezekiel 38–39 clearly and obviously follows the restoration of the nation and the land in Ezekiel 36–37, it is surprising that it is not mentioned by more interviewees. Perhaps this is because it is so obvious that it hardly needs to be mentioned. It may also be because we have become so accustomed to Israel once again existing as a nation in her ancient homeland, that we have come to take that for granted. This major

factor required for the fulfillment of the Ezekiel 38–39 prophecy was not targeted in any of the interview questions. If it had been, this student believes it would probably have been acknowledged by most of the interviewees. If the study were to be done over again, it probably would be good to include a question about this.

Nevertheless, looking at all the various factors brought up in the course of the interviews, there emerges a broad consensus that the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophesied war may be approaching.

Modern and Prophetic Alliances

[Q3] Could you comment on the alliances given in Ezekiel’s prophecy and any correlation with current alliances existing or being built in the world today? This is a major factor already discussed contributing to the perception that Ezekiel’s war may be approaching. The significance of these alliances was mentioned by almost every interviewee, with many of them mentioning specific connections that have developed or are developing between the different nations in question. Some mentioned the recent break-off of the predominantly Christian Southern Sudan from the Islamic northern part, which more closely correlates to the ancient Cush. Turkey’s very recent turn from alignment with the West and with Israel, to alignment with the Muslim world and against Israel, is breathtaking in its rapidity, and a key factor noted by several as bringing us one major step closer to the alignment foretold long ago by Ezekiel. Pentecost noted that what he calls the “istans,” or former Soviet republics, are all Muslim. Though they have not gotten as much attention by the experts addressing this subject, they would have been part of ancient Magog. Rhodes points out that the nations identified in Ezekiel are rather far-flung from each other, such that an alliance in Ezekiel’s day wouldn’t have made much sense, but it makes sense today because of Islam. Several of the experts mentioned the alliances in the region with Syria. Though not specifically mentioned by Ezekiel,

these modern alliances could be an indicator that Syria might be one of “the many nations with you” identified in Ezekiel 38:6.

The fact that Ezekiel gives a detailed list of many of the nations or people groups involved in the coalition against Israel, combined with the fact that most of the corresponding nations can be clearly identified today, gives the modern Bible prophecy student excellent material to look for when considering the possible approaching fulfillment of this prophecy. Furthermore, in history past these nations have never shared an alliance with each other as a group, and some of them have never had an alliance with some of the others as individual nations. The fact that these alliances are forming today, for the first time in history, or have formed already, is a powerful indicator that the fulfillment may be drawing near. It must not be construed as proof prior to the actual fulfillment, but at some point in history things will indeed line up in the world to match what God through Ezekiel has told us ahead of time. Thus the current alignment of nations forming today could be an example of what Rhodes calls the shadow that prophecies cast before them.

Russia's Attitude toward Israel

[Q4] Do you see any indicators that modern day Russia would engage in such a war against Israel? In response to this question, several indicated Russia's desire to remake herself into a great world power. For them, it is partly a matter of regaining the power, pride and prestige they lost when the Soviet Union fell apart. By gaining control in the Islamic Middle East, Russia would have the ability to control the flow of oil and natural gas to the West, bringing western Europe and the U.S. to their knees. Banking on the Islamic axiom that “the enemy of my enemy is my friend,” if Russia led an attack against Israel, she would immediately ingratiate herself with the Islamic world, for whom Israel has long been a thorn in their sides. In that scenario, according to Dyer, the plunder Russia would gain in such an invasion would not be simply the wealth of Israel, but

greatly increased control over the wealth of the whole Middle East. Fruchtenbaum, Hitchcock, Price and Rhodes all point out Russia's long history of anti-Semitism and animosity toward Israel. Russia has regularly aligned itself with the Muslim nations in the region and against Israel, supplying arms and ammunition in the repeated wars against Israel. Ice and Ruthven both point out Russia's longstanding desire to have a warm water port. Price, who sees the invasion taking place after the rapture, sees Russia possibly seizing the opportunity to fill a power vacuum, after the United States is devastated by the rapture. Rhodes reminds us about the gigantic cache of Russian weaponry seized by Israel in Lebanon back in 1982. He says these "were being prepositioned for an apparent Russian invasion into Israel along with Muslim nations," apparently as an earlier attempt to accomplish what the Gog-Magog invasion hopes to accomplish. Steyne takes a different view on Russia's involvement altogether, seeing Turkey as the leader of the coalition rather than Russia. He no longer sees Russia as involved with this prophecy.

Ezekiel 38:4 emphasizes that it is God who will put a hook in the jaw of Gog and bring him out against Israel. Hitchcock, Ice and Rhodes all mention this hook in the jaw, recognizing that it is God who will somehow drag Gog and his coalition into this conflict, so that he can enter into judgment against them. What comprises that hook in the jaw, we may not know. It could be one of the factors mentioned above, or it could be something completely different. In that sense, it really doesn't matter whether or not Russia had any previous reasons to move against Israel; God will supply the reasons. Like putting bait on a hook, God will provide some kind of irresistible bait that will draw Gog out to his doom, along with the multitudes who will join him.

Current Events in Iran

[Q5] Do you see any alignment between current events in Iran and the details of this prophecy? Given that Iran has been in the news almost daily for the last several years, and has been constantly threatening Israel with annihilation, it is hard not to make

some comparisons with what we see in Ezekiel's prophecy. And every expert asked about this also saw those connections. Dyer stated that Iran is committed to Israel's destruction, and are active supporters of Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas. Fruchtenbaum says, "If Russia wants to go against Israel, Iran has already made it clear that it wants Israel to cease to exist." Hitchcock says Iran is ready to attack Israel at any time. Rhodes points out that Iran's military efforts are mainly for offensive purposes, not defense, and that you don't do that "unless you intend to engage in offensive measures." Rosenberg comments on the significance of Iran's alliance with Russia: "We have never seen this type of relationship between Russia and Iran in more than 2500 years. That is the most striking to me." Everybody acknowledges that Iran is currently Israel's number one enemy, and would very much like to see Israel destroyed. The fact that they are first on the list among Gog's allies in Ezekiel's prophecy may not be a coincidence. At the very least, Iran's current relations with Israel clearly line up with what we see described in Ezekiel.

Iran's Nuclear Ambitions

[Q6] How do you see Iran's nuclear ambitions playing into this scenario?

Despite Iran's continued assertions that their nuclear efforts are for peaceful purposes only, there are few who really believe that. Dyer and Fruchtenbaum believe that Iran would like to get nuclear weapons in order to use them against Israel. However, although few doubt that Iran would like to actually use nuclear weapons against Israel, most of the experts interviewed do not actually see that happening in Ezekiel's prophecy. Dyer points out that "it is a ground attack against Israel in Ezekiel, not a nuclear attack." Ice concurs: "It seems to be a conventional attack." Price also agrees: "I don't think a nuclear exchange is going to take place. That is not what I see in Ezekiel 38 and 39." Fruchtenbaum points out that while some see the destruction of the invaders as a result of a nuclear exchange, the same terminology is used to describe what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah. In his words, "To my knowledge nobody dropped nuclear bombs on

Sodom and Gomorrah.” Hitchcock concurs and says, “I am not one of these people who sees this nuclear stuff in the Bible.”

One way in which Iran’s nuclear ambitions could play into the scenario is if Israel does something to stop it, which in turn could produce retaliation which could lead to the Gog-Magog invasion. Dyer speculates, “If Israel would ever bomb Iran and set their program back, it would just give Iran more hatred and animosity, and they would join any group they could to wipe out Israel.” Dyer also mentions a recent comment by former Vice President Dick Cheney saying, “He expects if the world can’t stop Iran then Israel will go it alone and launch a strike.” All this of course is speculation at this point, but still a reasonable speculation that many have considered. Even as this dissertation is being finalized (March 2012), speculation about a possible unilateral strike against Iran by Israel is widespread. A recent *New York Times* article by a prominent Israeli journalist anticipates such a strike to be likely in the spring of this year.¹ Even Fruchtenbaum, who has a strong aversion to speculation, states that “Israel will not tolerate a nuclear Iran.” Commenting on speculation itself, Hitchcock states:

It is not bad to speculate. I would say speculation, as long as people know that you are speculating, is fine. But the problem to me is when people speculate and act like their speculation is in the Bible. I think we can look and we can see this invasion is going to occur some day. The Bible tells us that and who is going to be involved. I don’t think it is wrong to sit here today and speculate how that might happen. We are not saying that my speculation how it is going to happen is inspired, but I think it is okay to do that as long as we let people know it is our speculation.

This is good advice, and helpful to keep in mind as we consider the possibilities that lie ahead of us. The other extreme from speculation is a refusal to draw any possible correlations from prophecy to the present age, which could lead people to

¹ Ronen Bergman, “Will Israel Attack Iran?” *New York Times Magazine*, January 25, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/29/magazine/will-israel-attack-iran.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed March 3, 2012).

disregard Bible prophecy altogether. Some might wonder, “Why even bother studying prophecy? It’s not relevant. We will just wait until it happens, and then we’ll know how it applies.” But this student would argue that at least one reason God has given us prophecy of things to come is to help us discern when the days are getting close. It is part and parcel of being watchful and alert. If it is just head knowledge, with no correlation to the times in which we live, about what are we to be watchful? And to just what are we supposed to be alert? But for those who find themselves near the day of fulfillment, the study of Bible prophecy is very valuable. As such, we should seek to be like the “men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do” (1 Chr 12:32).

Islamic Thought

[Q7] While Islam is not mentioned specifically in Ezekiel’s prophecy, the coalition coming against Israel in Ezekiel 38–39 is almost completely Islamic. Can you comment on how current Islamic thought may contribute to the fulfillment of this prophecy? When Ezekiel recorded his prophecy, there was no discernible reason why all the far-flung members of the coalition would join together to invade Israel. It would be many hundreds of years before Islam even came into existence. But today, every one of the nations that make up the Gog-Magog alliance is solidly Muslim, except for perhaps Russia itself. It seems very likely that Islam is the unifying factor to join these nations together into an alliance to destroy Israel. The purpose of this question was to determine how Islamic thought might unify the nations of the coalition against Israel.

Dyer points out that the southern part of Russia is Islamic. He also points out that the Koran teaches Muslims to destroy Jews wherever they find them. Hitchcock points out that for Muslims, “The main thing is their view basically that whatever land they have held still belongs to them, and Israel has that land. They want it. That is the bottom line issue right there.” Price explains, “They cannot allow an independent Israel, a non-Islamic entity to exist, in the sea of Islam.” From the beginning, Israel’s very

existence has been the *naqba* or “catastrophe” that the Muslim world has sought to overturn, with repeated wars seeking to destroy Israel once and for all. So far, every time, they have failed. But they have not given up. The coming Islamic invasion described in Ezekiel 38–39 may well be their last fatal attempt to destroy Israel. Ice says this is part of their religious beliefs about jihad, or holy war.

Ice makes an interesting comment that all the participants in this coalition are non-Arab Muslims. Hitchcock explains (and rejects) the theory proposed by Bill Salus in his book “Israelestine” that the Ezekiel 38 war is preceded by another war described in Psalm 38, made up of the “near” nations to Israel, which would be primarily the Arab Muslims. (Ice also rejects this theory.)² While this may be an intriguing area for further study, it is outside the scope of this project.

Islamic Eschatology

[Q8] Radical Islamic eschatology parallels biblical prophecy in many ways. Are you aware of any ways in which Islamic eschatology may contribute to the fulfillment of this prophecy? Specifically, it is Shiite Islamic eschatology, not Sunni, where this question is directed. As Iran is the only nation in the region that is predominantly Shiite, it is with Iran where their eschatology makes the greatest impact.

Dyer says that within that eschatology, they are looking for “the triumphant battle that is going to bring Islam to the fore over all the world.” Fruchtenbaum points out that “Ahmadinejad has said that he feels that it is going to happen in his lifetime.” What makes this so dangerous, according to Hitchcock, is that “they believe they can make it happen. It is going to become a self-fulfilling prophecy.” Pentecost states, “They have the goal of bringing the world under the power of the Islamic messiah, and so to me that fits in with this whole scene in Ezekiel.” Price explains further that “they are trying to foment

² Comments made at the Pre-Trib Study Group conference in Dallas, TX, December 7, 2011.

chaos in the region because that is what brings the rise of the Mahdi [the Islamic messiah].” What makes this even more dangerous, Price continues, is that “Ahmadinejad says that he is in contact with him, if you can believe that.” Price goes on to say, “If there was ever a time in history when these kinds of events were forecasting an invasion and attack on Israel, now is the time.” Rhodes explains why this is such a dangerous belief:

The Twelfth Imam [another name for the Islamic messiah] could be made to appear sooner as Muslims faithfully engage in violent activities against the enemies of Islam, including Israel and the United States. That is really the goal of Ahmadinejad, the Iranian President. In fact he views himself as kind of a John the Baptist preparing the way for the coming of the Twelfth Imam. . . . He is really kind of a madman when you think about it.

While being cautious about predicting the fulfillment of any prophecy, Price still maintains, “We can say it is the first time in history that we have seen all of these Bible factors come together.” That appears to be a significant statement. While we must be careful not to approach anything like the recent Harold Camping debacle, where he predicted a date for the rapture of the church,³ neither should we decide to ignore prophecy altogether. We ought to study prophecy with the Bible in one hand, as we watch what is happening in the world, with a newspaper in the other hand. As Price states, “We have been instructed by Scriptures to discern the times to understand these things. . . . We can’t get a clear warning if we don’t understand, and make people aware of the times in which we live.”

In concluding a review of this first section of the interviews (Q1 to Q8), the experts interviewed are unanimous in their opinion that current world events at least appear to match much of the prophetic picture put forth by Ezekiel some 2600 years ago. While none of them would be so bold as to declare the imminent approach of this

³ Camping, president of Family Radio, predicted that the rapture would occur on May 21, 2011. This was widely reported in the secular media, and was the subject of much ridicule when it did not happen as predicted.

prophecy's fulfillment, the correlations with the present world situation are hard to ignore. There has never been a time in the world's history when so many of those details have fallen into place. If prophecies do cast a shadow before them, as Rhodes explains, then what we are seeing in the world today may indeed be the shadow cast by this event as it approaches fulfillment. The stage is being set. Precisely how long we have left until the curtain goes up and the show begins, we cannot know. We know that the world situation could change, with the fulfillment being yet many years off. But it is also possible that these major events prophesied by Ezekiel so many years ago are just around the corner. What we do know for sure, in the words of God himself, is that it is coming. "It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign Lord. This is the day I have spoken of (Ezek 39:8)."

[Section 2] The Research Subjects' Understanding of How This War Fits In with Other End Times Events

The Prophetic Timeline

[Q9] What are your thoughts as to where this war fits in on the prophetic timeline at the end of the age? Determining the timing of this war has been the subject of much debate, and there are a wide variety of positions available, as was made clear in the review of the literature. This issue has proven notoriously difficult to determine with absolute certainty. Hitchcock astutely points out, "When it comes to the timing of this thing, the issue is not which view doesn't have any problems; it is which view has the least problems. Every view has problems."

Among those interviewed in connection with this project, there were three different views represented as to the possible timing of this war:

- 1) during the first half of the Tribulation: Dyer, Hitchcock, Pentecost
- 2) before the Tribulation but after the rapture: Ice, Price, Rhodes

- 3) before the Tribulation, but either before or after the rapture: Fruchtenbaum, Rosenberg, Steyne

Dyer says, “It has to take place sometime in the first half of the Tribulation period,” based on Israel’s need to feel safe, and the fact that it occurs at a time when Israel does not yet know God. Hitchcock puts it during the first half of the Tribulation primarily because of the security issue, and because of his understanding of “the latter years.” He says, “It is either going to happen during the first half of the Tribulation or it is going to happen before the Tribulation. Probably not before the rapture, but possibly before. The problem I have with placing it before the rapture for myself is that it says this is going to happen in the latter years.” Later Hitchcock explains that he thinks it will be near the beginning of the Tribulation. Pentecost puts it around the middle of the Tribulation.

Ice and Price both put it between the rapture and the start of the Tribulation. For both of them, the technical meaning of the phrase “the latter days” forces the event after the rapture. According to Ice, “I don’t think the latter days can include the church age.” Price says, “It’s the last days for Israel, not the church. And where would that begin? It would begin right after the rapture.” Since both men see a need for seven years of relative peace for Israel to burn the weapons, both would then place the Gog war in the interim period between the rapture and the start of the Tribulation.

Fruchtenbaum sees “this Russian invasion as the next major event” that will lead up to the Tribulation. In his mind, it may come before or after the rapture. He says, “The rapture may come before it, but I don’t know. But the next earthly event will be this invasion.” Rosenberg states, “I don’t have a view of whether it would be pre-rapture or post-rapture, because the Scriptures don’t give us any indications on that, not clearly anyway.”

Steyne thinks the war must precede the Tribulation because of the burning of the weapons. He believes in a pretribulation rapture, but thinks it likely that “we will still be here and know something about what is happening in this war.” However, he still holds to the imminence of the rapture, and makes clear that “nothing that has to take place prior to the Lord calling us home. . . . It certainly says the Lord can come today, prior to the event, after the event, whatever. It just seems to me that the events are taking place this way.”

Among those interviewed, Ruthven is the only one who would not take a position on the timing of the war. He did say he thinks the United States has to be out of the picture, with Israel standing alone in the world. But beyond that, he was reluctant to place the war on any sort of timeline.

Specific Timing Factors

[Q10] What specific factors influence your thinking regarding the timing of this war? Dyer argues that Israel has never known the security that is a prerequisite of this event, and they do not have it today. In his words, they are “surrounded by nations committed to their destruction.” Another time factor for Dyer is that the war occurs at a time when Israel does not know God. Therefore, he says, “it has to take place sometime in the first half of the Tribulation period, because there they are certainly not at peace the second half, and the first half the national repentance revival hasn’t fully taken hold yet.”

Two of the major factors for Fruchtenbaum are the time required for burning the weapons, and preparation for the ten-nation confederacy:

I see it at least 3½ years before the Tribulation because in the middle of the Tribulation the Jews are fleeing the land, and they won’t have time to bury the dead. The seven years of burning of the weaponry has to end by the midpoint, when the Jews have to flee the land. So I think that the destruction of these nations also sets the stage for the government that Daniel spoke about, the ten states that will arise in the last days.

The burning of the weapons is also a major factor for Ice, Price, Rosenberg and Steyne. Ice says, “You have to get that in, and I can’t see that happening during the millennium.” Because he believes the rapture will precede this war, he argues: “That means the rapture will happen at least 3½ years before the start of the Tribulation.” Rosenberg states, “I think you have to say it *can’t* happen where the seven years includes the second half of the Tribulation. Who’s burning their weapons? They are fleeing.”

For Hitchcock, the primary reason to consider is the matter of peace. “It says they are living at rest and living securely. . . . To me they are hardly living securely [now]. It seems to me what is being described there as something different from what is there now.” It is because of this requirement for a time of security that Hitchcock places the war in the first half of the Tribulation, during the temporary time of security provided by the Antichrist. This is the same view held by Pentecost. Another reason why Hitchcock prefers the first half of the Tribulation is:

It helps me see a way how the Antichrist at the mid-point of the Tribulation becomes the ruler of the world. To me if these nations have been destroyed, if Russia has been destroyed, the Islamic nations, this big king of the north, king of the south coalition has been wiped out, you could see how a guy like the Antichrist could be catapulted to power if this happens in the first half of the Tribulation, sometime near the end of the that first half. And he comes in and seizes this opportunity probably because of this attack.

Price sees the conditions for the war as being present already, so there is no need to force the war into the Tribulation period. Price also argues based on the presence of a temple during the first half of the Tribulation period: “In order to see the temple rebuilt we have to have something that is going to change the whole political situation and have an impetus for rebuilding the temple.” In his mind Ezekiel’s war will accomplish just that.

Rhodes thinks it most likely that the war will follow the rapture. One reason for this is because in his mind, the rapture will decimate the United States, and thus remove Israel’s protection, and “Russia and the Muslims which are all still on earth . . .

may have an attitude of ‘seize the moment.’” In his mind, it also “greases the skids for the quick revival of the Roman Empire,” which would then follow in the early Tribulation period. A third reason for Rhodes is that “This would make it much easier for the antichrist to actually sign a peace pact. In other words it gets a whole lot easier for the Antichrist to guarantee the protection of Israel over against the Muslims if the Muslims have already been taken out.” One more reason Rhodes places the war before the Tribulation is because, “If the Muslim invaders are greatly weakened then that would seem to also open up the possibility of a rapid construction of the Jewish temple, which right now poses big problems for the Muslim community.”

While the conditions of peace and security push the time of fulfillment into the first half of the Tribulation in the minds of several experts, for Rosenberg, it does just the opposite. He explains that while the Antichrist may be honoring his treaty with Israel, we must not forget that that period will still be a time of incredible tumult, destruction, and devastation upon the earth, hardly a time when anybody on earth will feel secure. He vividly describes this scenario:

How does an Israeli go down to the beach in Tel Aviv and put on his Coppertone and get out a magazine or a novel and sit down and go, “Well, look, two billion people are dying, but we are secure because we have a treaty.” No Jewish person could possibly feel secure in that context, no person in their right mind will feel secure.

This is a relevant point to consider. We may have become so used to thinking of the midpoint of the Tribulation as the time when things really get bad for Israel, in terms of their persecution by the Antichrist, that we forget how horrible the first half of the Tribulation will be. With incredible disasters taking place across the earth, and billions of people dying as one catastrophe after another rocks the planet, it will hardly be a time when anyone on earth will feel secure. In this Rosenberg raises a good point that this student has not found anyone else discussing. This and other factors for Rosenberg cause him to see the war as taking place before the Tribulation begins.

Israel's Security

[Q11] Ezekiel describes Israel as living in security at the time of this war.

Could that describe conditions in Israel at present, or will that condition not be fulfilled until Antichrist's covenant with Israel is established? This is a major question that is a deciding factor for several in their consideration of when this war might take place. Dyer, Hitchcock and Pentecost all think Israel will never know security until the brief period after the covenant with the Antichrist has been established. Most of the other experts interviewed consider the possibility that Israel may feel secure before that event takes place. Some of them, including Fruchtenbaum, Price, Rosenberg and Steyne, would say that the condition of Israel's security might already exist even at the present time.

One matter of which there is some discussion is whether the requirement is for "peace" or "security," and whether or not those two are the same thing. Dyer sees peace and security as synonymous, and defines it as "a time when Israel feels that they don't have to prepare for war." Others, such as Fruchtenbaum, point out that the word *shalom* (peace) is not even used in the passage, but that the word is *betach* (security), which does not mean quite the same thing. Fruchtenbaum says, "To look at other passages where it's used, it's used emphasizing the feeling of confidence, not peace. It's used even in the context of war, that the ones who have been confident that they can win, are not insecure about the war, just as Israel is today. They have security in their army." This has been a matter of confusion for many, focusing on the need for peace (not mentioned in the passage), rather than security (which is mentioned). As this matter is a deciding factor for many when they consider where to place the war, the confusion over what exactly is required by the prophecy has contributed to the divergence of thought regarding the timing.

Pentecost maintains that Israel does not have true security today, “not when hundreds of missiles are being dropped regularly on Israel from Syria, from Gaza. They are in the land but they are not at peace.”

While Ice concedes that Israel could know security before the covenant with the Antichrist, he does not join Fruchtenbaum in thinking that they have it right now. He says, “I don’t see Israel secure today, or in any scenario without them defeating their neighbors, or God doing it, until they are secure.” But he also considers the possibility that there could be some other non-propheesied event, such as a successful pre-emptive attack against Iran, that would cause Israel to feel secure prior to the start of the Tribulation. But even in this, he offers the possibility that Israel might feel secure even today: “Maybe we have misinterpreted the meaning of security. Maybe they already are somehow secure.”

Israel’s repeated success in war, especially in the earlier part of her history, produced a feeling of confidence that some believe might fulfill the sense of security required for the Gog war. Ice, describing Fruchtenbaum’s position, says, “Fruchtenbaum developed this view after the Six Day War, and in fact that is why Israel was caught off guard with the Yom Kippur War, because they were over-confident.” Steyne carries this thought even farther:

When I think of what God has so graciously enabled the Israelis to do in spite of all of those seeking to destroy them, in spite of the encounters with terrorism, they certainly have developed a civilization, a culture, a society that is exceptional in every way, that even exceeds that which is in the United States. You feel safer there sometimes than you do here. It seems to me that they live in a relatively good time of, quote, unquote, “peace.” So to me it seems like they are, in many ways, living in a time of peace, and facing their enemies as they come.

Rosenberg, as discussed under the previous question, adopts the position that during the Tribulation, it will be impossible for any people on earth to feel genuinely secure, because of the incredible death and destruction taking place on earth during that time. In his writings (discussed in chapter 2 of this dissertation), he has made a strong

case for the possibility that conditions in Israel today meet the security described by Ezekiel.

The Latter Years: A Tribulation Event?

[Q12] Are there any interpretive factors in your mind which force the fulfillment of this prophecy into the Tribulation period? [Q18] What is your understanding of the phrase “the latter years” in Ezekiel 38:8? Is that a specific reference to the Tribulation period, or could it include the period leading up to the Tribulation? These two questions will be addressed together, since the latter is actually an expansion of the former. Because Ezekiel’s war specifically involves the nation of Israel, and because of the prophecy of the 70 weeks given in Daniel 9, some say that the war needs to take place during the Tribulation period, Daniel’s 70th week, when God is once again dealing with the nation of Israel. Dyer, who places the war in the Tribulation period, argues that “God is going to finish with the church age before he picks up his program for Israel again. . . . This prophecy is so much connected with Israel and bringing them back into that relationship with God, it just feels to me like it has to be part of that time God is dealing with them, which is that last seven year period.” That prompted a follow-up question, asking if God wasn’t in some way dealing with Israel in 1948, which was still during the church age. Dyer responded that what happened in 1948 couldn’t really be described as a fulfillment of prophecy, but only as God setting the stage. Things could yet change, and we would not know for sure until the covenant is made. This student would argue that it is very possible Israel will remain in the land from now right up until the Antichrist’s covenant with Israel is established, which would prove that what happened in 1948 and following was in fact part of God’s promised restoration of the nation. If so, that would show that God was indeed beginning to deal with Israel during this latter part of the church age. Since that is clearly possible, then would it not also be possible for Ezekiel’s war to happen during the church age? The last sixty years

of world history, especially in regards to Israel, does not seem to support the concept that God won't start dealing with Israel again until the 70th week of Daniel begins. As that 70th week approaches, even if we call what is happening now simply "the setting of the stage," is it not still God at work? And does that not involve dealing with the people, nation, and land of Israel? There is nothing in Daniel's prophecy that forbids God from any dealings with Israel between the 69th and 70th weeks. True, that interim is where the church age fits in, but that does not mean nothing can happen during that period where God is not in some way dealing with Israel. Granted, we cannot state conclusively that prophecy was fulfilled in 1948, because Israel could get kicked out of the land, and her promised restoration and the end of the age could be yet hundreds of years off. But while possible, that seems highly unlikely, given the way that world events are moving. Thus this student considers it unwise to rule out the possibility that God might deal with Israel in another big way, before the church age has concluded, at least based on Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks. It seems likely that Israel will move to the forefront of world attention, as the church age begins to draw to a close. In fact, it seems obvious to this student that that has already taken place. Given the possibility that God has already begun the final restoration of Israel, with the events leading up to 1948 and following, it does not seem impossible that another big step could happen, with the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy while the church could still be here to witness it.

The question about "the latter years" is another matter which some think forces the fulfillment of this prophecy into the Tribulation period. Pentecost, for example, clearly identifies the phrase with the 70th week of Daniel, which in his mind forces the fulfillment of this prophecy into the Tribulation period. Hitchcock thinks much the same way: "To put these prophecies in the fulfillment in the church age is mixing Israel and the church. . . . You have this dramatic Old Testament, Jewish prophecy being fulfilled in the

church age. I think that is problematic. . . . To me that phrase seems to eliminate it from being a church age prophecy. That is clearly putting it after the rapture.”

Related to this is the purpose of the rapture, which according to Hitchcock, “is to deliver us from the wrath to come.” Those who put Ezekiel’s war between the rapture and the Tribulation often do so to allow for the seven years of burning, which would put the war at least several years before the start of the Tribulation. In response to this, in considering the purpose of the rapture, Hitchcock says, “If the wrath is ten years away, why do we need to be delivered?” Hitchcock can see some fairly short interim period before the start of the Tribulation, but an interim lasting several years is harder for him to accept.

Even if one does accept that the term “the latter years” refers to the Tribulation, not everyone sees this as ruling out a pre-tribulational battle of Gog and Magog. Ice, who holds the pre-tribulational position, says, “I don’t think that is a real problem with my view, because this is in a sense connected with the Tribulation But I don’t think the latter days can include the church age.” That is why he places the war after the rapture and yet before the Tribulation. Price adopts a similar position: “It’s the last days for Israel, not the church. And where would that begin? It would begin right after the rapture. . . . And so Gog and Magog could be pre-tribulational, but still fit into that time period.”

A slightly different take on this is that the phrase may connect the war with the lead-up to the Tribulation, without it necessarily having to follow the rapture. Rhodes, referring to the positions of Fruchtenbaum and Rosenberg, who put the war either before or after the rapture, thinks that is a possibility: “While it has primary reference to the Tribulation period, it could also include the years that lead up to the preparation of the Tribulation period, laying the groundwork for the emergence of the Tribulation period.” Fruchenbaum says that the phrase merely “refers to end times events. That would include

not just the Tribulation, but prophecies such as Israel becoming a state. . . . It's a general prophetic term, not a specific term." Even Dyer, though believing that the war will take place during the Tribulation period, refuses to make a case based on this phrase:

What I would love to do is to be able to say that demands Tribulation, because that would strengthen my position. But in reality, if I remember right, that is the only time that phrase is used . . . in Ezekiel Since that is the case, the most I can say is that to me, in Ezekiel's context, it has to refer to the kind of events he begins describing in 38 and go through 48, events related to the final gathering, the temple, the pouring out of the Spirit, the new covenant, the division of the land among the people and all the fulfillment of those prophecies, the latter days he is looking at. But he doesn't get more specific than that. So I can't say it is only the seven year period.

Regarding the precise interpretation of this phrase, then, the experts have not come to a consensus of opinion. Some see it as a technical phrase that refers to the Tribulation only, which forces the war into that period. Some hold it somewhat more loosely, and are willing to accept a position that places the war after the rapture, and close to, but not necessarily in, the Tribulation. Yet others interpret the term in a more general sense, which could even include the years prior to the rapture. So while the meaning of this phrase decides the case for some, it holds more possibilities for others.

The Doctrine of Imminence

[Q13] Does the doctrine of imminence influence your thinking about the possible timing of this war? Among those interviewed for this project, there are two primary views related to imminence. One view is that imminence means the rapture is the next event on God's calendar, as John Walvoord used to put it, and that no other prophetic event precedes it. The other understanding of imminence is that the rapture could happen at any time, and that there is no other prophetic event which *must* precede it. While at first glance, these sound almost synonymous, they are not. In fact, there is a significant difference between the two understandings of imminence, which makes a profound impact in the possibilities one considers for the placement of this war.

The first view rules out the possibility of any other prophetic event happening prior to the rapture, because, in that view, the rapture is *the next* event. Therefore no other event, such as the war of Gog and Magog, can precede it. This view is reflected by Dyer, who defines imminence this way: “that Christ could come back for his church at any time, and that’s the next event on God’s calendar.” Price adopts the same position, stating that Ezekiel’s war “has to be post-rapture, because of the fact that the rapture is the next event.” Dyer adds to his position by stating, “I don’t see the doctrine of imminence directly impinging on this war, except for my broader understanding that the final seven years are all related to Israel. If this is one of those major events in Israel’s turning point to God, it probably takes place in that seven years.” This is a reflection of his understanding that since the rapture is the next event, everything else, especially as it relates to Israel, has to follow it. Therefore, the possibility of Ezekiel’s war preceding the rapture is ruled out at the beginning.

The second view is that the rapture could happen at any time, and that there is no other prophetic event which *must* precede it. While this view still holds to the belief that Christ could come back for the church at any moment, it does not rule out the possibility that other prophetic events *could* possibly precede it. Thus it holds open at least the possibility that the war of Gog and Magog could possibly take place while the church is still around to see it. But in response to the statement, “The rapture will be the next event,” as Fruchtenbaum says, “We don’t know.”

This view has often been misunderstood or misrepresented as destroying imminence by placing something before the rapture of the church. However, this student has discovered no one who maintains that Ezekiel’s war *must* take place before the rapture, which would indeed destroy imminence; only that it *could*, which leaves imminence intact. Fruchtenbaum says,

If somebody says this has to happen before the rapture, then it destroys imminence, which I don’t teach. Some of the confusion is that people are always

assuming that the rapture starts the Tribulation. It doesn't. The seven year covenant starts the Tribulation. The rapture simply precedes it by some unknown amount of time. So the rapture could come anytime between right now and the signing of the covenant. So the rapture may come before this event, it might come after this event.

The possibility of a pretribulation fulfillment of Ezekiel 38–39 has often been ruled out because of the belief that it destroys imminence. Fruchtenbaum addresses this when he says,

If you look at Pentecost's *Things to Come*, he misunderstands the pre-trib position, because our position is not that this is pre-rapture, only pre-trib. And the rapture might come before or after. He defines our position as saying it's going to be pre-rapture, therefore we destroy imminency. But that's not our position. . . . It's a straw man.

Fruchtenbaum goes on to give specific examples to clarify his position further, especially as it relates to imminence:

If you look at 1947, and had asked, which will come first: Israel will become a state, or the rapture? Most people said rapture, especially in pre-trib circles. But the correct answer is, we don't know. Israel became a state. But then Israel did not have east Jerusalem yet. So which will come first, east Jerusalem, or the rapture? A lot of people said, the rapture. But maybe yes, maybe no. But then Jerusalem became Israel's in '67. If you start from the signing of the covenant, it doesn't mean it has to happen soon, it means nothing has to precede it. But things could precede it.

Several others recognize this distinction as well. Rhodes, who thinks it most likely that the war will take place between the rapture and the Tribulation, nevertheless believes that it could happen before the rapture, without violating imminence. Rosenberg certainly believes in imminence, but, as he says,

The question is, how do you define that? My definition is that nothing prophetically *has* to happen before. If you are standing just after the ascension of Jesus and you are back in the first century, at that moment nothing had to happen scripturally for him to come back in terms of the rapture, but that didn't mean nothing else *would* happen. . . . Yes, Jesus could come at any moment, but just because nothing else has to happen before he comes, doesn't mean nothing else prophetic will happen before he comes.

Steyne also believes in imminence, but says, “I don’t think it [the possibility of a pre-rapture fulfillment of Ezekiel’s war] circumvents imminence. It certainly says the Lord can come today, prior to the event, after the event, whatever.”

Ice, who places the war between the rapture and the Tribulation, sees no conflict with the doctrine of imminence. He says, “Since it is taking place after the rapture, the rapture is imminent whereas the events that happen after the rapture are not.” Because his understanding of “the latter years” connects Ezekiel’s war with the Tribulation period, and outside the church age, it does not impact the imminence of the rapture.

Seven Months of Burial and Seven Years of Burning

[Q14] How do the seven months of burial and the seven years of burning impact your thinking about the timing of this war? [Q21] If the invasion takes place during the first half of the Tribulation, or near the middle, how do we account for the seven months of burial and the seven years of burning, since Jews will be fleeing out of the land during the second half of the Tribulation? These two questions will also be addressed together, since they are closely related. These two time periods require a season after the war when this can be accomplished. For many (including Fruchtenbaum, Ice, Price, Rosenberg and Steyne), this is a major factor which in their minds pushes the timing of the war to sometime before the Tribulation, as discussed above under question 10 [Q10]. In particular, the seven years of burning is a big issue, given that during the last half of the Tribulation, the Jews will be running for their lives and fleeing the land of Israel. Since they are told not to turn back even to get their cloak, it is inconceivable for many that they would have means or opportunity to gather up all the fallen implements of war, taking them along with them to burn.

Regarding the seven months of burial, Dyer states, “This battle has to occur at least seven months before that [the mid-point of the Tribulation] to allow for the burial,

because if you are running, you are not going to be burying and looking for bodies.” Dyer puts the war very early in the Tribulation period, which gives around seven years before the return of Christ. He thinks the seven years of burning may be a round number, and believes it could be accomplished even on into the second half of the Tribulation: “If Israel is fleeing, then they are still going to have to be gathering wood, making fires both for warmth and for cooking, even on the run. If they can find things they can use to help them, they would. I don’t have a problem with burning the weapons extending on into [the second half of] the Tribulation period.” There does seem to be a bit of an inconsistency in Dyer’s position, however, because he rules out burying the bodies with the reminder that “they don’t even go back to get a coat.” So if they are leaving the land with no time to even get a coat, why would they have time to gather up fallen weapons along the way? Since they cannot remain in the land from that point on, without risking persecution and death, for the burning to be accomplished over the span of seven years, they would have to take those weapons along with them to burn after they left.

The opportunity to accomplish the seven years of burning is a major factor every view must contend with. Fruchtenbaum argues this very point when he says,

The seven months [are not so much of a problem], but the seven years, the Jews have to flee the land. They don’t even have time to go to the house to get a coat. They have to flee the land right away. So the seven years of burning have to end by the midpoint or earlier, but not later. At that point they will be bringing weapons, not burning weapons.

Ice recognizes the same problem, which is one of the reasons why he places the war before the Tribulation: “It is the burning of the implements for seven years. You have to get that in, and I can’t see that happening during the millennium.” Price also sees the war taking place at least 3½ years before the start of the Tribulation, which would give enough time to accomplish the burning of the weapons. Rhodes sees several possibilities, but says, “It just seems to make good sense that if the burning began 3½ years before the Tribulation, they would be done by the time the Antichrist moves into Jerusalem.” For

Rosenberg, the seven years of burning is a deciding factor: “I think you have to say it *can't* happen where the seven years includes the second half of the Tribulation. Who's burning their weapons? They are fleeing.”

Hitchcock acknowledges the problem, but still places the war during the first half of the Tribulation, based on other reasons. He says, “If you hold the view I hold, you are going to have that [the burning of the weapons] going on into the millennium.” The seven months of burial, however, he does not see as a problem, because he figures the war will most likely come two and a half to three years into the Tribulation, when there is still time left to bury the bodies before the mid-point. Pentecost sees a solution to the problem, because he sees “a period of time between the close of the Tribulation period and the actual inauguration of the millennial kingdom,” when the burning of the weapons and the burial of the bodies could take place.

[Note: The following questions from section 4 of the interview are actually a continuation of section 2, dealing with the timing of the war. As such they are discussed here, before getting into the influence on ministry practices.]

The Antichrist's Covenant

[Q19] Many Bible scholars put the war someplace in the first half of the Tribulation. If that is true, how do we account for the invasion taking place while the Antichrist is still honoring his covenant with Israel, with the land presumably under his protection? For Fruchtenbaum, this is one of the factors that causes him to place the war before the Tribulation: “That’s why I believe it happens before the covenant is signed. If this happens after the covenant is signed, why is he not stepping in for Israel’s security?” Rosenberg concurs: “How could the Antichrist have a treaty and have Israel being attacked? It doesn’t ring true.”

Dyer has an interesting response to this question. He explains that Israel trusts Antichrist at the beginning of the Tribulation, but “by the middle of the period, they reject him My question is, what is it that would make Israel have that radical a change? Obviously the rest of the world is not going to feel that way. They are going to ultimately follow and worship [him]. I wonder if this battle isn’t it.” Israel had been trusting Antichrist for their security, but when he fails them in that, Dyer speculates that perhaps that is why they turn against him.

Hitchcock proposes a different scenario, which is also an interesting possibility:

Obviously the Antichrist is not going to be a covenant keeper. We know that. He is going to break it at the mid-point, so he may have made it and had a lot of bravado, but he may just be thinking, “Let me watch this thing unfold.” I think it is possible when all of this devastation occurs over there and these armies are wiped out, he may take credit for it. He may come along after the fact and say, “Look what I did. I have this secret weapon. I can send fire from heaven to wipe these people out.” That would be a real way to gain further control over the world too. He says, “Look, I was in covenant with Israel and I said I was going to protect them. Now look what happened when somebody came against them. I wiped these people out.”

Pentecost believes it is possible that the Antichrist could still be honoring the treaty to protect Israel, but “he gets the brunt of it because Gog is trying to take over the power of Antichrist.” In that view, the war would be directed as much against Antichrist as it is against Israel. Hitchcock makes the same point: “It’s an attack not only against Israel, but it is an attack against the Antichrist who has this covenant with Israel.” But if that is the case, there is a different problem: when God dramatically intervenes in that war, he would be delivering the Antichrist just as much as he would be delivering Israel. That gets a little hard to swallow, especially since there is no explanation that the deliverance was intended only to help Israel, but not Antichrist. The very fact of such an incredible deliverance makes it clear that the war was directed against Israel, not the Antichrist.

The Impact of the Earthquake

[Q20] What about the statement in 38:20 that the earthquake will cause “every wall to fall” in the land? Is it fair to assume that would destroy whatever building is standing on the Temple Mount, either the Dome of the Rock or the temple? If so, how does that correlate with your understanding of the timing of the war, since we know the temple will be standing at the mid-point of the Tribulation? Dyer takes this to mean “massive destruction, but not every single wall,” which he argues is still within a normal literal interpretation of such phrases. Hitchcock makes the same point. For example, Dyer points out that in Ezekiel 39:17, it says “every beast of the field” is called to gather and feast on the fallen armies, but no one would argue that every animal on earth will come and take part. This is a good point. Still, if the destruction is that massive and widespread, even if every single wall in the land is not toppled, it would still be highly likely that whatever building is standing on the Temple Mount at that point would be severely damaged or destroyed.

Fruchtenbaum agrees that the argument has merit. Hitchcock also acknowledges that this is “one of the advantages of the pretribulation view.” Even though he does not hold this view, he says that “having it pre-trib and having this take place is a great way to explain how the temple gets rebuilt.” Steyne comments, “I believe it is primarily focused on the Al Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock, and of course perhaps some surrounding buildings will also be destroyed. Ultimately it opens the way for the temple to be erected.”

Ice, who does hold the pretribulation view, nevertheless does not consider this argument very significant. He says, “They have had earthquakes in the past, and they simply rebuilt it, so the destruction of the Dome of the Rock won’t solve anything. Israel has to have the political will to build the temple, and they are not going to do it under any current scenario.” However, while there have been earthquakes in the land in the past,

this coming earthquake sounds like it will eclipse anything that has gone before. Have there been any previous earthquakes which actually destroyed the Dome of the Rock? This student does not know of any. Furthermore, this possibility is unlike any current scenario. We do know the temple will one day be built. What will make that possible? Many have pointed out that the Antichrist's covenant could bring that about, but so could the war of Gog and Magog. If the forces of Islam were decimated, the Dome of the Rock destroyed, and Israelis finally recognizing that the Lord is God, as a result of this dramatic deliverance, that is precisely the scenario that would give the Israelis to political will and opportunity to build a temple.

Pentecost does not believe the phrase "every wall will fall" refers to any specific buildings. He says, "It has to do with protection or defense, and so Israel will be left without any defense." But the divine purpose of this earthquake is not to remove Israel's defenses; it is to deliver them from certain annihilation. And even though specific buildings are not mentioned in the prophecy, the earthquake will clearly bring widespread devastation, with many buildings destroyed. With the epicenter so close to Jerusalem, it's hard to imagine how whatever building is on the Temple Mount would escape damage.

Not only does the earthquake explain one theory of how the way is cleared for the construction of the temple, if the war is pre-tribulational, but it also poses a problem for those who put the war in the Tribulation period, especially if it is late in the first half. By that time there will be a temple standing in Jerusalem once again, which we know the Antichrist will enter at the mid-point of the Tribulation. This is problematic if the temple has just been damaged or destroyed by this devastating earthquake. This argument is certainly not conclusive in itself, but it does lend weight to the pre-tribulational view.

The Persecution of the Jews

[Q22] In the finale of this war, God will supernaturally deliver the Jews and destroy her enemies, which all the world will be forced to acknowledge. If that occurs

near the end of the first half of the Tribulation, does it make sense that the Antichrist would immediately launch another severe persecution of the Jews? Wouldn't it seem more understandable if some years elapsed between those two events? This makes sense to Dyer, who says, "I do see a gap since I see the battle toward the beginning of the Tribulation." However, he doesn't view it as necessary, because he thinks the world will quickly get over their awe at the destruction at the end of this war. But Fruchtenbaum replies, "Exactly. That's another reason for me why it cannot happen mid-trib." He says "it makes no sense" to place God's dramatic deliverance back to back with the start of Antichrist's persecution of the Jews. Why deliver them one minute, only to have them thrown into the fire the next? It seems there needs to be at least some interval of time between the two events. Steyne comments, "Would he [the Antichrist] dare not to make a peace after the defeat of all of these nations? So, therefore, it seems to me that it must be prior."

Pentecost doesn't see a problem with Antichrist instigating a persecution of the Jews right on the heels of this deliverance, "because he is Satan's masterpiece of deception." This is surely true, and if anybody would so flagrantly ignore God's hand of protection over the Jews, certainly it would be the Antichrist. The question is whether the rest of the world would be convinced enough to lift their hands against the Jews, after just seeming them so dramatically and miraculously delivered.

The Diminished Influence of Islam

[Q23] It seems this war will greatly diminish the influence of Islam, at least for a season, if not permanently. What implications do you think there could be from that? How might that tie in with other end times events? Dyer sees an explanation of how the Antichrist could receive universal worship in the aftermath of this war. This was a problem for Dyer until he saw an answer in this passage. He explains,

The Antichrist stands up and says, "I am God, worship me," in the middle of the Tribulation. No good Muslim would ever do that. The foundation, bedrock of Islam is, "There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet." . . . My gut feeling is that Ezekiel 38 and 39 is the answer. . . . God turns his hand against them and wipes out this Islamic invasion force, and I think it is going to shake them to their core. At that point they are starting to have a crisis of faith And I think it opens the doors for the Antichrist's rapid rise so that when he says "I am God, worship me," even those former Muslims are going to do it at that time.

However, Fruchtenbaum points out that it is not all Muslims who are affected, because the entire coalition, at least those specifically identified, are non-Arab Muslims. He says, "It includes certain non-Arab Moslem countries, but the Arab countries are not going to be affected by this per se. Some of them object to the invasion. Shiite Islam will be affected, but most Arabs are Sunni Islam Muslims, and it probably won't affect them at all."

For Hitchcock, it paves the way for the rise of the Antichrist:

It helps me see a way how the Antichrist at the mid-point of the Tribulation becomes the ruler of the world. To me, if these nations have been destroyed, if Russia has been destroyed, the Islamic nations . . . you could see how a guy like the Antichrist could be catapulted to power, if this happens in the first half of the Tribulation.

Price has a similar view:

I think we are going to see Islam diffused. In the past, when there's been a major defeat of Islam, they pull back. That creates a vacuum for something else. We haven't had that kind of vacuum filled in the past by anything, but we're looking now into the future. I think Gog and Magog will defeat a large portion of the Islamic world.

Rhodes also sees a significant impact on the world power structure, with the defeat of this mostly Islamic coalition:

If God destroys the Russian and the Muslim invaders prior to the Tribulation period, to me that just sort of greases the skids for the quick revival of the Roman Empire. In other words, that really would explain the quick shift in power from the United States to a European super state. If the Tribulation period is closely preceded by this failed attack by Russia and the Muslim nations, that would remove the Russian threat, as well as the Muslim influence, and make for a quick rise with the European super state. Further I think that this would make it much

easier for the Antichrist to actually sign a peace pact. In other words it gets a whole lot easier for the Antichrist to guarantee the protection of Israel over against the Muslims if the Muslims have already been taken out.

The Final Return of the Jews to the Land

[Q24] Ezekiel 39:28 indicates that God will use this war to stimulate the final return of Jews to the land of Israel. How does that fit in with your understanding of when this war will likely take place? Dyer sees the final regathering as one of the results of the war. But the regathering is on both sides of the war: they have been brought back from the nations before the war begins, but one consequence of the war is that they will all be brought back from the nations. At first this seems like a contradiction, but Dyer explains:

I think my best answer is that, is Israel back in the land today? Yes, except there are as many Jews living in New York City almost as there are in Israel. . . . They are in the land, but the end result of this battle, this is the catalyst that now brings the events God has always promised: the return to the land, the outpouring of the Spirit and his blessing on them. He is not saying it happens immediately after the battle, but that are the results of the battle. I think it will happen over a 3½ year period.

So Dyer, who sees the battle taking place near the beginning of the Tribulation period, anticipates that in the remaining first half of the Tribulation, the final return to the land will be accomplished. But then, almost as soon as they all get there, at the mid-point of the Tribulation, they all begin scattering again.

Hitchcock, however, sees the last part of Ezekiel 39 as a summary of chapters 33–39, and not just of the war of Gog and Magog, so that final return of the Jews to the land is not specifically tied to the aftermath of this war; it is just part of the whole process. Ice holds the same position. Pentecost pushes the final regathering even farther out, to the time of the second advent. So for him, there is no time issue involved of when there would be opportunity for the final return to take place, in the aftermath of Ezekiel's war. Christ himself will accomplish that when he returns.

The Third Temple

[Q25] Do you see any ways in which the movement toward the construction of the third Jewish temple ties in with this prophecy? Dyer, who puts the war in the first half of the Tribulation period, doesn't see a strong connection, but a possibility. He says,

Once this battle is over, I think if Israel is now starting to turn to God, and Islam has really been brought low, that could be the kind of thing that it would take for the Jews to say, "Now is the time to build the temple," and even if it means destroying the Dome of the Rock. So whether they were allowed to start building when the Antichrist makes the peace treaty, or whether it is not until this time, I think this is fairly close to that.

Fruchtenbaum acknowledges the same possibility, with the same measure of caution. He says, "It may be built during the first half; it may be built before the Tribulation starts. It could be the devastation of the invading army, and God will set the stage for the building of the temple. I think that's a possibility. But is that correct? We don't know." Hitchcock sees the possible devastation on the Temple Mount, and the destruction of the invading armies, as a way to "make it easier then for the Jews to rebuild their temple." Even though he places the war in the Tribulation, he says, "Having it pre-trib and having this take place is a great way to explain how the temple gets rebuilt." Price holds this view: "That explains why the temple is rebuilt by the midpoint of the Tribulation, because of this early event of Gog and Magog." Rhodes makes the same point:

If the Muslim invaders are greatly weakened, then that would seem to also open up the possibility of a rapid construction of the Jewish temple, which right now poses big problems for the Muslim community. . . . The temple of the Tribulation period . . . can be built fairly quickly. The money has already been raised for it, the utensils are already being constructed for it. And that would be much easier to accomplish if Muslim forces were destroyed, say 3½ years prior to the Tribulation period. You could be in full swing by the beginning of the Tribulation period with that temple already built.

Steyne also holds this view: "The earthquake will precipitate this. It can be rebuilt. And of course if this happens, then it must be there in the mid-trib, so it must be starting to be erected sometime before that."

Pentecost, contrary to most, does not see a temple in the Tribulation at all. He says, “I go back to Daniel and it says, ‘He will set up his palace or his headquarters in the holy mountain.’ So I don’t see Antichrist sitting in a Jewish temple.” He sees the rebuilding of the third temple as Messiah’s work, which won’t be accomplished until after he returns to earth. He mentions many orthodox rabbis who hold the same view. Explaining further why he does not see a Tribulation temple, Pentecost says, “I am looking at 2 Thessalonians 2. He as God will sit in the temple of God as God. What I do instead of putting a capital G, he said sit in the temple of God, I use a small g. . . . He claims to be god and therefore it is his temple or his headquarters.”

[Section 3] How the Research Subjects’ Thinking on This Has Impacted Their Current Ministry, Specifically in the Areas of: A) Teaching, Speaking and Writing; B) Vision for New Ministry; and C) Renewed Urgency in Presenting the Gospel

The Impact on Speaking, Teaching and Writing

[Q15] How have your views regarding this war impacted your ministry in the area of speaking, teaching, and writing? This is where we cross over from theological knowledge to practical application. The expectation upon beginning this research was that for those who see a possible soon fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy, there would be an impact upon their ministry practices. Almost by definition, to be known as an expert in the area of Bible prophecy, there has to be a public ministry on the subject in order for them to become known. There are certainly others who could be considered experts on Bible prophecy, but if they have not spoken, taught, or written on the subject, this student would have had little opportunity to become familiar with them. So it is practically a foregone conclusion that for the experts who were interviewed in connection with this project, their views have impacted their speaking, teaching, and writing. This is so patently obvious, that some of the interviewees tended to gloss over their personal ministries in the areas of speaking, teaching and writing. This student also suspects that a

healthy modesty has also limited their comments about how the Lord has worked through them in their personal ministries.

Given that most of the experts on this particular prophecy are students of other end times prophecies as well, it becomes difficult to separate out how their views on just this prophecy have impacted their ministry. Therefore, in most cases, their ministry practices will have been impacted by their overall views and understanding of eschatological events, not just by the Ezekiel prophecy alone.

When I interviewed him, Dyer was on his way out the following weekend to speak at a prophecy conference. His teaching focus has been especially on the prophets. Much of his writing has also focused on Bible prophecy, including the chapters on Jeremiah and Ezekiel in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, *The Rise of Babylon*, and *World News and Bible Prophecy*, where he dealt with Ezekiel 38 and 39. He is currently working on another book, the *24 Greatest Prophecies in the Bible* and why they matter to us. While much of his ministry has been focused on this, he bemoans the facts that the church is many times so shallow and ignorant about eschatology.

In Fruchtenbaum's speaking and teaching ministry, especially early on, he focused mostly on prophecy conferences. In writing his book, the *Footsteps of the Messiah*, he wanted to put the sequence of events in sequential order, and then discuss issues like Ezekiel 38–39 and other end times prophecies. In connection with that, he did much to bring in the Jewish perspective, as well as tying in key historical events, especially involving the nation of Israel. His goal has been to bring a much better awareness and understanding of what the Bible has to say about the end times.

Hitchcock, in his own words says, "I have written on this topic, Ezekiel 38 and 39, more than anybody, I think." And indeed he is a prolific writer. More of his books (seven) are referenced in the bibliography for this project than by any other author, and that does not include all of his books. He has addressed this particular prophecy in

many of those books, looking at it from a lot of different angles. In his preaching ministry at his church, he addresses prophecy topics, but not exclusively, so as to not wear people out on one subject, and in order to present a balanced teaching ministry to his people.

Outside of his church, he says:

I speak at prophecy conferences all the time on this topic. I usually call it the “Coming Middle East War.” That is the topic I use. It is a mainstay for me at prophecy conferences that I speak at, because we can look at our world today and see how this fits. To me it is a great passage for ministry to people because you are not having to make some stretch for people to see this. To me one of the key things it does is lets people see that 2600 years ago Ezekiel wrote this, and you could maybe get one of these places right if you were just sitting around back then, but to think about getting all of these names right, Israel being regathered to their land and all these factors. To me it is a great apologetic for the truth of the Bible that hasn’t happened yet.

He comments on the practical value of teaching Bible prophecy, saying, “I think in a strange way often times prophecy scares people, but in another way it really ought to comfort people to know that what the Bible said is going to happen. It is correct. To me that is a comfort to know.” He comments that it is important to give people hope.

Ice comments on the extra urgency all this prophetic knowledge gives to his public ministry. He also says, “I don’t think it is just prophecy, I think it is the Bible, the Word of God that gives you meaning and purpose, it gives you direction, and it gives you understanding about why things are always revolving around Israel and the Middle East and these other kinds of things.” Much of Ice’s ministry has focused on the rapture, but that also includes related prophecies such as the one in Ezekiel 38–39. And it is very practical. Ice says, “Most of the rapture passage references in the New Testament have a present impact on the person. In other words, it will have an ethical implication, and therefore what manner of people ought we to be in all godliness and holiness, etc. when it talks about the eschatology and the fact that Christ could return.” He points out that “eschatology is one of the things that is a big motivation.”

In years past, whenever Pentecost was invited to speak at a Bible conference, it was always about prophecy. However, he doesn't get asked to speak on that much anymore. He wrote three books focused on Bible prophecy, and still teaches at Dallas Theological Seminary.

Teaching on Bible prophecy continues to be a big part of Price's ministry. He says, "When you look at the Gog and Magog prophecy, so many things come together. People say, 'Wait a minute, maybe I am living at a time when I could see the fulfillment of these things.'" His ministry puts the emphasis on the Bible and interpreting world events in light of the Bible, and not the other way around. He says, "These things explain the current events. But anyone who is familiar with the prophecy, and just begins to study what's going on, just sees too much to not try to put this into perspective." In many ways, that is what has grabbed this student's attention on this whole subject: learning the details about the prophecy, and then seeing everything going on in the world that might relate to it, it becomes really hard to ignore. Price explains, "I can say that we've never lived in a time where so many things like this have come together, and this is what the text says would happen." Price gets regular opportunities to speak on these things to various groups. A focus on this ministry, Price says,

allows me to do what I want to do with my ministry, which is to bring people back to interpreting the Bible as the Bible was given. World of the Bible Ministries, the purpose there is to put people into the World of the Bible, interpret the word of the Bible in its original context. So they can take that meaning that you get from the original context, and then export that to the 21st century and apply it to our lives. That's relevant in terms of prophecy. Prophecy is given so that we might believe, and believe that he is the one who spoke these things, and it is true. The prophecies are given so we might have an assurance that God's in control of history, and we're not just some random set of circumstances where we don't know the outcome. It's meant to be an impetus to evangelism, because we see the days drawing nearer, and our time for witnessing is short. We need to have an urgency about ourselves. I see it in terms of developing a way of life that's more holy, because that blessed hope is nearing, and we need to see these things. . . . It's not just something to relegate to some part of theology. It's a driving, motivating practical force. It's for the good of the church. I think we've lost a lot of that. And the Gog and Magog prophecy, for instance, has the potential to at

least focus people on how to interpret the Bible, and the importance of doing it to understand the times in which they live, and stabilize their souls.

Rhodes exclaims, “There is no time that I would rather be alive than right now, doing Christian ministry. . . . There is a sense of urgency that I think an understanding of prophecy brings toward getting the word out there.” As time has gone on, this area has occupied a larger share of his public ministry: “I’m real thankful for the fact that whereas I formerly did mostly apologetics conferences, I am now also doing a lot of prophecy conferences.”

Rosenberg is one whose life and ministry have been hugely impacted because of his understanding of the Ezekiel 38–39 prophecy. It has changed his life. He has not been able to ignore what he has learned. It sounds like a purpose statement for his life when he says,

If I really believe these prophecies could happen in my lifetime, then I cannot allow myself *not* to be changed by these prophecies. In other words, if I thought that this could happen in the next few years, wouldn’t I be doing a series of things? Wouldn’t I be trying to teach this prophecy to anyone would listen? . . . Wouldn’t I be preaching the gospel to anyone who moved, particularly Jews and Muslims, for fear that they were going to get caught up in the middle of all this and end up perishing? Yes, that is what I would do, and that is what I am trying to do.

When it comes to practical ministry in light of this prophecy, Rosenberg gets quite passionate. His zeal for teaching others, his zeal for evangelism, his zeal for helping people in the name of Jesus shine through very clearly.

Steyne has likewise seen his ministry change as a result of his understanding of this prophecy: “It has given me a whole new perspective Urgency, but more so, a new understanding of even Scripture, and for that I am deeply grateful. . . . All of these things have certainly given a great urgency and motivation and perspective, new understanding.”

Ruthven is the one expert interviewed who had little to say about the possible timing of the war. His expertise was primarily in the area of identifying the modern

nations that correlate to the ancient ones mentioned in Ezekiel's prophecy. He has written an excellent and scholarly book that definitively identifies Rosh as the forerunner of modern day Russia. But in his interview, he didn't have much to say about the sequence of events at the end of the age, or how this prophecy might fit in. He has retired from teaching at seminary, and is somewhat discouraged about seminary training in general. His primary ministry today is focused on evangelism in the Far East. He doesn't have much of a current speaking, teaching, or writing ministry related to this prophecy or other end times events. When considering the results expected from this study, I did not anticipate finding many, if any, who see no correlation between current world events and Ezekiel's prophecy. However, if there were any, I would have expected to find negligible impact in their ministry practices as listed above. Ruthven does see a correlation between current world events and Ezekiel's prophecy, but expressed a reluctance to put that on any sort of a timeline, or correlate it with other end times events. That may be the primary reason why, as expected, there seems to have been negligible impact in his current ministry practice related to this prophecy.

The Impact on Vision for New Ministry

[Q16] What about vision for new ministry? As a result of your thinking about this war, or the proximity of other end times events, have you begun or considered any new areas of ministry? For Dyer, this has actually produced a major change in his ministry focus. In answer to this question, he responds,

Actually my best answer is, that is the reason I am not in academic administration. After 30 years, I was at the point where I could coast to the end just doing the academic administrative side. It comes easy to me, I enjoy it, but I look at it and say, "But if the end is getting closer who cares what the faculty/student ratio is?" And so it was a bit of a risk but I made a proposal to the president at Moody and said, we need to be doing more, focusing on Israel and Bible prophecy, and I would like to do that. I would like to step away from this job and start a radio show for Moody called The Land and the Book. So the whole program really is flowing out of this. What we are focusing on is why people need to hear the

gospel, why we need to be sharing with the Jews and the Muslims, and why Israel is important to what God says the future is for that part of the world.

Thinking on these subjects has also impacted the whole direction of Fruchtenbaum's ministry. He founded and directs Ariel Ministries, which is in eight different countries now. He has a special heart to share the gospel in the Jewish community in those countries, and "to teach the Word of God from a Jewish frame of reference, and from a dispensational frame of reference."

Hitchcock's ministry continues to be mostly in and through his church, where he serves as Senior Pastor. He has gotten involved in new ministry by speaking at prophecy conferences. His writing ministry has also expanded his outreach to prisons and many countries around the world.

Ice could not say if it has given him vision for new ministry. He has been involved in a recent speaking tour in Great Britain where he taught on some of this. He was also a part of the founding of the Pre-Trib Study Group 20 years ago, which has focused attention on this prophecy, as well as other areas related to the pretribulation rapture.

Pentecost, because of age and physical limitations, has almost ceased his public ministry. He is well known, of course, for having literally written the book on *Things to Come*, as well as other books and articles on the end times.

Rhodes has seen new ministry develop in the area of apologetics against false understandings of all of this, specifically the belief that the Antichrist will be a Muslim. He has just written a book on this that will be out soon.

When it comes to vision for new ministry that has arisen out of one's understanding of this prophecy, there is probably no one who has been more greatly impacted than Rosenberg. His first end times fiction series, which gets into this Ezekiel prophecy in detail, launched him into the spotlight. His understanding of Scripture, combined with his inside knowledge of world politics, enabled him to imagine scenarios

he wrote into his books which have come strikingly close to reality, earning him the title of being “a modern day Nostradamus.” His understanding of this prophecy in particular prompted the writing of the popular non-fiction book *Epicenter*, which in turn led to his vision for a series of Epicenter conferences, two of which this student has attended.

Rosenberg has hosted several simulcasts shown in churches around the country that have focused on Bible prophecy and world events, and calling Christians to get involved and make a difference. It also gave him vision to start a completely new ministry, reaching out to Israel and her neighbors with the love of Jesus. Explaining his passion, he says,

If I really believed this was going to happen in the next years, wouldn't I be trying to provide humanitarian relief in the epicenter, to the poor and the needy, and build a technical structure, a logistical structure, as well as a network of churches and believers around the world, who would be wanting to help both preach the gospel but also provide food and clothing and medical supplies and water and anything else that would care for people when this disaster happened? Yes, to me that is an inescapable conclusion of believing that this is what you do if you thought this was coming. That is what we are trying to do with the Joshua Fund.

When asked whether his vision for the Joshua Fund came directly out of what the Lord revealed to his heart from this passage, he responded,

Directly. Absolutely. The Joshua Fund, is my wife and me saying, if we believe this even remotely could happen in our lifetime, don't we need to be involved? And how would we be involved in a way that didn't just help one ministry, but could help a whole range of ministries and serve as a mutual fund in a sense? To match our own funds, and raise funds from others, and a whole range of ministries in Israel and the neighboring countries that will help get ready and be prepared from the church's perspective prior to any of these events happening. If they don't happen in our lifetime, shouldn't we be doing this anyway? But especially if we see Russia and Iran converging and all these other things happening. What would we think if this thing did happen in a couple of years, and we were just standing around just writing novels about it? It would be ludicrous. And we would end up standing before the Messiah one day and having him say, “Just help me understand how come you didn't get ready, and prepared to communicate the gospel to every single person in that region, and provide any humanitarian relief you could, knowing that these things might happen? How did you miss that, Joel?” I couldn't bear the thought of having no answer to that question.

This student was able to attend a meeting in Efrat, Israel, where a new bus was presented by the Joshua Fund to a Jewish ministry there reaching out to handicapped students. At the same time, there was a first-of-its-kind dialogue between Rosenberg and Rabbi Schlomo Riskin, with his entire Yeshiva school of rabbinical students in attendance, focusing on the prophecy given in Ezekiel 38–39. On the drive to the meeting, we passed an ambulance in Jerusalem that had been donated by the Joshua Fund. On another occasion this student visited the Israel College of the Bible in Netanya, an evangelical school training Hebrew-speaking messianic Jews to be Christian leaders in the land, which has also been helped by the Joshua Fund. Rosenberg recently took part in a prophecy conference there, where Ezekiel’s prophecy was a major focus. Rosenberg’s passion for ministry, as influenced by his understanding of this prophecy, continues to provide vision for new ministry on a regular basis. In fact, it was as a result of Rosenberg’s ministry that this student was awakened to the significance of Ezekiel’s prophecy, leading eventually to this doctoral research project. In that sense, his vision for new ministry has caught hold in this student’s life as well, and for that he is deeply grateful.

The Impact on Evangelism

[Q17] Finally, how has your thinking about this coming war and the end of the age impacted your ministry in the area of evangelism? Dyer related a battle with the publisher of his first book, who did not want the plan of salvation included, thinking it would limit sales. Dyer countered saying, “If it wasn’t in there, I wasn’t going to do the book with them.” His books since have always included the plan of salvation. On his radio program, he often ends up calling people to faith in Christ. He continues: “We also have a segment on the program every week on how to share your faith with a Jew or a Muslim, because we are dealing with the Middle Eastern context. The goal is, people

need to know not only that they need to share their faith, but how to do it in a way that makes an impact.”

Fruchtenbaum’s ministry is more focused on discipleship than evangelism, so it has not impacted his ministry as greatly that way. He explains, “We focus more on first coming prophecy. With some of the Jews you can deal with Gog and Magog, but most Jewish people are secular and don’t know Gog and Magog.”

Hitchcock’s books always present the Gospel in there somewhere towards the end. Non-Christians are often intrigued with Bible prophecy, and his books have received a very wide distribution. There is no way to really know the impact they have made regarding the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Focusing more on evangelism in general, rather than his own personal ministry, Ice relates how many people over the years have come to Christ out of an interest in Bible prophecy. One of those is Ron Rhodes, who was interviewed as part of this project. Hal Lindsey told Ice once that he “had letters from hundreds of thousands of people over the years that have said they accepted Christ” as a result of reading his book, including “probably 10 to 15 thousand Jewish people.” Tim LaHaye’s *Left Behind* series has had a similar impact. Ice references a work by Jeffrey Jue called *These Last Days*, where Jue talks about how people who believe in dispensationalism have always been tremendous evangelists, more than the average Christian.

Pentecost says he has emphasized evangelism all the way through, even when he was involved in prophecy. He references Dr. Barnhouse, who said, “You will not find a passage concerning the second coming of Christ, particularly in the Epistles, where it is not followed by a “wherefore” or “therefore.” And it is always an exhortation to godliness, so that revelation concerning the prophetic program was the great inspiration for godliness in the Christian life.”

Rhodes says his thinking about this coming war and the end of the age has impacted his ministry “tremendously” in the area of evangelism. He relates his personal testimony, how biblical prophecy was the primary theme that made him become a Christian.

Rosenberg, as related above under discussion of the previous two questions, has been greatly impacted by his thinking on this prophecy, particularly in the area of evangelism. He says, “If I really believe this could happen in the next few years, wouldn’t I be preaching the gospel to anyone who moved, particularly Jews and Muslims, for fear that they were going to get caught up in the middle of all this and end up perishing? Yes, that is what I would do, and that is what I am trying to do.” He relates his passion and motivation further:

To me the most important chapter in the entire book of Ezekiel isn’t 38 or 39. It is 3 and 33. This idea of being a watchman on the wall: if you see danger coming and you don’t warn people, and you don’t do anything to help people, people will die in their own sins, but their blood is going to be on our hands in some way, shape or form. And that is just not something I intend to go into eternity having happen. I don’t want to just see this and warn people through what I write and what I say; I want to do everything I can to reach every Jew and Gentile in the land of Israel with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and anyone between Tel Aviv and Tehran, and Tel Aviv and Turkey and Moscow. Those two corridors I think are the most dangerous corridors on the planet and they are also among the least reached with the gospel and so the urgency . . . is not just to reach Jews with the gospel in light of this. Because actually the good news out of this is that the Holy Spirit is going to be poured out on the whole house of Israel. It doesn’t excuse us from reaching Jews, it just means God is going to do something amazing with Jews. But when Jesus said to love your neighbor and love your enemy, this has compelled me to go and visit Muslim countries and learn more about Muslims coming to Christ and how lost they are without Christ, in a way that as a Jewish person I wouldn’t probably have been so motivated to go to Afghanistan and Iraq and meet Iranians and all these other countries if I didn’t realize that these Muslims are going to die and go to hell in this war . . . if we don’t share the gospel with them.

Ruthven’s primary focus now at this stage in his ministry has moved to evangelism, particularly in China and the Far East. He is working with an evangelist who

serves there, and with a Christian worker training program in China and India. However, in his comments on this he quickly switched gears into an extended discussion about the gifts of the Spirit from his charismatic perspective. He also commented, “I tend to believe that the last days were everything since the ascension,” which may reflect why he was reluctant earlier in the interview to get into the details of an end times chronology, or where this Ezekiel prophecy might fit in.

Concluding the interviews, Steyne comments that his understanding of the prophecy is a great motivation for evangelism. He says, “This is the day that we need to impact the world with the glory of God as never before.”

Evaluation of the Expected Results

I expected to find a strong consensus that current world events do point to the approaching fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophesied war. This was indeed the case. Every expert interviewed in connection with this project was able to point to many situations in the world today that match up closely with what we see in Ezekiel’s prophecy. The convergence of many details looks to most of the interviewees like the setting of the stage for the fulfillment of this prophecy. However, it should be noted that several of the experts urged caution that we will not really know for sure until the prophecy is actually fulfilled.

Regarding the timing of that war, I expected to find a variety of opinions as to whether that war will precede the Great Tribulation or be fulfilled during or after it. As expected, there were a variety of positions held by the different experts interviewed. All of those interviewed place the war either during the Tribulation or before it. Of those putting it during the Tribulation, the range of opinions was from early in the first half, late in the first half, or near the mid-point. None placed it in the last half of the Tribulation. Of those putting it before the Tribulation, some believed it must follow the

rapture of the church, while others were open to the possibility that it could be before or after the rapture. None of those interviewed placed the war after the Tribulation.

I also expected to find that those who see a possible soon fulfillment of these things will have their ministry practices impacted in the areas of teaching, speaking and writing, vision for new ministry, and renewed urgency in presenting the gospel. This was the case, although not uniformly so. All those who saw the soon fulfillment of the prophecy were involved in ministries on the subject through teaching, speaking and writing. The expert who placed it farthest off (Pentecost, who puts it near the mid-point of the Tribulation), was the least involved in current ministry on the subject. While there could be a correlation between his understanding of when the war will take place and his limited ministry on the subject currently, his age and ability to get around are most likely a more significant factor. He did comment, however, that he was not asked to speak on the subject of prophecy nearly as much as he was earlier in his career. Rosenberg, one of the three who consider the possibility that the war could even precede the rapture, was the most active in developing new areas of ministry as a consequence of this prophecy. In his case, that connection was definite and clear. Regarding evangelism, no clear pattern was detected. Some who regard the fulfillment of the prophecy as possibly very close are heavily involved in evangelism (Rosenberg, for example), while for others with the same position, their ministry was not so much focused on evangelism (such as Fruchtenbaum).

I did not anticipate finding many, if any, who see no correlation between current world events and Ezekiel's prophecy. However, if there were any, I would have expected to find negligible impact in their ministry practices as listed above. The only expert who came close to this position was Ruthven. He does see a correlation with current world events, but was reluctant to even try to draw any conclusions from that. He also was unwilling to correlate the timing of this war with the timing of any other end times events. As expected, the resulting impact on his ministry practices was negligible.

Evaluation of the Accuracy of the Hypothesis

To state the hypothesis once again, it is this: **There is an association between the selected authorities' understanding of the possible soon fulfillment of Ezekiel's war of Gog and Magog and their ministry practices in the areas of teaching, speaking and writing, vision for new ministry, and renewed urgency in presenting the gospel.**

The results summarized briefly above for the most part matched the expectations, indicating the accuracy of the hypothesis. The more strongly each expert saw the possibility of a soon fulfillment of Ezekiel's war, the more their ministry practices were impacted. Those who saw the war farther away, or who were unwilling to connect it with other end times events, had the least impact in their ministry practices.

The areas of speaking, teaching and writing saw the most impact from their views, perhaps in part because those areas comprise the primary ministry role of most of the experts interviewed. Thus it is logical that that would be the area with the greatest impact.

Vision for new ministry was for most an area of somewhat lesser impact. Some of that, although not investigated in this project, may have to do with the relative ages of the experts interviewed. Rosenberg was the youngest expert interviewed, and he was also the one with the greatest vision for new ministry.

Renewed urgency in presenting the gospel, or the impact upon evangelism, was acknowledged by most of the interviewees. Our proximity to the fulfillment of this prophecy, and the end of the age, was cited by many as a strong motivating factor for evangelism. Teaching, speaking and writing on the subject also provided many opportunities for presenting the plan of salvation that they would not have had otherwise. However, none of the experts interviewed, with the possible exception of Rosenberg, saw their ministries primarily as one of evangelism. For the most part, they are writers,

teachers, pastors, and ministry leaders in other areas. This is not to say there was no heart or place for evangelism in their ministries; just that evangelism was not their primary ministry role.

In summary then, I can conclude that for the most part my hypothesis was accurate, although not uniformly so in each case or with each individual. There is clearly a connection to be made between an understanding of the possible soon fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy and the ministry practices of the selected authorities, but how that is manifest in each case is different. But the impact definitely is there, as it should be. Prophecy is meant to impact our lives, and for the experts who have devoted much of their time and energy to it, it is encouraging to see the impact it has made.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Cautions to Keep in Mind While Evaluating This Prophecy

We Must Not Ignore This Prophecy

The first thing that must be said is that this prophecy is important! This has been recorded for us in Scripture for almost 2600 years. No prophecy of Scripture is insignificant, but two full chapters have been devoted to this great end times prophecy; four if chapters 36–37 are considered as part of the same overall prophecy. More specific details are given for this event than for most other future events, indicating at least something of its importance for us. It is one of the biggest of all end time events headed our way. It will impact the entire world. It describes ahead of time one of the biggest miracles that will ever happen in human history. It will present one of the greatest opportunities ever for bringing people to faith in Christ. It will mark a huge turning point for the nation of Israel in their relationship to the Lord. It will be a key step used of God to accomplish the full restoration of Israel. It would likely greatly diminish the influence of Islam, currently one of the world's biggest religions. It could possibly pave the way for the rebuilding of a temple in Jerusalem. It could pave the way for the rise of the Antichrist. It could pave the way for the rise of the end times ten-nation confederacy. It will demonstrate God's greatness and power to the whole world. It will provide a sober warning about God's judgment yet to come. And in the minds of some, the church of Jesus Christ could possibly still be around to witness it. This is big; really, really big!

This is something that every Christian pastor, teacher, seminary professor, and ministry leader should be familiar with. God tells us that this war is surely coming. We

live in the age when we could see its fulfillment. If ever there was a time in the history of God's people when they needed to be fully aware of this prophecy and all its implications, it is today. When it happens, every person on earth will be paying attention, and asking questions. It will be a time of unprecedented spiritual harvest. As it approaches, Christian leaders need to be talking about it, explaining it, and helping God's people prepare for it, should it occur in our lifetime.

Yet at the present time, there is woeful ignorance of this prophecy among the vast majority of Christians; pastors, teachers, and leaders included. For some reason, this huge prophecy has been largely overlooked by many. Most Christians have never even heard of it. Worse yet, some say, "We don't need to know this stuff. We'll find out when it happens. We don't need to bother with it ahead of time."

Such a sad state of affairs needs to change, and there are only a relative few in a position to do something about it. Those few would include seminary and Bible college professors, pastors, teachers, and ministry leaders. If the leaders in the Christian community are ignorant, certainly the church as a whole will remain ignorant. It takes some hard work and serious study to get a handle on this prophecy, but that is the job of those who are leading the church of God. But once those leaders learn, they need to pass on what they have learned to those in their sphere of influence. If you are even reading these words, you are obviously one of a tiny percentage interested enough in this prophecy to learn all you can about it. To whom much is given, much is required. Take what you are learning to heart, and use it to God's glory.

Elsewhere in Ezekiel's book, he admonishes the watchmen to be faithful in giving the proper warnings. Terrible things are headed upon this world, but only a few are fully aware of that ahead of time. Those few could be considered God's watchmen. And they have a sober responsibility to steward well the advance knowledge that God has given to them. This whole project was tackled with a sober realization of the weighty

responsibility God has given to us as watchmen. Let us be found faithful in fulfilling the task God has given to us.

We Must Look at Events through Scripture, Not the Other Way Around

With so much happening in the world today, people are looking for answers. Around the world, in every culture and in every religion, there is a broad sense that something big is coming, that the end may be approaching. Many people don't know what the future holds, and they are afraid. If they're not, many of them should be. They are looking for answers.

Many rightly realize that the source for answers is the Bible. So when things happen in the world, it's a good thing when they look to the Bible for answers. It's part of our job to direct them there. But unfortunately, many people start with what's happening in the world, and then look at Scripture through those events. Scripture is interpreted in light of current events, but that is the exact wrong way to go about it. That will inevitably lead to errors, and twisting the Word to make it fit what we see in the world. That places our interpretation of history in an authoritative position over the Word of God, when it should be the other way around. What we need to do is look at Scripture first, and then interpret what we see in the world through the lens of Scripture. The Bible is our authority, not our interpretation of events. We must start with the Word of God.

Final Proof Must Wait until Fulfillment

When it comes to our interpretation of Ezekiel 38–39, and how world events may be lining up for its fulfillment, some things will remain uncertain. The closer we get to the actual fulfillment, the clearer the details will become. This is always the way it has been in God's continued revelation of his plan.

Adam knew that one day his deliverer would come, but he didn't know much about him. David lived at a time when he was able to know much more. After the pre- and post-exilic prophets, the picture became even more clear, and on and on it goes.

The same is true of end times events. A hundred years ago, we didn't know if Israel would ever be in the land before the rapture of the church, but now that answer has been made clear. Fifty years ago, it was hard to imagine how Iran could become Israel's greatest enemy, but now we can see how that happened. Five years ago it was hard to see how Turkey, closely allied with Israel and the West, could be part of a coalition intent on destroying Israel, but today we have been able to see that reversal taking place.

It is easy to believe that we have figured out how God's prophecies will be fulfilled. We may have some details right, but at this time we cannot know for sure. Not all that long ago, many prophecy experts were convinced that the Soviet Union would lead the coming attack against Israel. But now the Soviet Union does not even exist. We may be convinced we've got our chronology all figured out, with every detail put neatly into place. But as time goes on, we may discover that we've got some parts of it wrong. In fact, we probably will.

So when it comes to how Ezekiel's great prophecy of the coming war of Gog and Magog is fulfilled, it's important to realize that final proof must wait until fulfillment. It's not always wrong to speculate, as long as people know we're speculating. There is a very natural desire to want to connect the dots, so that we can see the whole picture. But we won't see the whole picture, at least not accurately, until it actually takes place. So until then, we must be careful how we present our understandings of what might take place.

Every View Has Strengths and Weaknesses

With this particular prophecy, it has been notoriously difficult to prove conclusively where it fits on God's timeline. The plethora of positions on that are

testimony to the fact that it's not so cut and dried. Every position has its strength and weaknesses. There is no position that does not have arguments that can be made against it. So it's not a matter of finding a position that fits perfectly; it's a matter of finding a position with the fewest weaknesses, weaknesses which we are best able to accept. While the strengths and weaknesses of every position are worth examining, we must be cautious about ruling out an alternate position simply because we can point out a weakness. The same could be done for ours.

We Must Hold Our Positions with Humility

Based then on the fact that every view has strengths and weaknesses, we must hold our positions with humility. It's not that we shouldn't try to figure it out. But having done our best, we must be careful that we don't hold our position too dogmatically, or put down other views too confidently. There are good men with a solid grasp of Scripture who have come up with a wide variety of interpretations. Until every detail is crystal clear, we would be wise to hold our positions at least somewhat loosely. We probably won't have every detail figured out perfectly until after the Lord has brought the event to pass.

Theological Considerations of the Timing of Ezekiel's War

What Are the Different Positions That Are Held?

There are a wide variety of views of when the war will take place, with various subdivisions under several of them. Here is an attempt to list all the various views and variations that have been discovered in the course of this research, given in

chronological order. Also included are some representative names of men who hold each position:¹

- 1) Before the Tribulation (Cooper, Jeffrey)
 - a) Either before or after the rapture (Fruchtenbaum, LaHaye, Rosenberg, Steyne)
 - b) After the rapture
 - i) Definitely after the rapture (Price)
 - ii) Probably after the rapture (Ice, Rhodes)
- 2) During the Tribulation (Philips)
 - a) During the first half
 - i) Near the beginning of the first half (Dyer)
 - ii) At least seven months before the end of the first half (Hitchcock)
 - iii) Near the end of the first half (Ryrie)
 - b) Near the middle (Pentecost, Walvoord)
 - c) In the second half
 - i) Spread throughout the second half (Hoehner)
 - ii) Near the end of the second half (Feinberg, Gabelein, Ironside)
- 3) After the return of Christ
 - a) Near the beginning of the millennium (Alexander, Tanner)
 - b) Near the end of the millennium

What Are the Major Positions to Be Considered for Evaluation?

During the literature review and interview process, the most common positions for the placement of this war are either before the Tribulation, with its different variations, or from the first half to the middle of the Tribulation (which also has several

¹ In some cases it has not been possible to determine precisely where each person places the war, in which case their name is listed in a higher outline level. Some may also have changed their position over time, so it is possible this list does not reflect their latest thinking.

variations). Since there are fewer evangelical, dispensational representatives placing it in the second half of the Tribulation or following the return of Christ, those positions will not be considered in detail.

What Are the Various Factors to Consider?

There are many factors to be considered in trying to determine the timing of the war. Some of them are clues from the text itself, others are possible implications of the war in connection with other end times events. The text will be considered first. Most of these points have been discussed earlier in this work, so this will suffice merely as a review:

After Many Days (38:8)

This places the war late in history, near the end of the age. It is not a specific statement to the 70th week of Daniel.

In the Latter Years (38:8)

The significance of this phrase is more highly debated. Some say it has specific reference to the 70th week of Daniel, which would place the war in the Tribulation period. Some say it refers to the latter days of Israel, not the church, which if not in the Tribulation, would at least place it after the rapture. Others say it is a general term without a technical meaning, which could include even a time prior to the rapture of the church.

A Land That Has Recovered from War (38:8)

This is also a debatable phrase. Some say that means there is full peace (a term not used in the passage), which would put it sometime after the Antichrist's covenant with Israel, during the Tribulation. Others would take the words more at face

value, that there have been wars in the past, but the land has recovered from the direct consequences of those wars, which could include the present day.

A People Gathered from Many Nations (38:8,12; 39:27)

This reflects back on Ezekiel 36–37 and the return of the Jewish people to the land. This began mostly in the early 20th century, was climaxed at the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, and has continued since then as the aliyah has continued. There is no debate that this condition has been met or is being met in the present day, but before 1948 most would say the war of Gog and Magog was not yet possible.

To the Mountains of Israel (38:8,21; 39:1,4,17)

Some would say that this condition was not met until the 1967 Six Day War, when Israel conquered the West Bank, which includes most of the mountains of Israel. Because there is not a final settlement of those lands, some might say the conditions are not yet complete for this invasion to take place on the mountains of Israel, which are so prominent in this passage.

Which Had Long Been Desolate (38:8)

This also refers back to the restoration of the land described in Ezekiel 36–37. There is little debate that the land has been restored, and is continuing to be restored, from its previous desolation.

All of Them Live in Safety (38:8)

This phrase is highly debated, and is a deciding factor for some when considering the timing. Does safety mean a complete absence of all threats? If so, it is not present today. If it refers to a position of security, even in the face of threats, it could describe conditions today. Some would say this phrase forces the war into the first half of the Tribulation, during the false peace created by the Antichrist's covenant. Others would

say that with the terrible disasters happening on earth during this period, no one on earth then would be able to say they live in safety.

A Land of Unwalled Villages (38:11)

Most would say this condition has been met within the last hundred years or so, when defensive city walls were no longer a necessary defense in the land of Israel. Jerusalem began moving outside its walls in the late 1800's.

At Rest, Living Securely (38:11,14)

The discussion here is similar to with the phrase “all of them live in safety” discussed above. With many and significant threats, some would say this absolutely does not describe conditions today. Those who believe this condition is present today would look at the strength of Israel's army, and repeated success in war, as factors contributing to their security. Recent polls in Israel show that people do feel a sense of security there today.

Living without Walls (38:11)

This may be another way of describing “unwalled villages,” which the land has today. But Israel does have the security fence between them and the Palestinian territories. Must that wall come down before this condition is met? There has not been much discussion about this point.

Resettled Ruins (38:12)

This is another reference to the restoration described in Ezekiel 36–37. This was not true one hundred years ago, but it is true today.

Rich in Livestock and Goods (38:12,13)

This describes a wealthy state, which the invaders will come in to plunder. Currently Israel is much wealthier than all the surrounding nations, even some of the oil-

producing states. Recent discoveries of oil and natural gas could greatly increase their wealth. Most would say that this condition has either already been met, or is close to it.

Only a Weak Diplomatic Protest to the Invasion; No Nation Comes to Israel's aid (38:13)

The war must take place at a time when Israel is standing all alone, with no one to come to her aid. At the current time it is thought the United States would help Israel. The rapture would likely devastate the United States, removing her from the picture, which would support any post-rapture position. Several things could also change that before the rapture: a change in United States administrative policy, a financial collapse, a military attack, or a return to isolationism.

My People Israel/My Land/the Land of Israel/Towns of Israel (38:16,18; 39:9)

These phrases indicate that Israel will once again be an independent state, living in and possessing their ancient land. Before 1948 this was not the case. It is today.

In the Earthquake Every Wall Will Fall (38:19-20)

The question here regards the extent of devastation caused by the earthquake, and if it will destroy whatever building is standing on the Temple Mount at that time. If before the Tribulation, this would provide a good opportunity to build the temple that will be standing during the Tribulation period. If this takes place in the first half of the Tribulation, after the temple has been built, it would require the temple to be repaired or rebuilt prior to the mid-point of the Tribulation, in order for the Antichrist to enter it then. If close to the mid-point, there might not be enough time for it to be rebuilt. This argument favors the pre-Tribulation position.

Seven Years of Burning (39:9-10)

The fact that Israel will take seven years to burn all the fallen implements of war is a major factor for many, pushing the war at least three and a half years before the

start of the Tribulation. It is a major problem for anyone placing the war after the start of the Tribulation, but various explanations have been offered.

Seven Months of Burial (39:12-16)

Israel must enjoy conditions for at least seven months after the war when they will be able to accomplish this. Most would say this requires the war to take place at least seven months prior to the mid-point of the Tribulation.

From That Day Forward Israel Will Know (39:22)

This concluding section of chapter 39 is viewed by many as a summary statement of the whole period, which does not necessarily apply directly to the Gog invasion. It does describe at least the beginning of the spiritual restoration of the Jewish people. Most do not see this as the wholesale conversion of the entire house of Israel. It does probably place the war near or at least close to the day of Israel's spiritual restoration. There has not been much debate as to where that places the war in connection with the Tribulation period. However, this statement makes it clear that at the time of the Gog invasion, Israel is still in unbelief. That would describe any time between today and near the end of the Tribulation.

I Will Gather Them to Their Own Land, Not Leaving Any Behind (39:28)

Again, if this is part of the summary statement, it does not affect the timing of the war much. If it is a direct consequence of the war, then there must be adequate time after the war for the final return to take place. If the war is near the end of the first half of the Tribulation, there probably would not be ample time for the rest of the world's Jews to make their way to Israel. If it was before the Tribulation, or early in the first half, there would be enough time for this final return to take place.

I Will Pour Out My Spirit on Them (39:29)

This is similar to the discussion above about the spiritual restoration of the Jews. Most do not see that fully happening until the return of Christ, so it does not much favor one position over another.

That covers most of the textual and exegetical issues related to the timing of Ezekiel's war. But there are other clues from possible implications of the war related to other end times events. Following are some of those considerations:

The Antichrist Will Make a Covenant with Israel at the Start of the Tribulation

If Ezekiel's war took place prior to the Tribulation, the world would be reeling, looking for someone to bring order from the chaos. The Antichrist might seize such a moment, having a great opportunity to broker a covenant with Israel, with Islam knocked out of the picture. It would give him a chance to claim the credit for bringing peace. But this would need to place the war shortly before the covenant is established, which would not give the seven years needed for the burning of the weapons.

The Antichrist Will Be Honoring His Covenant with Israel until the Mid-Point of the Tribulation

With Israel under Antichrist's protection, the question is how he could allow such a massive invasion against Israel to take place, and do nothing about it. He will not abandon Israel until later. There is no indication that he will forsake his covenant with Israel prior to that point.

Russia Will Be Destroyed

This would provide a window of opportunity for the Antichrist to rise to power, lending support to a pre-Tribulation or early Tribulation placement.

The Influence of Islam Will Be Diminished

As with the demise of Russia, this would create a power vacuum, which the Antichrist could rise to fill. It would also explain how the whole world could worship the Antichrist, as it is hard to imagine Muslims doing that.

The Antichrist Will Begin Persecuting the Jews at the Mid-Point of the Tribulation

There are two questions about this, both of which challenge a placement of the war near or at the end of the first half of the Tribulation. First, is it reasonable for the Antichrist to launch a persecution of the Jews, right after they have been so dramatically delivered by God? Would the world be inclined to support a persecution of the Jews at that point? Would they not be reluctant to risk it, right after seeing the attacking coalition demolished by God? Second, why would God deliver the Jews right then, only to let them be thrown right back in the fire? It doesn't seem like much of a deliverance if it only lasts for such a brief time.

There Will Be a Great Harvest of Souls after the War

Several have argued that it would be consistent with the heart of God to bring about the salvation of many, prior to the rapture when they would be delivered from the wrath to come.

Conditions Are Ready for the War Right Now

Of course this is a debatable point, but some would claim there is no need to place the war in the Tribulation, if all the conditions are ready right now.

Conclusions

It is the conclusion of this student that the most likely time for the fulfillment of this prophecy is before the Tribulation, either before or after the rapture. Several major factors lead to this conclusion.

First is the need for seven years to accomplish the burning of the weapons, which it seems would have to be accomplished before the mid-point of the Tribulation. After that point the Jews are fleeing for their lives, with an admonition to take nothing with them.

Second is the impact of the earthquake. The text is clear that it will cause widespread devastation, which most likely will destroy buildings on the Temple Mount. If during the first half of the Tribulation, it is problematic to imagine a newly rebuilt temple being destroyed, and then being rebuilt prior to the mid-point of the Tribulation. But if before the Tribulation, it would answer the age-old question of how the Jews would be able to get their temple rebuilt.

Third is the fact that all the conditions for the war seem to be present even right now, before the Tribulation, with nothing that would force the war to be delayed until the Tribulation begins. If God has revealed all these conditions in the details of the prophecy, and if now, for the first time in history, they are all present, isn't it reasonable to conclude that the war could be coming very soon? It's a pretty impressive list:

1. It has been many days since the prophecy was given.
2. Almost all would concur we're near the end of the age.
3. The land has physically recovered from war, which any visitor to Israel today can see.
4. The Jewish people there have been regathered from many nations.
5. The mountains of Israel are under Israeli control.
6. The land which had long been desolate has been wonderfully restored.
7. The people live in safety and security, with one of the strongest militaries in the world, a string of military successes, and with a substantial feeling of security—the greatest the nation has ever known, even in spite of the threats against them.

8. They are no longer a land of walled villages.
9. The ancient ruins have been resettled, and the population has exploded.
10. They enjoy an enviable standard of living, the highest in the region, with a booming economy, rapid growth, and recent discoveries of oil and natural gas which could boost their fortunes ever higher.
11. They are increasingly isolated in the world, with the least supportive U.S. administration ever, with their strongest ally weary of war and with a struggling economy.
12. Israel is after thousands of years once again an independent state, living in and possessing their ancient land.
13. Opportunity for rebuilding the temple has not yet presented itself, but for which this war could provide a very plausible solution.
14. There is time now to accomplish the burning of the weapons.
15. Israel is in unbelief.
16. All of the world's Jews have not returned to the land.
17. This war would create conditions suitable for the rise of the Antichrist, his covenant with Israel, and the rise of the ten nation confederacy.

Related to all this is the natural flow of Ezekiel's book, especially chapters 36 and 37, which describe the restoration of Israel. It was an early decision to limit the scope of this study to only Ezekiel 38–39, lest this project become larger than it already is, but the prophecy there cannot be divorced from Ezekiel 36–37. That prophecy describes a two-stage restoration of Israel: the first stage being the physical restoration of the nation and the land, and the second stage being the spiritual restoration of the people. We are clearly at a point in human history directly between those two stages of restoration. Furthermore, since the conclusion of the war in Ezekiel 38–39 leads to Israel's ultimate spiritual restoration, the war must take place after the physical restoration has taken

place, but before the spiritual. Israel must yet be in unbelief. They are. Apart from the spiritual restoration yet to come, it seems apparent that most of the rest of the Ezekiel 36–37 prophecy has been fulfilled, or at least is in the process of being fulfilled. Even Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently acknowledged that. So, in the progression of the book, if the war of Gog and Magog follows on the heels of the physical restoration of the land and nation of Israel, we are there. Conditions are ready. Exegetically speaking, there is very little yet to fall into place. This leads to the natural conclusion that the war could be approaching very soon, probably before the Tribulation begins, and possibly even before the rapture of the church. And looking at current world events, which will be reviewed shortly, that certainly looks like a strong possibility.

There are two major challenges to the view that the most likely time for the fulfillment of this prophecy is before the Tribulation, either before or after the rapture. They are the interpretation of the phrase “the latter years,” and the matter of Israel’s safety and security.

Some have argued that the phrase “the latter years” is a technical term directly referring to the 70th week of Daniel, which would be the period of the seven year Great Tribulation. As such it would apply only to Israel, and not to the church, which some maintain forces the fulfillment of this prophecy into that period. Others have understood it as a more general term, which would encompass any time near the end of the age, certainly including the Tribulation period, but possibly even the years leading up to that Tribulation. Ezekiel does not use this term anywhere else, so that offers little help to determine if he had a technical meaning in mind. Arguing from the context, there is nothing to force a technical meaning upon the phrase. A reader in Ezekiel’s day would not likely have applied such a technical meaning to the phrase, but would more likely have simply understand it to refer to a time in the distant future, near the end of the age.

Therefore, this does not seem to be a strong argument to place the war in the Tribulation period.

The other major challenge to this position is the matter of Israel's safety and security. This is not as much an exegetical question as it is a matter of interpretation of conditions in Israel today. Certainly, there have been challenges to Israel's existence since the very beginning. The Middle East is in the news all the time, with Israel right in the forefront. This leads to the perception that there is no safety or security in Israel today. Anybody who has tried to put together a tour group to Israel has had to deal with many questions about whether or not it's safe to go there, with constant reassurances that there is little to worry about. Americans routinely perceive Israel as a place with little safety or security. But the perception in Israel is quite different. Polls show Israelis feeling more secure than ever before. Life goes on as normal there: people walk in the parks, mothers push their babies in strollers down the street, shoppers enjoy looking for what they can buy in the new malls. In contrast to the days leading up to and during World War II, Jews no longer feel weak and defenseless. They have a state. They have defended it successfully numerous times, and won even in the face of overwhelming odds against them. Not only have they proven they can defend themselves, they have one of the most powerful and sophisticated militaries in the world. Terrorism has always been a threat, but for Israelis, this is more like annoying gnats, than it is a pack of wolves closing in to destroy them. Furthermore, since the erection of the security fence, the number of terrorist attacks in Israel has dropped dramatically. Israelis are very aware of the threats in the world against them, but they feel confident in their ability to meet those threats. The conditions given in the prophecy do not require a state of absolute peace. What is needed is a sense of security. It is obvious that whenever Ezekiel's war does take place, that ipso facto they will not have conditions of absolute peace. That will be a threat against them, just as there are threats today. But the sense of security, they have right

now. Furthermore, when the Tribulation begins, and billions around the world are dying as one catastrophe after another rocks the world, it will hardly be a time when anyone in the world will exactly feel “safe.” All things considered, this challenge to the view that the most likely time for Ezekiel’s war is before the Tribulation, fails to convince.

One more area to comment on briefly here is the tendency among those who hold to a pre-Tribulation rapture, as this student does, is to see that rapture as the very next thing. Therefore any other major prophecy we naturally assume has to come after the rapture. We rightfully are waiting for the rapture to come at any time, so that is what we expect . . . not another war. Not some other major fulfillment of prophecy. That leads to what this student has called “pre-trib blindness,” to which we must be cautious not to succumb. Just because nothing has to happen before the rapture does not mean that nothing will. Just because no prophecy has to be fulfilled first does not mean that no prophecy will.

The restoration of the nation and land of Israel is the clearest example of that truth. Granted, some are cautious to identify that as a true fulfillment of prophecy, but this student would argue, how much more proof do we need, that God has done just what he said he would do? Israel is once again a state, the Jews have been returning from the nations where they were dispersed, the once desolate land has been restored, the ruined cities have been rebuilt . . . and on and on we could go. Is this a fulfillment of prophecy? This student would say yes. The evidence seems overwhelming that God has made good on his word. Sure, there is more yet to come, and yes, things could change in ways we cannot foresee. But if what God foretold has come about precisely as he said, I would count that as at least a partially fulfilled prophecy. And it has come about before the rapture. Did it have to precede the rapture? No, but it did. The same could be true of Ezekiel’s war. Does it have to precede the rapture? No, but it could. And we need to be

cautious not to rule out that possibility, in our eagerness to see the rapture as the very next thing.

Current Events That May Indicate the Possible Soon Fulfillment of this Prophecy

What Are the Relevant Factors?

If an understanding of this prophecy leads to the theological conclusion that the war could take place before the Tribulation, or maybe even before the rapture, then it makes sense to keep our eyes and ears open for signs that it could be approaching. For those who place it during the Tribulation, or after the rapture, if there are indications in the world that the war may be approaching, there is even more reason to get excited, because if the war is close, that means the rapture is closer still. Either way, it's an exciting time to be alive as we see the world rapidly moving toward the climax of the ages. The convergence of so many factors, pointing to the approaching fulfillment of so many prophesied events, gives the believer great hope that "our redemption draweth nigh." The second coming of Christ, in majesty and glory, is rapidly approaching. And before that, is the blessed hope for which we wait, "the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). It could come at any moment. We do not know how much more history will transpire first. But when we see the stage being set, and everything being put into place, it gives a sense of anticipation that the curtain will soon rise, and the show will begin.

As we consider the approaching fulfillment of the Ezekiel 38–39 prophecy, what indicators are there in the world today that it could be coming soon? These have been discussed already, especially in chapters two and four of this work, so a short review of some of those factors here will suffice. This list will begin with many of the same factors mentioned above, under the factors to be considered for the timing of the invasion:

1. The Jews have returned to the land.
2. Israel has been restored as a nation.
3. The desolate land has been restored.
4. The mountains of Israel are under Israeli control.
5. They are no longer a land of walled villages.
6. The ancient ruins have been resettled.
7. Israelis enjoy a sense of security.
8. Israel is prospering economically.
9. Israel is in unbelief.
10. Israel is increasingly isolated in the world.
11. The current U.S. administration under President Obama is the least supportive of Israel ever.
12. Israel's strongest ally, the United States, is weary of war and struggling economically.
13. The alliances Ezekiel foretold all exist today, for the first time in history.
14. Russia has a long-standing animosity toward Israel, and is actively building alliances with the Islamic states identified in Ezekiel.
15. The leaders of Iran have declared their goal to annihilate Israel.
16. Iran is seeking nuclear weapons and the missiles to deliver them.
17. The former Soviet republics, the area of ancient Magog, are all Islamic states, heavily influenced by the radicals.
18. Turkey has turned from an ally of Israel to an enemy, and is turning increasingly toward radical Islam, and is seeking to gain favor with other Islamic states in the region.
19. Sudan has divided, with Northern Sudan, ancient Cush, closely allied with Iran and controlled by Islamic radicals.

20. Libya, ancient Put, is allied with Russia and Iran.
21. Radical Islam provides a unifying factor for the invading coalition, and a common motivation to destroy Israel.
22. Shiite Islamic eschatology, which heavily influences Iran, provides a clear rationale for attacking Israel.
23. Iraq and Egypt, ancient enemies of Israel but not listed in this coalition, have in recent years not directly threatened Israel.

Conclusions

While other factors could also be identified, current world events certainly look as though Ezekiel's prophesied war could be rapidly approaching. There is a very close alignment today between the current world situation and the scenario described by Ezekiel. If the war is indeed approaching, obviously things will continue to fall into place. One of the biggest, most recent evidences of that was the stunning turn of Turkey from an alliance with Israel to turning against her. This is exactly the kind of thing one would expect in the days approaching fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy. It would not be a big stretch of the imagination to see the fulfillment of that prophecy even in the next few years. While this student is certainly not predicting that, or setting any dates for the fulfillment of any prophecy, neither can it be ruled out. As believers, we are told to be alert and discerning of the days in which we live. We are also to be good students of all that God has told us ahead of time will take place. Putting those two together, it is wise to be alert to at least the possibility that we are approaching one of the greatest of all end times events about which God has told us. These are exciting days to be alive.

Implications for Ministry Practice

How Is This Relevant for All Who Study This Prophecy?

What impact should it make as we seek to serve the Lord effectively in this present age of world history? Head knowledge that is not translated into real life application is of little avail. In this, it is primarily pastors, teachers, professors, and ministry leaders who will have the knowledge and insight about the details of this prophecy. What impact should that information make on their ministry practices?

Following the hypothesis of this research, first it should directly influence our speaking, teaching, and writing related to this subject. For most of those studying this, God has called us to be communicators. We are to communicate the whole counsel of God. We need to be preparing people for what God has told us to expect. People are looking to us for answers, for direction, for insight, for comfort, for truth that they can apply in their lives. We need to give it to them.

And end times truth is foundational for people to understand. Even when the apostle Paul was in Thessalonica for only a few weeks, he taught them foundational truth about the things to come. He did not see eschatology as an area to be reserved only for those who had walked with the Lord for many years. These were baby Christians he was teaching. When he wrote to them in his letter, he referred back to the things he had taught them while he was there.

Especially for those believers who will be living near the end of the age, this is critically important information to have. The ignorance in the Christian church about this prophecy is not the fault of the people in the pews; it is the fault of the people in the pulpit. And if the people in the pulpit are ignorant, it is at least partially the fault of those who taught them. As leaders in the church of God, it is our responsibility to discern what is important, and get into the minds of our people. Certainly, this is only one thing among many that believers need to know, but it must not be overlooked.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to be speaking, preaching, teaching and writing about Ezekiel's prophesied war. Sooner or later, it is going to happen, and people will be asking all kinds of questions about it. If the church is still on earth at that time, will they even know much about it? What a tragedy if one of the greatest of all end times events takes place, and the church knows little to nothing about it. We would be without excuse. It has been in The Book for over 2600 years, time enough for us to figure it out and learn something about it. It is our job to help prepare people for the things to come. Just as we should tell them about the return of Christ and the rapture of the church, we should tell them about this.

Consider this point: for those who believe in a pre-Tribulation rapture, we are convinced that we will not even be on earth during the rise of the Antichrist, his covenant with Israel, his desecration of the temple, and his persecution of the Jews. We won't be on earth to witness the terrible judgments of God upon the world. We won't be here for Armageddon. We won't be living through the Tribulation period, counting the days until the return of Christ. Yet many of us have spent a lot of time teaching that to our people, even though we're convinced they won't be here for it. The average Christian knows at least something about many of those things to come. But what about the war of Gog and Magog? It ranks right up there as one of the biggest of all end times events, yet most Christians know nothing about it. Even more shocking is the realization that that's one of the only end times events which we may be here to witness. So why do we spend so much time teaching about things that they won't be here for, but ignore this one event that they could possibly see from start to finish? It doesn't make sense.

So for those whom God has called to leadership in his church, with important roles in speaking, preaching, teaching and writing for the building up of the church, we must not ignore this vital prophecy. God will hold us to account for our stewardship of all he has placed in our hands. To whom much is given, much is required. If you are one of

the few who ever read these words, this applies to you. You already know vastly more about all this than most of the Christian church ever will. What will you do with it? May God give you the grace and wisdom to use it and apply it for his glory.

For some, it is hoped that knowledge of these things will produce vision for new ministry, the second application in the hypothesis for this research. What might that look like? I do not know. It may be the creation of a new ministry to help educate people on these things. It may be plans for a new sermon series. It may be the foundation for a new class to teach these things in more detail. It may launch the writing of a book. Perhaps it will be the creation of a prophecy seminar. It might involve training in evangelism, to help prepare people to lead others to Christ if we are still on earth at the conclusion of this war. And if we're gone, it's not such a bad thing then either! It may involve outreach to Jews and Muslims in Israel and the Middle East, who will be most directly impacted when all these events take place. It may involve teaching this prophecy to Muslim and Jewish background believers in that part of the world. It may involve preparation that could be made for this actual war, in terms of how to help people in the aftermath. When the war comes, Israel will not escape unscathed. This coalition will actually invade the land, with all that that means for those who live there. The earthquake will impact the Israelis, as well as their enemies. God may give someone vision for how they can help prepare people for all this ahead of time. Knowing that a temple will one day soon be rebuilt in Jerusalem, and considering that this war could provide the catalyst for that, someone may have a vision of how to be used of God in connection with that. A powerful evangelism tool, especially if the war someday begins to look imminent, would be to tell people what God has said about it ahead of time. Then when people see those things come to pass, they will see the truth of God and his Word, and many will come to faith.

Finally, there is the whole matter of increased zeal for evangelism. We shouldn't really need this to be motivated, but it helps. As we look at all these things rapidly approaching for the world, how can we keep silent? We know so much about what lies ahead, how can we not tell people about it, and help them get their hearts prepared? And it's not just our personal ministry of evangelism; how can we help train others to be more effective in sharing the good news? Specifically in light of this prophecy, it certainly wouldn't hurt for people to know the details ahead of time. If they are still here when these things begin to come to pass, it will give them a marvelous opportunity to be heard, and gain people's attention. People will be asking questions like never before. "What does the Bible say about this?" "Well, a lot, actually! Let me tell you about it." And from there, we transition into the plan of salvation, and watch to see God bring about the results. Bible prophecy has always been greatly used of God to get people's attention, and bring them to faith in Christ. Untold millions have come to Christ in this way. Astoundingly, unbelievers in particular are very interested in learning what the Bible has to say about the things to come. And when big events happen in the world, many turn to the church for answers. Consider the impact of 9/11 on America, when in the Sundays following, many came to church who rarely did before. This prophesied event, when it happens, will grip the entire world. It will be a hammer blow to the world's economy. Every government in the world will sit bolt upright, trying to figure out how it will impact them and their people. God has told us that in the aftermath, the whole world will know that the Lord is God. Certainly, it will be an unprecedented opportunity for an incredible spiritual harvest. Will we be ready? In whatever way God has given us opportunity, let us work to be ready to bring as many as we can into the kingdom of God.

How Is This Relevant for This Student?

This project has no doubt impacted this student more than it will any other. It must be said, that in the course of working toward the D.Min. degree, the thing I looked

forward to the least was the dreaded dissertation. I hashed around several possible topics, none of which really grabbed my attention enough to be worthy of this level of effort. Around that time, a friend at church read Joel Rosenberg's book *Epicenter*, and recommended it to me. I read it, and for the first time, my eyes were really opened to the significance of this prophecy, about which I knew shamefully little previously. That prompted further study, which led in the end to this research project. For the last three years, this subject has been the focus of much of my attention. I have preached two sermon series on the subject at my church, Central Manor Church near Lancaster, PA, and seen the greatest response and highest level of interest of any sermon series I have given in 25 years of preaching. Meanwhile, I have continued to work on this project. Probably like all such projects, it's one of those where it seems you could always do something more. There's always one more book I could read, one more person I'd like to interview, one more thought to add to what I have written, one more detail to tweak. Yet amazingly, even though it has been almost three years since I decided on this topic, my interest has not flagged. In fact, the more I have read, the more people I have talked to, the more interested I have become. For a long time, my wife and children have known that if they poked me just right, I would bleed Ezekiel. And get me going, and you had better watch out, because there's no telling how long it would take until I wound down again. Much to my surprise, doing this research project and dissertation has been a very enjoyable process. For several extended periods of time, adding up to quite a few weeks, I have secluded myself in my camper or a cabin tucked away in the mountains of central Pennsylvania, working on this project: just me and the woods, the turkeys and the deer, my laptop and my books.

Though this project is drawing to a close, my interest is not. I expect to keep reading, studying, and talking to people about this prophecy. I plan to keep my eyes open to further developments in the world that may portend the approaching fulfillment of this

prophecy. And I'm curious to see what God does with it in the days ahead. First priority has been to finish this dissertation itself. That is almost done. What lies ahead?

I have never written a book before, but there has been a growing vision in my heart to translate what I have learned into a book. That could be a scholarly work read by a few, or a more popular work intended for the interested layman. I'm leaning towards the latter, with the desire to help the church of Jesus Christ become more familiar with this vital prophecy. Also, since I am a pastor and a preacher at heart, that is the most natural direction for me. I have been urged to work on that soon, while all this information is still fresh on my heart and mind. Usually with a laugh, I've also been admonished to get to it quickly, lest the actual event beat me to the punch.

I would also consider the opportunity to fine tune a series of messages on this subject, which I could present as a weekend prophecy seminar in other local churches. Having preached a series of messages through this subject twice, that would not require all that much preparation. I also have a bit of a connection with the Israel Bible College in Netanya, Israel, where Joel Rosenberg has spoken on this subject. If an opportunity arose to minister there in some way related to this topic, I would welcome it.

On a personal level, I have developed a friendship with a messianic Jew in Israel, whose father is a prominent rabbi in the Galilee. I have been able to spend some time with him, teaching him on this subject. I hope to have further opportunity to build upon that foundation.

Another area I have considered is approaching the local Lancaster Bible College, where I have some connections, about developing a course that would focus on this subject. Whether that would be a regular course as part of the school's offerings, or something designed and offered for lay people in the community, I do not know.

Certainly, I will preach on this subject again in the days ahead. Having done so twice in the last few years, I will wait a while before planning that again in the church

were I am pastor. But there could be opportunities in other churches, if I am able to be away from my own church on occasion.

In every setting where I have opportunity to speak, teach or write on this subject, I will want to include the plan of salvation and invite people to respond. As I've already noted, this subject generates a surprisingly high level of interest among people who do not yet know Christ. I don't want to miss any opportunity to help lead those people to Christ.

I also have a deep love for the land and people of Israel, and have enjoyed leading tour groups there, as well as studying there on my own. It's hard not to look out over the Jezreel Valley, for example, from a vantage point on Mount Carmel, and not turn to Ezekiel 36. There you can open the Scriptures and point out the ruined cities that have been rebuilt, the desolate land that has been brought to life, and the mountains of Israel which have been resettled, as the Jewish people have been drawn back to their ancient homeland. It has moved me to tears in the land, to see God's Word brought so vibrantly to life. This has also provided me with a platform to teach people something about the details of this prophecy. As I lead tours to Israel again in the future, I'm sure I will also teach when I can about this important subject.

Implications for Further Study

In the course of this research, there are a few areas where I could see the need for further study:

One would be to delve in more depth into the companion prophecy given in Ezekiel 36–37. As that prophecy is closely related to this one, it would be helpful to gain a deeper understanding there as well.

Another area that could be researched more is the meaning of the phrase “the latter years” in the context of Ezekiel. This would involve a broader study of the phrase as used elsewhere in the Old Testament, as well as in extra-biblical material.

Another unanswered question is about the nature of the weapons that will be used in the invasion, and burned over the following seven years. Do we have any more clues as to whether those will be modern or traditional weapons? Given that modern weapons are mostly metal, how would they be burned?

Another question comes from Ezekiel 38:2 and 39:1. In what sense is Gog prince of Meshech and Tubal? If Gog is a Russian leader, and Meshech and Tubal are in Turkey, what does that mean about the relationship between Russia and Turkey? Could Turkey somehow come more strongly under Russia's sphere of dominance, or even conquered and absorbed by Russia? If not, what does it mean when Gog is described as their prince?

Another area of possible study comes from the work of Bill Salus, where he proposes a war to precede the Gog-Magog war, based on evidence in Psalm 83. The two lists of nations involved are mutually exclusive. Could Psalm 83 indicate a preceding war, where the near nations are conquered by Israel? Could that explain why in Ezekiel 38 only the far nations are mentioned?

Yet one more area, more practical in its application is to investigate why the church is so unfamiliar with this prophecy. That might involve researching what Bible colleges and seminaries teach on this subject. It might also involve surveying churches and pastors to see how familiar they are with this subject, and if they have ever received any teaching on it.

As time goes on, there will likely be other areas that also present themselves for further research. If we've been working on this prophecy for 2600 years, it's not likely we'll definitively answer every question in the next few. That will only happen with finality when the event actually takes place—which it will, to be sure. As God has said, "It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign Lord. This is the day I have spoken of (Ezek 39:8)."

APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW REQUEST LETTER

Dear [Recipient],

I am writing you to see if you would grant me the privilege of interviewing you. I am a pastor near Lancaster, PA, working toward completion of a Doctor of Ministry degree from Dallas Theological Seminary. I have a great interest in the prophecy given in Ezekiel 38-39 regarding the war of Gog and Magog, and would like to gain your perspective on this. If you are willing to grant me this interview, it will become a key part of my doctoral research project entitled, "Selected Expert Perspectives on Ezekiel 38-39 Related to Current World Events with Resulting Influence on Ministry Practices." I am contacting you because you have devoted much work to the study of biblical eschatology and I believe your insights can help me greatly in this study.

What I would like to do is spend an hour or perhaps a little more with you to probe your thinking related to this prophecy. Specifically, I would like to find out:

- 1) Your understanding of current world events that may indicate the possible approaching fulfillment of this prophecy;
- 2) Your understanding of how this war fits in with other end times events; and...
- 3) How your thinking on this has impacted your current ministry, specifically in the areas of a) teaching, speaking and writing; b) vision for new ministry; and c) renewed urgency in presenting the gospel.

While ideally I would like to meet with you in person to do this, if that is not possible, it could be done over the telephone. I know your time is valuable so I will work within whatever time constraints you may have. I will try to reach you by phone in the next week or two to see if you are able to help me in this, and if so, to try to work out a time when it might work for both of us.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

In Him,

Stanley A. Maughan
Senior Pastor
Central Manor Church
387 Penn St.
Washington Boro, PA 17582

APPENDIX 2
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(These were given to interviewees prior to each interview.)

These questions are in conjunction with a doctoral research project through Dallas Theological Seminary.

Stan Maughan
Senior Pastor, Central Manor Church
387 Penn St.
Washington Boro, PA 17582
(717) 872-2772
stanmaughan@comcast.net

Note: One hour is scheduled for this interview, and yet we could probably spend an hour on any one of the questions below. While the questions are designed to be open-ended, it is not my desire to spend an excessive amount of time on any one question, with a goal of getting through at least each of the three main areas listed below. There are further questions at the end that we could discuss if we have time.

The first primary area I'd like to talk about is your understanding of current world events that *may* indicate the soon approaching fulfillment of this prophecy.

- Based on your familiarity with this prophecy, do you think it is possible that Ezekiel's war could be approaching soon?
- What are some factors in the world today that cause you to come to that conclusion?
- Could you comment on the alliances given in Ezekiel's prophecy and any correlation with current alliances existing or being built in the world today?
- Do you see any indicators that modern day Russia would engage in such a war against Israel?
- Do you see any alignment between current events in Iran and the details of this prophecy?
- How do you see Iran's nuclear ambitions playing into this scenario?

- While Islam is not mentioned specifically in Ezekiel's prophecy, the coalition coming against Israel in Ezekiel 38-39 is almost completely Islamic. Can you comment on how current Islamic thought may contribute to the fulfillment of this prophecy?
- Radical Islamic eschatology parallels biblical prophecy in many ways. Are you aware of any ways in which Islamic eschatology may contribute to the fulfillment of this prophecy?

The second primary area I'd like to discuss is your understanding of how this war fits in with other end times events.

- Let's start with the broad question first. What are your thoughts as to where this war fits in on the prophetic timeline at the end of the age?
- What specific factors influence your thinking regarding the timing of this war?
- Ezekiel describes Israel as living in security at the time of this war. Could that describe conditions in Israel at present, or will that condition not be fulfilled until Antichrist's covenant with Israel is established?
- Are there any interpretive factors in your mind which force the fulfillment of this prophecy into the tribulation period?
- Does the doctrine of imminence influence your thinking about the possible timing of this war?
- How do the seven months of burial and the seven years of burning impact your thinking about the timing of this war?

The final primary area I'd like to learn about is how your thinking on this has impacted your current ministry, specifically in the areas of: a) teaching, speaking and writing; b) vision for new ministry; and c) renewed urgency in presenting the gospel.

- Let's start with the first area. How have your views regarding this war impacted your ministry in the area of speaking, teaching, and writing?

- What about vision for new ministry? As a result of your thinking about this war, or the proximity of other end times events, have you begun or considered any new areas of ministry?
- Finally, how has your thinking about this coming war and the end of the age impacted your ministry in the area of evangelism?

Deeper questions about the timing of the war, if there is time:

- What is your understanding of the phrase “the latter years” in Ezekiel 38:8? Is that a specific reference to the tribulation period, or could it include the period leading up to the tribulation?
- Many Bible scholars put the war someplace in the first half of the tribulation. If that is true, how do we account for the invasion taking place while the Antichrist is still honoring his covenant with Israel, with the land presumably under his protection?
- What about the statement in 38:20 that the earthquake will cause “every wall to fall” in the land? Is it fair to assume that would destroy whatever building is standing on the Temple Mount, either the Dome of the Rock or the Temple? If so, how does that correlate with your understanding of the timing of the war, since we know the Temple will be standing at the mid-point of the tribulation?
- If the invasion takes place during the first half of the tribulation, or near the middle, how do we account for the seven months of burial and the seven years of burning, since Jews will be fleeing out of the land during the second half of the tribulation?
- In the finale of this war, God will supernaturally deliver the Jews and destroy her enemies, which all the world will be forced to acknowledge. If that occurs near the end of the first half of the tribulation, does it make sense that the Antichrist

- would immediately launch another severe persecution of the Jews? Wouldn't it seem more understandable if some years elapsed between those two events?
- It seems this war will greatly diminish the influence of Islam, at least for a season, if not permanently. What implications do you think there could be from that? How might that tie in with other end times events?
 - Ezekiel 39:28 indicates that God will use this war to stimulate the final return of Jews to the land of Israel. How does that fit in with your understanding of when this war will likely take place?
 - Do you see any ways in which the movement toward the construction of the third Jewish Temple ties in with this prophecy?
 - Are there any other insights related to this war that we've not discussed that you would like to share with me?

APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS NUMBERING

The interview questions are numbered as below, with coordinating numbers used in the interview transcriptions. The purpose for this is to aid in correlating the responses of the interviewees to the various questions. In the interview transcriptions, only the questions listed below are given identifying numbers. Follow-up or unrelated questions, for example, do not have the identifying numbers. Depending on time constraints, not every question below was asked in every interview. In other cases, an interviewee would essentially answer a question before it was asked. In such cases, an identifying number might be inserted in the interviewee's response even if the question was not directly asked. Also, each interview is divided into three primary sections, as identified below. These sections are also identified in the transcription of each interview. A fourth section is included in some interviews, which indicates optional questions, deeper questions about the timing of the war, or other comments not directly related to the primary interview questions.

[Section 1] The first primary area I'd like to talk about is your understanding of current world events that *may* indicate the soon approaching fulfillment of this prophecy.

[Q1] Based on your familiarity with this prophecy, do you think it is possible that Ezekiel's war could be approaching soon?

[Q2] What are some factors in the world today that cause you to come to that conclusion?

[Q3] Could you comment on the alliances given in Ezekiel's prophecy and any correlation with current alliances existing or being built in the world today?

- [Q4] Do you see any indicators that modern day Russia would engage in such a war against Israel?
- [Q5] Do you see any alignment between current events in Iran and the details of this prophecy?
- [Q6] How do you see Iran's nuclear ambitions playing into this scenario?
- [Q7] While Islam is not mentioned specifically in Ezekiel's prophecy, the coalition coming against Israel in Ezekiel 38-39 is almost completely Islamic. Can you comment on how current Islamic thought may contribute to the fulfillment of this prophecy?
- [Q8] Radical Islamic eschatology parallels biblical prophecy in many ways. Are you aware of any ways in which Islamic eschatology may contribute to the fulfillment of this prophecy?

[Section 2] The second primary area I'd like to discuss is your understanding of how this war fits in with other end times events.

- [Q9] Let's start with the broad question first. What are your thoughts as to where this war fits in on the prophetic timeline at the end of the age?
- [Q10] What specific factors influence your thinking regarding the timing of this war?
- [Q11] Ezekiel describes Israel as living in security at the time of this war. Could that describe conditions in Israel at present, or will that condition not be fulfilled until Antichrist's covenant with Israel is established?
- [Q12] Are there any interpretive factors in your mind which force the fulfillment of this prophecy into the tribulation period?
- [Q13] Does the doctrine of imminence influence your thinking about the possible timing of this war?
- [Q14] How do the seven months of burial and the seven years of burning impact your thinking about the timing of this war?

[Section 3] The final primary area I'd like to learn about is how your thinking on this has impacted your current ministry, specifically in the areas of: a) teaching, speaking and writing; b) vision for new ministry; and c) renewed urgency in presenting the gospel.

[Q15] Let's start with the first area. How have your views regarding this war impacted your ministry in the area of speaking, teaching, and writing?

[Q16] What about vision for new ministry? As a result of your thinking about this war, or the proximity of other end times events, have you begun or considered any new areas of ministry?

[Q17] Finally, how has your thinking about this coming war and the end of the age impacted your ministry in the area of evangelism?

[Section 4] Deeper questions about the timing of the war, if there is time:

[Note: This section 4 is actually an optional continuation of section 2 above, but pulled out separately to insure sufficient time in the interviews to get to all three sections above.]

[Q18] What is your understanding of the phrase "the latter years" in Ezekiel 38:8? Is that a specific reference to the tribulation period, or could it include the period leading up to the tribulation?

[Q19] Many Bible scholars put the war someplace in the first half of the tribulation. If that is true, how do we account for the invasion taking place while the Antichrist is still honoring his covenant with Israel, with the land presumably under his protection?

[Q20] What about the statement in 38:20 that the earthquake will cause "every wall to fall" in the land? Is it fair to assume that would destroy whatever building is standing on the Temple Mount, either the Dome of the Rock or the Temple? If so, how does that correlate with your understanding of the timing of the war, since we know the Temple will be standing at the mid-point of the tribulation?

- [Q21] If the invasion takes place during the first half of the tribulation, or near the middle, how do we account for the seven months of burial and the seven years of burning, since Jews will be fleeing out of the land during the second half of the tribulation?
- [Q22] In the finale of this war, God will supernaturally deliver the Jews and destroy her enemies, which all the world will be forced to acknowledge. If that occurs near the end of the first half of the tribulation, does it make sense that the Antichrist would immediately launch another severe persecution of the Jews? Wouldn't it seem more understandable if some years elapsed between those two events?
- [Q23] It seems this war will greatly diminish the influence of Islam, at least for a season, if not permanently. What implications do you think there could be from that? How might that tie in with other end times events?
- [Q24] Ezekiel 39:28 indicates that God will use this war to stimulate the final return of Jews to the land of Israel. How does that fit in with your understanding of when this war will likely take place?
- [Q25] Do you see any ways in which the movement toward the construction of the third Jewish Temple ties in with this prophecy?
- [Q26] Are there any other insights related to this war that we've not discussed that you would like to share with me?

APPENDIX 4

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS

Introduction

On the following pages are transcriptions of each of the interviews conducted as part of this project. These are included in order to preserve the raw data from which this dissertation is written. This student also believes that these interviews in and of themselves would be valuable to others studying these subjects. The personality of the interviewees also comes across more clearly in the interviews than can be included in the discussion of the results. Taking each as a single unit, it is also easier to follow the flow of thought of each interviewee.

When transcribing the interviews, it became clear that in the course of normal conversation, most people do not speak nearly as precisely as they would write. Incomplete sentences, thoughts started but not completed, changing directions mid-sentence, long run-on sentences, and much more are all part of the normal conversation of most of us. So when transcribing an actual conversation into print, if written precisely as spoken, it does not usually look as good as we normally expect of written communications. It is also not always clear how to punctuate a transcription, or break sentences apart. In the process of making these transcriptions from the recordings, the student has sometimes used a little careful license in order to make the written result a little more acceptable. Though every effort has been made to accurately preserve the thought of the speaker, in some cases it may not be written precisely, word for word as it was spoken. However, there are many other cases where what is written accurately reflects what was actually said, and as such may not present a complete sentence, proper

grammatical form, or a thought that makes complete sense by itself. There are also times when the speaker might drop his voice or something, making it difficult to accurately discern from the audio recording exactly what was said. Sometimes the transcription presents a best guess at what was said, but it is possible that in the process errors may have inadvertently been introduced. It is hoped that none of those change the thought or intent of the speakers, but if that has happened it is completely unintentional. In a few cases where occasional words could not be deciphered from the recordings, they are either left out from the transcription, or indicated as an ellipsis.

Also deleted from most of the transcriptions are the greetings, small talk, and introductions to the interview, as well as some of the concluding remarks. Where relevant to the flow of thought of the conversation, however, some have been retained.

Also, in the ebb and flow of each interview, the interview questions may not have always been presented in the exact same format. Most of those changes are probably inconsequential, and just a matter of wording the same question somewhat differently. As such they may or may not be reflected in the actual transcriptions.

The section headings and question numbers were inserted after the fact as an aid to working with the information recorded from the interviews. Please see the explanation of the numbering which precedes the transcriptions in this appendix. Each comment or question from this student is identified with an introductory Q: whether or not it was an actual question.

Charlie Dyer Interview

September 13, 2011 (by telephone)

[Section 1]

Q: [Q1] Based on your familiarity with this prophecy, do you think it is possible that Ezekiel's war could be approaching soon?

Charlie Dyer: I do. I don't know how much detail you want but my short answer would be yes I do.

Q: [Q2] What are some factors in the world today that cause you to come to that conclusion?

Charlie Dyer: Comparing it with the passage itself, You see Russia's rising influence, especially in the Middle East. I see Turkey's rising antagonism to Israel that ten years ago seemed impossible. Iran's hatred of Israel and her efforts to do everything to sponsor that terrorism to destroy the nation Israel and even the changes in Libya, and Sudan, that have taken place in the last 12 months. The direction there isn't clear. The reason I pick all those nations is those nations occupy the lands that Ezekiel describes in that passage.

Q: [Q3] Could you comment on the alliances given in Ezekiel's prophecy and any correlation with current alliances existing or being built in the world today?

Charlie Dyer: The leader obviously is Gog from the northern coalition. I didn't take the old view that Rosh was Russia, Meshech was Moscow. My approach is they were real countries in Ezekiel's day, they were real countries in Moses' day in Genesis. Put them on a map and wherever that place is, that is what is going to attack. The southern part of Russia is included within what Ezekiel describes, and then Turkey, Iran, Sudan and Libya are the near attacking nations around Israel, the nations one tier removed from these far, north, east, south and west nations and what I find interesting is you find all these coalitions. Turkey is building a coalition with Iran, Turkey is connecting with Russia, Russia is really building a close relationship with Iran, Libya and Sudan are connected to Iran and Islamic fundamentalists. You have some interrelationships that are far more advanced than some people even think.

Q: Even watching the news, even today, with moves in Turkey, seemingly doing everything they can to endear themselves with that radical Islamic part of the world. Even a year or two ago we weren't there.

Charlie Dyer: That is right. In fact in Turkey the secular military always held the Islamic tendencies in check, and in the last year with the rest of military people and some of the moves by Erdogan, the military is no longer holding the Islamic leanings of the government in check and it just keeps moving with a greater rapidity toward that Islamic fundamentalism.

Q: [Q4] Russia, some would say, has been rather quiet since the fall of the Soviet Union, that is debatable, but what indicators do you see that modern day Russia would possibly engage in such a war against Israel?

Charlie Dyer: There are some things that make it look like it wouldn't happen, a million of the Israelis are from Russia, Israel has some real strong contacts with Russia. However, what I think for Putin and his successor, the building up of Russia has been to make Russia a great world power. They have to get the West where it hurts. Western Europe and the US are so superior. Russia is a third world country economically, except for its energy needs. But what I see Russia doing is Russia has aligned itself very carefully with Iran, starting with Turkey, Syria, Libya. It is selling them weapons and it is aligning with the energy needs there and if Russia can pull those countries into their orbit and squeeze off the supply of oil or natural gas to the west, that would bring western Europe and the US to their knees. I see Russia's grand design being no longer trying to push toward the west, the old NATO Warsaw Pact days, Russia is trying to push south because the oil reserves that the west needs are there. Why would Russia engage in war with Israel? Only in the sense that Israel represents the enemy to all these Arab countries and if Russia could engage them and be their champion in a war with Israel, it could help accomplish Russia's designs ultimately against the west and against the United States.

Q: So it is not so much Israel itself, it is what it would do with the Islamic countries in that region.

Charlie Dyer: That is right. I think Russia doesn't see – when it talks about coming for the wealth in Ezekiel 38 and 39, the plunder, it is not just that Israel has plunder, they have the oil and natural gas and they have other things, but part of the plunder they get through it all is the control of all the oil reserves in that region, and just controlling that helps Russia accomplish its militaristic ends.

Q: It was interesting when I first learned, back during the Lebanon War, when Israel discovered this gigantic cache of Russian weaponry buried in caves underground, that was far exceeding anything required in the conflict currently, which a lot of people supposed is their staging for an invasion that would have included Israel. So it seems like their intentions have been towards an invasion for a long time.

Charlie Dyer: Yes, and nobody has paid any attention to it.

Q: [Q5] One of the big players in the region obviously is Iran. As I read the Ezekiel prophecy they are first on the list after Gog as far as a key player in this alliance. Do you see any alignment between current events in Iran and the details of this prophecy?

Charlie Dyer: Yes, I do and Iran is, from the time the Shah was thrown out, so we are back into Jimmy Carter's presidency, they have been committed to Israel's destruction, they are the active supporters of Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas, and I really do believe they have been trying to get nuclear weapons with Russia's help, that they would like to use

against Israel. You read the prophecy and it suddenly mentions Persia as one of the allies seeking to destroy Israel, it makes perfect sense. That aligns with their national policy.

Q: [Q6] How do you see Iran's nuclear ambitions playing into this scenario?

Charlie Dyer: Yes, but not in the way most people would think. I think right now Iran is trying to develop nuclear weapons and Ahmadinejad, if he had nuclear weapons, would not hesitate to use them. His thought being, okay, Israel will retaliate and 30 million Muslims may die, but if I can knock off five million Jews between Tel Aviv-Haifa, in that one corridor where so many of them live, and bring about their ultimate destruction, that is no problem, because he believes in the resurrection. He believes there is a future, so in his mind destroying Israel, if it destroys Iran in the process, it is a small price to pay to bring about what God has said he believes is going to be for the future. Here is my twist – I don't think that is ever going to happen. I don't think he is ever going to get the nuclear weapons, or won't be able to use them, his nuclear weapons, against Israel. He is part of a coalition, he does not act alone. It is a ground attack against Israel in Ezekiel, not a nuclear attack. So the question is, does the event happen before he gets nuclear weapons, or does Israel something to stop that progress toward nuclear weapons? Which if Israel would ever bomb Iran and set their program back, it would just give Iran more hatred and animosity, and they would join any group they could to wipe out Israel.

Q: That is interesting. That is very much along the lines of my own thinking. I agree with you. I don't see nuclear weapons in use in Ezekiel 38 and 39. But Netanyahu is probably the clearest thinker in the world as far as a national leader realizing the danger in Iran. They are really between a rock and hard place. But I have just been expecting that sooner or later they will have to take some kind of action against Iran, and I think that will just infuriate the whole Islamic world, and could even precipitate this war. What do you think about a scenario like that?

Charlie Dyer: I agree. Just in the last few days Dick Cheney, during an interview for his new book, his quote was "Israel will not allow Iran to get nuclear weapons." He expects if the world can't stop Iran, then Israel will go it alone and launch a strike. If they ever do that, Iran will join any group from that point on, if it can join a group that will destroy Israel.

Q: I don't hold a whole lot of hope that the United States or the UN or anybody else is really going to deal with Iran. It seems like they are going their merry way and thumbing their nose at anybody who even talks about stopping them.

Charlie Dyer: We are really showing our impotence right now in the world.

Q: [Q7] While Islam is not mentioned specifically in Ezekiel's prophecy, the coalition coming against Israel in Ezekiel 38-39 is almost completely Islamic, even southern Russia. Can you comment on how current Islamic thought may contribute to the fulfillment of this prophecy?

Charlie Dyer: If Russia there means just the southern part, you are right, it is all Islamic. If it includes the current leadership of Russia or the secular atheistic part of Russia, I could see Russia using Islam as the unifying factor to get these other countries in, even if they are not Islamic. I do think Islam plays that role. To answer your question though, I think you see the Islamic teaching on Judaism: Jews are cursed of God, they are two steps removed from the current true people of God, the followers of Islam. They are going to be wiped out, they are called the people of the Book. There are also statements in the Koran to destroy them wherever you find them. The Islamic principle of abrogation, that later statements made by Mohammed abrogate some of the earlier ones. It was the later statements that talk about destruction of the Jews, so their true philosophy right now is that in the end times God is going to wipe out the Jews, and they are going to be part of that. I think their eschatology leads to that final conflagration, the final destruction, the final triumph of Islam. And again, the Shiites and Sunnis split. They don't have exactly the same theology, but even within the Shiite theology, which is what governs Iran, they see that that final battle coming as a necessary part of God's ultimate control of the world. I just think that they will align themselves, thinking that they are actually accomplishing God's will in the invasion of Israel.

Q: [Q8] Can we talk a little bit more about Shiite eschatology, and their views of how they can hasten the coming of the Mahdi or the Twelfth Imam? Do you see how that could tie in with the fulfillment of this prophecy?

Charlie Dyer: Their eschatology parallels Christianity in the sense it is a triumphant eschatology. They see a conflict where God wins in the end. Most Shiites have been somewhat passive, and in this case they also parallel Christians. We see the end coming but it is not like we can start the battle of Armageddon, or we can start the end times. God is going to do it in his timing. Most Shiites through history have said the Twelfth Imam is going to come out of seclusion, there is going to be this final battle and God will do it in his time. I think what we have seen recently, and especially Ahmadinejad and some of his group, they believe that it is imminent, that God has put them in this place and that God's expectation is that they will get the bout. That is a little different than what has been the thread running through Shiite Islam in the past. Their eschatology, they are looking for that worldwide conflagration, they are looking for Jesus to come back with Mohammed, they are going to look for that battle against the Jews, the triumphant battle that is going to bring Islam to the fore over all the world, ultimately then the return, the resurrection and then the final state. It shouldn't surprise us. I don't think that Mohammed and what he ended up teaching has some elements of Christianity and our eschatology for two reasons. One, if he had studied some Christianity and some Judaism and kind of adulterated it, there is a mixture of them in there. I think Satan used that because the Satanic counterfeit, counterfeit 20, if it had a picture of Alfred Newman on it you would less be likely to make it work. You try to make a counterfeit look as much like the real thing as possible. I think even the Islamic eschatology counterfeit though it is, has some elements that really parallel what we understand the future holds.

[Section 2]

Q: **[Q9]** What are your thoughts as to where this war fits in on the prophetic timeline at the end of the age?

Charlie Dyer: In the broadest sense, if I read Ezekiel 38 and 39, **[Q10]** it takes place in a time of peace, Israel is a land of unwalled villages, they feel like they are finally secure in their land and they have been brought back from the nations. So it is a time of regathering when Israel feels safe. From the day Ezekiel wrote it until today, that has not been true, certainly from 1948 until today, they have been surrounded by nations committed to their destruction, terrorism and everything else. So it has not been true until today. The other thing that kind of sets the other side of the line for me, I think it is a time when Israel doesn't know God, because the result of the battle is that from that day on they are going to know him. At the end of 39, "I will no longer hide my face from them, I will pour out my Spirit on them," so it occurs before Israel starts seeing that outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the nation, before they know God. With those two delimiters on it, if you will, to me it has to take place sometime in the first half of the tribulation period, because there they are certainly not at peace the second half, and the first half the national repentance revival hasn't fully taken hold yet.

Q: **[Q11]** Let me ask you a little about that security. Actually, I am not sure if they use the word peace in there so much as it is a time of security, and so I guess you are saying that you don't think that will be fulfilled until the Antichrist establishes his covenant with Israel? That it would not or could not describe situations in Israel at present.

Charlie Dyer: I have no problem with security versus peace. That would be synonymous for me. A time when Israel feels that they don't have to prepare for war. Could the battle happen before the rapture? I have got to say it could, because it doesn't say it doesn't. **[Q12]** Here's my theological problem with it happening beforehand. I don't want to move out of Ezekiel to Daniel, but in Daniel 9 the 70 weeks, the one prophecy that gives the time elements for Israel – for your people your holy city are the reference points, and it starts and goes all the way up to Messiah. It stops and then I believe the church age begins. But theologically God is going to finish with the church age before he picks up his program for Israel again, so I end up saying the whole seven year period remaining is for Israel. When I look at Ezekiel this prophecy is so much connected with Israel and bringing them back into that relationship with God, it just feels to me like it has to be part of that time God is dealing with them, which is that last seven year period. I wouldn't start a new church over it but it looks to me like it is that seven year time when God is dealing with Israel as a nation that this happens.

Q: Let me play devil's advocate with you. In 1948, that dealt pretty majorly with Israel, but it is still during the church age.

Charlie Dyer: Here is my answer, and it is trying to be consistent. If somebody said to me, "Do you think Israel might be a fulfillment of prophecy?" My answer is no. If Israel were defeated and kicked out of the land it wouldn't impact my eschatology. I think God

can be setting the stage, because I know in Daniel the final seven years has to begin when the Antichrist makes a covenant with the many, which could go beyond Israel, but has to include Israel I think. So there has to be an Israel to make that covenant. So God is setting the stage, but we won't know that Israel being in the land is the eschatological Israel in the land until that covenant is made.

Q: [Q12] [Q18] Are there any interpretive factors in your mind which force the fulfillment of this prophecy into the tribulation period? I am thinking specifically of the phrase, "the latter years." Dr. Walvoord and others said that is a specific reference to the tribulation period. So my question is, do you see that phrase forcing it into the tribulation period, or could that phrase include the period leading up to the tribulation?

Charlie Dyer: What I would love to do is to be able to say that demands tribulation, because that would strengthen my position. But in reality, if I remember right, that is the only time that phrase is used, certainly in Ezekiel, but I think even in the Old Testament. I can't remember any other time when that phrase is used in an eschatological sense. So since that is the case, the most I can say is that to me, in Ezekiel's context, it has to refer to the kind of events he begins describing in 38 that go through 48, events related to the final gathering, the temple, the pouring out of the Spirit, the new covenant, the division of the land among the people and all the fulfillment of those prophecies, the latter days he is looking at. But he doesn't get more specific than that. So I can't say it is only the seven year period. That would be my best guess. But again, if you push me to the wall on it, I can't say that is what it has to refer to.

Q: [Q13] Does the doctrine of imminence influence your thinking about the possible timing of this war?

Charlie Dyer: Taking that to mean that Christ could come back for his church at any time, and that's the next event on God's calendar, at least as Paul described it, the dead in Christ will rise and we who are alive. Paul was expecting it in his day. Even in 2 Thessalonians, Paul doesn't, it's an argument from silence, doesn't deal with the Ezekiel passage. He talks about the Antichrist coming, going into the temple and the other events that are going to happen. So what I have to say is, I don't see the doctrine of imminence directly impinging on this war, except for my broader understanding that the final seven years are all related to Israel. If this is one of those major events in Israel's turning point to God, it probably takes place in that seven years, and the rapture happens before that seven year period. I guess I am backing my way into it in that sense.

Q: As I have studied this, one thing is clear is that it's hard to be really dogmatic, saying it absolutely has to be here or there. There are so many views on this passage, I think it is wise to be a little cautious in our positions.

Q: [Q14] Do the seven months of burial and the seven years of burning impact your thinking about the timing of this war?

Charlie Dyer: The middle of the tribulation is when the time of trouble starts for Israel. [Q21] This battle has to occur at least seven months before that to allow for the burial, because if you are running, you are not going to be burying and looking for bodies the way Israel does today with that. In terms of how much ahead, I tend to view it very early in the tribulation period so I have about seven years there. If seven is a round number like three days in the grave, I can see the burial taking place, because even in the second half of the tribulation if Israel is fleeing, then they are still going to have to be gathering wood, making fires both for warmth and for cooking, even on the run. If they can find things they can use to help them, they would. I don't have a problem with burning the weapons extending on into the tribulation period. If it is too close to the middle of the tribulation then you have that happening going into the millennial kingdom. Why would you be doing that in the millennium? My answer is I don't know. So with all that said, I kind of have a bracket, if you will, the years of burning tells me that it is probably close to the beginning of that seven year period. Maybe that is what he is trying to picture, is that whole period is going to be both in the good times and the bad times to follow. God is going to be providing for their material needs through these spoils of war. The seven months tells me it can't occur right at the middle point of the tribulation because beginning then they are going to be Jews that flee, they don't even go back to get a coat. That tells me they are not going to be stopping to bury bodies.

[Section 3]

Q: [Q15] How have your views regarding this war and end times view in general impacted your ministry in the area of speaking, teaching, and writing?

Charlie Dyer: In terms of speaking, I am going out this coming weekend to Tampa and I am speaking on eschatology and the rapture. I told them I have to come up with a way to jazz up because that usually makes people's eyes glaze over, but I think here we are getting closer to the end times. We can see parallels, more ways that the Bible says fits literally, and yet the church is more tone deaf, and almost blind to eschatology, than at any point in its history. Go back to why did God give eschatology. There are practical reasons, and to the extent the church hasn't focused on them, the church has become a mile wide and an inch deep, losing its impact on the world. The teaching side, my focus has been the prophets, especially. My goal is to get people realizing that they need to be preaching that part of the Bible, that is usually very clean pages on the edge of their Bibles, because it has very practical material in Daniel and Revelation. Those areas that are just being ignored need to be taught more and I want to do that. For writing, everything from the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, where it was Jeremiah and Ezekiel that I wrote, *The Rise of Babylon*, and *World News and Bible Prophecy*, where I actually dealt with Ezekiel 38 and 39 and what's next. I am kind of working a book now, the *24 Greatest Prophecies in the Bible* and why they matter to us. That one is going to be a little longer getting done. All that to say, those are areas I want to devote my time to because I think it is an area that is important and an area that we have neglected for a long time.

Q: My heart is with you on that. It just amazes me that if we are as close to the end as I think we are, that this isn't the focus of, maybe not the focus, but major on every Christian's radar screen. It just boggles my mind to think that a lot of people just aren't really in tune with that at all. It is surprising to me. I have read most of your books on this subject by the way, I appreciate all your work.

Q: [Q16] What about vision for new ministry? As a result of your thinking about this war, or the proximity of other end times events, have you begun or considered any new areas of ministry?

Charlie Dyer: Actually my best answer is, that is the reason I am not in academic administration. After 30 years, I was at the point where I could coast to the end just doing the academic administrative side. It comes easy to me, I enjoy it, but I look at it and say, "But if the end is getting closer who cares what the faculty/student ratio is?" And so it was a bit of a risk but I made a proposal to the president at Moody and said, we need to be doing more, focusing on Israel and Bible prophecy, and I would like to do that. I would like to step away from this job and start a radio show for Moody called *The Land and the Book*. So the whole program really is flowing out of this. What we are focusing on is why people need to hear the gospel, why we need to be sharing with the Jews and the Muslims, and why Israel is important to what God says the future is for that part of the world.

Q: I have not had a chance to listen to the radio program. Is it on the internet also?

Charlie Dyer: Yes it is, if you type in www.thelandandthebook.org . We have podcasts so if you get on there you will find all the stuff we are doing.

Q: [Q17] Finally, how has your thinking about this coming war and the end of the age impacted your ministry in the area of evangelism?

Charlie Dyer: Again, since you read my books you know that it started with the *Rise of Babylon* with Tyndale. They did not want the plan of salvation in there. They thought that would limit sales of the book, and I told them if it wasn't in there, I wasn't going to do the book with them. That starts with the most eschatological book in the Bible, Revelation. Revelation ends with a call to salvation. The Spirit and the bride say "Come!" And let him who hears say "Come!" Come take the free gift of the water of life. One of the dominant purposes for prophecy was to attract unbelievers and to share with them what is going to happen and call them to faith. If we don't do that we will be misusing eschatology, so from the very first book I did and I think every other book I have done on prophecy since then, we have put the plan of salvation in it. On the radio program, I do devotionals and with great frequency the devotionals end up calling people to faith in Christ. We also have a segment on the program every week on how to share your faith with a Jew or a Muslim, because we are dealing with the Middle Eastern context. The goal is, people need to know not only that they need to share their faith, but how to do it in a way that makes an impact.

Q: I have been amazed in my own preaching ministry here at my church when I preach on end times topics that draws unbelievers in better than anything else I ever touch on. They are just fascinated by it.

Charlie Dyer: I tell people just look at a secular thing. Nostradamus, how many shows appear for him on the television. Horoscopes, astrologers, all these things which we know are false and yet they are incredibly popular because people want to know what the future holds. They are scared. They don't know what is around the corner. It is important that they ought to know so you come along and say the Bible tells us what is there. It attracts them in, and that is one of the reasons God gave just enough about the future that people could recognize it and hear it and say yeah, it's from God. My future is wrapped up in it.

Q: I love preaching on it. It is such a fun topic. I did an extended series a few years ago using Pentecost's title, "Things to Come" and it was by far the most well received sermon series I have ever given in my whole ministry career. It surprised me how much. People were begging me to do some more again so I am doing some more again this fall.

[Section 4]

Q: [Q19] If the war is in the first half of the tribulation, when Antichrist has this covenant of protection with Israel, how does that work if Antichrist is protecting Israel and yet this big invasion comes against Israel?

Charlie Dyer: Actually we know the Antichrist, their faith is to his ministry, and when he appears to be assassinated, and rise from the dead, claims to be god, we are in the middle of the tribulation and it is the last half, the final 3½ years, when he just seems to be unstoppable. The first half he comes as a man of peace, a man of protection and Israel buys into it initially. So Israel is making some kind of agreement at the beginning of the period. By the middle of the period, they reject him, they refuse to acknowledge him, in fact actively oppose him even though it seems suicidal from the world's perspective. My question is, what is it that would make Israel have that radical a change? Obviously the rest of the world is not going to feel that way, they are going to ultimately follow and worship this king and God. I wonder if this battle isn't it. Israel put their trust in the Antichrist, they become this place of unwalled villages, of lax security and can be taken by surprise and from a human perspective ought to be wiped out. Except God intervenes in such a dramatic way, Israel suddenly realizes, wait a minute we were trusting him for our security. He is not god, God in heaven is the security, and that becomes their revival element. I think you start seeing that national revival so that by the middle of the tribulation they are finally saying, we are not going to follow you.

Q: That is a good answer. Let me see if can rephrase it, so that I understood it properly. Israel had put their trust in the Antichrist but basically he failed them and allowed this war so then by the mid point they turn against him. Is that what you are saying?

Charlie Dyer: Yes.

Q: [Q20] What about the statement in 38:20 that the earthquake will cause “every wall to fall” in the land? I have pondered that statement a lot in terms of what that would do to whatever building is standing on the Temple Mount at that point in time. If it was the Dome of the Rock it seems like it would knock it down, and if it was the Temple it seems like it would knock it down. But I know the Temple is standing at the mid-point of the tribulation because the Antichrist goes in and desecrates it. So one scenario is, if the battle is before the tribulation, it would clear the way for the building of the Temple. If it was during the tribulation I guess you would have to have the Temple rebuilt to the point where the Antichrist could go in and desecrate it. Any thoughts about that? Am I reading too much into that phrase?

Charlie Dyer: What I would say, and the best thing to do is do a search on “every” or “all,” the Hebrew word. I take it in a relative sense and my illustration would be again, I believe the battle is in the first half of the tribulation. I believe there is a temple being built then. I can’t push the exact timing there. But every wall is going to fall, I take it meaning massive destruction, but not every single wall. You might say wait a minute, aren’t you a literalist. I am, but literal means taking words in a normal sense and context, and as I have gone through Ezekiel in the past, like he says back in 5 through 8, the part where he’s commenting on their idolatry, he said they are worshiping on every high hill and under every green tree. I don’t think every tree had an altar under it, billions of trees in Israel. The idea was it is extensive. Even in 38 every man’s sword against his brother. I think what he is picturing is these armies are going to start fighting one another. So the Turks don’t know Persian, they try to get the Persians fighting against the Sudanese, the Sudanese are fighting the Libyans but I don’t think it is every single person fighting every single person, its not like I’m turning and fighting my own squad. But what he is picturing is kind of like seeing friendly fire going on all over the place. He comes up to every bird and every beast in the field to come and eat the carcasses that are left. I don’t think you are going to see every single bird of the world descend on Israel at that one moment. I see a number of times in Ezekiel he uses that word, he doesn’t mean every single one but he is trying to picture an all-encompassing or very extensive event. So through his own use of the word I don’t think it has to mean every single wall, but you are going to see this massive earthquake, massive destruction. And now I have quite preaching; I have gone to speculating.

Q: I appreciate your thoughts. I think that is good understanding of what literal interpretation means.

Charlie Dyer: I don’t think it is a problem having it in the first half of the tribulation as long as I can interpret “all” or “every” in a slightly different way.

Q: Even with your position it would at least be seven months before the mid-point of the tribulation. It would give time for repairs even if the temple was damaged, it would give some time for repairs.

Charlie Dyer: Yes, absolutely, although again, if every wall did collapse, they would not be able to rebuild it in seven months. But damages could be repaired if it is something less than total destruction.

Q: [Q22] In the finale of this war, God will supernaturally deliver the Jews and destroy her enemies, which all the world will be forced to acknowledge. Israel will know that the Lord is God, the nations will know that the Lord is God. I don't think that means necessarily that they are all suddenly born again but they know that God is defending the Jews. If that occurs near the end of the first half of the tribulation, does it make sense that the Antichrist would immediately launch another severe persecution of the Jews? It seems like the world would go, wait a minute, we just saw God deliver the Jews. I don't think I want to fight against the Jews. It makes a little more sense in my mind that there might be some span of time in there for people to basically forget that God was for the Jews. Any thoughts on that?

Charlie Dyer: Yeah and part of it would be, I do see a gap, since I see the battle toward the beginning of the tribulation. I would have a couple of years in there, but I am not even sure that it would be necessary. Here is why, and again, take this with a grain of salt. I don't know if all the world is going to acknowledge God. I think what God, at least what I see it saying, God says, I am going to display my glory among the nations and they will see the punishment I inflict. I don't think they are necessarily going to go, "Wow, God is for Israel!" I think they are going to go, "Man was that an awesome destruction or what?" The destruction was an earthquake and volcanic activity and huge hailstones. But I think most of the world will easily get over that. I think it is Israel that suddenly realizes that was God. God is pouring his Spirit out on them as well. Prophets are coming up saying, "Hey you just saw God's hand at work. You better turn and get right with him." All that said, I don't think they, the world, are going to acknowledge God, I think they are going to see it as a massive destruction. I do think there are a couple of years in between the battle of Gog and Magog and when the Antichrist launches his final campaign.

Q: [Q23] Islam is going to be greatly influenced by this, I don't know if it will be completely wiped out but I would think it is going to be at least pretty severely subdued. Any implications do you think there could be from that, and how that might tie in with other end times events?

Charlie Dyer: I do. One of the ones that always bothered me before as I was first approaching this, the Antichrist stands up and says, "I am God, worship me," in the middle of the tribulation. No good Muslim would ever do that. The foundation, bedrock of Islam is, "There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet." They're problem with Jesus is you can't have somebody who is God. The only god is Allah. I keep saying, when it says all the world is going to follow the Antichrist, how can that be true of a quarter of the world's population almost, the Muslims. My gut feeling is that Ezekiel 38 and 39 is the answer. Here are the true Muslims, the fanatical followers who believe God has given them the chance, the beginning of all they were taught and believed that God is going to do, they launch their attack and it is not the Jews that destroy them, it is not the United States, or the west or the Antichrist or anyone else that destroys them. Everything

that destroys ultimately are acts of God. God turns his hand against them and wipes out this Islamic invasion force, and I think it is going to shake them to their core. At that point they are starting to have a crisis of faith, “Wait a minute; who is this God?” And I think it opens the doors for the Antichrist’s rapid rise so that when he says “I am God, worship me,” even those former Muslims are going to do it at that time.

Q: [Q24] In Ezekiel 39:28 this is one of the outcomes of the war, God says “I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind.” It seems to me in some sense, God is going to use this war to precipitate the final regathering of the Jews to the land. They are not all there yet, maybe half of them but not all of them. That latter part of Ezekiel 39 starting in verse 21, do you see that as part of the war itself, or is that more or less just a general summary statement? And where do you see this final regathering? Is that precipitated by the war, or does that precede the war?

Charlie Dyer: It is interesting. I think in verses 21 to 29, he was fairly chronological for most of the chapter: here are the nations, here is when they are going to invade them, I am going to bring on them this, this – this seems to me to be more summary, saying these are the results of that battle. I am showing my glory, I am going to bring them back to the land, I am going to pour out my Spirit on them, I am going to bring them back from captivity. And the part that I wish I had a good answer for, he started the chapter by saying this is going to happen against those people who are gathered from many nations in the mountains of Israel. So Israel is back in the land and the result of the battle is, I am going to bring them back to the land. Wait a minute, how can he bring them back if they are already back? I think my best answer is that, is Israel back in the land today? Yes, except there are as many Jews living in New York City almost as there are in Israel. Again, it is not an absolute statement but a general one. They are in the land, but the end result of this battle, this is the catalyst that now brings the events God has always promised: the return to the land, the outpouring of the Spirit and his blessing on them. He is not saying it happens immediately after the battle, but that are the results of the battle. I think it will happen over a 3½ year period. The Jews will come back to the land and they will experience the blessing and all of the events of 40–48 will start taking place.

Q: I guess part of my question was, if you put the battle near the mid-point of the tribulation then there is no time for the rest of the Jews to come back to the land. But you put it more toward the beginning of the tribulation period, so even if this war did precipitate the final return of the people to the land, they have another 3½ years almost to get there.

Charlie Dyer: In fact the last 3½ years they are going to be scattering again when Jesus said those in Jerusalem flee.

Q: [Q25] Do you see any ways in which the movement toward the construction of the third Jewish Temple ties in with this prophecy?

Charlie Dyer: Not necessarily. What I would end up saying is we know there has to be a temple built. Right now that doesn’t look like it is going to happen, even the Jewish

authorities don't allow them on the Temple Mount. If there is a connection, and my gut feeling says there is, but I can't point to a passage that says it. But once this battle is over, I think if Israel is now starting to turn to God, and Islam has really been brought low, that could be the kind of thing that it would take for the Jews to say, "Now is the time to build the temple," and even if it means destroying the Dome of the Rock. So whether they were allowed to start building when the Antichrist makes the peace treaty, or whether it is not until this time, I think this is fairly close to that. I don't see a lot of time between those two events so if it is the peace treaty that allows Israel to build a temple, I wouldn't have a problem. If it is this event that makes them now have the zeal to begin building the temple, I wouldn't have a problem with that either.

Q: [Q26] We are close to the end of our hour. Any other thoughts about this that we have not touched on that you care to share with me?

Charlie Dyer: Maybe just two quick things. What I think, and it is kind of bizarre, I think Ezekiel 38 through the end of the book as almost his recapitulation of the exodus. They had the original exodus from Egypt, God defeated the enemy and then he followed that with the wandering in the wilderness, building the tabernacle, the order for the priest, bringing them to the land, he gives the land boundaries and Joshua divided the land among the tribes. Ezekiel comes along and has this final ultimate battle that now God can bring them into the land, he has the temple, he has service of order for the priests, he has the boundaries of the land, and division of the land among the tribes. I think it is deliberate. Ezekiel really trying to recapitulate the exodus and this is a vital part of it. Just as the destruction of the Egyptian army was the beginning of that process, the destruction of Gog and Magog is the beginning of that process that ultimately leads them to fulfill all the promises God gave them regarding the land. The other I think of is the second battle of God and Magog in the book of Revelation. I see Revelation borrowing from this I don't see them as being the same battle.

Q: Your first comment about comparing it to Exodus. It seems like that parallel is profound, I don't think it is accidental. I think Gog and Magog is probably going to be the biggest miracle since the crossing of the Red Sea.

Charlie Dyer: And I think it has the same impact on the nation.

Q: Right, even the construction of the temple afterwards, it was right after that when they built the first tabernacle. Now here is the final temple getting built starting in chapter 40 so I really concur with your parallels there.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum Interview

August 2, 2011 (in person)

[Section 1]

Q: [Q1] Based on your familiarity with this prophecy, do you think it is possible that Ezekiel's war could be approaching soon?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: The guy who disciplined me taught me not to speculate, so whether it's soon or not, I couldn't tell you. I think that it definitely happens before the tribulation starts, 3½ years or more before, but whether it's very soon, or in the distant future, I choose not to speculate.

Q: [Q2] What are some factors in the world today that cause you to come to that conclusion?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: You have alliances between Russia and Iran, and you have those alliances coming on. And you have non-Arab Muslims getting involved, which is what this invasion is mostly. So these are things that move towards it, but whether this is the actual last possibility, I really don't know.

Q: [Q3] Could you comment on the alliances given in Ezekiel's prophecy and any correlation with current alliances existing or being built in the world today?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: I think the breakdown of the Soviet Union was significant. And the lack of any sort of a solution with the Palestinian issue. These might be signs of things that have begun. These kind of questions are speculative, and I don't like to speculate. I teach that when the Bible stops, we need to stop.

Q: [Q4] Do you see any indicators that modern day Russia would engage in such a war against Israel?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: Russia is always looking for its own self-interest, and the whole point that is in Ezekiel is that Magog is looking for its own interest. Besides their long history of antisemitism, it's natural for them to be more sided with Arabs than with Jews, which has been their history all along. Russia has had a very long history of antisemitism, both in the czarist period and the communist period. So eventually Russia must play a role.

Q: Is that why your family ended up leaving Russia?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: No, not exactly. We are Polish Jews, not Russian Jews. My father fled Poland from Hitler, and was shipped to a concentration camp in Siberia, with charges as a Nazi spy. My mother was shipped to Siberia for different reasons. He was 31 when he was released. My father is a photographer by profession. My mother needed identifications photos for a passport. That's how they met. But then after the war they

were able to go back to Poland, because they were Polish citizens number one. They escaped into Poland. From Russia, they took a train to Poland. They left Siberia in 1943, and it took a while before they came into Poland in '45, after the war. I was three years old then.

Q: [Q5] Do you see any alignment between current events in Iran and the details of this prophecy?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: The Shah was pro-Israel. Israel received most of its oil supply from Iran. There was a lot of travel to Iran, the Jewish community in Iran was quite well off. But when Khomeini took over, and they became a Moslem state, a lot of the antisemitism began to blow over, and a lot of aggression. Ahmadinejad as well is quite antisemitic. So if Russia wants to go against Israel, Iran has already made it clear that it wants Israel to cease to exist. The goal of their nuclear weaponry is to destroy Israel.

Q: [Q6] How do you see Iran's nuclear ambitions playing into this scenario?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: People sometimes see what happens in verses 17-23 as a nuclear exchange. But the trouble is, if you look at the details, the terminology that they use to define nuclear weapons was also used of Sodom and Gomorrah, and to my knowledge nobody dropped nuclear bombs on Sodom and Gomorrah. And number two, the only ones affected by the judgements of the hills was the invading army. First of all, it's only 50 miles wide. You drop a nuclear bomb anywhere in the middle of Israel it destroys everybody. As far as I know they have not been able to invent a nuclear bomb labeled for Gentiles only. It will kill everybody. And so this has to be seen, what's described, as a divine judgement. If it's a nuclear bomb, the nations will get the credit. The air force that dropped a nuclear bomb will get the credit. But the nations will see that this is something only God can do. So this has to be something more than that. It has to be supernatural. God has to wholly get the credit for it.

Q: Do you see any possibility if, for example, Israel was to have pre-emptive strike to try to take out Iran's nuclear capabilities, how could that precipitate events such as this?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: Again, that would be highly speculative. But Israel has made it quite clear that it cannot live with a nuclear Iran. But just what can they do about it is not so clear. 20 years ago the Iraq nuclear reactor was bombed out by Israel. Israel will not tolerate a nuclear Iran. But just what they will do about it, time will tell. They had the Stuxnet computer virus. But Israel is serious, they cannot stay silent while Iran goes nuclear.

Q: Do you have any kind of clues what kind of response there would be from the Muslim world if there was a pre-emptive strike?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: Well, that would be a double standard, because most Arabs tend to be Sunni, and Iran is Shiite. And they've always been going against each other. In fact most of the people killed in Iraq right now are Shiites attack the Sunnis. I would say

verbally they would have to protest against an Israeli strike, but they would be happy that Iran is out of the picture.

Q: [Q7] While Islam is not mentioned specifically in Ezekiel's prophecy, the coalition coming against Israel in Ezekiel 38-39 is almost completely Islamic. Can you comment on how current Islamic thought may contribute to the fulfillment of this prophecy?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: When this war starts, the interest is nationalistic. Russia is an atheistic country. Russia will head up the alliance. It won't be a religious issue, it will be a nationalistic issue. Whether Islam itself will play a role in this war again is speculative. Both Moslem and non-Moslem countries decide to get together. Time will tell.

Q: [Q8] Radical Islamic eschatology parallels biblical prophecy in many ways. Are you aware of any ways in which Islamic eschatology may contribute to the fulfillment of this prophecy?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: Well at least for Iran, it is a Shiite country, the Mahdi plays no role in Sunni eschatology, it's Shiite eschatology. So there will definitely be an element for Iran, and Ahmadinejad has said that he feels that it is going to happen in his lifetime, and so it will play a role at least for Iran. Whether it plays a role in other countries, that's a different issue.

[Section 2]

Q: [Q9] What are your thoughts as to where this war fits in on the prophetic timeline at the end of the age? [Q10] And what specific factors influence your thinking regarding the timing of this war?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: I think the Bible speaks of nine events that will lead up to the tribulation. Of those nine events, three have already come to pass. I see this Russian invasion as the next major event. The rapture may come before it, but I don't know. But the next earthly event will be this invasion. I see it at least 3½ years before the tribulation because in the middle of the tribulation the Jews are fleeing the land, and they won't have time to bury the dead. The seven years of burning of the weaponry has to end by the midpoint, when the Jews have to flee the land. So I think that the destruction of these nations also sets the stage for the government that Daniel spoke about, the ten states that will arise in the last days.

Q: [Q11] Ezekiel describes Israel as living in security at the time of this war. Could that describe conditions in Israel at present, or will that condition not be fulfilled until Antichrist's covenant with Israel is established?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: People assume that this invasion that takes place requires peace. The word shalom is not even used in this passage. It's the word "betach." To look at other passages where it's used, it's used emphasizing the feeling of confidence, not peace. It's used even in the context of war, that the ones who have been confident that

they can win, are not insecure about the war, just as Israel is today. They have security in their army. The way the word is used in Hebrew, it's not a state of peace, the word shalom is not in there. The streets of Jerusalem are far safer than in many American cities.

Q: [Q12] Are there any interpretive factors in your mind which force the fulfillment of this prophecy into the tribulation period?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: [Re: latter days] It refers to end times events. That would include not just the tribulation, but prophecies such as Israel becoming a state and so on; it includes the kingdom. It's a general prophetic term, not a specific term. I don't think they can argue using that term that it has to happen in the tribulation. It's a wider term.

Q: [Q13] Does the doctrine of imminence influence your thinking about the possible timing of this war?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: If somebody says this has to happen before the rapture, then it destroys imminence, which I don't teach. Some of the confusion is that people are always assuming that the rapture starts the tribulation. It doesn't. The seven year covenant starts the tribulation. The rapture simply precedes it by some unknown amount of time. So the rapture could come anytime between right now and the signing of the covenant. So the rapture may come before this event, it might come after this event. Because I believe in imminence, the rapture could come today. But it's not the rapture that starts the tribulation. So if the rapture comes today, the tribulation won't start tomorrow. The rapture is not dependent upon the starting point of the tribulation. The rapture takes place sometime before the tribulation.

Q: I'd like to probe a little further on this. I'm discovering more and more people, Randall Price, for example, who believes that this event will happen before the tribulation, but he puts it after the rapture. I hear the phrase, "The rapture will be the next event." I've never quite been able to embrace that, because we don't know.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: We don't know.

Q: We don't really know that for sure.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: If you look at 1947, and had asked, which will come first: Israel will become a state, or the rapture? Most people said rapture, especially in pre-trib circles. But the correct answer is, we don't know. Israel became a state. But then Israel did not have east Jerusalem yet. So which will come first, east Jerusalem, or the rapture? A lot of people said, the rapture. But maybe yes, maybe no. But then Jerusalem became Israel's in '67. If you start from the signing of the covenant, it doesn't mean it has to happen soon, it means nothing has to precede it. But things could precede it. We're saying that the rapture can come any time between now and the signing of the covenant. What comes next? We can't be certain. Maybe we'll be here when this happens, maybe we won't. Tommy Ice takes the pre-trib view. I don't think he says it has to happen

before the invasion. If he does I don't recall. I think that the invasion happens between now and the signing of the covenant.

Q: I think that he would probably pick between the rapture and the signing of the covenant. I don't know too many people who say it could go either way. Most people tend to say it falls after the rapture. I want to just throw a thought out to you and get your take on this. I believe in a pre-tribulation rapture, I believe in the imminence of the rapture, but there's something I call "pre-trib blindness." That's my own description, where we think, "No, no, no, the very next thing is the rapture." And we deny the possibility of anything else happening before the rapture. Which I think, among our circles, tends to close our minds a little bit to the possibility of other major events, such as Ezekiel's war, possibly, not has to but possibly, taking place prior to the rapture. So I wonder if sometimes we are so big on imminence, and I hear this phrase that "it's the next event in God's program." John Walvoord used to say that. We just don't know that.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: We don't know it. If you look at Pentecost's *Things to Come*, he misunderstands the pre-trib position, because our position is not that this is pre-rapture, only pre-trib. And the rapture might come before or after. He defines our position as saying it's going to be pre-rapture, therefore we destroy imminency. But that's not our position.

Q: It's a straw man.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: Yes, it's a straw man. Dr. David L. Cooper's position was not pre-rapture, but pre-trib. We do not say that the rapture will start the tribulation, that's the problem. But again the rapture does not start the tribulation. The seven year covenant, between the Israeli government and the Antichrist in power before the tribulation, the covenant has to be signed. So Antichrist must be in power before the tribulation. Israel must be a state before the tribulation, otherwise she can't sign a covenant with Antichrist.

Q: I think there's a tendency to take the pre-tribulation position and just assume that means pre-rapture.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: Right.

Q: I don't think that's a fair presentation of the position.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: No.

Q: [Q14] Do the seven months of burial and the seven years of burning impact your thinking about the timing of this war?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: The seven months [are not so much of a problem], but the seven years, the Jews have to flee the land. They don't even have time to go to the house to get a coat. They have to flee the land right away. So the seven years of burning have to end

by the midpoint or earlier, but not later. At that point they will be bringing weapons, not burning weapons.

Q: There's some kind of interim between the rapture and the signing of the covenant. And we really have no idea of how long that is.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: We have no idea.

Q: I have struggled a little bit separating them too much, because if the rapture is the ending of the church age, and the seven years are Daniel's 70th week, dealing primarily with Israel, it's hard to picture decades going in between those two. I realize whatever is not in place by the time of the rapture will have to get in place...

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: Right.

Q: ...by the time the tribulation begins. Would you say there has to be an interim period there?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: Well, doesn't have to be. The tribulation could start the day after the covenant is signed. [Sic...I think he meant the day after the rapture.] If you believe in imminency, then the rapture could be a long period of time. But I think part of the confusion is when you talk about two groups of saints, church saints and tribulation saints. A better term would be church saints and post-rapture saints. That covers the period people are saved during the interval, however long that may be, however short, and then the seven year tribulation. The term "tribulation saints" is not a biblical term; it's just a term we use to describe it. A more useful term would be "post-rapture saints."

Q: I've wondered as we get closer and closer to the fulfillment of these events, for example, in 1948 Israel became a nation. We don't have to wait for that any more. Israel possesses the mountains of Israel. They possess the city of Jerusalem. It's easy to postulate an interim period because we're still waiting for these last pieces to fall into place. But if, possibly, the rapture is delayed, it could be that most of these things might fall in place, maybe, before the rapture takes place, in which case, it could be a very short interim there.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: Time will tell.

[Section 3]

Q: [Q15] How have your views regarding this war impacted your ministry in the area of speaking, teaching, and writing?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: In the first part of my teaching ministry, I was doing mostly prophecy conferences. And putting my book together, I wanted to make a double contribution, first of all to put the sequence of events in close sequential order, and then discussing issues like Ezekiel 38-39, discussing issues like the timing of the rapture,

being pre-trib, but we're in the pre-trib, it doesn't start the trib. But the second thing I wanted to do was bring in the Jewish frame of reference, which is often missing in our dispensational circles. And to make clear that the rapture does not start the tribulation, the seven year covenant requires Israel to exist, the role of the Six Day War, and dealing with both Jerusalem and the West Bank area, and then the difference between the second coming and the rapture. Rapture, no pre-conditions, could happen any time for the church, but the second coming has some pre-conditions. Israel's national salvation. He cannot come back until Jews first accept him. The national salvation is a pre-requisite for the second coming. Which again helps to define what happens in Revelation 12, the satanic war against the Jews, the antisemitism. Because Satan knows once the second coming occurs, his career is over. For most of the Jews, he won't come back until they ask him to. He's always had this broken Jewish violation to avoid the second coming. That part is missing from the evangelical dispensational theologies. So I want to bring in the Jewish background as well and the Jewish emphasis within the pre-trib pre-mil view of eschatology and provide a chronological sequence with a Jewish emphasis, which is what the Scripture does. In the prolegomena of Chafer's systematic, he makes a couple good points as only dispensationalists can offer [torah?] theology of Israel. And that's true. But then he didn't do it. His theologies of eschatology are not categorized in a systematic way. That's why I coined the word Israelology to my contribution to present a full Israelology from a dispensational frame of reference.

Q: Are you aware of any thoughts about this prophecy in Judaism or Israel today, outside of the Messianic circles?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: In Orthodox Judaism, they hold a two messiah view. They believe that the first messiah will come and will be killed in the Gog-Magog war. He will be the son of Joseph. Then the second messiah, the son of David comes who will win the war and raise the first messiah back to life. So Gog and Magog is a very important prophecy in the messianic context, with two messiahs each coming one at a time.

Q: Do you know where I could learn more about that? Do they have any writings in English that would summarize any of it?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: There are two [mathebac??] commentaries which you can get in English. The one is called the Artscroll Bible Commentary, that's the ultraorthodox view. Then you have the Soncino Bible Commentary, that's an orthodox commentary. Some of this is mentioned in my book, "The Footsteps of the Messiah," page 107. Midrash rabbinic commentary from the early centuries, they also refer to what is now Russia.... Page 109....

Q: [Q16] What about vision for new ministry? As a result of your thinking about this war, or the proximity of other end times events, have you begun or considered any new areas of ministry?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: I've been involved since early on in Jewish ministries, and Ariel Ministries which I direct, which is in eight different countries now. But the goal is to

share the gospel in the Jewish community in those countries, and to teach the Word of God from a Jewish frame of reference, and from a dispensational frame of reference. This attracts people from all around the world. We have branches where the work continues; we have books, tapes, DVDs, everything we teach you can now get in DVD.

Q: [Q17] Finally, how has your thinking about this coming war and the end of the age impacted your ministry in the area of evangelism?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: Well not too much evangelistically, because we don't deal with planting the seed too much with people who do not have the Spirit of God and can't grow beyond the milk. We focus more on first coming prophecy. With some of the Jews you can deal with Gog and Magog, but most Jewish people are secular and don't know Gog and Magog. This is more of a discipleship program than an evangelistic program.

[Section 4]

Q: [Q19] Many Bible scholars put the war someplace in the first half of the tribulation. If that is true, how do we explain this invasion taking place while the Antichrist is still honoring his covenant with Israel, with the land presumably under his protection?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: It's security. If you look at the other passage, which is Isaiah 28:14-22, it guarantees Israel's security. That's why I believe it happens before the covenant is signed. If this happens after the covenant is signed, why is he not stepping in for Israel's security?

Q: [Q20] What about the statement in 38:20 that the earthquake will cause "every wall to fall" in the land? Would that not destroy whatever building is standing on the Temple Mount, either the Dome of the Rock or the Temple, giving evidence for a pre-tribulation event, since we know the Temple will be standing at the mid-point of the tribulation?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: Exactly. I'll have to look back in my Hebrew Bible. There are different words for wall. I'll have to check and see if that means the walls of a building or a city wall. There are two different Hebrew words and I don't remember exactly which word is used.

Q: I have wondered about the impact of that upon the Israelis. This is going to be a devastating earthquake. If it's going to destroy the enemies, what's it going to do to the Israelis themselves? It doesn't seem like they're going to escape completely unscathed. It's still a war.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: They won't be hurt by a nuclear weapon being dropped on them, but of course they'll be affected.

Q: It also strikes me that this invasion takes place, and their enemies are in the land, because they're falling on the mountains of Israel. And so, the invasion has already taken place. They're already there.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: They do penetrate Israeli defenses, to the central mountain range. And if they're in the mountains of Israel, they're headed for Jerusalem as their target. So God lets them go quite a distance before he finally stops them, so there will be a lot shooting and killing before God finally makes an intervention.

Q: That's only started to dawn on me recently. I guess I was thinking that God spares them and delivers them, but not until they've already been tromped down a good bit.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: That's right. Because the mountains of Israel refers to the West Bank. Which means that this war could not have happened until 1967, before which the West Bank was not in the nation of Israel.

Q: [Q22] In the finale of this war, God will supernaturally deliver the Jews and destroy her enemies, which all the world will be forced to acknowledge. If that occurs near the end of the first half of the tribulation, does it make sense that the Antichrist would immediately launch another severe persecution of the Jews? Wouldn't it seem more understandable if some years elapsed between those two events?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: Exactly. That's another reason for me why it cannot happen mid-trib, as well as the seven months of burial, and the seven years of burning, for three and a half years into the messianic kingdom.

Q: It seems that people do forget quickly. I look at 9/11; we woke up however briefly as a nation, but very briefly. I could imagine this more easily if there's a little bit of time period there where the whole world sees God deliver Israel, then a little bit of time goes by and they forget, and then the Antichrist starts his persecution again. It seems hard to put those two right side by side.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: Yeah, it is.

Q: Didn't we just attack them? Didn't God just deliver them?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: Yeah. It makes no sense.

Q: [Q23] It seems this war will greatly diminish the influence of Islam, at least for a season. What implications do you think there could be from that? How might that tie in with other end times events?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: It includes certain non-Arab Moslem countries, but the Arab countries are not going to be affected by this per se. Some of them object to the invasion. Shiite Islam will be affected, but most Arabs are Sunni Islam Muslims, and it probably won't affect them at all.

Q: Like Egypt, for example? They're Arab Muslim, but not part of this conflict.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: That's right. It mentions Cush which is Ethiopia, Put is Libya and Somalia, and then Gomer. You've got Persia, Cush and Put, these are Moslem countries, but they're not Arab.

Q: Do you see the latter part of Ezekiel 39, starting around :20, as part of the war of Gog and Magog, or is kind of a summary statement?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: The chapter divisions were not in Ezekiel's original scroll. I think that the prophecy about Gog and Magog ends at the end of chapter 39 verse 16. Because earlier each time God says something he names Gog and Magog. He doesn't do that in :17. To me, in :17 and onward, it's focusing more on Armageddon and the kingdom of chapter 40. So I see the Gog and Magog prophecy as from 38:1 to 39:16. I don't include :17-29.

Q: [Q24] Ezekiel 39:28 indicates that God will use this war to stimulate the final return of Jews to the land of Israel. How does that fit in with your understanding of when this war will likely take place?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: To me, that part of the passage refers more to Armageddon, the second coming and the restoration.

Q: [Q25] Do you see any ways in which the movement toward the construction of the third Jewish Temple ties in with this prophecy?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: Before the midpoint of the tribulation the temple will start to be functioning, so it has to be rebuilt before the midpoint. It may be built during the first half; it may be built before the tribulation starts. It could be the devastation of the invading army, and God will set the stage for the building of the temple. I think that's a possibility. But is that correct? We don't know.

Q: If Islam is knocked back from the impact of this war, and if you have the temple mount, the Dome of the Rock, knocked level from the earthquake, and if you have the Jewish people returning to the Lord, maybe not turning as true believers yet, but they know that the Lord is God, it seems that the next logical step...if you knock Islam out of the picture, you clear the temple mount, and Jews are knowing that the Lord is God, it almost seems as the next logical step is, let's build a temple. Obviously there's already a lot of motion toward accomplishing that even now.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: Even now. There are three different groups getting ready for the temple. The temple is well on its way. This may very well play a role, but only time will tell.

Q: [Q26] Do you have any other thoughts related to this prophecy that we've not talked about yet that come to mind that you can share with me.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: Have you seen Tommy Ice's articles on this? He's done a good work on it. There have been some articles in the Pre-Trib newsletter.

Q: Any comments on Joel Rosenberg's perspective on all this?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: He's what I call a newspaper exegete. He doesn't spend much time in exegesis. So I would not use him as an authority.

Q: Have you had any interaction with Tim LaHaye? His perspective on the timing is similar to yours.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: That's because he got it from the same source, back to Dr. David L. Cooper. He was a disciple of Cooper. The man who disciplined him was a disciple of Cooper.

Q: Was Cooper one of the first to lay this out in the perspective that we've talked about today?

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: To my knowledge. At least I've not come across anybody else that took that view before him. Where he got it from, from other studies, other teachers, I don't know.

Q: I'm toying with the possibility of writing a book on this subject, if the Lord opens the door. And if I have time! Maybe it will happen before I get there. It seems that one of the purposes of prophecy such as this is so that when the time approaches for its fulfillment, that people can see that, and get their hearts ready, it can impact their ministry.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: You had better finish your dissertation before it happens, or it will be too late. If you have any other questions, just send them to me via email, and I'll get back to you.

Mark Hitchcock Interview

July 26, 2011 (by telephone)

[Section 1]

Q: [Q1] Based on your familiarity with this prophecy, do you think it is possible that Ezekiel's war could be approaching soon? [Q2]

Mark Hitchcock: Well, yes I do. We will probably talk later about the time of it, where I put it. I don't think it is going to happen before the rapture takes place, but certainly no matter what view someone holds, most people would say it doesn't have to happen before the rapture and you kind of destroy the idea of imminency. The things we see happening, it is amazing. A lot of the countries have been set up for awhile with Russia with Iran; the Sudan just recently broke into two parts which I think is very significant because now you have Northern Sudan and Southern Sudan. Northern Sudan which is Islamic is now its own country. The southern part which is Christian, and probably wouldn't wanted to be involved in something like that, now they wouldn't have to be involved. You have Libya which of course they are having all the problems there and is likely even bad or worse than Qaddafi may end up taking over there, who knows what happens when all this chaos is over there. But the fly in the ointment has kind of been Turkey. With Erdogan they are turning back to the east strongly. There have been a lot of articles in Newsweek and Time and other places about him. You see these things lining up, certainly Israel is there and back in their land. And there is no love lost with the nations that are around them so to me it looks like something is set up. All the nations that the Bible mentions are identifiable nations today. They all have the will and desire to attack Israel and Israel is back in their land so those things seem to be in place.

Q: [Q3] Could you comment on the alliances given in Ezekiel's prophecy and any correlation with current alliances existing or being built in the world today?

Mark Hitchcock: There are a lot of things we don't know how they are going to happen, a lot of twists and turns of how these things will ultimately come about, but Turkey spending a lot of time talking to Russia, they spend a lot of time talking with Iran. There is a recent article in Newsweek saying that one of the fears now that people are having is that there may be a new Ottoman Empire. Their economy is like the second or third fastest growing economy in the world right now. Egypt is talking to them a lot about all the things that are going on there. These other nations are getting their approval before doing things because they are seen as a little bit of a bridge between the east and the west, although they are much more turned toward the east now so Turkey is a key player. Four of the names mentioned there I think are in modern Turkey. They were kind of the one that you wondered about but I don't think any longer. Libya is obviously an unstable place right now but we have seen how quickly things can happen either going into dissolution and revolution or we have seen how quickly new governments can take over so in our world today things can happen very quickly. I don't think it is like it was a long time ago.

Q: [Q4] Do you see any indicators that modern day Russia would engage in such a war against Israel?

Mark Hitchcock: Russia is the more reasonable of all these nations that are out there. Every nation acts in their own self interest but I think with Russia, they lost the Soviet Union back in 1991, they have been smarting from that ever since I think, all these nations went independent. I think they want to flex their muscle. They are pretty wealthy now, they have a lot of oil, tons of gas, I think their economy is doing ok through all of that. But the Bible talks about hooks in the jaws, we don't know what that is for sure but you know that is their neighborhood over there. Iran and Tajikistan and these countries speak Farsi kind of like Iran does. Those countries are just south of Russia and what it is exactly that will pull them into this, I don't know if anyone knows for sure but it could just be the idea of recapturing the old days of glory, leading all these other countries, being the dominant part of the world again. Another part to me is if you have this western confederacy after the rapture that is set up with the Antichrist and all of that, it could be that Russia doesn't like that and is a challenge to that and of course this attack down in Israel could really be an attack against the west which you know Russia has been in a showdown with the west after World War II so that could be part of it was well I think. Possibly kind of an end around attack against the west.

Q: Back during the Lebanon War when the Israelis discovered that gigantic underground storehouse of Russian weapons that it looked like Russia was preparing for an invasion of Israel and perhaps beyond even back then. Do you see any connections between that and how their desires could foment to attack Israel in the future?

Mark Hitchcock: Yes, they have been helping Syria years ago, they helped Iraq quite a bit years ago. Again that is their neighborhood, they are always involved with these different nations and they were behind Syria and Egypt back in the 60's and early 70's even behind what they were doing to Israel so they have never had a love for Israel and you know to me it is going to be something either political, economic, something like that that is going to cause them to be involved in this. They have been helping Israel's enemies I don't know how long back but at least since the 60's so for them to do that in a larger way, especially in light of all the things that are going to happen in the end times to me fits hand and glove with what we see today.

Q: [Q5] Do you see any alignment between current events in Iran and the details of this prophecy?

Mark Hitchcock: Yes, I think they are the number one nation probably someone could look to, could be exhibit A for this whole thing. Because the revolution in '79, they are the number one sponsor of terror in the world and of course you know about all the Mahdi stuff. Joel Rosenberg calls him an apocalyptic genocidal death cult and that is a very descriptive phrase. You know the mullah regime that is over there, you know Ahmadinejad is a mouthpiece for the mullah regime and he is not the key player, although he does spew out his own load of venom that he has for Israel. The difficulty I think of a lot of the people over there don't want war, they probably even like the U.S.

some, the problem is the leaders. We know what the leaders did in Germany in World War II. The leaders are who plunged the people into these situations, it is such a repressive dictatorial society, it is all this Arab Spring's been going on or was last spring. That is the one place it didn't take hold at all. People are just too afraid to do anything with it, with the Revolutionary Guard and all that is there. With their end time viewpoint of the coming of the Mahdi and all of that and their hatred for the nation of Israel, they are prime candidate to do that, they would attack Israel at any time if they really had a chance and really thought they could achieve victory, I think.

Q: [Q6] How do you see Iran's nuclear ambitions playing into this scenario?

Mark Hitchcock: Well I am not one of these people who sees this nuclear stuff in the Bible. Some of it could be, the Bible doesn't tell us everything. Obviously Israel is a small nation so if a nuke did hit there, it would be all over so it doesn't seem to me like that is going to take place. How that is going to be prevented. The leaders in Iran some of them want to wipe Israel off the face of the earth, people say if they get nukes they will immediately launch them, you know whether they will do that or not, I don't know. They be more reasonable behind closed doors, this just may be a lot of bravado and posturing and threatening. Obviously they want to get rid of Israel but they know if they did that, they would be destroyed as well so how that will all take place, how it will all happen, you know getting nukes and getting the ability to deliver those things with missiles, and do it accurately, is not as easy as people think it is. The rapture could take place and these events could unfold before Iran is able to get all of that but it looks like if the rapture is 20 years away or even 15 years away, Iran is going to get those weapons. Something could happen over there, though. The regime could completely collapse, there could be some people more moderate come in for a period of time and it could revert back. We just don't know.

Q: If Israel were to carry out some preemptive attack against Iran to knock out their nuclear capabilities?

Mark Hitchcock: That could certainly happen but the problem with that is they are not going to be able to destroy everything over there, it would set it back five years.

Q: I guess I have wondered if that could and this is speculation at this point so that is dangerous ground, but wondering if that could move the ball along towards this Ezekiel invasion saying, "All right, that is the last straw. We are going to get together and destroy you, Israel."

Mark Hitchcock: That would certainly would do that. It is not bad to speculate. I would say speculation, as long as people know that you are speculating, is fine. But the problem to me is when people speculate and act like their speculation is in the Bible. I think we can look and we can see this invasion is going to occur some day. The Bible tells us that and who is going to be involved. I don't think it is wrong to sit here today and speculate how that might happen. We are not saying that my speculation how it is going to happen

is inspired, but I think it is okay to do that as long as we let people know it is our speculation.

Q: I appreciate that. The other extreme of that is people who think why even bother studying prophecy, we will just wait until it happens. Well, why is it in there if not to at least consider when the days are getting close?

Mark Hitchcock: That's right, there are the two extremes and of course some of the speculation stuff goes all the way to date setting, it goes all the way to the extreme, but I don't think it is wrong to speculate as long as people know that is what we are doing.

Q: [Q7] While Islam is not mentioned specifically in Ezekiel's prophecy, the coalition coming against Israel in Ezekiel 38-39 is almost completely Islamic. Can you comment on how current Islamic thought may contribute to the fulfillment of this prophecy?

Mark Hitchcock: The main thing is their view basically that whatever land they have held still belongs to them, and Israel has that land. They want it. That is the bottom line issue right there. They take the Jewish people there as interlopers, people who have come in and live on a land that belongs to them. The Temple Mount where the temple stood, the Dome of the Rock, the Al Aqsa Mosque is the third most holy site in Islam, even though it is not mentioned in the Koran but it is considered their third most holy site. So just those factors right there. The bottom line behind all of that is that it is Satanic. Satan is the one who is jening (?) all this up, of the hatred for the Jewish people but Islam is the vehicle for it and the Palestinian question, obviously the two state issue and all of that just keeps this whole thing stirred up all the time, but there is not one nation there that has recognized the right of Israel to exist. Egypt and Jordan did sign these treaties with them but of course Sadat was assassinated for doing so. But no one has recognized their right to exist so if there is one thing that people could look at in our world and say boy I can see how that would happen, it would be all these Islamic neighbors getting together and wanting to wipe Israel out. It has been ongoing since 1948, Suez War in 1956, 1967, 1973, 2006, the beginning of the Intifada there and the 34 day war in the summer of 2006. It is one thing after another over there. One of the questions, I don't know if you are going to address this, but I think is an important one to address is Ezekiel talks about these far nations, what about the near nations?

Q: You mean like Syria, Jordan and Egypt and so forth?

Mark Hitchcock: Yes, they are not mentioned in Ezekiel and that has been a big sticking point and that is why Bill Salus wrote "Isralestine."

Q: I just ordered it, it is sitting here on my desk right now.

Mark Hitchcock: Anyway, that is an interesting issue because Salus' thesis, I don't want to steal the book's thunder and you can read it for yourself, but his thesis is that Psalm 83 is another war, and that war has to happen before Ezekiel 38 for all these near enemies to be dealt with, the far enemies are dealt with. I have just written a book coming out in

December and I have a whole chapter in there about Psalm 83 because I don't see Psalm 83 as a separate war.

Q: So you would say Psalm 83 is the same as Ezekiel 38 and 39?

Mark Hitchcock: Well, no I wouldn't. What I do in the book, I could send you that chapter so you could read it. There are three theories on Psalm 83. Three main, some people think it is a past event, but it really doesn't fit anything in the past and some take it to be, like Bill Salus, that Psalm 83 is this separate war. There are ten nations mentioned in Psalm 83 just like there are ten proper names mentioned in Ezekiel. There are parallels between them but anyway they take it to be something that is going to precede Ezekiel 38 and 39. In other words this is how Israel gets their peace. It is so powerful and then the Ezekiel 38 and 39 war is later so they see this Psalm 83 war as being before the rapture maybe even or right after the rapture or something like that. And then there is the view that Ezekiel 38 and 39 is the same as Psalm 83. I have a chart in the book showing some of the similarities. There are similarities between the two. Then the other view, the one that I hold is just that Psalm 83 is kind of like Psalm 2, it is just saying that (there is similar language – why did the nations rage against Israel in Psalm 83) look there are people who are always against Israel. Israel is always going to have these enemies, they are always going to be against them and God is going to deal with them someday. We don't see a separate Psalm 2 war. It is the Psalm about God is going to deal with these people someday, all these enemies of Israel, this is what you are always going to face. So that is the way I see it. Because the problem with Psalm 83, not a problem but an issue, the Psalm 83 passage never gives any indication of the timing of that war. There is nothing like Ezekiel 38, Israel has to be regathered, they have to be at peace, they have been regathered in the land and living in peace and safety. It talks about what happens, these enemies after they invade, it gives all this detail. Psalm 83 just talks about these nations and about how God is going to be victorious in the end.

Q: What is the title of the book?

Mark Hitchcock: It is called "Middle East Burning." The Arab Spring, and it has a chapter in it on Ezekiel 38. That's coming out in December.

Q: There is another book that someone else recommended to me and it just came yesterday called "God's War on Terror" and I just glanced at it but have not read it yet. It has him quoting you in there and he describes the Islamic coalition and the Islamic Mahdi as the Antichrist instead of somebody out of the Roman empire. Have you read that yet?

Mark Hitchcock: Do you mean by Walid Shoebat? I thought it was a terrible book. It was horribly written, convoluted. I talked with Walid about that in person. To me he kind of won't listen to basic things. You go back to Daniel 2 and Daniel 7, the Antichrist comes out of the fourth kingdom.

Q: That was the first thing I was glancing at to see how he addressed that and I didn't see him specifically addressing that at length in there.

Mark Hitchcock: Whenever I brought it up, he would say well you guys always go back to Daniel, you are always going back to Daniel. I said, well Walid that's the basis for everything, Daniel 2 and 7, that is where it starts. It is the beginning of these prophecies, why wouldn't we go back there.

Q: You can't just ignore it.

Mark Hitchcock: Walid is an interesting guy. I like Walid, he has a great testimony and all but I think when he gets to prophecy, he goes and finds passages all over the Bible that he says this is this, and this shows this, and this shows this but he never really shows how each of those passages in their context really say what he is talking about. He just pulls out these passages out of these different contexts and lumps them all together and comes up with his view. To me, each of those passages don't say what he says they say.

Q: It looked like he equates Ezekiel's war with Armageddon also, and I have some problems with that.

Mark Hitchcock: Gog, Magog and Antichrist are the same, Ezekiel 38 and 39 is Armageddon. You know thesis is, I see two major end time wars, Ezekiel 38 and 39 and Armageddon. Salus and these guys now are seeing at least 3, Psalm 83 war, Ezekiel 38 and 39 and Armageddon and I just see those two. There is going to be wars and rumors of wars, nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom, so there is going to be all kinds of skirmishes and wars going on in the world but it seems to me those are the two major wars that are going to take place. That is the way I see it but many other people have a lot of different wars in there.

Q: **[Q8]** Radical Islamic eschatology parallels biblical prophecy in many ways. Are you aware of any ways in which Islamic eschatology may contribute to the fulfillment of this prophecy?

Mark Hitchcock: Sure, the whole Twelver Shiite view, it has been their view since the 16th century, and that is the view of their country. This whole twelfth imam and hidden mahdi is going to come back. They believe they can make it happen. It is going to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Ahmadinejad sees himself as others maybe there do, as kind of the John the Baptist, if you will, for the Mahdi. They have kind of put out the welcome mat for him so I see very much how their view of eschatology and this whole Mahdi theology could fit in. Could there be someone who comes that they think is the Mahdi, I don't know. It is interesting, the Mahdi, when he comes is going to rule the world for seven years, that has always been an interesting factor. I don't think the Mahdi will be the Antichrist. I don't think he is going to be Islamic because if you think about it, the Mahdi, if he is Islamic he is going to say there is only one god who is Allah. The Antichrist is going to say that he is God. You can't have both. The second you said that you would be beheaded by them so there is a big problem there. I see massive waves, especially in places like Iran and of course Iran and Iraq is a Shiite nation. You don't realize that there are three nations over there that have a majority of Shiites and that is

Iran, Iraq and Bahrain, the three that are majority Shiite. That is what a lot of people don't realize of all the violence in Iraq. Saddam Hussein was a Sunni. His whole Baath Party and all that was all Sunni. So the Sunnis are the minority dominated the majority. That is why now enough people are worried when we eventually leave Iraq for good, pull everything out, they are going to be become a satellite of Iran. I see all of this could fit in very easily with all of that. All of these other nations even Turkey is a little bit more secular, although they are moving back that direction but the old saying, "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." You know Russia is not Islamic but they can be joined. People are going to act in their self interest and if they have wanted to destroy Israel all of this time, I can see how they are going to join together in a conspiracy to do this and it wouldn't surprise me at least with some of the nations if there eschatological view might not be fueling that.

[Section 2]

Q: [Q9] What are your thoughts as to where this war fits in on the prophetic timeline at the end of the age?

Mark Hitchcock: As you know that is the hardest point of all this. Figuring the other things out, I think there is somewhat of an agreement about it now, there is some little bit about who is involved and people say different things about that. The timing of it, I put it in the first half of the tribulation. To me when it comes to the timing of this thing, the issue is not which view doesn't have any problems; it is which view has the least problems. Every view has problems. People always put away your view and they give you these problems and then you say well here are the problems with your view and lots of time they never thought about them. They've all got problems. Figuring out which one has the least. [Q10] [Q11] The reason I put it there is because of the peace primarily. It says they are living at rest and living securely and Fruchtenbaum and others take that word and say that would apply to how they are now. They are at rest now, which they are, they are not being invaded. But to me they are hardly living securely. It seems to me what is being described there as something different from what is there now. I could be wrong about it but it clearly can't be Armageddon.

Q: I concur with you. Some do put it there and some even put it after the return of Christ which rather astounds me.

Mark Hitchcock: Arnold Gabelein did. He put it there because he said it was going to be kind of like Christ was going to have a Davidic reign and then a Solomonic reign that after his return there is going to be this time of mopping everything up and it is during that period of time. The day that the warfare reign and then the other but Armageddon, they will clearly not be at peace then and the second half of the tribulation they really won't be. The question is really if it could occur before the tribulation like Fruchtenbaum and others put it, is whether what we have today over there in Israel satisfies what's in Ezekiel 38. Some would say it does and some would say it doesn't. It is how much you see that peace and that rest and security that they have. [Q23] There are couple things to me that make the first half of the tribulation attractive. One is the peace or the security

and the rest. We know they are going to have this covenant with the Antichrist so that does seem to help fit in with that. The second thing is it helps me see a way how the Antichrist at the mid-point of the tribulation becomes the ruler of the world. To me, if these nations have been destroyed, if Russia has been destroyed, the Islamic nations, this big king of the north, king of the south coalition has been wiped out, you could see how a guy like the Antichrist could be catapulted to power, if this happens in the first half of the tribulation, sometime near the end of the that first half. And he comes in and seizes this opportunity probably because of this attack, I take it. And another thing that I see is part of the point of this attack is, it's an attack not only against Israel, but it is an attack against the Antichrist who has this covenant with Israel.

Q: [Q19] That was a question I had, if the invasion takes place during that first half when Israel is under Antichrist's protection, how could he allow the war to take place? You are saying it is an attack against him also.

Mark Hitchcock: Yes probably what happens is that it is taking place coming in there, he may be caught off guard himself so he may be watching this whole thing unfold and is going to see what is going to happen. Israel may be able to take these people out. Sometimes people make covenants, but obviously the Antichrist is not going to be a covenant keeper. We know that. He is going to break it at the mid-point, so he may have made it and had a lot of bravado, but he may just be thinking, "Let me watch this thing unfold." I think it is possible when all of this devastation occurs over there and these armies are wiped out, he may take credit for it. He may come along after the fact and say, "Look what I did. I have this secret weapon. I can send fire from heaven to wipe these people out." That would be a real way to gain further control over the world too. He says, "Look, I was in covenant with Israel and I said I was going to protect them. Now look what happened when somebody came against them. I wiped these people out." Of course then he is going to come in at the mid-point and break his deal with them but anyway it fits for me for several factors like that. **[Q14]** The main problem with that view is 39:7, you have the seven years burning the weapons, seven years of cleaning the deal up which LaHaye and those guys obviously say, Tim backs off 3½ years even before the tribulation starts and says you have 3½ years and that gives you the first 3½ years of the tribulation for all that to take place, to get the seven years. If you hold the view I hold, you are going to have that going on into the millennium. That is the bottom line so if that bothers a person too much then they are going to have to find a different view. It is just which one of these things bothers you the most.

Q: [Q14] The seven months of burial is to cleanse the land which obviously then the Jews are trying to purify their land but from the mid-point of the tribulation they are fleeing. So is that delayed then also until the beginning of the millennium?

Mark Hitchcock: **[Q21]** No, I wouldn't say this event happens right at the mid-point, sometime during the first half, probably near the later part of that unless it is right at that mid-point, you would have seven months to do that. If it was three years into the thing or whatever, two and a half. Somewhere in the first half. To me it doesn't seem likely that it would be in the first six months of it. It seems like Israel has really had time to flourish so

it seems it is two to three years into this treaty or something like that which would give the time for the seven months of the clean up but then you still have the problem of the seven years of burring the weapons which is also a whole problem of burning weapons, what kind of weapons are they going to have. We will take it is nuclear fuel or whatever and you have the whole problem of riding the horses, and bucklers, and shields. There are two different views of that. One is that it would be symbolic language. Ezekiel is just describing warfare in his day but obviously would be the modern counterparts to that. Or, like Dr. Walvoord held that they may be using that kind of weapons again. There has just been so much devastation in the world that people are going back to these ancient means of using things. Either one of those are possible I guess but it seems odd to me that people would be back that soon using spears and swords. There are guns all over the place in the world. Those are problems there to me that are things I don't have the exact answer for. Of course that is why preterists come in and say this is all passed, it was some ancient war but that raises way too many problems.

Q: One thing that is really abundantly clear in all this is that it is important to hold your position with a little bit of humility. Ron Rhodes did a really good job with that I think in his book because there are so many views on this and so many factors to consider that if anybody comes and says it absolutely has to be right here I think there are going to be a lot of questions.

Mark Hitchcock: To me there are some time periods that I think can reasonably be eliminated but I think you get down, to me, it is either going to happen during the first half of the tribulation or it is going to happen before the tribulation. Probably not before the rapture, but possibly before. The problem I have with placing it before the rapture for myself is that it says this is going to happen in the latter years.

Q: [Q18] That was my next question.

Mark Hitchcock: Last days and latter years. There are two different Hebrew phrases used there in 8 and 16. To me that looks at the time before the Messianic age and including it. To me, to put these prophecies in the fulfillment in the church age is mixing Israel and the church, if you are a dispensationalist. You have this dramatic Old Testament, Jewish prophecy being fulfilled in the church age. I think that is problematic. Now we do have the regathering of Israel being fulfilled during the church age but I don't think it is complete yet. But that is stage setting to me. The prophecy of Israel's regathering hasn't been fulfilled. It is in the process. I don't like to see future prophecies being fulfilled in the church age. The only real prophecies I see fulfilled today is the regathering of Israel, is in the process of fulfilled. The other one is apostasy of course in the church because obviously that is a church age prophecy. Apostasy within the church can only be fulfilled in the church age. Other things I don't see as being fulfillments, I see them as setting the stage for the fulfillment. Like today I wouldn't say Ezekiel 38 and 39 is being fulfilled, the stage is being set for it to be fulfilled. I think that is an important distinction. I hear people all the time saying and all these prophecies are being fulfilled before our eyes. I don't think they are. I think things are being set up for these prophecies to be fulfilled but that is an important distinction to me.

Q: If you are saying are being (present progressive) so the regathering of Israel has begun, the restoration of the land has begun so it has not been completely fulfilled.

Mark Hitchcock: In the process though. We don't know how many Jews are going to be back. People are continuing to go there.

Q: The phrase – the latter years – does that seem definitive in your mind that that has to make it the tribulation period? Or is it after the rapture but before the tribulation, does that qualify for latter years?

Mark Hitchcock: It could, the church age would be over, if you were between the time of the rapture and the tribulation actually starting. To me that phrase seems to eliminate it from being a church age prophecy. That is clearly putting it after the rapture. It would be odd again for this prophecy of the nation of Israel and all this Jewish prophecy being fulfilled during the church age. That seems strange to me.

Q: I talked with Dwight Pentecost and Tommy Ice and they both talked to me about the necessity of some time period between the rapture and the beginning of the tribulation. What are your thoughts on that?

Mark Hitchcock: I think there will be. I don't think it will be years of time because part of the purpose of the rapture is to deliver us from the wrath to come. If the wrath is ten years away, why do we need to be delivered? To me there is a connection between getting us out of here cause the wrath is coming. That would seem to indicate that it is fairly close. Now again, how far could it be out? Could it be a year out or six months out. This is one of the things that I think helps people a lot – the rapture does not begin the tribulation period. The rapture ends the church age. The signing of the covenant begins that seven year period of time and I think between the rapture and the beginning of the tribulation a lot of things could happen, further stage setting. People say today that Babylon isn't some great city so the rapture can't take place soon. We have these other different things that they will come up with. This can't happen because this hasn't taken place well if the rapture happens and there is a year before the tribulation starts, a lot of that stuff could happen.

Q: And once again if the rapture happens, stuff could be happening very, very quickly.

Mark Hitchcock: Very quickly. The world is going to change dramatically. To me that allows for other stage setting to take place. Tommy Ice said the same kind of thing. He and I talked about this stuff in the past. Today I would call the time we live in as the time of stage setting. I would say the time between the rapture and the tribulation is a time of further stage setting and after the tribulation starts then you have fulfillment. That is when the stuff actually really begins to happen that was actually prophesied.

Q: [Q13] How does the doctrine of imminence influence your thinking about the possible timing of this war?

Mark Hitchcock: It really doesn't to me. To me the Lord can come at any time and he can get the stage set however he wants to. I hold that he could come at any time but he is going to have things ready when he comes.

[Section 3]

Q: [Q15] How have your views regarding this war impacted your ministry in the area of speaking, teaching, and writing?

Mark Hitchcock: I have written on this topic, Ezekiel 38 and 39 more than anybody, I think. In a lot of my books I will talk about this. "After the Empire" is the first book that I did which is basically just about that. The book "The Coming Islamic Invasion" was kind of a simplified version of that. On this book "Middle East Burning" I look at how these events are leading to that. I am trying to take different angles with it so I have talked about it in a lot of books. Here at our church, I don't wear people out on prophecy. I try not to. I just go through books of the Bible. This summer we are doing Philemon, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, the New Testament postcard deal but this fall I am going to do a prophecy series on 10 – 12 weeks of different topics. I am going to do Ezekiel 38 and 39 one of the weeks. I speak at prophecy conferences all the time on this topic. I usually call it the "Coming Middle East War." That is the topic I use. It is a mainstay for me at prophecy conferences that I speak at, because we can look at our world today and see how this fits. To me it is a great passage for ministry to people because you are not having to make some stretch for people to see this. To me one of the key things it does is lets people see that 2600 years ago Ezekiel wrote this, and you could maybe get one of these places right if you were just sitting around back then, but to think about getting all of these names right, Israel being regathered to their land and all these factors. To me it is a great apologetic for the truth of the Bible that hasn't happened yet. But the set up for it is tremendous so to me there is the whole idea just of God's sovereignty, of the inspiration of the Bible, I think it is a motivating factor for people when they look at our world today. I think in a strange way often times prophecy scares people, but in another way it really ought to comfort people to know that what the Bible said is going to happen. It is correct. To me that is a comfort to know. To me what would really be worrisome is if everything was unfolding in the world in a way not consistent with the Bible. Nobody's driving the bus, we are reeling out of control so in an ironic way it is comforting. To say God has said this is going to happen and things are shaping up in our world in a way that remarkably corresponds with that. To me that is the things that I use it as. I think teaching this passage is a very good lesson for people in hermeneutics.

Q: Oh yeah because you've really got to look at the text and see what is this saying, what does that mean, how does that fit.

Mark Hitchcock: You have to go through and ok these ancient nations are mentioned, well these nations don't exist today so what do we do. Well where were they in Ezekiel's day, where are they today so you have to look at the timing phrases, you got to look at weapons that were being used, you've got to look at the context of chapter 37 before

Israel being regathered and 40-48 after what is 40-48 talking about. Is this the church, preterists and other say it's the church age or is this a literal millennium. Now depending on how much detail, when I go speak at a prophecy conference I speak for 45 minutes, I don't go into all of that. Still though you are alluding to those things. To me you look at the timing, okay, 37 is before it, Israel has to be regathered, the millennium is after in 40-48 so it has to be some time between Israel being regathered and the millennium. You are dealing with a lot of issues that even the average guy sitting out there, I don't sit there and say when I am speaking on this, now we are going to go in and look at all the hermeneutics of all this but I think to me they are picking up a hermeneutic that you are using, we are going to take this literally and we are going to understand this that it is really an event that is going to happen and there may be some of the things like the weapons, just like the names of the nations are ancient names that we bring up today, maybe the weapons are ancient weapons that we bring up today, but you are having to deal with a lot of mine fields and so I think hermeneutically you are helping people too whether they even know it or not.

Q: That reminds me of something back in May. I was in Israel with my wife for our anniversary and we joined Joel Rosenberg at a meeting he had in Efrat with a rabbi there, Rabbi Schlomo Riskin, and Joel gave his presentation on Ezekiel 38 and 39, very biblical, straight from the text and then the rabbi was going to give his perspective. He had a totally different, he hardly even looked at the text. He just goes into the rabbinical thought here and there and I thought, "Good heavens! This war, when it comes, is going to impact you guys. Aren't you even going to look at the text and see what it says about it?" It was quite interesting seeing how they dealt with it, or didn't deal with it.

Mark Hitchcock: I think to me the things pastorally at conferences I go to I think it is important to give people hope. There is a hope ultimately, looking for the Lord's coming, hermeneutics, God's sovereignty, the inspiration of the Bible. I think a lot of these things again I am not making all the points of all those things, I just think it is coming through as you preach and teach on a topic like this, and it just also helps people look at our world today, this is Rosenberg's statement, through the "third lens." You look at it through the Bible and you look at these current events through the Bible which I always point out in conferences too, you don't ever do it the other way around. You never look at the Bible through current events. They say, you know, this earthquake happened, let me go find it in the Bible. We look at the Bible and see what it says and then we look up to our world and say, wow, there's things here that really do correspond to this. So those are the things I found. I find it helpful, not everybody likes prophecy or finds it the most interesting but I think in small doses here and there to look at our world and find out what is going on, I think almost everybody finds it fascinating. That is another thing too is to me as a pastor, we are going to advertise this, this fall when I do this series. I will have a lot of people come here. People are interested in it and at the time when it is most needed in our world, it is being least preached.

Q: [Q17] That has been my own experience as well when I have preached on this, people come out of the woodwork and unbelievers in particular which is fascinating and leads

into the next question. How has your thinking about this coming war and the end of the age impacted your ministry in the area of evangelism?

Mark Hitchcock: Well I am sure there are people out there who have come to faith in Christ through my books, I hope there are. I always pray for that. I know in conferences I have been at, people have come to know the Lord. People come to know the Lord here in our church regularly, I don't know that it has ever been just a prophecy sermon that I have done but I give the Gospel every week here at our church in my messages. I think that is important to do and certainly when I am doing this prophecy series coming up here in our church which I have never done. I have taught the book of Revelation, I've taught Daniel, I've taught books, but never done a topical prophecy series. I expect the Lord to really use it in that way. Most of my prophecy speaking is at prophecy conferences.

Q: [Q16] What about vision for new ministry? As a result of your thinking about this war, or the proximity of other end times events, have you begun or considered any new areas of ministry?

Mark Hitchcock: Well, not really. What I would just say is what we do here at our church, my whole kind of ministry outside the church that I do, going to prophecy conferences is kind of a new area of ministry for me. I guess that is more personal. Still though I think it is what I do outside of our church is still an arm of our church. I never see myself and what I do as disassociated from the church here. I am just an arm of the church as I go out and speak at these different conferences that I go to.

Q: Mark, one thing I have appreciated with all your books is every one that I can think of that I have read, you present the Gospel in there towards the end. I really appreciate that. I will be curious to know when we get to heaven how the Lord has used that. It intrigues me how intrigued non-Christians are with Bible prophecy.

Mark Hitchcock: I get letters all the time from guys in prison and all over the country and I send books to prisons, they will say we got this book and that book of yours here in the prison and I wanted to see if you have any other books. When you write a book and it gets out there, and I have probably 700,000 to 800,000 books out there now floating around. People are seeing them in bookstores as Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. I get letters from South Africa and once these books are out there, they just keep filtering around. Some guy pulled them out of the trash, or who knows where. You just don't know where the things are going end up and what they are going to do.

[Section 4]

Q: [Q20] What about the statement in 38:20 that the earthquake will cause “every wall to fall” in the land? Would that not destroy whatever building is standing on the Temple Mount, either the Dome of the Rock or the Temple, giving evidence for a pre-tribulation event, since we know the Temple will be standing at the mid-point of the tribulation?

Mark Hitchcock: [Q25] One of the advantages of the pre-tribulation view to me has always been even the Temple Mount falling over is one thing but just all those armies being wiped out by those people would make it easier then for the Jews to rebuild their temple. Just like I said earlier to me putting it in the first half is a great way to explain how the Antichrist comes to power at the mid-point. I would say having it pre-trib and having this take place is a great way to explain how the temple gets rebuilt. So those views each have a different thing that helps to support the rest of the stuff in the context. To me though when you have statements like “every wall will fall,” and this is where you get into difficulty of literal interpretation because “all” does not always mean “all,” “every” doesn’t always mean “every.” Sometimes “some” means “all,” sometimes “all” means “some” and that is difficult when you explain that to people. They say I thought you just took the Bible literally but you know it says in Romans 5 it talks about how the many were made sinners through the death of one man. The “many” there means everybody. So “many” really means “all” and then when it talks about “all” were made righteous well the “all” there doesn’t really mean everybody. So the “all” means “many” there and the “many” means “all.” So that is where you run into things like this. Does it literally mean every wall will fall down in all the land of Israel? It could mean that if you take it literally that everything is going to fall down or it could just be a way to talk about there being devastation. Those kind of things are difficult because if you put it pre-trib and every wall falls flat in the whole land, that means every building falls over.

Q: I have considered that.

Mark Hitchcock: That is a problem too though because Israel is wiped out. I would probably opt for the idea that it is just language. It’s fire and brimstone from heaven, all the walls are going to fall, this is devastation. There’s going to be a lot of devastation.

Q: [Q22] In the finale of this war, God will supernaturally deliver the Jews and destroy her enemies, which all the world will be forced to acknowledge. If that occurs near the end of the first half of the tribulation, does it make sense that the Antichrist would immediately launch another severe persecution of the Jews? Wouldn’t it seem more understandable if some years elapsed between those two events?

Mark Hitchcock: It is a good point. I think though God delivers them to show them his mighty power before they go into this time of persecution, in other words he gives them a tremendous showing of his power before they go into this time. Okay, you are going into this time of tribulation but you have this idea of what I have done for you. In other words you have every reason now to turn to me. It is obvious though that most of the Jews won’t turn to him because whenever you place it, it is obvious the Jews won’t really turn to him and believe because if they did, they wouldn’t need the tribulation, the last half of it. I think whenever it says they are going to know that I am God there is going to be a beginning to be a turning, it could be when a lot of the remnant really come to know him.

Q: I don’t think it could mean complete salvation because it says all the nations of the world will know he is God, well then you have everybody saved so it clearly doesn’t necessarily equate to salvation.

Mark Hitchcock: It says in there too, I am not going to allow them to profane my name any longer as well. I am not going to allow them to profane my name. What I think that means in Scripture is God isn't going to allow people to profane his name with impunity any more, in other words when they do it from now on they are going to pay.

Q: Does that then refer to right specifically at that point in time or is that more of a general reference to the second coming of Christ which is getting very close?

Mark Hitchcock: Well I told in my view of kind of having it near the first half of the tribulation as he is getting ready to bring the great tribulation on the world. They are not going to profane my name any longer and whenever they do from now on they are going to pay for it. In other words, it is not saying that I am not going to allow them to profane my name, but they are not going to profane it anymore without consequences. When they do it from now on, they are going to know that I am God, sending the trumpets and the bowls. I think the trumpets are in the last half and the bowls are last half. Tim LaHaye and Tommy Ice put the trumpets in the first half, I put them in the second so I think that is when God, you know they are not going to profane his name anymore with impunity.

Q: [Q24] Ezekiel 39:28 indicates that God will use this war to stimulate the final return of Jews to the land of Israel. How does that fit in with this war or is that some kind of a summary statement. Is verse 21 on after the war or is it a summary statement of the war?

Mark Hitchcock: I think it is a summary statement myself. It is kind of just summarizing all, because chapters 33 to 39 there in Ezekiel, you really have a whole section of restoration and you got 1 to 24, Judah is getting judged and then 25 to 32, the nation is getting judged and 33 is restoration. I think to me this is just a summary statement of this section before you into chapter 40.

Q: So that final return of the Jews to the land is not specifically tied to the aftermath of this war, it is just part of the whole process?

Mark Hitchcock: That is the way I would take it. Through 28 they will know that I am the Lord, no longer hiding my face, I will put out my Spirit on the house of Israel. That is the new covenant type language. In other words, this will be the ultimate end of this when it is kind of all said and done so to me it is just summarizing the whole deal, I want to have mercy on them, I want to regather them, I want to bring them back, they are going to be sanctified. It is just ending this whole thing on a positive note to me before he goes into to the idea of this millennial temple and all.

Q: I guess I was thinking if it was more sequential, then there would have to be some time after the conclusion of the war before the mid-point of the tribulation in order for this final return to take place.

Mark Hitchcock: The problem with verse 29, if that did occur, if this invasion is before the tribulation and verse 29 happened then, I won't hide my face from them any longer, I

will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, that's like new covenant language. That is when the new covenant is going to be made with the house of Israel, the house of Judah, I will pour out my Spirit on them. If that happened then there wouldn't be a need for the tribulation.

Q: I find a little bit of a problem trying to figure out what is sequential in the events, and what is more descriptive of what is happening in the whole period or in the conclusion of the period, where Christ comes back and we have the millennial period beginning. Sometimes it is a little hard to figure out which is which.

Mark Hitchcock: That is true. And with the prophets, the difficult issues are, you know what is past and what is future even sometimes. Even in chapter 37 you have Israel being regathered then you have reunited Judah and Israel, you got I am putting my king David ruling over them, so that is clearly looking ahead to the millennium and then you backtrack a little in 38 to the tribulation again. There is some back and forth with that, to me in 37 they are getting all regathered, then he is telling what is going to happen and ultimately the kingdom is going to come. Chapters 38 and 39 are like meanwhile back at the ranch. This is how this is all going to come about and then you have again the summary at the end. There seems to be kind of these summaries or kind of glimmers of the hope after he talks about some of the things.

Q: Even in chapter 36 and 37 it seems like there is this two stage return, they come back, they are physically restored, but they are not spiritually restored yet, and it is all kind of interwoven together, almost like the Old Testament prophecies about the first and second coming of Christ, it wasn't completely clear that they happen at two different times but in the prophecies they are just blended together almost.

Mark Hitchcock: You are right, and then there are places it is like, that is why you get preterism and things like that. They either want to put it all past or somebody wants to put it all future. A lot of these prophecies in the Old Testament that a lot of my friends take futuristic that I would see already fulfilled in the past but that is the question. Some guys want to read the prophets almost everything is future. Every one of these invasions and some of them seem to have been past but that is the problem. You are right it is a lot of back and forth in there. To me it is easier to take that last part of 39 as a summary statement.

Tommy Ice Interview

July 19, 2011 (by Skype)

Q: This particular prophecy, Ezekiel 38-39, has really got my attention. It almost seems like a *lost* prophecy to me, because most Christians just don't know much about it. And yes as I look at the prophecy and try to understand everything I can about it, it looks like it could possibly be approaching.

Tommy Ice: Within Orthodox Judaism, it is the focus of their eschatology.

[Section 1]

Q: [Q1] I was just in Israel not too long ago, and met with a rabbi there along with Joel Rosenberg. It was interesting as they were talking about it, and I have a lot to learn in that area. Based on your familiarity with this prophecy, do you think it is possible that Ezekiel's war could be approaching soon?

Tommy Ice: Yes I do. Because I hold the view, although I think there are problems with my view as to the timing, that it occurs probably after the rapture but before the tribulation. Therefore if we are near the rapture then obviously it could take place. [Q2] [Q3] In addition to that you have the alignment of the countries where geopolitically today it doesn't seem far-fetched that such a thing could happen or such an alignment. For example, Turkey has always been aligned with the west up until the last couple years and they have come on line. I remember reading "The Late Great Planet Earth" back in 1970 and how Lindsey pointed out that in his chapter that Turkey was the only country that wasn't properly aligned yet. But that is no longer the case.

Q: [Q4] It is amazing how quickly that has turned around, even in just the last year or so. A year ago that wasn't the case, but now it is. What about Russia? The prophecy puts Russia at the forefront of that. Do you see any indicators that modern day Russia would engage in such a war against Israel?

Tommy Ice: Yeah because of Russia's basic opposition to the west which the leading components are the United States and of course, Israel. Russia has always wanted to have a warm port so to speak for its Navy and all these kinds of things. But it really doesn't matter what Russia thinks because the Scripture is very, very clear that God put hooks in the jaw. It is God who is bringing them down, so there may not be, in my opinion, that would make it possible that there may not be a rational geopolitical reason for Russia invading other than the stated reason to get spoil, in other words, wealth.

Q: [Q5] Do you see any alignment between current events in Iran and the details of this prophecy?

Tommy Ice: Yes there are all kinds of things. I remember in the early 90's, Israel believed that Iran was its major enemy back then. I was at a meeting in Washington D.C. and Dory Gold who was the U.N. ambassador to Israel under the first Netanyahu

administration, and he gave a lecture on how important Iran was and how they were the source of terrorism back in the early to mid 90's. Iran is very aggressive and they had, for example, last year, a military maneuver with Russia for the first time ever in their history. So you have these kinds of things taking place that have never happened before. Iran, what direction is it going to look for alignment but to Russia and these other countries?

Q: [Q6] How do you see Iran's nuclear ambitions playing into this scenario? Do you see any way in which Iran having nuclear weapons could play into this prophecy?

Tommy Ice: No. I don't see anything that states nuclear related things. It seems to be a conventional attack.

Q: Do you think if Israel took a pre-emptive attack against Iran, do you think that could spark this conflagration?

Tommy Ice: Yes. But I go back to the fact that God puts hooks in their jaw. The prophecy starts off with the emphasis that God is sovereign. There are five or six different statements there and I don't know of any other prophecy like that where God says I am the one who is going to bring you down and putting hooks in your jaws to bring you down, etc. etc. That is my whole point, the broader point is that whether things seem rational from a geopolitical standpoint, God is going to bring them down. Why? So that he can glorify himself by destroying them.

Q: [Q7] While Islam is not mentioned specifically in Ezekiel's prophecy, the coalition coming against Israel in Ezekiel 38-39 is almost completely Islamic. Can you comment on how current Islamic thought may contribute to the fulfillment of this prophecy?

Tommy Ice: Yes, because of their belief in Jihad and what you have here, the nations that are listed, although Russia has a lot of Islamic in their country, are non-Arab Muslims. There are no Arab Muslims that are involved in this and so obviously the militancy that is embedded in Islam itself, not just Radical Islam, but Islam itself makes attacking another nation no problem. But it doesn't say in the biblical text that they are coming down to expand their borders, they are coming down to take spoil. But you know a lot of those are directed toward Gog, Russia, which is the leader and perhaps the other nations that come down with them have their reasons for joining the coalition.

Q: [Q8] Radical Islamic eschatology, especially Ahmadinejad's version of that, parallels biblical prophecy in many ways. Are you aware of any ways in which Islamic eschatology may contribute to the fulfillment of this prophecy?

Tommy Ice: When you say Islamic eschatology, there are different levels of Islamic eschatology, in other words, the Koran is very boring when it comes to eschatology. Probably because Islam developed at a time when medieval Christianity was amill. And medieval Christianity had a very boring eschatology. In other words, in the Koran you just have the day of judgment and Allah shows up and they killed the infidels and that is it. But when you move down to the Hadith and other things that they have added extra

koranic material, then they tend to reflect historically, especially the Christian eschatology. I was told that in the late 70's and early 80's some Muslim came in and wrote a book that was modeled on Hal Lindsey because Hal Lindsey's dispensational eschatology was so exciting, and that something like half of the Muslim world has read this, and this is what someone told me. I have no idea if this is true, but this was told to me by an expert in Islam. And so if you study the history of eschatology as I have done over the years, you know that, for example, in early medieval times there was the whole eschatology of the last Roman empire, a tradition that had developed in Syria and other places, Syriac Christianity, and it was based on the Roman empire because Rome had become good after Constantine christianized it. So they are trying to think of ways to make Rome good because Rome was bad in the Bible, in Daniel and the book of Revelation, at least they thought that was Rome. I don't, but I think Babylon is Babylon, but nevertheless they developed this idea that was popular among medieval Christians of the last Roman emperor that at the last time there would be two Roman emperors just like at the founding of Rome and there would be a good king and he would be the most righteous that ever lived. He would be so righteous that he would be taken up into heaven without dying and then the evil king who would be the Antichrist would come along and he would be so bad, etc. and that would lead to the tribulation. So these kinds of stories have developed within modern Islamic eschatology. I delivered a paper last summer at the University of Wales and there were a lot of Muslims there that heard my paper and it was an historical paper on Morgan Edwards who in 1742 developed a pre-trib rapture when he was a student at Bristol Baptist College. He was from Wales, and so that is why I gave a paper on that. And these Muslims had a Muslim studies program and there were Muslims from all over Islam and there were about 15 of them who came up and talked to me for about an hour about on eschatology. All they did was ask me questions, they never said anything. They were fascinated with the details of dispensationalist eschatology which I think is the biblical eschatology and the fact that Israel would conquer and all of this. They said they believe Israel has come back in the land but of course they believe Islam will conquer. It is hard to say Islamic eschatology has all these different levels of writings that they have, as time has gone on. But the Koran is amillennial basically. You just have the last day and that is pretty much it.

[Section 2]

Q: [Q9] [Q10] What are your thoughts as to where this war fits in on the prophetic timeline at the end of the age and what influences your thinking?

Tommy Ice: After the rapture and before the tribulation. It is the burning of the implements for seven years. You have to get that in, and I can't see that happening during the millennium. And if it happened, say, 45% of the way through the tribulation which is Dr. Mark Hitchcock's view, the traditional Dallas view which used to dominate dispensationalism. But now currently, I would say that the view I hold is the dominant view among dispensationalists. But the problem with my view is, in fact Arnold Fruchtenbaum is the leading proponent of this view, who argues that there is going to be at least 3½ years, in other words since Israel is going to leave the land at the mid-point of the tribulation and go to Petra for 3½ years then the battle of Gog and Magog will have to

take place at least 3½ years before tribulation starts. So that means the rapture will happen at least 3½ years before the start of the tribulation. [Q11] So therefore you have that seven year period, and so Israel will be not at peace (that is not what the Hebrew word means) but secure and that is the problem with my view. I don't see Israel secure today, or in any scenario without them defeating their neighbors, or God doing it, until they are secure. Now Fruchtenbaum believes that today they are secure, and so therefore he would say that today's situation fits his model of what is going to happen. I don't know that I would agree with that.

Q: I understand that secure is not the same thing as having peace.

Tommy Ice: No, it is not peace. You could be secure militarily. Fruchtenbaum developed this view after the Six Day War, and in fact that is why Israel was caught off guard with the Yom Kippur War, because they were over-confident. So I could see him thinking in the late 60's, early 70's, that Israel was secure, but are they really secure now? They have really lost or tied wars like the Lebanon War of five years ago and these things where they have become more passive and they are not as aggressive as they used to be. They have nukes, but of course that is about to change with Iran and these others coming along.

Q: [Q11] Would you in your understanding, that condition of security, does it have to wait until the covenant with Antichrist? Do you think that could come about prior to the tribulation beginning?

Tommy Ice: Yes, but it would be a non-propheesied security. Something would lead to that.

Q: When you say non-propheesied security, you mean something we don't know the details about at this point?

Tommy Ice: Exactly, the Six Day War was not propheesied, the Yom Kippur War was not propheesied but it is part of modern Israel's history. Or maybe we have misinterpreted the meaning of security. Maybe they already are somehow secure.

Q: Well, that is as I am sure you are well aware, an area of big debate right now. You know they have a strong military and they have great technology and the people in the land are living for the most part, normal lives.

Tommy Ice: Yes, that is right. In fact, I thought of a scenario where Israel did a pre-emptive attack to keep the lids down, and maybe they are successful, and therefore Iran has lost some of its capability. Although I think Iran is going to hit back with all kinds of stuff including suicide bombers. Let's say that they are successful, then I could see Iran teaming up with Russia. I have been saying for 20 years now, ever since the first Gulf War, in fact I was on PBN with Hal Lindsey the day the first Gulf War ended back in '91. We were talking about all this stuff. I wouldn't go on PBN any more. But nevertheless, you have the fact that Iran and these others, in other words argue the rational that the United States has intervned on behalf of its surrogates in the Middle East for years, it is

time that you, the other great military power, joined us in intervening against Israel. So they would say the precedent was set by the United States' intervention so therefore if they are humbled then let's get this gang of nations to go after Israel.

Q: I have wondered if that could possibly be a precipitating factor, if Israel does go after Iran and Iran says we are not going to take that sitting down, and this alliance could then come together in the aftermath. Of course that is just speculation.

Tommy Ice: I have been reading the last month, the problem with Israel, Ashkenazi, who is the chief of staff, Netanyahu ordered him to prepare for a strike and he wouldn't do it. In a column by the conservative columnist at the Jerusalem Post, she showed that the IDF is not properly prepared for a strike because the brass at the higher level doesn't want to do it. They think it would be a disaster and so Netanyahu appointed this other guy to take his place when his term ran out and this other guy was brought down by some scandal so he had to appoint another person who is now the current chief of staff. She didn't comment on whether she thought he would approve the idea for this or not, but nevertheless it is interesting that all this stuff is going on. But that would, if Israel successfully attacked Iran, then I would see where they would feel at peace. They don't consider the terrorism, I talked to many Israelis over the years, they consider the terrorist more like gnats, and if Iran who is the source of all of the missiles for Hezbollah and Hamas, is taken out, that might impact even the missiles that are shot from the north and south. Within today's geopolitical context that would seem to be a possibility.

Q: [Q10] [Q12] [Q18] What specific factors influence your thinking regarding the timing of this war? Are there any interpretive factors that you can see that would force the fulfillment of this prophecy into the tribulation period? I guess I am thinking of the phrase, "the latter years."

Tommy Ice: I have taught for years and I believe it that the term "the latter years" generally refers to the tribulation, even as early as Deuteronomy chapter 4, which is the first time that it is used. In 25-31 which is the prophetic outline of Israel's future history. Daniel uses it a lot and Ezekiel uses it. It is used 14 or 15 times to refer to I think the 70th week of Daniel but I don't think that is a real problem with my view, because this is in a sense connected with the tribulation, so I wouldn't put it in that way. But I don't think the latter days can include the church age.

Q: So that is why you would put it after the rapture and yet before the tribulation.

Tommy Ice: Yes. That is the whole point of Daniel chapter 12. The nation is in unbelief now, that's why they are in exile in the 6th century B.C., and obviously in anticipation of the rejection of Jesus as the messiah in the first century. The book of Daniel is to be preserved for the Jewish people who in the tribulation will wake up and study the book of Daniel and come to understand it and follow it. That is why it is preserved. That idea of sealing up the book of Daniel has nothing to do with understanding or not understanding the book. I was at a conference with Hal Lindsey 20 years ago when he came out with The Apocalypse Code, and he was trying to say that the book of Daniel was sealed up till

the end times because people could not understand it because it has all this modern technology in there and now because we live in that general time we can understand it. I am sorry, that is talking about the Jews not understanding it because of apostasy and unbelief, not because of modern technology. So any believing person, Jew or Gentile, for the last two and a half thousand years can understand the book of Daniel. It is being sealed up for preservation reasons for the Jews in the tribulation. I have talked with Jews, probably a dozen here on the east coast, and half of them have told me (I like to ask them what is your interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27, the seventy weeks of Daniel prophecy), and half of them have literally told me that their rabbi will not let them study that. They then often go on to talk about how only rabbis can understand the Bible, like the Catholic magisterium, and that we as regular people aren't capable of understanding the Bible. So I think that is what it is talking about. Their eyes are going to go back and forth across the page and they are going to understand and knowledge will increase, their understanding of the book of Daniel, and they will get excited and that will be in the 70th week of Daniel which will lead for many of them to their conversion.

Q: [Q13] Does the doctrine of imminence influence your thinking about the possible timing of this war?

Tommy Ice: Since it is taking place after the rapture, the rapture is imminent whereas the events that happen after the rapture are not. If you get saved after the rapture but before the tribulation starts, you would be able to observe, if it is a public event, the covenant being made. I think it can be either imposed or negotiated and therefore, you would know seven years based on a 365 day calendar when the second coming would occur. In fact in Luke 21 it talks about when you see these events (talking about events at the beginning of the tribulation) the end is not yet. When you see the abomination of desolation (which we know happens at the midpoint) the end is not yet. In verse 28 he says but when you see the sun will be dark and the moon will not give its light, over in Matthew 24 in the parallel passage, that says that is going to happen after the tribulation, so that is the second coming of Christ. He says then look up for your redemption draws near, in other words, he that endures to the end there in the Olivet discourse is referring to Jewish believers who physically don't get killed in the tribulation and make it to the end and they get to go in their mortal bodies in the millennium. So that's what he is talking about. You can see the signs relating to the second coming and so as Walvoord used to say when you are in the mall and you see decorations for Christmas, you know Thanksgiving is near. In other words this is an event. We can see the build up of the events that are going to take place after the rapture and so imminence is left intact. Christ could come at any moment and the rapture is a signless event, but the events that are going to happen after this heighten our expectation and so this is why I believe we are near that time. I had a debate about two years ago in Oxford at the Debating Society and the question was: This house believes the end is nigh. Of course I was the only one that held that view. I gave three reasons. Number one, Israel is back in the land. I called that God's super sign of the end times. The fact that Israel is brought back in the land, you have all these prophecies talking about in the last days this is going to happen for Israel. Secondly, globalism – we have for the first time global consciousness and the whole world is moving toward globalism, especially the intellectuals and the liberal academics are all into globalism at

some level. Thirdly, is the revived Roman empire. The European Union is preparation for the revived Roman empire, it is not a fulfillment of it. We see these three things happening which have never happened before. You can say, well, people have always thought this and they have looked to different things in their culture, and that is true. But these are specific historical events that either are or not. We are not talking about how children are getting worse and relates to apostasy in the church, that's the end of the church age, but instead these are stage setting events and that's the view I hold which I got from Walvoord. You can see the stage being set for the events of the tribulation and you cannot know anything definitely, certainly just the general understanding that we are near the time so what we are watching sign wise are events or preparation for the tribulation knowing that the rapture will occur before that.

Q: Coming back to imminence specifically, we have had some end time events, such as the restoration of the nation of Israel, that have already happened....

Tommy Ice: But that is where I would argue that there are two end time, I agree with Fruchtenbaum, there is a restoration before the tribulation in unbelief, which is what is taking place now, but most of the prophecies talk about Israel, for example, Israel being born in a day was not 1948. It is going to be Israel in the millennium. Most of these talk about Israel in belief and the land. That is why I have had the faculty at Dallas Seminary try to argue that the current Israel is not related to the Bible prophecy.

Q: That's hard to swallow.

Tommy Ice: Yeah, I know, but if you are able to talk to some of the faculty, hardly any of them believe and that is why a lot of them have become pro-Palestinian, a lot of them, which is the politically correct view with evangelicalism, which is the liberal view. They are going liberal in every other area, why not hating Israel? Mark Bailey wrote that thing, Mark is one of the more conservative guys there now, about how modern Israel is not fulfilling Bible prophecy, like 10 or 12 years ago. That is why I argue. I was doing a response to Timothy Weber with Walt Keiser and I argued that there are two end time regatherings: one before the tribulation in unbelief, because I like when I am speaking to ask people in the crowd, "What is one of the conditions that you have to be in order to become a believer?" I said you have to be an unbeliever. [Laughter.] I thought it up. And I say, "I bet everybody here who is a believer used to be an unbeliever." And so if the purpose of the tribulation is to lead to Israel's conversion, then it makes sense that they are brought in unbelief and I have never heard anybody able to answer to that logic, but they could question where these passages like Ezekiel 20 and 22, Zephaniah 2:1-3 and the gradual process of Ezekiel 37 and the dry bones seem to say that. But nevertheless that is the point that they are brought together in unbelief in the last days back to the land, and I think Gog and Magog play a role in their eventual conversion because God starts to act like he did during the exodus, that is Israel's earlier history, supernaturally protect and defend the nation of Israel.

Q: [Q24] It is interesting at the end of chapter 39, I think God is going to use that war to bring the rest of Israel back. It says "I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any

behind” in verse 28. So they are not all there yet, more than ever before, but the day is going to come when God brings them all back, and it seems like this war will even be used to help bring that about.

Tommy Ice: I rank the Gog-Magog War at the end of Chapter 39:20, and I believe :21-29 is not part of the Gog-Magog, instead it is part of the overall theme of those last four or five chapters of the 30’s, bringing Israel. Kind of a summary statement. Then you go into the millennium in chapters 40-48 after all this is done and so he is not going to leave any of the remnant behind. The remnant, of course, all throughout the prophets are the elect Jewish individuals who will be saved. Zechariah 13:8-9 say one third or two thirds, is the debate – their land or earth, if it’s land then those Jews in the land of Israel, if it’s earth, it’s the entire Jewish nation.

[Section 3]

Q: [Q15] How have your views regarding this war impacted your ministry in the area of speaking, teaching, and writing?

Tommy Ice: It has impacted it in the sense that there is an extra urgency, believing, because if you see we are near this, everything revolves around the fact that Israel is back in the land and therefore since this is going to happen, even if it is in the tribulation period, then there is that added urgency that we are suppose to have waiting for Christ. Notice I didn’t say watching, because I think the rapture emphasis is only on waiting for Christ because there are no signs, whereas the second coming passages including 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 related to the tribulation where you can watch for signs. Nevertheless, it heightens our expectations as I was saying earlier and we can sit here and see apparently the preparation for this and it gives us an understanding of history, of why history is flowing and moving in the direction that it is. Something that I have been seeing a lot lately is all these people today like to talk about the kingdom of God this and the kingdom of God that, we are doing this for the kingdom, etc. but when you think about it – the kingdom of God is not going to come in until Israel has arrived. The kingdom of God flows through Israel. I know replacement theology people don’t see it that way, but the fact of the matter is you cannot have the kingdom of God without Israel coming into acceptance of the Messiah. So we see all these geopolitical things happening. So it gives me hope to see that God has fulfilled all these prophecies in the past. For example, like with Christ’s first coming literally, meaning historically, and therefore we see the stage being set today. And whereas many people are very pessimistic and have no meaning and purpose in life. I think that is why you have all the teenage suicides. I don’t think it is just prophecy, I think it is the Bible, the Word of God that gives you meaning and purpose, it gives you direction, and it gives you understanding about why things are always revolving around Israel and the Middle East and these other kinds of things.

Q: Have you seen your personal ministry in speaking, preaching, teaching, and writing you focused on this quite a bit obviously?

Tommy Ice: The exact focus of our ministry is to preach the rapture, but it also says in our purpose statement and related Bible prophecies. Once again it gives an urgency and when you are talking about eschatology as a whole, the fact is that most of the rapture passages references in the New Testament have a present impact on the person. In other words, it will have an ethical implication, and therefore what manner of people ought we to be in all godliness and holiness, etc. when it talks about the eschatology and the fact that Christ could return. Or for example in 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 where he is telling the Thessalonian believers that they don't have to worry about people who have wronged them because God is going to right all the wrongs one day in the second coming. So you have these kinds of impacts that should, to a person who understands and actually implements what the New Testament teaches, you have these kinds of implications that impact you in the present. The general thinking is of we don't want to talk about eschatology because it is the future and it is all going to work out. I have been dealing for the last 20 some years with preterists who believe it has already happened. In fact I have a debate of my own with Gary Demarr and I started the debate with the thing, "it is all going to work out in the end," in other words panmillennialism, and I said, well, what if it already happened. You have to be interested in these things because the Bible is a seamless garment. If you pull out one thread the whole fabric falls apart and so you cannot legitimately take eschatology, which obviously Gog and Magog is part of, and ignore it and expect to be teaching the whole counsel and the Word of God, and expect your people to be properly motivated because eschatology is one of the things that is a big motivation. And so people denude the Bible of eschatology today and all its church growth and all this stuff going on today. First of all they ignore the Bible's warning about apostasy, and they suck up all kinds of false doctrine. Secondly they wonder why their people are not properly motivated because in the New Testament the motivation of the future impacts you in the present. In other words, your view in the future impacts you socially, politically and all of these other kinds of things. So this is the big emphasis nowadays with the younger kids is on social things and what are they doing, they are becoming social liberals and if they really believed the biblical view of Bible prophecy, they would not be doing that because they are misusing the prophets and all of this. So it is like a child who all through his childhood as he is growing up, the focus is on what are you going to be when you grow up, preparation for the future so that when you become an adult you are mature and ready. In the same way we are focused on the future and it impacts us in the present as we live.

Q: **[Q16]** Back up, let's say, 10 years as you thought about all this stuff, how has that given you vision for new ministry? And maybe the Pre-Trib Research Center is part of the answer for that; I don't know.

Tommy Ice: I don't know that it has given me vision of new ministry. It is just part of the total package, the emphasis and vision that I have always had of trying. You see, dispensationalism, pretribulationism and the belief in all this stuff came out of what is called the Bible Conference Movement after the Civil War in the United States. In fact I just got back from a 27 day speaking tour of Great Britain with the Prophetic Witness Movement which began in 1917, the year Israel took over Palestine and the year the Balfour Declaration came out. That is what prompted this movement and it is still going.

The Bible Conference Movement in the United States began to teach this stuff, and it began to teach a more an inductive Bible readings over in Britain that the Brethren started, and it was a certain inductive approach like we have at Dallas in the Bible Exposition Department, which is an institutionalization of the Bible Conference Movement, that you look at books organically, and you argue the book rather than going through from one verse to another verse and you preach a theological sermon about that verse. In other words, you are treating it as literature. That goes back to the Brethren so they are trying to interpret the entire Bible, and as a result, that results in them having to deal with Bible prophecy. And that is why our views have declined today, is not because there is something exegetically wrong or applicationally wrong our view, it's because people have quit Bible exposition. Bible exposition is what gave birth to dispensationalism and our views and that is what sustained it. And now we are seeing the decline of Bible exposition and as a result we are seeing the overall decline of our viewpoint. And so we need to get back to Bible exposition. My goal has always been to understand and teach the Bible, which even R. C Sproul, he told in a personal conversation one time that you cannot interpret 60 percent of the New Testament or two-thirds actually without coming to conclusions about eschatology. Your view of the kingdom impacts how you handle passages.

Q: [Q17] How has your thinking about this coming war and the end of the age impacted your ministry in the area of evangelism?

Tommy Ice: I am 60 years old. I lived through the Jesus movement in the early 70's, and when I went to Dallas Seminary in the late 70's, a significant percentage of the students were there because they got saved through Bible prophecy, most of them through reading "The Late Great Planet Earth." Ron Rhodes would be one example, if you have ever heard of him. He got saved by reading it. Ask him to tell you about it. He was a pretty famous guy, the Rhodes family, he was on all these different TV shows when he was a kid in a band and all this but between Pat Boone's evangelism with him, and mainly reading "The Late Great Planet Earth," is how he became a believer. So the fact of the matter is that there is something about Bible prophecy that when you teach it and talk about it, it seems to relate to what is going on geopolitically so it is easy when you start talking about the news and everything, you can then talk about what God is doing in the world, what God is doing, and the nation of Israel and all of these kinds of things. And that involves judgment and wrath, and so it is easy to bring up the fact that a person is a sinner and in need of grace and salvation, they need deliverance from the tribulation and also from their personal sins. Hal Lindsey told me one time that he had letters from hundreds of thousands of people over the years that have said they accepted Christ. And he said probably 10 to 15 thousand Jewish people who said that they had accepted Christ from reading "The Late Great Planet Earth." Now you have the "Left Behind," a small wave similar to that. And I worked for LaHaye for 18 years and he has all these stories of people who say there is something about knowing that God is sovereign and in control of history. History is moving that way that makes it easy to bring up the gospel. So when you are knowledgeable of prophecy, when you talk about current events and then talk about the broader thing that things are moving in a certain direction, it is so easy to talk about the gospel compared to just bringing it up when you are talking about the weather

or something. And so I think eschatology has led to this. And also I have a book over here called "These Last Days." It is from Presbyterian Reform Publishing which tells you automatically that it has amil, and maybe a little postmil in it, and there is an article in here by Jeffrey Jue, he is an American of oriental extraction. He grew up on the West Coast, and his father was a Presbyterian minister, and he had never heard of dispensationalism until he went to college and everybody was a dispensationalist. I like the guy because I read his doctoral dissertation which was on Joseph Mead and it was excellent even though it cost \$110 but nevertheless, he talks in here about how people who believe in dispensationalism have always been tremendous evangelists, more than the average Christian.

Q: That's an interesting statement.

Tommy Ice: It is. For whatever reason, and he says that is why dispensationalism spread, because people at a higher number dispensationalists. I don't know if it is true anymore, but it used to be true. Dispensationalists went to the mission fields, ran the rescue missions and all of this kind of stuff and this is something just about everybody recognizes. Even George Ladd makes a statement about how dispensationalists were the greatest lovers of the Bible, even though he can't stand the theology. You have these kinds of statements from even our enemies when they get honest. I have never heard a preterist or a reconstructionist say anything like that because they will never say anything good about us. This is generally the case, and I have got stuff by Samuel J. Andrews, for example, who graduated from Princeton back in the late 1800's and he was a dispensationalist and he was talking about how in his class of 24, there were seven premillennialists, and all seven volunteered for the mission field and none of the other students did. That was back when postmillennialism was big and supposedly premillennialism and dispensationalism did not lead to evangelism, but postmillennialism did, and he was pointing out how they have always been evangelists. And so the point is, how did dispensationalism get spread all around the world if it wasn't out there engaging people and spreading and teaching the gospel. But this postmodern way is destroying theology as a whole. I think it is just a round of apostasy and so we are seeing what you had when the enlightenment came in, before the enlightenment even scholars were interested in eschatology. After the enlightenment, they ceased to be interested, only lay people and clergy who were not interested in that. Why, because if you buy into the enlightenment then believing in the book of Revelation as a prophecy book requires supernatural things so we are seeing a whole another wave of evangelicals today, as these people are all moving toward critical scholarship, then they are losing interest in eschatology because they don't see it as relevant. They have all these different reasons but that is always what happens you see the enlightenment influences come in, and in this sense it's mysticism, it's existentialism that is leading to man putting his authority over the Word of God that always leads to a de-emphasis in eschatology. We are seeing a whole new wave of this in our lifetime.

Q: It is amazing when we were so close to the fulfillment of all these things, you would think everybody would be getting interested.

Tommy Ice: You would think people who were in the tribulation themselves would be interested. Yet not one of the earth dwellers comes to faith in Christ.

[Section 4]

Q: [Q19] I have a few questions about the timing of the war. As I am wrestling through the possibilities for the placement of this war, one view that, for example, Mark Hitchcock holds, that it is in the first half of the tribulation. During that period, the Antichrist is still honoring his covenant with Israel, and I am not sure of all the nature of that covenant but if it is basically his guarantee of protection for Israel or whatever, how could he allow this invasion to take place while he is still honoring that covenant? Have you given any thought to that?

Tommy Ice: No, I have never heard that. That is a good point. That is an excellent point. But the reason why I think Mark's view is so popular is two reasons: Number one, is the peace which is a pseudo-peace which you have in Israel, not in the rest of the world. And secondly, as Mark, who wrote his master's thesis on Daniel 9 or something, or Daniel 11, I can't remember, believes that the king of the north is also part of this invasion. I don't, because the king of the north is Syria, historically and not the uttermost north. If you make those two connections, Hal Lindsey held that view for example. Of course Walvoord and Ryrie and Pentecost all held that view, that is why I call it the Dallas view, which I am just saying I don't accept that view, but on the other hand, I don't know of any other eschatological view that I have held, where I realize that I have problems. I don't really know and I rarely say that. I have strong convictions on most of these things, but I don't really know the timing of this. But in the last days I do think it has to be related to the tribulation in some way. I know it is not Armageddon, because there are just so many differences. Part of my logic is what you have here is a regional invasion at the beginning of the tribulation, or even before the tribulation, and what that does is removes Islam and Russia from the geopolitical picture, and that enables E.U., the revived Roman empire, to come in and dominate. The United States apparently has become passive...

Q: We're getting there already.

Tommy Ice: Exactly. That's not hard to envision. And then that leads to the E.U. coming in and making the covenant. [Q25] And I also believe that John Witcomb made a comment in his commentary on Daniel that he thinks the two witnesses in the first half of the tribulation are going to oversee the rebuilding of the temple.

Q: [Q20] Okay, I have a question about the temple. What about the statement in 38:20 that the earthquake will cause "every wall to fall" in the land? Would that not destroy whatever building is standing on the Temple Mount, either the Dome of the Rock or the Temple? If the war is during the first half of the tribulation, wouldn't it destroy the Temple? But it can't destroy it, or at least they would have to rebuild it, because we know the Antichrist enters that at the mid-point. But if the war happened prior to the tribulation,

could it not clear the way for the rebuilding of the Temple, because the Dome of the Rock goes to rubble?

Tommy Ice: You know the presence of the Dome of the Rock, which Randall Price and I wrote a book in the 1992 called “Ready to Rebuild.” And he is a big expert on it, and we found that in the earliest Islamic traditions it was built to commemorate the Jewish Temple.

Q: Really? I never heard that. Wow!

Tommy Ice: Because the Jews hated the Byzantine Christians who were in control of Jerusalem for 300 years cause they treated them like dirt, and then when the Muslims came in they were a new movement and they schemed with the Muslims to take over Jerusalem. The Muslims thought it was a temporary time of goodwill for about 15 years, because they thought they could convert the Jews. But nevertheless, Omar built first a wooden copula where the temple had been because the Byzantine Christians had profaned it...

Q: Is that the Dome of the Spirits over there? Is that what they call that?

Tommy Ice: No, that came later. We are talking about the Temple Mount Platform, there was nothing on it basically. It was covered with human refuse and dung for a couple hundred years to profane it because they believed that Christianity superseded Judaism, and Judaism would never build the temple again, in fact that is why Julian the apostate attempted to rebuild the temple in mid 300’s to disprove Christianity because Christianity was so tied into the idea that the Jews were forever replaced by the church, and therefore one of the ways to disprove Christianity in the 4th century was to rebuild the temple. So they attempted that and it didn’t happen so they piled dung for a couple hundred years and the Jews could not get within a mile of Temple Mount on the penalty of death. So they helped the Muslims and Omar build a strange building, not a mosque, called the Dome of the Rock. Later it was upgraded to eventually what it was and so we explain in our book how it was meant to preserve the site of the Temple, because the Muslims believe that the Temple would be rebuilt one day at that point. And also Omar was trying to start (this was early in Islam) a rival to Mecca there in Jerusalem. He didn’t succeed. And only in the last 75 to 100 years have they changed the interpretation that the Al Aqsa, the far place, was the Temple Mount. Before it was thought to be Medina, the furthest mosque. I forgot where I was going with that.

Q: I was asking about the statement, “Every wall will fall,” and what that might do to whatever is standing on the Temple Mount, and the possibility of the war of Gog and Magog paving the way for the rebuilding of the temple.

Tommy Ice: They have had earthquakes in the past, and they simply rebuilt it, so the destruction of the Dome of the Rock won’t solve anything. Israel has to have the political will to build the temple, and they are not going to do it under any current scenario. In fact that is what my current article is. If Israel is going to have political will, and that is where

the two witnesses thing could come in, because as Whitcomb suggests, they have the power to call down fire from heaven and all this. Nobody can mess with them, and they could oversee the rebuilding of the temple in the first 3½ years and protect it. And so when God allows them to be removed, that is when the Antichrist goes into this rebuilt temple and sets his image up.

Q: [Q22] In the finale of this war, God will supernaturally deliver the Jews and destroy her enemies, which all the world will be forced to acknowledge. If that occurs near the end of the first half of the tribulation, it doesn't make sense to me that everybody goes, "Wow, look how God delivered the Jews," and then the Antichrist turns around and institutes the biggest persecution of the Jews ever. It would make more sense to me if there would be a little bit of time in there, give the world time to forget how God stood for the Jews. So I'm wondering if you had ever considered that.

Tommy Ice: No, I never thought of that specifically, but I was saying earlier that I think what you have is a regional attempt to destroy the Jews. Why do they want to destroy the Jews? Because, I agree with Fruchtenbaum and others who have said, it is part of the struggle, that is what Revelation 12 is all about, the struggle between the sea and the serpent, it has been going on. Look at Robert Thomas' commentary on that. He gives a whole list of history of that, and what you have then is this is Satan's last attempt, if he can destroy the Jews then he can prevent the second coming because the second coming requires the Jews to recognize that Jesus is the Messiah and call on him to save them. I think that is what is going on in Romans 10, where he quotes Joel, whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved, and they say, "how shall they call on him who they have not believed, how shall they believe him of whom they have not heard and how shall they hear without a preacher?" So he is using reverse logic back from the outcome of calling the rescue to occur, and then they have to believe so that is the point, they are going to believe, and they are going to call and the two witnesses and others are going to be involved in the evangelism. So Satan's last hope is to prevent the second coming and therefore you have the Gog-Magog invasion at the beginning of the tribulation and that doesn't work so Armageddon is where he brings up all the armies of the world, surely this will work. I like to juxtapose them to Gog and Magog, and so his regional approach didn't work, but surely all the armies of the world are going to be able to destroy the Jews. In fact I think it is in Matthew 24 that says all flesh would be destroyed if it wasn't for the intervention of God, and so God comes to the rescue.

Q: I guess at this point in my understanding I think this war is going to be pretribulation the same as you. I am not sure if it is before or after the rapture, I guess I could see it either way. One area of question I have, if it is after the rapture, as in your view, so then that means that you have a 3½ year period at least between the rapture and the beginning of the great tribulation period. So I am trying to get my mind around that, if it is Daniel 70th week where God is dealing with Israel, specifically during those seven years, why would the church be raptured out 3½ plus years before the beginning of that?

Tommy Ice: Because you are not going to have prophecy relating to Israel being fulfilled during the church age.

Q: So then 1948 isn't part of that fulfillment?

Tommy Ice: That is not a specific fulfillment. Show me a passage that that fulfills. In other words, that is a specific deduction from, in other words when we talk about the tribulation period, it pictures the Jews back from the land, it pictures the Jews in control of Israel, it pictures the Jews having a temple. But there is no prophecy that specifically says that, so that is a deduction that we draw that Israel has to be back in the land. And you have passages like Ezekiel 20 and 22 talking about them being brought back into the land before the tribulation, before the time of wrath occurs. So I see all of this as preparation for a fulfillment.

Q: What about the prophecies in Ezekiel 36 and 37 where it says God is going to bring the Jews from the nations and bring them back to the land and he is going to rebuild the ruined cities and the land that was devastated will be restored. Wouldn't you describe that as a fulfillment that is at least in process right now?

Tommy Ice: It is in process but not fulfilled.

Q: Why is it not fulfilled?

Tommy Ice: Because it is not completed. It is in the process and there are a lot of things mentioned in there, I am going to put them into a furnace like a guy who melts metal, that is tribulation itself, so it is basically saying he is going to bring them in before the tribulation and of course that is going on and it will continue to go on after the rapture, I think up until the time that the tribulation starts. So there is not one prophecy that we can say has been fulfilled, past tense. There is the regathering that is taking place, and I would argue that you have precedent for that because you had the dispersion taking place in the church age. You did have the fulfillment of the thing, but that is part of the transition period in the book of Acts. But I don't think you can have, you certainly can't have the 70th week, which I think you would agree, in the church age. And so I am in fact writing a whole series of articles now called "Consistent Biblical Futures" where I am showing where all of these hangovers from historicism are becoming more and more out of control, where people want to bring in fulfillment of prophecies before the tribulation begins, or they are linking it over into the church age. For example, Grant Jeffrey in his 38 Fulfillments that are happening today. I remember we were at a conference together and he preached that sermon that not one of them was being fulfilled today. What is happening is preparation for the fulfillment.

Q: So that would your view then, that it is not a fulfillment it is a preparation for the fulfillment.

Tommy Ice: Of course, because when are these things going to take place? In the tribulation. Are we in the tribulation? No.

Q: What about the Antichrist has to make a covenant with Israel, so don't you have to have Israel restored as a nation for him to be able to make that covenant?

Tommy Ice: Yes. And that is why Clarence Larkin, for example, in 1911 when his book came out, postulated that there was going to be a 50 year period in between the rapture and the tribulation, because you had to have all of these events occur. Babylon had to be rebuilt, Israel had to come back to the land, etc. And so historically tribulationists have believed in the gap between rapture and, see the rapture theologians ends the church age, but it does not begin the tribulation. And you have 2 Thessalonians 2 that says but the mystery of iniquity doth already work has been restrained, and that refers specifically to the man of lawlessness. So that is why we see all these people, millions of people who could be the Antichrist. But I would argue that the Antichrist comes from the security based on the little horn in Daniel chapter seven that comes up amongst the ten horns. So somebody we know today who is famous can't be the Antichrist, because this guy comes out of nowhere. So you have to have, before you can have the covenant based on the book of Daniel, the formation of the ten nations of confederacy. Then you have the little horn that comes up and he takes over that ten nation confederacy, seven through negotiation and three militarily, to create the ten nation confederacy. Then he is in a position to make a covenant. So you have to have a period of at least months for those kinds of events to occur. And therefore it makes sense to me that Gog and Magog would happen during the interval after the rapture. Tim LaHaye pictures it happening before the rapture. I just can't buy that. I used to could have, but the more I look at these kinds of things, and I guess it is my studies in church history when you see the transition from historicism that dominated up to the mid 1800's, and premillennialism and then the shift of futurism and as is typical when you have any system shift, and by the way the early church was futurist and historicism wasn't developed till around 1200, then you have residue that you bring over with you. The idea that Rome is Babylon is pure historicism, and this is why as early as the 1830's you have, oh I forget his name, it was a Brethren who was a rival of Darby, comes up with Babylon as Babylon. You have the Olivet Discourse. I disagree with Walvoord and Fruchtenbaum and all these people that the first 9 verses or the first 12 verses refer to the inter-advent age. No, verses 4 through 31 will refer to the tribulation period, because the tribulation period is when the birth thing start. Because you go to the Old Testament in Isaiah and Jeremiah and you have the birth things and those are all related to the tribulation. You go to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and the birth pangs are related to the tribulation. You go to Revelation chapter 6, everybody believes that is the start of the tribulation in 6:1 with the Antichrist coming on the white horse, except Zane Hodges, but he is dead now. He always took weird views. He even held to a 65 day, the only futurist that I know, him and his groupies that followed him. I'm a free grace guy; so Zane, he and I would agree with the theological outcome of free grace, I think the guy had weird interpretations of passages. So what you have is the parallel of the first five seal judgments that parallel exactly the order of events that Christ talks about in the Olivet Discourse so it makes better sense, and I first ran across this view after I left seminary, from Pentecost and his Things to Come, Gabelein holds this view also, that this refers to the tribulation period. If that is true then earthquakes and famines are not prophetically significant because they are referring to events that happen in the tribulation. So that is another big rub. That is a hangover from, I have 200

commentaries on Matthew, a bunch on these others as well. You read all these historicist's commentaries, and I can see where futurists reading all of these things just pull these interpretations in, without making a clear break. And then I realized Dr. Chafer held that view and Walvoord held that view and things like that. I think that that is inconsistent with futurism, to not take the entire Olivet Discourse to refer to the tribulation period.

Q: So if we back up and summarize, you would say as far as between the rapture and the start of the tribulation, not only could there be some time there, but you would say there needs to be some time between those two events for the last remaining things to fall into place.

Tommy Ice: Yes.

Q: How long is an open question, you are saying at least 3½ years?

Tommy Ice: I don't necessarily think that, but that is what Fruchtenbaum thinks. We had a debate at Pre-Trib about 12 years ago between Fruchtenbaum and Hitchcock on the timing of this and everybody agrees regardless of who is right that Fruchtenbaum just killed Mark. Mark is a very good debater. Arnold is very dogmatic but he is brilliant. Nevertheless so is Mark. I wrote a 29 article series on Gog and Magog, and I softened my view of the timing after doing this because I realized, then I think Mark has got problems as we were saying with his view and Mark agrees. Mark is very open. He has a conviction about his timing of his view but he is open.

Q: As I've been devouring everything I can read on this for the last couple years, one thing I've realized is that there is no view that doesn't have problems. And I think it's important, I have my own position, but I have to even hold that loosely, because we cannot say it quite so precisely as we would like.

Tommy Ice: I agree with Ron Rhodes on pretty much everything he wrote.

Q: He presented it very gently. I thought he did a masterful job with that.

Tommy Ice: I agree, he did an excellent job on that. I never forget Elliott Johnson, in our second year, this will be our 20th anniversary coming up in December for our Pre-Trib Study Group, he did a paper our second year arguing that Gog and Magog is going to take place in the millennium, in the first part of the millennium, and Walvoord just savaged him. Walvoord machine gunned all these questions and Johnson said, "I can't answer them. You're Dr. Walvoord; I don't know these things." That's just a ridiculous view, in my opinion. Harold Hoehner, where did he put it? He has an article.

Q: He splits it between the first half of the tribulation and second half. He doesn't see it as one continuous prophecy. He looks at it differently.

Tommy Ice: I don't buy that approach. I don't buy splitting prophecies just because you have a hard time. It doesn't make sense.

Dwight Pentecost Interview

July 19, 2011 (by telephone)

[Section 1]

Dwight Pentecost: First let me outline my perspective and then you can ask questions. I believe the Tribulation begins somewhat after the rapture with the making of the covenant by the prince who shall come, the Antichrist, makes that covenant with Israel. That seems to be Antichrist is the head of the reconstructed Roman empire. He guarantees Israel's security in the face of Muslim threats so that Israel thinks they are at peace. The prophet says, "Peace, peace, there is no peace." That covenant lasts for 3½ years. The rise of Antichrist I put in the first seal, then about the middle of the Tribulation period, that covenant is broken and that is when Gog and Magog takes place.

Q: So right at the mid-point of the Tribulation.

Dwight Pentecost: Approximately at the mid-point of the Tribulation period, when God moves in and destroys that invasion. Gog is the commander of many nations, Persia, Ethiopia, Libya, and Egypt. So I take it those are the Muslim nations. That leaves a political vacuum and that is when Antichrist becomes head of a one world government in the last half of the Tribulation. So from Revelation 13 he is going to have a one world government, one world religion, and a one world economy. He is imitating the reign of Christ. He has universal power. Then what is often overlooked is Revelation 16 at the end of the Tribulation, nations that were east of the Euphrates River decide to move against Antichrist whose headquarters is in Jerusalem and that is the second great wave of invasion. Often those two are made synonymous.

Q: This invasion, the Revelation 16 one and the Gog and Magog invasion you are saying is often made synonymous.

Dwight Pentecost: Yes, they are confused so they see only one invasion when really there are two. Gog is demonstrating his right to rule in the middle of the Tribulation period and then again demonstrates his right to rule in overthrowing the Antichrist's regime at the end of the Tribulation. That is the scene as I see it.

Q: [Q1] Based on your familiarity with this prophecy, do you think it is possible that Ezekiel's war could be approaching soon?

Dwight Pentecost: Well what I see is that now Russia of course is no longer the USSR but what I didn't realize until it was over is that probably two-thirds of what was the USSR was Muslim.

Q: [Q3] So it fits in with the rest of the Muslim nations that are part of this coalition.

Dwight Pentecost: All the "istans" were Muslim. Now that hasn't changed and even though the USSR is not united, Russia is dominant in that area of the world over Muslim

nations and is supporting Iran with their missiles and things like that. So I still see Russia as being a dominant force in the Arab world or the Muslim world.

Q: [Q4] Do you see any indicators that modern day Russia would engage in such a war against Israel?

Dwight Pentecost: I don't have any question about it.

Q: [Q3] Could you comment on the alliances given in Ezekiel's prophecy and any correlation with current alliances existing or being built in the world today?

Dwight Pentecost: Those are all Muslim nations and so they are tied together from religion. There doesn't have to be a formal political alliance. They belong together because of their Muslim religion that is of course bent on the extermination of Israel.

Q: [Q5] Do you see any alignment between current events in Iran and the details of this prophecy?

Dwight Pentecost: Only that they are allied together.

Q: [Q6] How do you see Iran's nuclear ambitions playing into this scenario?

Dwight Pentecost: Only that they are bent on exterminating Israel. That isn't mentioned in Ezekiel but it says that God is going to destroy that coalition of nations to defend Israel and to demonstrate to the nations that he is the God of Israel.

Q: [Q7] While Islam is not mentioned specifically in Ezekiel's prophecy, the coalition coming against Israel in Ezekiel 38-39 is almost completely Islamic. Can you comment on how current Islamic thought may contribute to the fulfillment of this prophecy?

Dwight Pentecost: You have to take it all the way back to Ishmael.

Q: So you are likening it to that long standing animosity between the descendents of Isaac and the descendents of Ishmael.

Dwight Pentecost: Yes, that is the origin of it, and long before Mohammed came along, Ishmael hated Israel and you see that when Israel was released from Egyptian bondage. It was the descendents of Ishmael that tried to prevent their getting into the land so that doesn't go to the Arab world and that is why I have a tendency to leave Arab out of my vocabulary and I would rather talk about the Muslim world than the Arab world.

Q: [Q8] Radical Islamic eschatology parallels biblical prophecy in many ways. Are you aware of any ways in which Islamic eschatology may contribute to the fulfillment of this prophecy?

Dwight Pentecost: They have the goal of bringing the world under the power of the Islamic messiah, and so to me that fits in with this whole scene in Ezekiel.

[Section 2]

Q: [Q9] Let me ask you a little bit about your understanding of the timing of this war and how it fits in. You have it at the mid-point of the Tribulation, so specify that a little bit. Is it just before the mid-point?

Dwight Pentecost: Approximately. To me, the middle of the Tribulation period doesn't refer to a 24 hour day because Daniel says that the covenant of Israel with the Antichrist is for 3½ years before it is broken. So I see seal #1 covering essentially the first half of the Tribulation period, where Israel thinks they are at peace. Then the second seal through six occur almost simultaneously as a result of that war and that invasion, and that is when Antichrist can take over because that coalition has been removed.

Q: So that kind of opens the door for him. Now when he goes in and desecrates the temple at the mid-point of the Tribulation, that is basically when he breaks off his treaty that he made with Israel. You had said at the start of the conversation that the Antichrist would guarantee Israel's security in the face of Muslim threats and this invasion is a huge Muslim threat so you would say that as long as he is guaranteeing their security, this war couldn't take place. Is that accurate?

Dwight Pentecost: Yes that is my idea. The Antichrist is the appointed or elected head of the ten nations that emerged out of the old Roman empire. Revelation 17. So you have essentially the western world against the eastern world.

Q: [Q10] What other factors influence your thinking regarding the timing of this war?

Dwight Pentecost: The fact that Israel considers themselves at peace.

Q: So you would say that won't happen until the Antichrist makes that covenant with them.

Dwight Pentecost: That is right. I see a period of time between the Rapture and the making of the covenant.

Q: I want to ask you about that. I was talking with Tommy Ice earlier today and he was saying the same thing. He says there almost has to be some length of time between the Rapture and the making of that covenant.

Dwight Pentecost: Yes. Now look at the way nations establish agreements and especially with Israel because Antichrist comes along and offers his support for Israel against the Muslims and so they refer to the Knesset. The Knesset will argue. They will bargain to get the most out of it and then they have to set up a time when it becomes operative and that is going to take time and the fact that Antichrist is going to establish his headquarters

and the head of his one world government in Jerusalem means that is going to take a lot of doing.

Q: [Q11] There are some who would say that Israel is living securely in the land right now but you would say that doesn't fulfill the condition described in Ezekiel.

Dwight Pentecost: No, not when hundreds of missiles are being dropped regularly on Israel from Syria, from Gaza. They are in the land but they are not at peace.

Q: [Q12] [Q18] Some of the terminology in Ezekiel for example, the phrase "the latter years or the latter days," how do you understand that phrase?

Dwight Pentecost: I take it that ultimately "latter days" refers to the 70th week of Daniel, which begins with the covenant. Now there have been disclosures of latter days, what the latter days will be like when you take under Babylon or Antiochus Epiphanes. Those were foreshadowings of the latter days. I take that ultimately those are events sort of warning Israel of what it will be like unless they shape up.

Q: Would you say that the use of that phrase in Ezekiel 36 forces the fulfillment of this prophecy into the tribulation period?

Dwight Pentecost: Yes.

Q: [Q13] Does the doctrine of imminence influence your thinking about the possible timing of this war?

Dwight Pentecost: It is something that could happen at any time because an antagonistic Ishmael coalition always existed.

Q: I am thinking about another great event in 1948 when Israel was reborn as a modern nation. By the way, I believe in the imminence of the rapture as well. And yet there has been at least a partial fulfillment (maybe you would argue with that) of Ezekiel 36 and 37 with the Jews coming back to the land, the land being restored, Israel once possessing the mountains of Israel, and so forth. In hindsight we can look back and see that that happened prior to the rapture of the church without negating imminence. Is that because if whatever events need to take place, they could just as well take place after the rapture of the church, they don't have to be before?

Dwight Pentecost: You see when you try to put Old Testament prophecy in relationship to the rapture, you are putting two extraneous things together because the church isn't in the Old Testament, the rapture isn't in the Old Testament. So to relate these Old Testament prophecies to a New Testament prophecy is linking together what doesn't belong together.

Q: [Q14] In Ezekiel 38 and 39 in the outcome of this war, Ezekiel describes seven months when they are going to be burying the dead bodies and seven years when they are going to be burning the implements of war. How do you see that fitting into the scenario?

Dwight Pentecost: Again, I see a period of time between the close of the tribulation period and the actual inauguration of the millennial kingdom, an indeterminate period of time.

Q: So this burning of the weapons and the burial of the bodies could take place during that period then?

Dwight Pentecost: Yes, because as a result of these invasions, particularly the second invasion, there is no Jerusalem, because it has been destroyed, and to have a royal city from which Messiah reigns is going to take some cleaning up, some reconstruction. That is where I see the building of the new temple.

Q: So looking at it from a dispensational perspective, you say there can be transitional periods between the dispensations. For example, the church age ends at the rapture of the church but the Tribulation will begin some indeterminate period after that and then the same thing after the Tribulation there could be another transitional period before the millennial period begins.

Dwight Pentecost: Yes.

[Section 3]

Q: [Q15] How have your views regarding this war impacted your ministry in the area of speaking, teaching, and writing?

Dwight Pentecost: Let me say that 20 years ago, maybe 25 when I was invited to speak at a Bible conference, it always was on prophecy and it was easy to do it and it always gave a good hearing. Well then Hal Lindsey got us in trouble because he began to predict the date of the rapture and he proved to be wrong and so he reviewed the duration of the generation. He got in trouble over Matthew 24 and then he had the generation 40 years, then he had it up to 70 years. And it came and went and the rapture didn't take place and so he did a lot of rethinking. People began to laugh at the prophetic subject and I am rarely asked to speak on that now.

Q: You have written a lot on the subject over the years.

Dwight Pentecost: Yes, but of the 20 books that I published only 3 are distinctly devoted to prophecy.

Q: Do you still teach at the seminary?

Dwight Pentecost: Well, I hold classes. [Laughter.] I finished my 56th year and they assigned me two more classes in the fall so I am looking forward to it.

Q: What are you teaching this fall?

Dwight Pentecost: I am teaching the book of Hebrews and Transitional Problems in the book of Acts.

Q: [Q16] What about vision for new ministry? As a result of your thinking about this war, or the proximity of other end times events, have you begun or considered any new areas of ministry?

Dwight Pentecost: I don't know that I would use the word "new."

Q: You are saying that areas of ministry that you had already been involved in, you just continued your involvement with those?

Dwight Pentecost: Yes. I think in my conference ministry I am dealing more with the Christian life, living out Christ. My public ministry has almost ceased. In the first place I am just not physically able to get around like I used to.

Q: Well you have quite a few books and magazines, countless of those to your name.

Dwight Pentecost: Yes, but physical limitations make it impossible for me to take on a lot of these traveling ministries like I used to do. I am concentrating on Christian life and Christian living.

Q: [Q17] Finally, how has your thinking about this coming war and the end of the age impacted your ministry in the area of evangelism?

Dwight Pentecost: I have emphasized that all through, even when I was involved in prophecy, I got it from Dr. Barnhouse. He said you will not find a passage concerning the second coming of Christ, particularly in the Epistles, where it is not followed by a "wherefore" or "therefore." And it is always an exhortation to godliness so that revelation concerning the prophetic program was the great inspiration for godliness in the Christian life.

Q: [Q19] Many Bible scholars, like Mark Hitchcock for example, put the war someplace in the first half of the tribulation and you stated in the beginning that part of that covenant with Israel is that the Antichrist guarantees Israel's security in the face of Muslim threats. So in your mind would that prohibit this invasion from taking place while the Antichrist was still honoring that covenant?

Dwight Pentecost: It depends on how you divide up the seals. What we have always done is give them equal time and so we divide the first half of the tribulation period into six equal segments. I rather see the first seal, the rise of Antichrist taking place in the

beginning of the tribulation and then he inaugurates a period of peace that stretches over most of the first half of the tribulation period. But then the invasion comes so the seals two through six take place almost simultaneously at approximately the end of the first half.

Q: Which involves this Gog and Magog War. Is that correct?

Dwight Pentecost: Yes. Now that Gog War would be under seal number two. But when in the first half of the tribulation does it start? If you make them all equal in time, that is evidently what Mark does.

Q: [Q19] I couldn't answer that for sure. That is one question I have had. If it was at some point during the first half, how could that happen if the Antichrist was honoring his covenant of protection over Israel? How could he allow this invasion to take place?

Dwight Pentecost: Well, the Antichrist is not the author of the war, he gets the brunt of it because Gog is trying to take over the power of Antichrist.

Q: So then you would say that it is possible, at least as far as that factor, that the Antichrist could still be honoring that treaty to protect Israel or the treaty that he has with Israel and war could still come during that time.

Dwight Pentecost: Yes.

Q: [Q20] In Ezekiel 38:20 in part of the miraculous conclusion of that war where God intervenes to deliver Israel from this invasion, it says that "every wall to fall." I have turned that phrase over and over in my head that this earthquake will cause every wall to fall and then wondered what that would do to whatever building is standing on the Temple Mount. If this was per chance prior to the tribulation then the Dome of the Rock would fall, if it was during the tribulation then it would cause the Temple itself to be destroyed. Have you given any thought to the significance of that phrase?

Dwight Pentecost: It has to do with protection or defense, and so Israel will be left without any defense and I didn't try to specify to a particular building.

Q: That is a new thought for me. So when it is talking about every wall will fall, that is talking about walls of protection or defense, not necessarily every structure?

Dwight Pentecost: Yes.

Q: [Q22] In the finale of this war, God will supernaturally deliver the Jews and destroy her enemies, which all the world will be forced to acknowledge. If that occurs at the mid-point of the tribulation, the whole world will just have seen God destroy those who came against the Jews but at the mid-point of the tribulation, the Antichrist would immediately launch another severe persecution of the Jews?

Dwight Pentecost: Right and that is when they have to leave the land and the nations open up their mouths and give them refuge. That is why the regathering is from the four corners of the earth.

Q: I guess my question is, of course the Antichrist is a pretty bad fellow obviously, but after he has just seen the enemies of Israel destroyed how can he turn around the very next day and launch another persecution against the Jews?

Dwight Pentecost: Because he is Satan's masterpiece of deception.

Q: I know there is no one who even compares to him in wickedness.

Q: [Q24] Do you see the last part of chapter 39:21-29, some people consider that part of the war of Gog and Magog, others say it is more of a general summary of the whole thing. But in verse 28 it says "then they will know that I am the Lord their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind." As I read that, now maybe you have a different view, it looks to me like God is going to use this war to gather the last of the Jews from wherever they are among the nations and bring them back to the land.

Dwight Pentecost: I wouldn't say this will happen, not because of the war but in spite of the war. In Matthew 24:30, he will send his angels to regather the elect from the four corners of the earth and that is the regathering that 39:28 is talking about.

Q: My question is how could that happen at the conclusion of that war, because that is right when the Jews are fleeing out of the land because of this persecution?

Dwight Pentecost: They flee in the middle of the tribulation and they remain outside the land for the last half of the tribulation period and then with the kings of the east coming against Antichrist, both the armies of the kings of the east and of Antichrist are destroyed.

Q: So you would say that the regathering in verse 28 is not happening in days immediately following the war, it would be looking ahead toward the end of the tribulation?

Dwight Pentecost: I take it that that will be after the second advent.

Q: Ok, that makes sense. I did not consider that side of it.

Dwight Pentecost: The second advent is God's final judgment on Satan and Satan's kingdom. He is coming as judge, and he is coming to defend Israel. He wipes out the kings of the east and the armies of Antichrist. Now the land is empty.

Q: So that's when the regathering from the four corners of the world would be concluded?

Dwight Pentecost: I would parallel Ezekiel 39:28 and Matthew 24:30. His angels will gather together his elect from the four corners. When were they scattered to the four corners? During the tribulation.

Q: You wouldn't equate that scattering with the Diaspora that has been effect for a couple thousand years?

Dwight Pentecost: No. You see that is only a continuation of that present Diaspora. He came back temporarily but they are brought back to be scattered again.

Q: So that is a much more recent Diaspora.

Dwight Pentecost: Yes.

Q: [Q25] Do you see any ways in which the movement toward the construction of the third Jewish Temple ties in with this prophecy?

Dwight Pentecost: Yes. First of all let me say, I hold a very narrow view on that thing of rebuilding the temple. I never took a trip to Israel (I have done it a dozen times) that the people didn't ask me at home, "See what you can find out about rebuilding the temple." Because they felt the temple had to be rebuilt before the rapture could happen because when Antichrist comes, he sits in the temple of God declaring that he is god. So it was widely held, you couldn't have the rapture until there was a Jewish temple for Antichrist to occupy. I go back to Daniel and it says, "He will set up his palace or his headquarters in the holy mountain." So I don't see Antichrist sitting in a Jewish temple. His headquarters becomes his economic, his political, and his religious center, and my feeling has always been that God would not claim as his own a building as a successor to Solomon's temple that unbelieving Israel built.

Q: So do you not see a temple in the tribulation then, or not one that lasts?

Dwight Pentecost: No. I don't see a Jewish temple.

Q: So you don't think the third temple will be rebuilt until after the tribulation is concluded?

Dwight Pentecost: That's Messiah's work. On one trip I took to Israel, I got there on Saturday, the day that a convention of 1600 Orthodox rabbis adjourned a week long meeting. They had come from all over the world to discuss the question, "Should Israel build a temple?" The Jerusalem Post published their conclusion. They said that Israel should not build a temple. They do not have the proper geographical location because the Dome of the Rock was there and if they dismantled it would precipitate such a war on the part of the Arabs. The second reason that if they build it nobody could trace his levitical lineage to be able to function in it so they would have a building but no one to do anything. The third reason, according to prophecy, that was to be the work of Messiah and they should leave it to Messiah when he came to build it.

Q: So they don't think they can rebuild one?

Dwight Pentecost: No. So what they decided was to build what they call the Great Synagogue which would be the center for world Judaism and they have done that. It is built just outside the Damascus Gate.

Q: You say there is no temple during the tribulation itself.

Dwight Pentecost: I am looking at 2 Thessalonians 2. He as God will sit in the temple of God as God. What I do instead of putting a capital G, he said sit in the temple of God, I use a small g.

Q: So when it is God's temple, it is god's temple with a small g.

Dwight Pentecost: He claims to be god and therefore it is his temple or his headquarters and so when in Daniel I read, "and his palace," I take it that is the headquarters of his economy, political and religion and has nothing to do with a Jewish temple.

Q: So then this whole abomination of desolation really is not like what Antiochus Epiphanes did where he desecrated the Jewish temple.

Dwight Pentecost: No.

Randall Price Interview

August 1, 2011 (by telephone)

Q: Before we begin, tell me just a little bit about this trip to Turkey you have coming.

Randall Price: Not a lot of people know a great deal about it. This actually started in 2008. We had satellite data that indicated that there two anomalies on Mount Ararat that many had sought but never found because the technology didn't exist and now it did. We went. It has taken 2008, 2009, 2010, three years and trips to the top of Ararat, each of those years working to get to the place where we are today. That is that we have really good satellite data and we did onsite ground penetrating radar to indicate these anomalies. Not just anomalies we have one piece that is 420 feet long, the other one is 80 feet long and another piece that is 60 feet long although the debris trails have taken some of that, but the dimensions of it really fit what we have in the Bible. It is organic and it is man-made, the shapes don't occur in nature, and it's between 31 and 55 feet under the glacier, which we have to dig down to. So that has been part of the efforts in trying to get there, document this scientifically, get the money assembled, professionals to do this and so one team is there now. They are climbing the mountain today. The second team left this morning. The geophysicists will arrive tomorrow and then climb in about two days. I leave a week from now with my team which are excavators. We will be there and on the 16th meet them on top and begin work. I will be there a month on top. Our goal is to dig up what we have found. Now is it Noah's Ark? It is kind of hard at 17,000 feet to think that under a glacier like that it could be anything else, but we are always prepared that it just might not be what we think. One of our geoengineers says, "I don't know any shape like that in nature." I don't either, not under a glacier, at the depths, because it is not at the bottom. The glacier is 300 feet thick. The bottom of the mountain is (?) suspended. There are hollows in this thing. We have actually measured it. From the satellite we can see things there. There are clear structures on it, which are measurable and it is broken. It is not something that is natural. I could say, well, I don't know what else it could be other than Noah's Ark, but we are going to be objective enough to get to it and get samples and test it, and hopefully get inside of it. We have a film crew going so the cost is about a million dollars for this project right now, for just this year. There are 20 people climbing as a team. Today there were 20 Kurdish workers that went with 11 horses full of our cargo. A lot of the equipment is still coming. This is just stuff that is necessary to set up the camps. The rest is being brought over with each team, because we couldn't risk shipping it. So we will see where things go. By the end of September we hope to let people know what we have got. Turkish government gave us a permit, a very exceptional thing, we have had it now for three years and since we found something last year, they let us have it for this fourth year. We are the only ones getting in. This is the last time it will be done. This narrow window where it's possible to be on top of the mountain and work under conditions is from the middle of August to the end of September. That is why we are going now. We don't publicize that. We don't want to do that until the work's finished and we've got something to say.

[Section 1]

Q: [Q1] [Q2] [Intro....] Based on your familiarity with this prophecy, do you think it is possible that Ezekiel's war could be approaching soon?

Randall Price: Yes. The reason I think is, I developed this, and I go from church to church, I have done it in Germany, I have done it in other parts of Europe, I have done it in churches all over the United States from conservative churches to non-conservative churches and I think the general reaction is that people are afraid to deal with this prophecy because first off they don't know if it is future or if it's past. Second thing is they are afraid of trying to interpret it in light of current events because that is too political and they don't know what to do with that. Third, pastors looking at this saying if I take it as future I don't know when it's taking place in the future. There are all different interpretations, they don't know how to handle it, they are afraid of taking one view over another and getting themselves in a position they can't support. And then of course because a lot of people who are conservatives but are not very scholared, they have more sensational friends and they're populist. They have written books on this, they have said things, they want to distance themselves from those kind of people so avoid this kind of thing altogether. I think it is unfortunate because first the scriptures were written to give us information, to inform us about the days in which we live and the days to come. The days in which we live are precursors of the days to come, and so we should have some indication of where we are in the divine program and have enough understanding to be able to deliver those terms, and address those times from the Word of God. They are not meant to be veiled prophecies. I think the closer you get to the actual fulfillment, the clearer some of them become. In this case when looking at events, on the one hand I don't think Ezekiel's prophecy could have been fulfilled literally as I understand it before probably 1948 and certainly not before 1967, because the terms "return to the land", "restored from the sword", "return to the mountains of Israel", those two things happened from 1918 to 1948, when you had this return. 1948 you had a nation and it is clearly Israel as a nation, not being thought of as in the past as a scattered people. They are regathered people. Then the mountains of Israel, largely the area of the West Bank including the Golan Heights. That was not held by Israel until 1967. It had a focus in Jerusalem that is included because Eastern Jerusalem and probably the Temple Mount. I am not sure that we can see a focused attack on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. That is a typical Jewish view because they tend to interpret Ezekiel 38 and 39 in line with Zechariah 12 to 14. I always see those two as separate things. I see Zechariah 12 to 14 in the tribulation and I would see Ezekiel 38 and 39 as pretribulation. Because of that they coalesce this and see it as one event and they focus on Jerusalem. Whatever, this is the mountains of Israel that includes that general area. So we are seeing that kind of thing talked about today. It talks about and the fact that Israel living securely in unwallled villages. There were no unwallled villages in that time; in fact all the way up until recent times, people have lived in walled villages. It is very interesting that today, not until the beginning of the 20th century that Jews moved outside of the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem. Only recently did they begin to see themselves secure outside the walls. Modern Jerusalem is well outside the walls. Acco is the only walled city today but that does not constitute the modern city. So generally, Israel lives within unwallled villages

and that was part of that fulfillment. The idea of “betach” or security was there. That is a big sticking point for some. They say well either it can’t really be a modern fulfillment because Israel is not secure. Well, Israel is secure if you think of it from a military perspective. “Yashab betach,” the Hebrew word for security, and the security forces are able to be in place, is that word “betach,” if you look at it and it does say at least from their perspective he lives in the center of the world. These are the two focal points of the Scripture. The security is from without. They are living in the midst of enemies otherwise you wouldn’t have people able to invade them. That is what the situation is today. They have enemies on every side but they have won all the wars fought against them, they have a nuclear arsenal, they have secured people because of the secure military, generally every tourist who goes there feels secure walking around the country. Yes they attacks against them. We don’t have to project this into the millennial kingdom, or into this pseudo-peace in the 3½ years before the mid-point of the tribulation, in order to say they have security. They do have security now. There may be something that threatens security, but it is still security. I don’t see anything preventing modern fulfillment of the passage. Who live in the center of the world and have acquired goods and cattle and all this, if we can think of that logically, the idea of these is just like the weapons that are used and burnt. We will be thinking in terms of whatever weapons exist at the time of the prophecy is fulfilled or whatever goods they may have so in that sense Israel does have goods and cattle but that is not how you measure wealth today, at the time of fulfillment. Of course information about Israel’s natural gas, oil deposits off shore, all of this is an attractive idea that Israel is about to have wealth that would exceed the Saudis and other countries and they get a real prize from those who have come to capture, if that is the goal, that is the hook. [Q3] That plus the idea of the modern nations that are mentioned in ancient names. When you talk about Turkey or Libya or Sudan or whatever you want to call that. You talk about Iran, Persia and you look at the enemy to the north which I think linguistically has to be identical to the area in the ancient Scythians, which are the Russians today. You look at the motives, you look at the relationships between all of these peoples, the Islamic peoples, the Islamic growth in Russia and the fact that within the next seven years the control of the Russian army will be a dominant Muslim population. That kind of thing gives you some kind of indication that this stuff is moving to a realistic type of fulfillment. Are these just coincidences, does God work in terms of coincidences, or is he moving history, and moving events and actors on the stage of history by his sovereign purpose? So I think on that basis alone someone would not be unreasonable to try to interpret this in light of a near fulfillment.

Q: [Q3] Any more comments on the alliances....?

Randall Price: Turkey has now got a more radical form of Muslim government. They just got rid of a bunch of generals who resigned because they were wanting to actually make it less Muslim. They have been forced to do that. They also doubled the size of the army for some reason, when just last year they were worried about a coup and were trying to reduce the size of their military. For some reason they decided to double the size of their military. You have got war games going on between these different nations, you’ve got them suppling arms to each other. Such a switch with Turkey and all these military alliances with Israel and all of a sudden, you now have these pacts with Iran, Russia and

others. It seems to be very interesting. [Q5] Iran, of course, just look at what it says, you might say well that is just what it says, but it does have nuclear reactors, it does have the enriched uranium and other things which are only for military usage. You could have that kind of amount of fissionable material to help the military application and they frighten everybody with that clear violation particularly Israel. You look at this and you don't know what will bring this about or how it could happen but it is plausible that it could happen. It is the first time in our history we have seen all of these kinds of factors come together which is why people are attracted to prophecy because they are looking in the Bible for a place that explains all of these events and variants. When you look at Islam, it is dominating Europe, it is going to dominate Canada, it's going to dominate the United States, at least by 2050 they say. So you have a situation where demographically they are just growing. Something is going to have to put a stop to this and I don't think as I look at the description in Daniel 11 of the Antichrist or Revelation 13 or any of these places that the end times of the Gentiles or when it talks about him being someone, talks about the god of his fathers. I think it is a plural there, elohim would mean he doesn't have, his god is plural, he was probably a Gentile pagan, he doesn't have any religious affectation. His god is a god of fortresses, the text tells us. So he is a military figure. But once Satan gives his power to him and authority to him then he takes on further ambition and he wants to usurp the place of God and be like the most high which is why in 2 Thessalonians 2 we see him exalt himself above every object of worship and above God himself seeing himself in the temple, make himself to be God so this is part of it in this call for the world to worship him. I think that doesn't fit the picture of Islam. There are many who want to see the Mahdi or the Twelfth Imam which is an imagined figure and they see that as the Antichrist. Well I don't see that. [Q23] I think we are going to see Islam diffused. In the past, when there's been a major defeat of Islam, they pull back. That creates a vacuum for something else. We haven't had that kind of vacuum filled in the past by anything, but we're looking now into the future. I think Gog and Magog will defeat a large portion of the Islamic world. Islam is not going to be a dominant force in the tribulation. I think when you look at Iraq and Syria they may have still a future role to fill. They are marginalized, and I think one of the reasons is that they are the only thing left. That is why Iraq and Babylon becomes the commercial area apart from other places that might be more suitable for that because they are not there any more. They are decimated in this sovereign act of God which is supposed to get the attention of the nations and certainly that of Israel.

Q: [Q4] Do you see any indicators that modern day Russia would engage in such a war or lead such a war against Israel?

Randall Price: It all depends on what the real catalyst is. Whether it is the fact that they feel that, if they say the rapture of the church takes out the power structure of the United States and therefore removes the western fence for Israel, they may see that is a perfect opportunity to enter into that vacuum and take these allies, the former Soviet satellites, which are Islamic countries now, with them in a massive invasion. If they are wanting to capture the technology Israel has, if they want to capture the resources Israel has discovered, or simply remove it because there is a satanic agenda that drives them to do it, we can't say. Russia has always...in 1948, they supplied arms to Israel that was

because they thought it was going to be a socialist or communist country and had the early beginnings in its kibbutz movement and other things. They felt this was a chance to win favor that way but it didn't happen. I think they have always aligned with the greater Arab power and because Israel is considered...for whatever reason, the Islamic reasons or whatever, that is the thing that tests alliances and if you were really going to be in position where you wanted to win the favor of the Arab world, then you would lead the attack against Israel. That would do it. The Soviet Union, of course, has had its own failures and its own economic and social problems. Glasnost and perestroika and all this is actually a weakening of what they considered Russian weakness, because the people didn't know how to live in that kind of capitalistic system. The government and its people could not adjust. I think there has been a push to get back to the dictatorships they have had in the past and relations with the US and west has worsened in the last few years and again alliances with China and with the Arab world has been strengthened. So that sets up Russia in the place to do this. I don't know exactly what catalyst would determine that yet.

Q: [Q6] How do you see Iran's nuclear ambitions or Israel's desire to stop them playing into this scenario?

Randall Price: Again the best you can do is take some guesses and speculate. Again Iran and Russia have alliances. Russia has supplied Iran with the antiballistic missiles and some of these kind of things, and you have Israel's preemptive attacks on nuclear reactors. If it came to this, you could see Russia being called in to do things. I don't think we are going to see this invasion or anything like this until after we see the rapture of the church. If it happens now, we are going to support Israel, unless our country just completely abandons and betrays them. I don't think that is possible at the present time given the Congress, given the lobbies, given a lot of things. Even if Obama and others have moved away from the previous support of Israel, someone like Netanyahu will be able to walk into and speak to the Congress and get all this applause, shows that we have a strong commitment to Israel. We have to be gone. I think there are countries like Germany too who have to be out of the way and others. Something has to change for that kind of invasion to be successful. Of course, it isn't successful because God intervenes. It can start very easily with Iran attacking Israel and Israel trying to start something. I don't think a nuclear exchange is going to take place. That is not what I see in Ezekiel 38 and 39. But people try to interpret that as God destroying them through their own weapons, but Israel doesn't do a thing. Its defense is the Lord God. It doesn't act on its own behalf. I think the threats of that they draw these alliances and things together. The best we can do is speculate, yes Iran could be the saber-rattling that's going on there, and gets all these other countries in to support it. I can't be sure.

Q: [Q7] While Islam is not mentioned specifically in Ezekiel's prophecy, the coalition coming against Israel in Ezekiel 38-39 is almost completely Islamic. Do you see this war as primarily an Islamic war against Israel and do you see how current Islamic thought may contribute to the fulfillment of this prophecy?

Randall Price: I kind of touched on that earlier. I don't see it as an Islamic war. I think that is not the way, certainly the Islam world is involved because of their agenda to rid the world of the Zionist state. They cannot allow an independent Israel, a non-Islamic entity to exist, in the sea of Islam, as they call it. They want to unite the Umma (?), the greater Muslim community which has been divided because of Israel's occupation of the land. It came under the sword of Islam and should remain there. That is an affront that has to be righted. There are other places in the world that need to be righted too in their perspective. Israel is the main aggressor so that is not going to change. I don't think that would be Gog's, if Gog is Russia, their agenda necessarily. But again, if shortly they become, if they have a dominate Muslim population because of having younger people, less disease, less alcoholism, less abortions, the Muslim community doesn't do it, they have ten kids to every one the Russians would have. Demographically, they are about to out-populate them. So you are drawing an army statistically, where you are going to have more Muslims involved than anybody else. That could be a reason to see Russia involved with this. I think again from God's perspective, he isn't looking at Islam or some Islamic agenda, he is looking at nations coming in against Israel and the result is that he wants to have a demonstration of his sovereign power in defense of Israel. [Q25] I think that the result of this, this is again speculation, but when I look at Daniel 9 it talks about in verse 27 about rebuilding the temple and we believe that the one who does that is going to be the Antichrist, in other words prince of the people that destroy the temple. This one is connected at least nationally with him at the time of the Gentiles so he is going to come before and do this. Why in the world would he want to rebuild the temple for Israel? No one has wanted to do that, it has been such a horrible controversy, it's the most disputed real estate on the earth. Why on the earth would he do that? Well if then the God of Israel on the side of Israel destroys all these other nations aligned against Israel if you wanted to then somehow earn Israel's favor, not just their favor but establish a base there, sort of fill the gap as it were, then you would do whatever Israel wanted to do. The symbol of the God of Israel who had this victory is the temple. It's always built for his presence, for his honor and in fact Orthodox Jews and others who would see this kind of thing probably a great deal of the population of Israel, those who are not either religiously inclined, would have this great sense of nationalism and also the miracle that's occurring on behalf of Israel. And that would change very quickly and call for the rebuilding of the temple and this guy would step in as part of who knows what kind of multinational entity and say let's do this, there is no Islam to oppose it now, they have been nullified and so this could be the explanation why this time it happens. And that would take us from if we had a pretribulational Gog and Magog event, and you started burning the weapons and they continue right through to the middle of the tribulation, that would be the seven years, 3½ years before that perhaps. You can go to the end of the tribulation if you wanted to but Israel is pretty much persecuted and scattered so I am not sure business as usual is taking place. However, that explains why the temple is rebuilt by the midpoint of the tribulation, because of this early event of Gog and Magog. That is my view. I think the rebuilding has something to do with the covenant because the desecration of the temple has something to do with breaking the covenant. I think when he establishes the covenant, it has this idea of rebuilding the temple itself.

Q: [Q8] Ahmadinejad talks about the imminent coming of the Mahdi and some of the conditions that have to be fulfilled to make the time right for his coming. Any thoughts about how any of that could contribute to the fulfillment of this prophecy?

Randall Price: Of course from his perspective, he and Khomeini and Moserala (?) are all predicted in some of the Islamic statements that were in some of what the clerics did in the past. They are actually predicted so they would see a fulfillment in their time, in their current administration, which is why they are trying to foment chaos in the region because that is what brings the rise of the Mahdi. He comes at a time when Islam needs him, he comes at a time when Israel's enemies, like the [____?] Antichrist who is Jewish from their perspective, he has come on the scene, and of course Jerusalem is the center of the focused attack ultimately so the stuff he is saying and doing, the fact that he thinks he is the contemporary fulfillment of prophecy with these others, indicates that they are quite serious about this and they have their own idea of mahdju and yahdju (?) prophecy, different of course, but it is all there. Again, even though this is their agenda and they want it made with that kind of purpose in mind, it is part of the imaginations of their evil hearts, their delusion that drives them to it. It is part of the overall deception there that brings them to invade Israel at this time. It is not a prophesied event, anything surrounding the Islamic figures. I don't think that the Twelfth Imam or the Mahdi are equivalent to the Antichrist. There are similarities and I think that when you talk about the rider on the white horse in Revelation 6. You have Islamic writers who say this is the Mahdi, even in Christian sources. Well that is misinterpreted. They don't see that as the Antichrist, they see it as a warrior figure because for them the Antichrist is Jewish and not Muslim. We would see it as the Antichrist, in the fact that he lives seven years and rules and then dies. That seven year period is prominent. There are so many other factors that are there. They draw that from the Christian rabbinic sources which deal with these signs at the end of the age. So they borrow these things from these various sources and elaborate on it so that is why you have these similarities and parallels. I don't think because this is a predicted individual, it is Bible prophecy. He will fit into the events in a sense, if someone rises and claims to be the Mahdi. You don't know. Ahmadinejad says that he is in contact with him, if you can believe that. He continues to put out news articles and say his coming is near and all of this is still being released, and being put out for consumption in the Arab world to try to encourage people to expect and to look for him, and prepare for him. If there was ever a time in history when these kinds of events were forecasting an invasion and attack on Israel, now is the time. Again we have to be careful because we don't know that for certain, all we can say is that if it is going to happen in this modern period, these events certainly seem to be leading up to it. None of us can say really what's going to fulfill prophecy, we know how it can be fulfilled but we don't know if it is going to be fulfilled now or somewhere down the line. We can say it is the first time in history that we have seen all of these Bible factors come together. We have seen the emphasis for it, we've seen the alliances exist, we've seen the conditions exist, the places exist. Everything is like this. Before this we didn't have that, we didn't have those alliances, Iran was even a western sympathizer so how could you have had it happen before now. But now these exist. It is exciting. We cannot say with certainty, but I think we have been instructed by Scriptures to discern the times to understand these things. And as a result, in light of the greater event which is the coming of Christ and the

judgment and the tribulation, we can't get a clear warning if we don't understand, and make people aware of the times in which we live. If we are wrong, then we are wrong but we are wrong about the timing, we aren't wrong about the events and the interpretation of the events.

Q: It seems to me a really significant statement that you made there that this is the first time we have seen all these factors come together and what is the purpose of the prophecy even being recorded for us if not for us at some point in history to discern that maybe these things are coming together.

[Section 2]

Randall Price: [Q9] [Q10] We having timing factors as in Ezekiel 38, it is clear, it says in the last days, and there are many last days, it is the last days of what. It is clear, it is referring to Israel's time. You have to interpret it contextually. This idea of "acharith," the Hebrew term for the coming days and the last days. In context, it is clear. You look at Ezekiel. It is a big issue that Ezekiel 38 and 39 seem to be stuck right in the middle of a text that is dealing with the last days but dealing also with the temple. Because Ezekiel 37 ends with this whole picture of the sanctuary in their midst, and all of this, that is millennial kingdom as Israel returns to the land. And then you go to Ezekiel 40 to 48, the new temple itself. It's descriptonal. Why interrupt that with Ezekiel 38 and 39, this battle? It looks like it would be so nice to go to chapter 40 rather than 37 because here it is the subject of this future temple and now you have a description of it, so why this battle? I think that if the focus is Jerusalem and the attack upon the Israel, and if it's an attack on Jerusalem itself with its temple and all of this. When this is happening Israel could say to itself, could the promise of God fail? Could all this hope for restoration be wiped out? These are huge, like the sand on the seashore, there's this huge, innumerable host coming against our country and we don't have support from anybody else in the whole world. What are we going to do and call into question the promises of God and this whole restoration. Then when you see that God has already said, look let me tell you, don't worry about that, it is already written, here is what is going to happen, that invasion is going to happen, I am going to wipe them out before they wipe you out, then the temple will be rebuilt and all these things that you want are going to happen. You have to look at it in the context of other things. I think it is to give an assurance that the worst the world can do is not going to thwart the plan of God that this thing is going to come about. That is why you can't stick it in the millennial context, because when that's wiped out it is the end of the story, that's what the end of the millennial kingdom looks like to me, not at the beginning of it or the middle of it. The temple will already have been built, so it is not something that needs that kind of encouragement like this does. That is just my thought as to why it is placed where it is.

Q: [Q9] So you think that most likely this will come after the rapture but before the tribulation begins. Is that accurate, your best guess?

Randall Price: [Q10] [Q14] Yes and the reasons I have, first and foremost would be the burning of the weapons for seven years. [Q11] The second reason would be that when

the conditions exist now for this, before the tribulation, you don't have to wait until after the tribulation for this to be there. I don't think it is a false security or false peace but is something that exists now. A third reason is because I think in order to see the temple rebuilt we have to have something that is going to change the whole political situation and have an impetus for rebuilding the temple. I think this triumph and victory of God for Israel could be that. And then after that I just think that trying to place this with some other event like a midtribulation battle or some part of a campaign of Armageddon or anything like this just fails for a number of reasons, it is not this event. Something moves Israel to trust what's going to happen, because they're largely in a state of unbelief at this period. The Antichrist rebuilds the temple, they enter this time of false peace. They do it because they believe in God, but I think probably even coming out of this, the 144,000 emerge. But you have a time in which Israel is probably thinking they've entered a messianic age of sorts. Everything is fine, but it's a deceptive period. And those who come in with the true gospel, trying to explain that the God who did this is coming shortly, but we're going to go through a period of Israel's trouble. And we've got to be strong, we've got to endure, we've got to do this. That's not a very popular message at that time. That's why I think they're persecuted to death by the midpoint of the tribulation. I place the two witnesses in the last part of the tribulation. I think the two witnesses pick up where the 144,000 leave off. So in Revelation 11, where it talks about measuring the temple and all this, and then see immediately after that the two witnesses in sackcloth, I think they're reacting to the desecration of the temple that's happened with the Antichrist. I could be wrong on that. I've been around, arguing with John Whitcomb, Tommy Ice and others about this. Fruchtenbaum probably disagrees too, I don't know. He might not. Walvoord agreed with me, so at least I had him with me. I don't know, if you starting adding up things, to me the best solution seems to be a post-rapture, pre-tribulation fulfillment. I could be wrong, but I'm saying, based on comparing the various timing views, this looks like it has the greatest strengths, and answers the most problems for me.

Q: [Q12] [Q18] What is your understanding of the phrase “the latter years” in Ezekiel 38:8? Is that a specific reference to the tribulation period, or could it include the period leading up to the tribulation?

Randall Price: I don't think it has to refer to that, because “latter years” are put in a synonymous relationship with “last days.” It says, “in the last days, in the latter years it will come,” that kind of thing indicates that they're seeing this at the same time. “Last days” is a more general term, but I think it has a technical significance. But “the latter years,” what does that mean? It's the same kind of expression, the time after. So the time after what, what are we talking about? I think it's the time of the fulfillment as expressed in a number of passages that deal with the tribulation and the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord begins with the tribulation and goes through the millennium. But we have the idea of birth pangs, and the idea of increasing pangs. I see the birth pangs in the first part of the tribulation. It's a long tribulation. You talk about Matthew 24:5-13 or 14, somewhere in there, I see all those earthquakes and signs in the first part of the tribulation. But in a similar way, there's always things that lead up to that. So I guess the latter years of Israel, it's the last days for Israel, not the church. And where would that

begin? It would begin right after the rapture. So if it's expressed in the time in which Israel is now, the shift in focus is moving from the church age to Israel, then we're looking at this time that would be called the latter years or the last days. So we're no longer in the last days of the church, or the last hours. John refers to the latter years, or the last days for Israel. That's a shift to them. So yes, the tribulation is a part of that, but it involves everything related to Israel, rather than simply a specific time period.

Q: Is that part of the reason why you think it's more likely that this refers to after the rapture, rather than before?

Randall Price: You have to explain the period from after the rapture until the beginning of the tribulation. We don't know how long that is. When the tribulation begins, the 70th week of Daniel begins. That begins with the signing of the covenant. What sets that up? Something had to set that up. It just doesn't happen the next day. And so that interim period, whatever that is, has got to fit into a prophetic time period. What do you call that? If you wait to call the tribulation the last days, or the latter years, then what do you do with this period before? What if that period is 50 years? We don't know how long...I don't think it will be that long. I think events will move very quickly after the rapture. But you have to think realistically about the fulfillment of this in our world today. People are going to have to catch their breath, you've got communications down, you've got other kinds of things down, you've got governments meeting, trying to decide what to do. If there's going to be an invasion of Israel, all this kind of stuff is going to have to take time to work this out and get it orchestrated. Israel itself has got to regather and figure out what's going to happen. We don't have a friend in the world left. They're all gone. Some great disaster has happened to our only ally and friend. And so this whole time period, however long it takes for things, it may only be months, it could be a year or two. But that has to fit into some prophetic time period. What do we call that? You can't just call it the post-rapture period. So I think when you talk about the last days, the last days of the church, the church is gone, it will be the last days for Israel. It's the same idea as the latter years, it's a parallel expression. It covers the same time period. So I would say yes, that's when we begin that. And so Gog and Magog could be pretribulational, but still fit into that time period.

Q: [Q13] Does your understanding of the doctrine of imminence incline you to put the war after the rapture, or doesn't that play into it directly?

Randall Price: I would think yeah, sure. I didn't include that as a reason, but at any rate it has to be post-rapture, because of the fact that the rapture is the next event. As a futurist, a strict futurist, I see the events mentioned in prophecy pertaining to the tribulation. There is a predicted event for the church, but that's the rapture. Nothing else that I see. So Israel has a general prophetic plan that's unfolding, and I think we could see the events of Israel in the land, I see it as a two-stage process: Israel returning to the land, then Israel returning to the Lord. So in the present time, they're returning to the land. They have to be in the land for a covenant to be signed with them as a national entity, they have to be in the land for the Sabbath to be in place, as Matthew 24:15 says, or somewhere close to

that. They have to be in the land in order to rebuild the temple. So there has to be a national entity. What we see today is setting that up.

[Section 3]

Q: [Q15] How have your views regarding this war impacted your ministry in the area of speaking, teaching, and writing?

Randall Price: In general, people have questions, and I try to answer them, based on the interpretation of prophecy. There it is, they want to know what it means. People look at events today and they want to make sense out of them. And where the Scripture speaks to that, that's what I want to do as part of my ministry. I've seen audiences and other people at least wake up to the fact that there's a possibility that these things happening in the world have a divine purpose. They're not just random events that have no real connection. They see Israel at the center of things, they see the enemies of Israel, this is not just a political problem, there's a greater purpose for all of this. When you look at the Gog and Magog prophecy, so many things come together. People say, "Wait a minute, maybe I am living at a time when I could see the fulfillment of these things." Proper attendance, proper lifestyle, some people coming to Christ. I haven't built a ministry on this, it's simply one thing that explains what many other people involved, who have sought to defend Scriptures, are doing. But I've not shied away from it either. The idea is, where we can try to understand what the Scriptures say, we don't want to use current events to do that. It's the opposite. These things explain the current events. But anyone who is familiar with the prophecy, and just begins to study what's going on, just sees too much to not try to put this into perspective. Even if this is not the time of fulfillment, it's like the time. It's going to be things like this, when the world comes together and alliances form, and these nations have this animosity toward Israel, and they desire to wipe it off the map. It's going to be a time when Israel is in the land and occupies these places, and they have the type of security, imagined or real, that they have. And so it's going to be a time like this, even if it's not this time. And so it at least trains people to look and say, I can't say for certain, but I can say that we've never lived in a time where so many things like this have come together, and this is what the text says would happen. So many people who don't take a futurist perspective of a biblical text like this, it should at least give them some reason for doubting their historicist views of things, and saying, could this many coincidences come about? Does not the Scripture speak to purpose, why do we have these details, why do we have these nations listed, why do we have so much there when we're not meant to be instructed about a day and time that somebody would see. And then as a result, know how to react, how to have faith. It would be a warning and a comfort to the people, who it looks like Israel could trust in God's intervention.

Q: You're a teacher, and a writer, and I'm assuming you get asked to speak on these subjects as well. Do you address these things very often in public?

Randall Price: I do. Just a couple weeks ago I spoke to an Episcopal church group. They are Anglican, sort of mildly premillennial, but I had a very good response to this. We had lots and lots of questions. I presented this in a PowerPoint teaching. We went through

Ezekiel 38–39 and explained the context of these modern events to illustrate how it could happen. For churches like this that aren't within our premillennial circles, that generally don't look at prophecy as having a present or future..., it doesn't mean anything, it's irrelevant. It really moved them to think in terms of looking at literal interpretation of other Scriptures, which of course is very important. You talk about messianic prophecy, they're with us on the first coming passages, but they look at other passages differently. And try to appeal to a consistency on this. This is a good text for that because how you allegorically interpret this, how you try to make this passage really mean anything to the church, you can't do that unless you take a literal interpretation and take it in light of the times in which we live. So I think in that sense, it allows me to do what I want to do with my ministry, which is to bring people back to interpreting the Bible as the Bible was given. World of Bible Ministries, the purpose there is to put people into the World of the Bible, interpret the word of the Bible in its original context. So they can take that meaning that you get from the original context, and then export that to the 21st century and apply it to our lives. That's relevant in terms of prophecy. Prophecy is given so that we might believe, and believe that he is the one who spoke these things, and it is true. The prophecies are given so we might have an assurance that God's in control of history, and we're not just some random set of circumstances where we don't know the outcome. It's meant to be an impetus to evangelism, because we see the days drawing nearer, and our time for witnessing is short. We need to have an urgency about ourselves. I see it in terms of developing a way of life that's more holy, because that blessed hope is nearing, and we need to see these things. At the same time, Romans 13 tells us that we're to basically wake up, because the day is at hand, the night is about to end, and we're to wake up in the sense that we're to get our lives in order. So the church I think is in a terrible situation today, because it has moved away, in my opinion, a strong presentation of the Scripture and of Christ. It's moved us to more of, in many cases, a lesser picture of that. As a result, people are besieged by television, all kinds of critical theories that demean the Bible. They call it into question. I think people's faith is pretty shallow. They don't know how to defend it, so they just believe in [?], almost a post-modern idea that I believe what I believe, my faith is all I need. But how strong is your faith? What's your faith in? If it's a real faith, it's in an object that is trustworthy. And when difficult times come, will that faith hold you up? Prophecy moves someone into the Scriptures so they have to study to understand it. It draws them into the Old Testament, where these prophecies were originally given. And to the New Testament, to help to see that the church should have this as a mission in their life. It's not just something to relegate to some part of theology. It's a driving, motivating practical force. It's for the good of the church. I think we've lost a lot of that. And the Gog and Magog prophecy, for instance, has the potential to at least focus people on how to interpret the Bible, and the importance of doing it to understand the times in which they live, and stabilize their souls.

Ron Rhodes Interview

August 9, 2011 (by telephone)

Q: This whole prophecy has really grabbed my attention. In many ways it seems like a lost prophecy in the Christian community. Most Christians can tell you all about the rapture, the Antichrist, and Armageddon but when you talk about the War of Gog and Magog, they don't really know what it is and yet to me it seems like one of the biggest of all end times prophecies.

Ron Rhodes: I think that a lot of Christians today are pretty Biblically illiterate, not all of them, but a lot of them are. In fact, polls seem to indicate a large percentage of Christians only read the Bible only during the sermon on Sunday morning. That being the case, they are not going to pick up on what is in Ezekiel or most of the rest of the Bible.

[Section 1]

Q: **[Q1]** Based on your familiarity with this prophecy, do you think it is possible that Ezekiel's war could be approaching soon?

Ron Rhodes: I think it could. I am always real careful to avoid date setting for obvious reasons even in recent days, we've had really good illustrations of why people should not set dates. [Referring to the Harold Camping rapture prediction.] On the one hand I want to be careful not to do that but at the same time, I do think that Scripture enables us to tell the general season of the end times, we don't the day or the hour but we do know the general season and I have always viewed it in such a way that God's prophecies are like intel in advance. God does tell us what the world is going to look like prior to his return and so I am a big believer in first learning what the Bible says about the prophecies and then seeing if there is a legitimate correlation between modern events and the prophecies that are in the Bible and that we are called by Christ himself to be active observers of the times. So based on that policy I think that there is a reason for saying that that battle draws near and I have often called it the Convergence Factor when I teach on prophecy. Basically what I mean is that there are many prophecies that seem to be converging which point to the end times. Just to clarify, if there are just one or two prophecies being fulfilled that would be one thing but when you see the stage being set for multiple prophecies to be fulfilled, you know prophecies that speak of the tribulation that are now having their stage being set for fulfillment, and all of these prophecies converging on a date in the not too distant future, to me that says something. And so when I look at these different prophecies it is my conclusion that every day that passes brings us one day nearer to that. Having said that, I think the super sign and the prerequisite sign is the rebirth of Israel, nothing else makes sense until that happens and that is one of the reasons why people have tried to set dates. In past centuries have always gotten it wrong because Israel was not yet a nation again so that has to happen for anything else to make sense and the reason for that is that many of the other biblical prophecies of the end times relate or depend upon Israel existing as a national entity. For that reason, it is the number one thing to watch for. So you have the rebirth of Israel back in 1948 and to me it is very interesting that this rebirth of Israel is described in Ezekiel 36 and 37 and then

immediately following that chronologically you have a description of the invasion into Israel, Ezekiel 38 and 39.

Q: That seems like a huge factor to me that a lot of people don't address very directly.

Ron Rhodes: I think it makes a great deal of sense when you think about it. Some people will try to say well you know this is something in the past but the fact is that Israel is said to be regathered from many nations around the world in the Ezekiel passage. So we are not talking about one nation like the Babylonian captivity or the Assyrian captivity, we are talking about a situation in which the Jews are being regathered from many nations throughout the world and that has never happened before. So I do find it significant that Ezekiel 36 and 37 speak about this rebirth and it is immediately followed by Ezekiel 38 and 39 which refers to the Ezekiel invasion. Of course, I can spend the next hour talking about the signs of the times which all relate to this. I suspect we don't have time for that so I could just give you a three minute summary.

[Q2] I do believe that the signs of the times that Christ speaks about are relevant to us. To clarify I think those signs of the times are fulfilled during the Tribulation period specifically but I also believe that prophecies cast a shadow before them. It really makes a lot of sense because it is almost like there are foreshocks or tremors prior to the actual event itself. Because prophecies have historically cast their shadows before them I think when we look at today's scene around the world, it becomes clear that the stage is being set for those things that are going to take place during the Tribulation period. I always categorize the signs into maybe four or five categories. I talk about the earth and sky signs, like the great earthquakes, famines, pestilences, fearful events and great signs from heaven. I have often written on this fearful events part because from the Greek it carries the idea of terror – sights of terror or terrifying things. I think few people would doubt we are living in days of terror. I also talk about moral signs – 2 Timothy 3:1-5 in the last days difficult times will come, people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God and of course you could categorize lovers of self as being humanism, lovers of money being materialism, and lovers of pleasure as hedonism. Those are the three big philosophies of our day. We definitely see the shadow being cast before itself in terms of the prophecies of the future tribulation period. There are religious signs and I have written a lot about this in my other books, the emergence of false christs and false prophets and false teachers and false apostles and so forth as well as the emergence of apostasy in the end times. And again even though there is a tribulation context to these prophecies, who would doubt in our own day that those prophecies are casting their shadow before them because aren't we witnessing false apostles and false prophets in our own day with the rise of the cults and false religions and there is tremendous apostasy in the church, the great falling away from the truth. Then there are the realignment of nations signs. Not just Israel being reborn but I will talk a little later about how Russia, Iran, Sudan, Turkey and Libya and other Muslim nations are building alliances today setting up this northern military coalition that will invade Israel. There's also technological signs. How are we going to take the Gospel to every nation without modern technology, satellite, internet, global media, translation technologies and so forth. There is going to be the mark of the

beast somehow the Antichrist is going to control the economy of the world and that will require modern technology. These kinds of things I think are all relevant and when you put all those together, the earth and sky signs, the moral signs, the religious signs and the realignment of nations signs, the technology signs along with the rebirth of Israel, that is why I say these are all converging, at a point in the not too distant future. All of that is simply to say, in maybe too many words, that I believe that we are drawing near that day.

Q: [Q3] Could you comment on the alliances given in Ezekiel's prophecy and any correlation with current alliances existing or being built in the world today?

Ron Rhodes: I have done a lot of study in the past and since I wrote the book. It very much seems like nations like Iran and Turkey, Sudan and Libya and other Muslim territories are aligning with each other politically and religiously. Let me note that when I talk about Iran I am not just talking about the modern Iran but you are already aware I am sure that the ancient Persia extended off to the west and the east beyond the boundaries of modern Iran so when you are talking about Iran invading Israel according to Ezekiel 38 I would also include an extended territory off to the west and the east of modern Iran because that is what ancient Persia was. Of course the text also seems to indicate those nations to the west and east and even to the north of the Black and Caspian Seas which is all Muslim territory so all these territories seem to be involved in a mutual hatred for Israel and standing together and wanting to bring about a global Islamic government. What I find really interesting about this alliance is these nations are not necessarily right next to each other and wouldn't make too much sense back in Ezekiel's day but of course it makes sense today because of Islam. It came about later in history and so even though it wouldn't have made sense to Ezekiel, it makes great sense today because the one unifying factor is Islam and among Muslims, there is mutual hatred for Israel and that is a powerful motivating factor I think for this invasion. I think Iran is the big player. It just seems like Iran is the moving force in wanting to move Israel off the map and to push Israel into the sea and I think of particular significance is the close relationship that has been developing between Russia and Iran. By the way Russia is not without Muslims. There are a phenomenal amount of mosques being built on Russian soil. The population continues to escalate among the Muslim population so I think that is going to continue rather than diminish. Certainly Russia has been assisting Iran militarily which is kind of significant because in previous days Russia and Iran were not close at all, during the days of the Shah. During the days when the Shah was in power, the Shah was pretty much pro U.S. but of course the radical Muslims overthrew the Shah and after the Iran-Iraq war everything was in chaos in Iran and they needed drastically to rebuild itself, especially the military. So today Iran is paying a half billion dollars a year to Russia to build up its military and they are on a big campaign that is going to last decades to increase air defense and naval warfare and combat capabilities and it is all based on Russian technology. They are buying submarines and anti-aircraft missiles and surface to air missile systems and guess what their primary motivation is – Iran's primary motivation is to completely weaken and do away with all western influence in the Middle East. That is what their stated goal is and it is not just a political goal but it seems like economics is involved in the alliance as well. In fact there continues to be a lot of talk about Iran and Russia forming a gas cartel. I am sure you are aware how both Russia and Iran have

become major players in the oil market and I talk about this in my more recent book, “The Coming Oil Storm” in which I document all of this. While Russia and Iran have become major players in the global oil market all of that is happening at the same time when the U.S. is saying all of our oil fields have reached peak oil. Meaning basically that we have used up over half of our reserves and that finding oil is going to become increasingly expensive and more difficult to find. So right at the moment where we need the most oil, we are running out of it here, while Russia and Iran have a plethora of it. So I think that is significant. Beyond that there are Russian alliances with a number of other nations both politically, militarily, and economic. That would include Syria. Syria has really been in the news a lot and I don’t think Syria is specifically mentioned in the nations. I think it is one of the many nations with you that Ezekiel 38:6 talks about. Even this week I have seen a number of reports coming out. For example, two days I received a report stating that the Russians are now warning NATO against targeting Syria. About a week ago I received a report on Iran is on track to take over the U.S. influence in the Middle East. They are continuing along those lines. Another article that came out about three weeks ago is talking about how Turkey is now working on setting up a confrontation with Israel. Even since my book came out, the same alliances that I talked about in the book are continuing today and they are all working with each other. [Q7] For example, Iran continues to forge alliances with Turkey in terms of strategic and security issues and in fact Turkey is transitioning toward a more militant form of Islam today and they are using more of the madrassa style educational system. That is where they train young students in the Koran and in a more extremist interpretation and so forth. I think that all of that is continuing. What I wrote in my book has only grown more intense since that time. I do continue to believe that one of the motivating factors or perhaps the hook in the jaw that Ezekiel speaks about in drawing these nations against Israel could relate not just to the mutual hatred they all have for Israel and not just the idea that they believe that that land belongs to them by divine right, since it belongs to Allah but it could also relate to the oil issue because now there is a lot of talk about Israel making a major discovery of oil and if that happens don’t you think Iran and the other Muslim nations are going to want that oil because they think that Israel is theirs already? When Ezekiel talks about in God saying that I am going to put a hook in your jaw, there is a possibility that part of that hook in the jaw could be this major oil discovery that the Israeli geologists are talking about.

Q: That is an interesting connection there because you think about a fish hook has bait on the end of the hook and I hadn’t considered that particular scenario that the oil discovery there could be the bait on the hook.

Ron Rhodes: It could be, because one of the things we have also discovered is that some of the Muslim oil fields, more in particular the Saudi Arabian oil fields, it has now been estimated that they have already passed peak meaning they have already used up half of the oil in the ground and the reality is that with the current consumption of oil and estimated growth of oil usage in the coming years, Saudi Arabia will have to double its output in the next 20 years, however, the reality is that it is estimated by the Saudis that they will have to work overtime to keep up with present demand which means basically that more oil is going to have to come from somewhere. Like it said it is possible that that

could develop into part of the hook and the jaw that is going to move the Muslim nations against Israel and that is just on top of the fact that they already think the land belongs to them by divine rights. They think the original Old Testament has the line of promise going from Abraham to Ishmael to the Arab people. Of course the Jews would say it goes through Isaac to the Jewish people and they say that the Jews changed the Bible. So in other words it is all by divine right and it is a religious battle and not just a political battle.

Q: Here is a question I have not asked anybody else but I have been pondering it and I don't have an answer. It has to do with the relationship between Turkey and Russia. Obviously when you wrote your book things have changed dramatically with Turkey since then but in Ezekiel 38 it talks about Gog and the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshach and Tubal which most scholars now I think put in Turkey, Mesech and Tubal, and it describes Gog as the prince of Meshech and Tubal. I guess I have wondered does that mean that at some point in the future possibly Russia might exercise a greater degree of authority over Turkey in such a way that Gog could be described as their prince. Have you ever thought about that?

Ron Rhodes: It is possible but it is not necessarily the case. The reason I point that out is that when we talk about Russia and the Muslim nations invading Israel, it is not necessarily the case where the leader must himself be a Russian leader, even though our natural inclination would be that. Historical precedent is the battle has been led by Muslim nations with the backing of Russian military muscle. We have seen that on a number of occasions in the past when Muslim nations have moved against Israel so there is always a possibility that Russia could develop a strong relationship with Turkey and even come to control it. We do know that Russia is an expansionist country, always has been and with its revived economy it is not only providing military to Turkey but its also busy working on its own build up. So what we are witnessing today is that we are not through with Russia. At one time I think a lot of people interested in prophecy were wondering, well, it seems like Russia has gone through the floor and everything has gone to heck over there but the fact is there has been a revival of Russia, not just economically but ideologically as well. I think there is nothing that would please some of those guys any more than to have the former glory of Russia restored in its expansionist activities.

Q: [Q4] Do you see any indicators that modern day Russia would engage in such a war against Israel?

Ron Rhodes: I think so, not only is Russia spending a phenomenal amount of money building up its own military. They spent about four times more in the present day than they previously did back a decade ago but as I mentioned there is a precedent that has been set in Russia cooperating with the Muslim nations. I talk about this in my book. I am thinking back for example to the 1967 Six Day War and you might recall that Soviet war ships and Soviet military were mobilized. They were getting ready to do their thing, and then U.S. intelligence picked up on it and our own president basically sent the Navy in toward Israel as a show of strength siding with Israel and because of that move, because of the U.S. standing with Israel, the Soviets backed down. There was a clear

instance where the Soviets were cooperating with Muslim nations moving against Israel. In 1973 you might remember that Egypt and Syria moved against Israel and they didn't do it just by themselves but Russia was providing the intelligence and the weaponry. They even trained a lot of the Muslims in how to attack and succeed in attacking Israel. You might remember that things began to heat up between Brezhnev and Nixon. Basically Brezhnev sent a communication to Nixon saying back down, stay out of this, it is not your business and then Nixon fired back saying you guys back down or there is going to be major consequences and so basically again the U.S. stared down the Soviet bear. But the point I'm making is, there is another example of the Russians cooperating with Muslim nations. And then of course there was the 1982 situation in which a massive cache of Russian weaponry was discovered underground in Lebanon. The fact is you don't just stick those weapons there for no purpose, they were being prepositioned and they were being prepositioned for an apparent Russian invasion into Israel along with Muslim nations. It took virtually hundreds of Israeli trucks to get that stuff out of there. All I am saying is that because of the precedent that has been set, it is no stretch at all to conclude that Russia and Muslim nations are going to cooperate in a massive invasion against Israel, once that hook in the jaw takes place. My feeling is that all of this adds significance to all the other prophecies that seem to be converging on the horizon. It is not just this precedent with Russia working with Israel, it is not just the nations that have aligned with each other, but it's all of that combined with the other prophetic signs of the time which seem to be pointing to the nearness of all of this.

Q: [Q5] Do you see any alignment between current events in Iran and the details of this prophecy?

Ron Rhodes: There is no doubt about that in my mind. Really I could think about that in terms of different levels. From a political perspective Iran is obviously building alliances with Turkey and Russia and a number of other nations. The agenda seems to be two fold. They want to strengthen the Muslim grip on the Middle East so that they can weaken the western influence. Secondly to stand strong against Israel and to move against Israel. So from a political perspective things are in motion big time. From a military perspective Iran is building up its military and its offensive capability. It is important that you understand offensive as opposed to defensive. What Iran is doing is not simply to defend itself. They are building up offensive weaponry. For example, in their missile program they are continually working on their Shahab missiles that would be intercontinental. You don't build intercontinental missiles unless you intend to engage in offensive measures and they have made great strides already but they have an agreement with Russia that will take them several decades into the future building up their military. So it is not just political, its military but beyond that it is also religious. From a religious perspective the Iranians want to push Israel into the sea and of course this is no more evident than in Iran's current leadership. The goal is to do away with the lesser Satan and the greater Satan, that would be Israel and the United States. It even goes beyond that because we could also bring in the economy. Israel has become a big player in the global oil market and really exercises tremendous influence in the Middle East and there are some political ramifications for all this for the United States. Not only is Iran controlling a lot of the oil

herself but just to give you a little inkling of what Iran has promised to do. What if Iran gets attacked by Israel?

Q: [Q6] That has been a big factor I have been considering and plays into these nuclear ambitions.

Ron Rhodes: Not only nuclear ambitions but one of the things that Iran has said that the first thing that Iran will do if the U.S. or Israel strikes Iran is that they will fill the Persian Gulf with sea mines. The fact is that all of the oil that goes to the U.S. from the Middle East flows through the Persian Gulf and if the Persian Gulf gets shut down as a result of those mines it will blow up boats. That is going to basically throw economic chaos all over the western nations. The thing is there is only about a 1 to 1.5 percent oil reserve that the United States has. So we would have to immediately tap into oil reserves and then our stock market plummets. And believe me, our stock market can't take any more.

Q: That's true, but I honestly wonder how much worse it could get.

Ron Rhodes: I do too. The fact is I think our present leadership is on the wrong course. I don't want to get into a political discussion but it seems like the problem is getting worse by the day. That kind of ties into my overall view that the United States is going to weaken in the end times anyway. I guess to summarize I think that what we see politically, militarily, religiously, and economically, Iran is right at the heart of all of this.

Q: Do you think Israel might carry out a preemptive attack against Iran? I have almost been expecting that, but realize at the same time that Israel is between a rock and a hard place.

Ron Rhodes: There are several ways that all of this can unfold, and it is difficult no matter how you look at it. One of the problems that exists right now is that Iran has purposely put its reactors and spread them out among the civilian population. Which basically means you cannot attack Iran's reactors without killing Iranian civilians. They purposely designed it that way. Another concern is if in fact Iran does get attacked by either Israel or the United States, by the lesser Satan or the great Satan, how would that effect the rest of the Muslim world. Could that constitute a hook in the jaw to the rest of the Muslim world? You see there are all kinds of considerations like that. Certainly I think Israel has the capability of carrying out that kind of attack. A lot of people don't really think of Israel as a major military power but they are. They are a very strong military power and not only that they have been very successful just over the last decade in doing things that are amazing. Just in the last five years or so Israel moved in and attacked Syrian military installations. Were you aware that the Syrian radar was completely blind? Israeli hackers were able to engage in cyber warfare prior to the actual kinetic attack or the physical attack against Syria and basically they hacked Syrian radar which they got from Russia, by the way. The radar was completely blind to the invading Israeli jets and of course the first thing Syria does is contact the Russians and says what gives. But the fact is that is part of the world we live in right now. Cyber attacks will typically take place before a physical or kinetic conventional war attack. I document that

in my just released book on cyber meltdown. It just came out a week or two ago. It kind of documents how all this unfolds and it is pretty amazing stuff that I discovered. All of that is simply to say all of this is very possible. This is cutting edge and is developing before our eyes. It is always possible that Iran could be attacked. I am still seeing from the news reports even in the last week or two that there is still talk about attacking Iran and different methods for doing that. Of course I am sure you are aware of the Stuxnet virus. It basically took down Iran's nuclear reactors and that bought the U.S. and Israel some time. Iran still has not figured out how to get things working. Apparently the Stuxnet virus is engineered so that when you try to get rid of it, it gets more aggressive. So Iran is offering unlimited money toward computer hackers who can undo the problem. It is all cutting edge and happening before our very eyes right now.

Q: [Q8] Radical Islamic eschatology parallels biblical prophecy in many ways. Are you aware of any ways in which Islamic eschatology may contribute to the fulfillment of this prophecy?

Ron Rhodes: I think that is a very real possibility especially as related to what we see coming out of Iran. With the Twelfth Imam who is going to bring about allegedly a messianic era for Islam. He's going to bring complete justice to the world, Islam will become victorious and the scary thing about all of this is the belief that the appearance of the Imam is tied directly to the hastening of apocalyptic violence against the enemies of Islam. In other words, the Twelfth Imam could be made to appear sooner as Muslims faithfully engage in violent activities against the enemies of Islam, including Israel and the United States. That is really the goal of Ahmadinejad, the Iranian President. In fact he views himself as kind of a John the Baptist preparing the way for the coming of the Twelfth Imam which is sort of a counterpart to the second coming of Christ in Christianity. A lot of people in Iran, particularly the Shiite leaders have actually said they witnessed mystical appearances of the Twelfth Imam.

Q: I know Ahmadinejad says he is in regular communication with him.

Ron Rhodes: Well, yeah. He also gets real mystical at his speeches at the United Nations, this light is suppose to come down upon him, sort of a messianic light and the entire audience at the UN is captivated and can't turn their attention from him. He is really kind of a madman when you think about it. The real mission of Ahmadinejad is to pave the way for the reappearance of the Twelfth Imam and according to his time table it is not too far off. It's going to happen in the near future. All of that is something that can be hastened as the United States is attacked and Israel wiped off the map so to speak. It is awful significant that the people who work under him are all in agreement with his stated goals. He fired the former cabinet and the former people who were in charge there and he brought in a bunch of Imam zealots like himself and so his conclusion is that a world without America and Zionism is attainable in our day.

Q: It is interesting, I think a lot of Americans think he is just big talk but I get the impression he means exactly what he says.

Ron Rhodes: I think he does. It is the Muslim tradition based on the Hadith rather than on the Koran to warn an enemy before attack. And of course as you know there were full page ads in many American newspapers...

Q: His letter to the President and to the American people here a few years back...

Ron Rhodes: ...exhorting America to turn to Islam, become servants of Allah and all of that and so he has been heavily influenced by this messianic Muslim society. It is really a man by the name of Ayatollah Mesbah-Yazdi. Of course he is just a huge influence on Ahmadinejad. I think that ties in big time with what is going on in setting the stage for this prophecy.

[Section 2]

Q: [Q9] [Q10] Your thinking is really lining up with where my research has been leading me. I appreciate all your thoughts. What are your thoughts as to where this war fits in on the prophetic timeline at the end of the age?

Ron Rhodes: First of all I don't think that this is not something that took place in the past like a lot of people, like preterists, try to argue and some of the spiritualizers of Bible prophecy. [Q18] I think foundationally it takes place in the latter days or the latter years which when you relate to the Old Testament concept of that, that relates to the distant future, the end times. I do distinguish between the New Testament church age in which the term latter days can fit in from the Old Testament usage of the term latter years or latter days. In the Old Testament it seems to point forward to the distant eschatological future and so when the Ezekiel passage tells us that this takes place in the latter years or the latter days, I do think that is something that is yet future. I also think that for its fulfillment it hinges on Ezekiel 36 and 37 being fulfilled. In other words, it hinges on Israel becoming a national entity before the invasion takes place so that automatically places it beyond Old Testament times to the distant eschatological future. Secondly I don't think we have ever seen anything like this in Israel's past, with the exact nations that are mentioned here, with the exact consequences with God delivering God's people in the midst of this invasion from multiple nations. We have never seen that in Old Testament history. [Q11] Aside from the rebirth of Israel, there is the whole issue of Israel living in security and at rest. I probably won't get into that a lot right now just because I see that there are some time factors here. There is debate among Christians as to what that means. Does that mean that Israel's military will satisfy that condition or does the signing of the covenant guarantee all of that? Those are some of the general concepts of the timing. As to the specific timing, my personal feeling is that even though there are several options that could work and that there is room for debate among Christians without us putting on the boxing gloves in all of this, I tend to think there is a lot of sense that can be made for the scenario that it takes place after the rapture but before the tribulation. The reason I say that is several-fold: first of all the rapture does not begin the tribulation period. A lot of people make that mistake. That's not what begins the tribulation. The signing of the covenant begins the tribulation period and many prophecy scholars believe that there is going to be a time, whether it is weeks, months, or

years, between the time of the rapture and the beginning of the tribulation. Here is my thinking on it. If this invasion takes place sometime after the rapture but before the tribulation, there is a number of variables that would seem to fit with other prophetic events. For example, at the point of the rapture, I think that the United States is going to be negatively impacted more than any other country in the world. I say that because there is probably more Christians here than anywhere else. That would be debated by some people. There might be some countries where there is a lot of true Christians but it has been traditionally a Christian country and even though we have a lot of people who are more talking the talk than walking the walk, still I think that there is enough Christians here that when the rapture happens the U.S. is going to be in complete chaos and economically we are going to cave, I think that the stock market is going to plummet and the United States is going to be greatly weakened. That in my opinion is going to make atheistic Russia and the Muslims which are all still on earth, they may have an attitude of “seize the moment.” If the United States is in complete chaos, the main ally of Israel is basically in turmoil and that might open the door for it to be a much easier task of Russia and the Muslims to move against Israel. [Q23] Secondly if God destroys the Russian and the Muslim invaders prior to the tribulation period, to me that just sort of greases the skids for the quick revival of the Roman Empire. In other words, that really would explain the quick shift in power from the United States to a European super state. If the tribulation period is closely preceded by this failed attack by Russia and the Muslim nations, that would remove the Russian threat, as well as the Muslim influence, and make for a quick rise with the European super state. Further I think that this would make it much easier for the Antichrist to actually sign a peace pact. In other words it gets a whole lot easier for the Antichrist to guarantee the protection of Israel over against the Muslims if the Muslims have already been taken out, or at least they have been largely taken out when God destroys the Muslim invaders. [Q25] Still further if the Muslim invaders are greatly weakened then that would seem to also open up the possibility of a rapid construction of the Jewish temple, which right now poses big problems for the Muslim community.

Q: [Q25] You talk about the sequence in Ezekiel, you’ve got 36 and 37 paving the way for 38 and 39, and then chapter 40, you start talking about a rebuilt temple. I have wondered if there could be a chronological reason for that.

Ron Rhodes: I think the millennial temple is separate from the tribulation temple. You are going to have a millennial temple which is built and of course there is a lot of controversy as to why that temple will be built with apparent animal sacrifices in it, but the fact is that the animal sacrifices don’t necessarily refer to man’s salvation. What you have to keep in mind in terms of the millennial temple, there will be mortal human beings invited into the millennial kingdom. Matthew 25:31-46 makes that clear, that is the judgment of the nations and so you have got the nations judged and those who are judged to be those who treated Christ’s brothers well are invited into the millennial kingdom in their mortal bodies and they still have babies and they grow old and eventually die and meanwhile the church is already resurrected and raptured and will be ruling with Christ during that time. Those mortal human beings will go into the kingdom and so many theologians believe that the sacrifices that take place in the Jewish temple are more for

purification of the temple itself because human sin will still be there with human beings, even though they have become believers they are still tainted by sin and therefore the Jewish rituals are basically to cleanse the temple of any defilement. Anyway that is the Jewish temple in the millennial kingdom. The temple of the tribulation period, however, can be built fairly quickly. The money has already been raised for it, the utensils are already being constructed for it. And that would be much easier to accomplish if Muslim forces were destroyed, say 3½ years prior to the tribulation period. You could be in full swing by the beginning of the tribulation period with that temple already built. I think finally that would also really help for a good understanding of that burning of weapons. That has always been a thorn in the flesh for any scenario. [Q14] [Q21] The problem is that Israel is suppose to burn these weapons for seven years but Israel will have to get out of town quick right in the middle of the tribulation period.

Q: So you have to start that clock earlier.

Ron Rhodes: How is Israel going to get out of town quick and still be burning the weapons? There are several scenarios I can think of. Could be that because a third of the trees are going to be burned up prior to that time. Israel is going to need stuff to burn and so maybe there is going to be like an underground market where the Israelis take some of those with them and burn them incognito out in the desert somewhere as a way of having something that is burnable. That is always a possibility. But it just seems to make good sense that if the burning began 3½ years before the tribulation, they would be done by the time the Antichrist moves into Jerusalem. From a chronological perspective and I also think that if you had all this take place prior to the tribulation period, this would also greatly facilitate the emergence of a one world religion headed up by the false prophet. And I say that because you have the Christians taken out at the rapture and you have got the Muslims taken out as they attack Israel. You have the two super monotheistic religions no longer in play. The Hindus are open to all kind of religions anyway, they don't care. They are open to thousands of different religions. New Agers don't care, apostate Christians don't care. They are already open to all this kind of stuff so all I am saying is that as you relate this to all the other factors, [Q25] the building of the temple, the one world religion, and the burning of the weapons and all of that, it just seems to make good sense to me personally that it take place prior to the tribulation by 3½ years. Having said that I still concede the possibility that it could be right at the beginning of the tribulation. There are a lot of good scholars who hold to that.

Q: There are good scholars all over the map on this one. It seems that it used to be the predominant view to put it in the first half of the tribulation and just as I have researched this I sensed that the predominant view is shifting more toward your view and also mine that it is pretribulation whether before or after the rapture. I couldn't say that but it seems a lot of movement in that direction.

Ron Rhodes: [Q13] One of the issues related to the rapture is the imminency issue. And of course there are some who would say, well, if it is going to happen before the rapture, does that mean that the rapture is no longer an imminent event? In other words are we saying that something has to happen prior to the rapture? And if that is the case then how

can we still say that the rapture is imminent? So there has been some debate on that. Those people who hold that it could happen before the rapture have basically still stated that the rapture could happen any moment, there is nothing that has to happen before that, even though they think the invasion will still take place before it.

Q: I think the pretribulation view has been misrepresented sometimes as saying that it has to be prerapture and I don't know anybody personally that says that it has to be before the rapture. I look at 1948. If I had been living in 1947 and I would have said well the restoration of Israel is going to come after the rapture. Well it didn't, it came before, or is coming, I guess I should say; it's still ongoing. I guess I look at this war that it could be the same way, it does not have to be before the rapture, but it could be, without violating imminence.

Ron Rhodes: Yes, it could. Everybody has to work out their salvation. This is one of the reasons why I don't like to put on any kind of boxing gloves on all this because there are such fine scholars in all of these viewpoints. I do reject the idea that it is in the millennial kingdom. There are some who think it is at the end of the millennium because of the reference to Gog. Some of those viewpoints I find very little evidence for. Some of these other viewpoints, there are good reasons for believing them, and there are also problems with each of them. If someone says there are no problems with their particular viewpoint, they just haven't studied the issue.

Q: [Q12] [Q18] Let me ask one quick follow-up question. You mentioned the latter years and some scholars have said that is a specific reference to the 70th week of Daniel, others say it is just a little more general than that and referring to basically the end of the age and could include events preceding the tribulation. What is your take on that?

Ron Rhodes: I think that is a good question. I do think traditionally it refers only to the tribulation period. To tell you the truth, though, I do think that the argument set forth by people like Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Joel Rosenberg and some others, that while it has primary reference to the tribulation period, it could also include the years that lead up to the preparation of the tribulation period, laying the groundwork for the emergence of the tribulation period. I think that is a possibility. I understand why certain individuals will argue otherwise and say it is only the tribulation but my understanding of it is that while it has primary reference to the tribulation period, it could include the years that lead up to the event, especially the events that transpire and set the stage for the events that take place during the tribulation period. That is where I am at the moment. I do distinguish between the New Testament and Old Testament usage of the term like I said before but at this point I tend to think that maybe it might include a couple years prior to that time period. How about you, where do you stand on that?

Q: Well that is my take. I understand the arguments on that, but it seems to me that to the reader in Ezekiel's day they are not going to have a technical definition of that phrase. They would interpret that as the end of the age and even if it does apply to the great tribulation or the 70th week of Daniel, it seems to me the events immediately leading up

to that period are certainly included and deeply connected with what goes on there. I guess in my mind I have a hard time saying it has to refer just to those seven years.

Ron Rhodes: I think one of the things that we always have to be careful to do is to always test our theological paradigm against the Scriptures and even though it would be very neat from a chart perspective to have absolute precision on how long each thing lasts, we always have to use that hermeneutical circle where we tests our paradigms against the scriptures and as I did that it just wasn't as clear to me as it has been to some people who have written in the past that it refers absolutely to the last seven years.

Q: I think it is related to it but doesn't have to be precise.

Ron Rhodes: Well I kind of see it the signs of the times, they cast their shadows before them.

[Section 3]

Q: [Q15] I like that phrase. How have your views regarding this war impacted your ministry in the area of speaking, teaching, and writing?

Ron Rhodes: There are a number of things. First of all, there is no time that I would rather be alive than right now, doing Christian ministry. I would not trade positions with people who were in the Reformation, I wouldn't trade places with people who lived back in the 4th or 5th century. I would rather be alive today seeing all the stuff and challenges that we see before us. Certainly there is a sense of urgency that I think an understanding of prophecy brings toward getting the word out there, especially when we see so many counterfeits emerging. In a way one could argue apologetically for Christianity just based upon the escalation of counterfeits trying to explain all of this stuff away. I think Satan is working overtime right now to do away with these kinds of doctrines. One of the movements that I have also been particularly sensitive towards arguing against is this Preterism that is being promoted by many Christian apologists. A guy I used to work with, Hank Hanagraaff. I used to co-host the Bible Answer Man with him and since that time he has become partial preterist and because of the popularity of some of his books as well as people like Frank Turek and some other people who are in apologetics it seems like a lot of people have been getting the idea that apologists are defacto of the belief system of partial preterism which says all the prophecies have already been fulfilled. My primary work has been in the field of apologetics and I wanted to take a very strong stand against that by indicating that here is an apologist who believes in a literal interpretation of prophecy and that when you take things literally you are going to end up against preterism and for a very clear outlining of prophetic events including the Ezekiel invasion. That has been one of the things I have been doing and all the while I am guarding against unhealthy attitudes like date setting. I have always subscribed to the idea that we ought to live our lives as though the Lord could come today but plan our lives like we will be here our whole life time expectancy. That way we are prepared for both time and eternity. And so I have always warned against date setting but at the same time tried to get people excited about it. I'm real thankful for the fact that whereas I formerly

did mostly apologetics conferences, I am now also doing a lot of prophecy conferences. So that is great. The more that we can get the word out the better.

Q: [Q16] What about vision for new ministry? As a result of your thinking about this war, or the proximity of other end times events, have you begun or considered any new areas of ministry?

Ron Rhodes: I think that in answer to that, one of the new ministries I found myself having to engage in is having to engage in apologetics against false understandings of all of this. For example, there is a great deal of emphasis today on a Muslim Antichrist. People arguing that the Antichrist will actually be a Muslim, and this is for obvious reasons. People seem to think it makes sense that the Antichrist is going to be a Muslim. But you know the Muslims have a very detailed outline of prophetic events of the end times. Because of that fact I wrote a recent book that is already to the publisher and will be out in the next six months on unmasking the Antichrist.

Q: Is that relating to the book God's War on Terror?

Ron Rhodes: No it is related to the books by Joel Richardson.

Q: Yeah, he wrote that book, Joel Richardson.

Ron Rhodes: He is really the primary promoter of the idea but a lot of people are buying into it saying it makes good sense to me. There are just so many problems prophetically with that theory that I felt like it had to be answered in a nice way, in a way that is not offensive but at the same time in a way that is very Biblical in its analysis.

Q: What is the title of the book, responding to Joel Richardson?

Ron Rhodes: "Unmasking the Antichrist" in the next six months or so. Publishing is a slow business.

Q: I have never done a book but actually once I get done with the DMin work I am interested in writing a book on this subject if there is time. You have covered a lot of the ground already.

Ron Rhodes: The more, the better.

Q: [Q17] Finally, how has your thinking about this coming war and the end of the age impacted your ministry in the area of evangelism?

Ron Rhodes: Tremendously. In fact I might let you know that the primary theme that made me become a Christian was biblical prophecy. At the time I was actually pursuing a career in Hollywood. I was a long haired musician rock and roller. I was being very successful in Hollywood doing the Tonight Show, Merv Griffin Show and the Dinah Shore Show, Mike Douglas Show, American Bandstand and all those, making a ton of

money. And lo and behold, I am backstage one day with Shirley Boone (Pat Boone's wife) and they were into Bible prophecy. It was the first time I ever saw anybody cry tears of joy from a relationship with the Lord. They were talking about the rapture and the tribulation and the Antichrist, which I had never heard of. After that I decided to read as many books as I could find on the subject, and I ended up gravitating toward books by Dallas Seminary faculty, by Pentecost, Walvoord, and Ryrie and some of those guys. Long story short I ended up becoming a Christian, dumped Hollywood and went to seminary and haven't looked back.

Q: When were you at DTS?

Ron Rhodes: I graduated with my doctorate in 1983 and so I went straight through both masters and doctorate.

Q: I overlapped with you just a little bit. I was there from 1982 to 1986.

Q: When I am done, if you are interested, I could email you some of my conclusions, if it would be any help to you.

Ron Rhodes: I would love see it and hope you do end up writing a book on it.

Q: We will see. I am a pastor at heart and currently am pastoring. There is just kind of a ignorance in the Christian community about this prophecy that I think the Lord may be calling me to help enlighten people a little bit as you have been doing.

Joel Rosenberg Interview

October 11, 2011 (by telephone)

Q: Joel, I have been embarked on a study in Ezekiel 38-39, as part of my doctoral research at Dallas Seminary. Whether you know it or not, you're the guy who got me started in the whole process. Your Epicenter book really first caught my attention on that, and it really awakened me to that prophecy of Scripture. So I have been reading thousands and thousands of pages on that, and interviewed quite a few people. My dissertation is focusing on not only selected expert perspectives on that prophecy but how it relates to current world events and how it then influences what we do in ministry. Joel, you have impressed me as being one who really puts his feet to what he believes on that. I appreciate your willingness to talk to me for a few minutes.

Joel Rosenberg: My pleasure. Thanks.

[Section 1]

Q: [Q1] I've got a whole slew of questions to ask you here, and I'm actually going to skip over some of what I might have asked, because of our time limitations. I've read I think everything you've written so I probably could fill in the blank on some of these. Based on your familiarity with this prophecy, do you think it is possible that Ezekiel's war could be approaching soon?

Joel Rosenberg: Yes, I think it is possible, but I think it would take an awful lot more information and development to unfold before we could feel like with any sense of certainty that it was happening. Definitely the trajectory of events in the last 10 or 15 years is strikingly consistent with what Ezekiel laid out for us so given the fact that Ezekiel 36 and 37 have essentially come true or are coming true in our lifetime, I think it makes us need to be very watchful.

Q: [Q2] What are some of the big factors, if you just had to list a number of factors that make you think we could be in the gathering storm for this war, what comes to mind?

Joel Rosenberg: Certainly the beginning of the Russian-Iranian alliance that began in the mid 1990's. I think that is the most striking. If you already accept the rebirth of Israel and Jews coming back to the Holy Land in Ezekiel 36 and 37, that is the most dramatic. [Q3] [Q5] So on the heels of that, the beginning of the Iranian-Russian alliance in the mid 1990's and accelerating under Putin with Ahmadinejad. We have never seen this type of relationship between Russia and Iran in more than 2500 years. That is the most striking to me. [Q11] I think if you follow by blog I would direct you just a couple days ago to this poll taken in Israel reported by the New York Times, but originally from the Israeli newspaper *Yediot Aharonot*, indicating that while almost half of Israelis feel that they face an existential threat from Iran, still 88% of Israelis feel good about living in Israel and they feel more secure than ever before. That poll captured in real time the exact conundrum that I believe is described by Ezekiel. Because on the one hand Israel is described as living securely in the land, it doesn't say peace, doesn't use the word

shalom, there is no treaty describes, it is just a sense that they are living securely so that strikes me as a state of mind, not necessarily a state of geopolitics. On one hand, the people of Israel when the prophecy will be fulfilled will feel more secure than any other time, however, at the same time they are watching presumably Russia, Iran, Libya, Sudan, other countries form this alliance against them, so that always struck me as a conundrum, is the best word I can think of, just almost contradictory things happening at the same time. I think that is exactly where we are. Now, as a caution, could Israel become more secure over the next few years, could the natural gas that they've discovered come on line, and they become even more prosperous, that this creates even more of an incentive for Russian plunder than currently. Yes I think that is possible. Could the wall that is being built between Israel and Palestinians need to be torn down before that prophecy could be fully triggered? I think that is possible, I don't know if it is necessary but it is certainly possible. So yes more can happen and may very well happen, but we are at a really striking moment. Then I think also you have to add international isolation of Israel. There is really not that many allies to whom Israel can look anymore and even U.S./Israeli relations are more strained today than they have been in 63 years. So if a Russian/Iranian alliance is set into motion against Israel in the next couple of years, do we picture an American president taking military action to intervene? For much of the last 63 years, the answer would be yes, of course an American president would help Israel. Now, I think that has changed. So those are a few of the reasons I think we are in a really interesting moment. I am a very cautious guy about this. Some people think, well, you are so outspoken about it. That is because people need to be aware of how consistent current events have been over the past 10 or 15 years with the prophecy but that doesn't mean it is going to happen soon, but it doesn't mean its not going to happen soon. I think the most important verse in those two chapters is 38:7, "Get ready, be prepared." And if God is saying that to the Russian dictator, Gog, then what should the church be doing? We should be getting ready and being prepared.

Q: I want to ask you a question about Russia as it relates to Turkey. Even just two years ago, Turkey was an ally of Israel, conducting joint military exercises together and since that attempt to run the blockade, everything has changed with Turkey, and Turkey is clearly throwing in its lot with its Muslim neighbors. Here is my question. In the very beginning of chapter 38, it talks about Gog, being the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. Rosh in most of my studies put that in Russia; Meshech and Tubal probably in Turkey. So here is the question. I don't have an answer for this, and am curious if you have thought of this. In what manner would Gog be the prince of Meshech and Tubal which are in Turkey? Does that foreshadow maybe some growing Russian control over Turkey? Have you ever given any thought to how that might play out?

Joel Rosenberg: It is a good question and it goes to a debate that has been going on for a long time certainly for several decades within modern evangelical circles over defining what exactly is Meshech and Tubal. Someone I like and respect very much, a Dallas grad himself, Mark Hitchcock, in fact I just saw him, we were speaking at a conference but unfortunately we didn't get into the events were such that we didn't get to spend time just really talking about this in any detail. He is convinced that Meshech and Tubal is Turkey and it very well may be. Obviously there are others who believe, no, that's Russia, could

be Moscow, could be Tobolsk on the Tubal River. I guess I am a bit of an agnostic on the precision thereof, the point being I am sure personally that Magog overall is Russia and the Russian speaking areas that may extend beyond the current borders of Russia. So the question then becomes if that at least is right, and I think Mark disagrees with that. I forget if he believes Magog is Turkey.

Q: I think he would put Magog as southern Russia and the former Soviet Republics if I remember right.

Joel Rosenberg: And some scholars say no, no this is only Turkey and not Russia at all. So Mark and I are pretty close on that and so the point being I think that you would have to say if Mark and others are right that Meshech and Tubal are Turkey, then there has to be a growing alliance or more, even maybe more dramatic than an alliance between Russia and Turkey. If the other scholars are right, and I don't consider myself a scholar on these things, that say Meshech and Tubal is Russia then you retain Gomer as the alliance either between Russia, then Gomer being Turkey, and that is how Turkey is included. All that to say I am a bit of an agnostic on which version it would be, but my conclusion is that you would have to see a very tight alliance between Russia and Turkey. I believe that is growing. Putin went to Turkey. He was the first Russian leader I think maybe ever, but certainly in a hundred years. I haven't found a time where a Russian leader visiting Turkey, but that just happened a few years ago and it happened a year or two ago. So I think that alliance is growing and Turkey is breaking away from Israel and joining the Russian-Iranian sphere. Again this is where it may take years more for these things to solidify and go as deep as the scriptures may indicate. The point is the scriptures are clearer about this prophecy than a lot of prophecies, the destruction of Damascus for example. We have almost no detail beyond the fact that that will happen, so to have two full chapters about this is a lot, but still not as much as we would like. There is a lot of room for caution here.

[Section 2]

Q: [Q9] [Q10] I want to talk a little with you about the possible timing of this war and obviously I am sure you are fully aware of all the different possibilities for where this might fit on the prophetic timeline. Could you just give me your take on where your best guess is and what causes you to make that choice?

Joel Rosenberg: #1: It is going to happen in the last days because the text says so, so I believe it is an end times prophecy. #2: I don't have a view of whether it would be pre-rapture or post-rapture, because the Scriptures don't give us any indications on that, not clearly anyway. [Q11] #3: In terms of the tribulation, I have great respect for a man I never met but Mark studied under him, Dr. Walvoord. Walvoord was sure that the peace and security of Israel that is described would be because of the Antichrist's peace treaty with Israel. He has a lot of letters after his name, the guy was genius, he may very well be right, however, I have a lot of caution about whether this could happen beyond the first seal in the tribulation, because Israel is living securely and even if they have a treaty, once the rest of the next three seals open from Revelation 6, a quarter of the earth is

dying so if it would put it in the next couple of years, that is 2 ¼ billion people or so. For an Israeli who might have a treaty, I am using this if the tribulation would happen in the next couple of years, I am not saying that it will, but how does an Israeli go down to the beach in Tel Aviv and put on his Coppertone and get out a magazine or a novel and sit down and go, “Well, look, two billion people are dying, but we are secure because we have a treaty.” No Jewish person could possibly feel secure in that context, no person in their right mind will feel secure, they will be happy to have a treaty, but we Jews are a very pessimistic people for good reason. [Q14] I just think that both for timing purposes, how are you going to burn weapons for seven years if the clock has already begun running on the tribulation, but also the issue of security. I just think that Walvoord may have lumped this together with something, I am not entirely sure it will bear out. I personally lean strongly towards this is a pre-tribulation event, but whether it is pre-trib or not, I don’t know.

Q: [Q14] I have given a tremendous amount of thought to the timing factors and I think in a nutshell I am right on the same page with you. I sat under Dr. Walvoord too, I really respect him, but the seven years I just don’t see how they are running for their lives, how are they going to have time to pick up weapons and carry them along and burn them? It just doesn’t fit.

Joel Rosenberg: Me personally, without a doctorate from Dallas, I think you have to say it *can’t* happen where the seven years includes the second half of the tribulation. Who’s burning their weapons? They are fleeing. It could happen so that it is still ending in the seven years but you are really getting into...I could go on and on, but I won’t.

Q: [Q19] Another factor I thought about is during the seven years, the first half of the seven years, the Antichrist is giving his personal protection to the nation of Israel. So if the Antichrist himself is protecting Israel, how can he allow this Gog and Magog invasion to take place? It just doesn’t quite make sense to me, that he could stand by and watch that happen and not come to Israel’s defense, and still be honoring this treaty, because he doesn’t break the treaty till the mid-point.

Joel Rosenberg: That is exactly right, Stan. These are nuances that I think more people take time to really process this through, and try to think through the implications. Those pieces are not *in* the text but once you begin to war game it, you would say yeah if you have a treaty, there is no nation that comes to Israel’s defense so how could the Antichrist have a treaty and have Israel being attacked? It doesn’t ring true, and again I would look at this as sometimes I think prophecy scholars, who were really remarkable in many ways, but when you are looking at these lenses you have to look at them through such long range telephoto lenses, that it flattens and compresses things. That is what telephoto and zoom lenses do, they compress so it is hard to see. For example, to use a different analogy, if you were a pioneer moving across the United States and you were heading to California in the 1800’s and somebody told you who had already been there, you have some mountains you have to face when you get to Colorado. Okay, so you are coming across Kansas and thinking, “Mountains? I don’t see any mountains.” You get to the foothills and you’re like, “All right, well, these aren’t *so* bad, my cousin Fred was telling

me, I don't know why he was so, "Ooh, there's mountains!" These aren't so bad." So you go, clip, clop, clip, clop, you go up to one mountain and you're like, "Oh, oh I see, there's a valley and then a much larger mountain. Well, we can do that." You go down in the valley and come up the next mountain, you get to the top and you are like, "Holy smoke, I didn't see that one coming." You go back down again, and then come up an even higher mountain. You can't see that from Kansas, and you can know there are some mountains there, but you might not know all the distances in between and the heights of those mountains. I would liken end times prophecy to those mountains for the same reason that Jesus used the birth pangs analogy which is contraction, release, contraction, release. But the distance between those contractions and the intensity of each contraction, we just don't know. All that to say, I think Walvoord was thinking okay, you need security, I got security in the text, Daniel 9. You need a massive war, okay that could all fit into it, and it all seems compressed and people, he included, weren't thinking through every single nuance of the "what if." What I am trying to do is not tell people that I have the conclusive, absolute way to look at this, but to try to get people to think, what are some of the "what ifs" that others may not have thought of, and that will help us to understand this thing better and consider what we might be watching for, rather than drawing an immediate conclusion as I think some, Lindsey for example, was certain it was the Soviet Union. Well, it isn't, so that means that things can change and he didn't see that change coming, nor might we have, but we have to be very cautious, clear but cautious that there may be more twists and turns in these things that normally wouldn't be seen. I think the ones that you are picking out are really excellent points.

Q: [Q13] I believe in a pre-tribulation rapture, and a lot of the people I have studied under believe in that, but there is a danger, I call pre-trib blindness. In fact I used to hear Dr. Walvoord say, "The very next event on God's calendar is the rapture." I think, well, we really don't know that for sure. What if you had said that in 1947, what do you do with the rebirth of the nation of Israel? And because we hold so strongly to this pre-trib rapture, and people mistakenly sometimes equate that with the beginning of the tribulation, which it doesn't. It's the signing of the peace treaty that begins the tribulation. But there is this pre-trib blindness that sets in where no, nothing can possibly happen before the rapture, before the tribulation begins because that is next. I think it is probably a little short sighted on our part. The Scripture doesn't say that this war *has* to happen before the rapture, it doesn't say it *has* to happen before the tribulation but I think we are foolish to say no, it *couldn't* happen before that. I think it could, and personally I think it is very possible.

Joel Rosenberg: I think it is a nuance, but I am not sure it is as much pre-trib rapture blindness as it is doctrine of imminency confusion. It is just a nuance. I believe in the doctrine of imminency, but the question is, how do you define that? My definition is that nothing prophetically *has* to happen before. If you are standing just after the ascension of Jesus and you are back in the first century, at that moment nothing had to happen scripturally for him to come back in terms of the rapture, but that didn't mean nothing else *would* happen. The one you just cited is the perfect example. If you believe in the doctrine of imminence and that means that the next thing *is* the return of Jesus in terms of the rapture, then Israel couldn't have been reborn. So some people say I think a little

fuzzy and maybe they haven't even realized the implications of what they are saying. I see this as an observation in my friend, Tim LaHaye's work. On the one hand he is a total firm believer in the doctrine of imminence or imminency, however you want to say it, and I agree with him but he would also indicate, "Are we living in the last days?" Well we are seeing wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes, so yes. Which is it? If there is no sign, this is often how he and others will say it, that the rapture is a signless event. It is turning out not to be true, that may have felt true and conceptually it was true years ago, but now you can't say it is a signless event, meaning that nothing else would happen, because things *are* happening.

Q: That is a good point, I hadn't thought of that.

Joel Rosenberg: I don't think it is an issue of whether the rapture is going to happen, and it doesn't go to the issue of whether the rapture is going to happen before the tribulation, it goes more precisely into the doctrine of imminence and exactly what do we mean by imminence. Yes, Jesus could come at any moment, but just because nothing else has to happen before he comes, doesn't mean nothing else prophetic will happen before he comes. That is a nuance, but it is an important one, and just to say precisely when it comes to this issue of Ezekiel 38 and 39. In my novel, the Ezekiel Option, obviously I had to choose, is it a pre-rapture or post-rapture event? I chose pre-rapture because I thought that would be interesting to imagine. I kind of want it to be that way. I want to live during the time that we preach the gospel and prepare and help people understand these prophecies. That being said I have one little piece that cautions me against it being pre-rapture. It is not conclusive, it is just curious and that is the issue of the Lord ending the season of his hidden face at the end of Ezekiel 39. That was of course foretold by Moses, that eventually God would hide his face from the Jewish people. Of course it wasn't complete because otherwise I wouldn't be a believer. But that is Paul describing the partial hardening. But the word clearly indicates that at the end of Ezekiel 39 he will remove this season. It will be the end of the season of him hiding his face, and he will stop hiding his face, and he will pour out his Holy Spirit on the house of Israel. Now that could suggest, not conclusively, but it could suggest that this happens *after* the rapture but before the tribulation.

Q: I have studied that. Another take on that is that the ending of chapter 39 might be just kind of a summary conclusion about what God is doing through all these great events. It says all the nations will know that the Lord is God, all of Israel will know that the Lord is God. That doesn't necessarily mean that they all are born again, because not all the nations will be born again, not all Israel will be born again at that point. So I think it might be a summary statement looking backward, and even looking forward to the near future, where assuming that it happens before the tribulation, that it won't be long until his Spirit *is* poured upon the house of Israel.

Joel Rosenberg: That is why I say it is not a conclusive point but there is something related to Ezekiel 38 and 39 that comes with the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Jewish people in a way that we really haven't ever seen since the 1st century. I am saying we haven't ever seen like this the way he is describing it. That is very consistent

with the church being gone and Jews coming to faith increasingly en masse up until a Romans 11:26 conclusion. But I would still love it to start to happen while we are all around and then the rapture could happen right in the middle. We just don't know.

[Section 3]

Q: [Q15] [Q16] How have your views regarding this war impacted your ministry in the area of new ministry, speaking, teaching, writing, and vision for new work? And forgive me, but you're my poster child in this, because you have done so much, that I am aware of, in ministry *because* of your thinking on this.

Joel Rosenberg: Well the short version is that if I really believe these prophecies could happen in my lifetime, then I cannot allow myself not to be changed by these prophecies. In other words, if I thought that this could happen in the next few years, wouldn't I be doing a series of things? Wouldn't I be trying to teach this prophecy to anyone would listen? Not to convince them necessarily that it is true or even that I have the correct analysis in full but that this is important, people should study this. That is one of my conclusions, that is one of the things I should do. [Q17] If I really believe this could happen in the next few years, wouldn't I be preaching the gospel to anyone who moved, particularly Jews and Muslims, for fear that they were going to get caught up in the middle of all this and end up perishing? Yes, that is what I would do, and that is what I am trying to do. [Q16] If I really believed this was going to happen in the next years, wouldn't I be trying to provide humanitarian relief in the epicenter, to the poor and the needy, and build a technical structure, a logistical structure, as well as a network of churches and believers around the world, who would be wanting to help both preach the gospel but also provide food and clothing and medical supplies and water and anything else that would care for people when this disaster happened? Yes, to me that is an inescapable conclusion of believing that this is what you do if you thought this was coming. That is what we are trying to do with the Joshua Fund.

Q: Would you say that your vision for the Joshua Fund came directly out of what the Lord revealed to your heart from this passage?

Joel Rosenberg: Directly. Absolutely. The Joshua Fund, is my wife and me saying, if we believe this even remotely could happen in our lifetime, don't we need to be involved? And how would we be involved in a way that didn't just help one ministry, but could help a whole range of ministries and serve as a mutual fund in a sense? To match our own funds, and raise funds from others, and a whole range of ministries in Israel and the neighboring countries that will help get ready and be prepared from the church's perspective prior to any of these events happening. If they don't happen in our lifetime, shouldn't we be doing this anyway? But especially if we see Russia and Iran converging and all these other things happening. What would we think if this thing did happen in a couple of years, and we were just standing around just writing novels about it? It would be ludicrous. And we would end up standing before the Messiah one day and having him say, "Just help me understand how come you didn't get ready, and prepared to communicate the gospel to every single person in that region, and provide any

humanitarian relief you could, knowing that these things might happen? How did you miss that, Joel?" I couldn't bear the thought of having no answer to that question.

Q: I just so appreciate that. When I look in the Scriptures almost every time God talks about the coming of the end of the age and all these signs, then immediately he will talk about and so how then should you live your life. This is always that practical application. I so appreciate what you have done. I am friends with Garry Denlinger, who is one of the founders of the Israel College of the Bible. I know you have helped them out. And the last time I was in Israel we stopped at a stop light and there goes this ambulance that had the Joshua Fund logo on the side of the ambulance. I know that is an outgrowth of your heart and I just praise the Lord for what you have done with that.

Joel Rosenberg: [Q17] Thank you, Stan. Here is the thing. To me the most important chapter in the entire book of Ezekiel isn't 38 or 39. It is 3 and 33. This idea of being a watchman on the wall: if you see danger coming and you don't warn people, and you don't do anything to help people, people will die in their own sins, but their blood is going to be on our hands in some way, shape or form. And that is just not something I intend to go into eternity having happen. I don't want to just see this and warn people through what I write and what I say; I want to do everything I can to reach every Jew and Gentile in the land of Israel with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and anyone between Tel Aviv and Tehran, and Tel Aviv and Turkey and Moscow. Those two corridors I think are the most dangerous corridors on the planet and they are also among the least reached with the gospel and so the urgency.... This is why I want to underscore this, Stan, that I hope this somehow, not necessarily through me, but in your dissertation gets reflected. The urgency is not just to reach Jews with the gospel in light of this. Because actually the good news out of this is that the Holy Spirit is going to be poured out on the whole house of Israel. It doesn't excuse us from reaching Jews, it just means God is going to do something amazing with Jews. But when Jesus said to love your neighbor and love your enemy, this has compelled me to go and visit Muslim countries and learn more about Muslims coming to Christ and how lost they are without Christ, in a way that as a Jewish person I wouldn't probably have been so motivated to go to Afghanistan and Iraq and meet Iranians and all these other countries if I didn't realize that these Muslims are going to die and go to hell in this war, or others, if we don't share the gospel with them. And so I am trying very hard hopefully in the power of the Holy Spirit to help people understand that we can't just become more pro-Israel because of these prophecies, we also need to be become incredibly compassionate and proactive in reaching Israel's neighbors and her enemies as well.

Q: Well the Muslim world is so receptive to signs from the Lord and of course you have written about that a lot. You have this huge sign coming and there is going to be an incredible spiritual harvest, I think especially in the Muslim world after this war. I hope I get to see it because it is going to be pretty exciting.

Joel Rosenberg: I hope so too. Yeah, I agree.

[Section 4]

Q: I could talk to you for hours on end, but I want to honor your time. When I am done with my project I would be willing to print up a copy of what I am doing and send it to you.

Joel Rosenberg: Absolutely. I'd be fascinated.

Q: I have done a lot of interaction about some of the some of the possibilities of the timing and what we do with all this as far as our ministry and so I will send you a copy when I am all done. You got me started on it so I have to give you the end product!

Joel Rosenberg: I appreciate that. What is your time frame for finishing?

Q: I am suppose to graduate next May which means I need to do a lot of writing between now and then so it is coming up in the next few months. I have actually pretty much finished most of my interviews. I have talked to ten or twelve of some of the key prophecy experts around the country. So I am going to writing over the next few months and finishing this up and hoping to get to the finish line. Do you go to the pre-trib research group in Dallas in December?

Joel Rosenberg: Once, I spoke at it a few years ago but no I haven't gone. That is the only time I have been.

Q: I knew you had spoken there once. I am hoping to get down to that in December and do a little bit more talking with some folks. At this point I am on the home stretch. The light at the end of the tunnel is visible. I just have to do a lot of work between now and then.

Joel Rosenberg: Let me ask you – are you reviewing those countries and looking at the historic background?

Q: Yes, what I am trying to do is to relate..., I am a Bible expositor at heart, I really am committed to studying what does the Bible say, so I spent a huge amount of time in this passage to try my best to interpret it correctly and then to look at what is happening in the world. Do we see the pieces falling into place, do we see the stage being set, at least as far as we can see? So I have been trying to tie these two together. I am looking a lot at some of the alliances and some of the factors that make it look like this war could possibly be approaching. I spent quite a bit of time talking about the timing and all the pros and cons, is the war before the rapture, is it after the rapture, is it before the tribulation, is it during the tribulation and then really focusing on what difference this is making in our lives. As ministry people, how is this impacting what we are writing about, how is this impacting what we are talking about, how is this impacting evangelism, what do we do with it? So that is the core of what my research is on. It is a big project.

Joel Rosenberg: And do you know whether others, do you have a sense because you are working in the Dallas system, has anyone else done this in a while? I am always curious whose doing actual scholarly research on stuff like this.

Q: Some of the authors that you are familiar with like Mark Hitchcock, Ron Rhodes and Tim LaHaye and yourself, there are people writing on but I have not found anybody else doing at least this kind of research on it, even in recent years. It strikes me as in many respects a lost prophecy, that for the most part, the evangelical church is ignorant of. And God has used you to open a lot of people's eyes to that but you talk to most people on the street, they can tell you all about the Antichrist and the rapture and the great tribulation but you mention the war of Gog and Magog and they ask, "Is that part of the tribulation, is that part of the battle of Armageddon? They just don't know anything about it.

Joel Rosenberg: Forget the guy on the street, although I totally agree with you. But people at Dallas, it is amazing how few people, obviously Dwight Pentecost has written about in *Things to Come*, and some wonderful scholars there, obviously Walvoord, have written about it, but it is amazing I don't think it even gets taught there. I think it is important that somebody in the Dallas world that talks Dallas, you could talk Trinity and others but you are talking Dallas and for you to do this I think it would be important then for this discussion to be going out in the Dallas Theological graduate world. I don't know how you are going to do that, but if there is any way I can help you do that, and I may not be the guy because I am not a Dallas grad, I am a Syracuse grad with political seminary rather than Bible school or seminary but it is important for people with letters after their name as it were, you and Mark and others to continue to try to teach this to the community because I think it is more likely – if we really believe and I think we all do that the rapture will come before the tribulation, that means it is possible these events will happen in our life time. Can't prove it...but all our studies of the tribulation, as fascinating as that is, it is not really that relevant to us. This could be *really* relevant, especially when you look at what is going on. With Putin possibly emerging again next year, you think it is not crazy to think this could happen in the next couple of years, I am not saying it will, but it could, then it is going to be a lot of preachers and pastors and theologians thinking, "Gosh, have I spent any time studying this, and from somebody I trust?" You and this document may end up being a very useful one in a world where people are going to want a theologian to help me with this, not some guy from Washington, so that will be very important to the overall work.

Q: If the war doesn't happen first, and I have the time, I have actually had it on my heart to write a book on this. I am a pastor at heart, that is what I do, but it seems so relevant and the pieces are being arranged on a stage and it seems like it is only a matter of time until the curtain goes up. I am like you, I will never predict when, it could be 50 years away for all I know, but it could be two years away, and I think an awful lot of Christians are going to be caught totally unprepared, no clue. And it is one of the biggest of all the end times prophecies, and yet most of us are ignorant of it. So in whatever role the Lord gives me to be a watchman, to teach the Scriptures, that is my heart. Talk about how it applies, to open people's eyes to how what is going on in the world around us today ties in with what God told us ahead of time is going to happen. I want people to have their

eyes open. I want to have people be discerning of the times so that we know what to do when we see these happening around us. That is where my heart is.

Joel Rosenberg: I appreciate that so much and I look forward to your work. Keep in touch with me, shoot me a note every now and then, saying, “Keep praying for me,” and it will help remind me to do that. I will be praying for you in your writing process and can’t wait to see the conclusion.

Q: I will see that you get it. Joel, thank you so much for your time. We have your simulcast coming here soon so I will get to at least listen to you.

Joel Rosenberg: Thank you so much Stan. I appreciate it very much. God bless you.

Q: Thank you and God bless.

Jon Ruthven Interview

July 20, 2011 (by telephone)

Q: It astounds me how broad the ignorance is in evangelical circles to what this prophecy's all about, especially when I consider how close we could be to the fulfillment. We need to do some serious waking up and study here to understand what's coming.

[Section 1]

Q: [Q1] Based on your familiarity with this prophecy, do you think it is possible that Ezekiel's war could be approaching soon?

Jon Ruthven: Yeah. [Q2] There are two things that I think have to happen. It's funny how the pieces of the puzzle are coming together. Like Edan and Yemen and all those that were traditionally understood to be kind of peripheral. They're not. They're part of the package. And I used to say, it's not Sudan that's involved as Cush, it's northern Sudan. It's northern Sudan that was always considered to be Cush. Now they've split off into two countries. And (the north) is Muslim, and virulently anti-Israel. And the southern tends to be animistic or Christian. That's why there was this enormous jihad against them for so long. But two big things that I see have to happen. One, Israel is depicted there as being absolutely alone. There's no hyper power backing her up in this invasion. The target has always been the Great Satan, the United States, in order to get at the Little Satan. It almost seems to imply that either American policy is totally changed toward Israel, or we no longer exist. You wonder how these things shape my view of the world. Since the 90's, Iran has been practicing with their missiles, firing several of them from a barge in the Caspian Sea, and firing them up and over and then detonating them about 400 km up. At first the CIA thought these people were nuts. Why did you lose control of a missile and why would you shoot it in that direction, only to detonate it? It made no sense, until it finally dawned on the CIA, what they were doing with the Shihab-3 and Shihab-4 missiles was that they were practicing a sea-launched EMP attack. And to detonate them over central United States, you don't have to be accurate at all. Somewhere over Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, whatever, you didn't have to be precise at all. It's enough to wipe out North America. That's not all. They're in an alliance with North Korea. And a few years ago, I think it was 1999, no 2009, they tested a nuclear device. There was big fanfare about the test and everything. And the seismic reaction to that test was that it was very small, around the range of 3 kilotons. And they thought, that's not a nuclear weapon. That's got to be a chemical thing. And it was a big joke or it fizzled or something. But something that small could not be considered nuclear, and they were kind of mocking the test. About two weeks ago it came out that some Russian nuclear scientists had been hired by North Korea to come in and help them develop a very miniaturized fission bomb that put out the equivalent of gamma radiation, EMP radiation, of a one megaton bomb. And that the test they were doing was perfectly in line with this miniaturized EMP weapon. It could be easily attached to one of their existing missiles. Now way back when, more than a year ago, the Iranians launched their first satellite, which goes over the United States nine times a day at pretty much the right altitude. And we don't know when it was launched. One of the mullas wrote that this is a hammer over the head of the

United States. Nobody that's ever launched a satellite has said that before. What is it? What could be in that thing that's only a push-button away. It's not a question of launching a missile; it's a question of pushing a button.

Q: So the reality that to fulfill this prophecy that Israel has to be alone, one, you would say that it's certainly possible that we could be militarily neutralized. What about our presidential policy maker, President Obama, or whoever may be in power after him, basically saying, "Sorry, Israel, we're not coming to your aid this time." A few years ago that was almost unthinkable. It doesn't seem so unthinkable anymore.

Jon Ruthven: Oh, no. The [?] department, which is comprised mostly of leftist Ivy-league graduates, has been arguing for decades that we should bail out on Israel, because all it does it cause trouble for us all over the world. Just below the very top level of the State Department, just below the appointed officials, you have this ferment that's been going on forever. What we're watching right now, where you have 75% of the U.N. resolutions against one country. Talk about all the world joining together against her. This is particularly odd. It could go either way. Either we do have a policy change, which under the Obama administration, Barack Hussein Obama, that could easily go that direction. Or, if you read the 2008 report to Congress by the EMP commission, that was commissioned by the scientists that were commissioned to study the possibilities and effects of EMP attack, you'll see that they are arguing that there would be total social breakdown and chaos by the end of the year without massive intervention by the rest of the world, which is very unlikely. There would be a 90% death rate. People starving to death because nobody knows how to grow anything or survive in our culture. Everything's by the nearest cell phone.

Q: You said there were two things that had to happen for this war to take place. What's the second?

Jon Ruthven: The other thing seems to be, the emphasis in Ezekiel, seems to be about the power from the uttermost parts of the north, the farthest north. You saw from one of the charts there that you draw a line up from Israel through the north pole and you miss Moscow by about a degree and a half. It goes right through the area that was formerly called the Mescharians. The southern plain, on the southern edge of Moscow, is called the Meshecharian Plain. It's the only name like that in all of ancient Russia, and for that matter in Europe. And the evidence is that possibly that group migrated from eastern Europe, around the western end of the Black Sea, into eastern Anatolia, as early as the 1200's B.C., 1100's, and that may be the Meshech of the prophecy.

Q: So you're saying that Russia has to come to the lead, or a leader from Russia has to step forward to actually lead this coalition. Is that the second thing?

Jon Ruthven: Yes. And they're already that. **[Q3]** They already have military and nuclear alliances with the three key players. Libya is going under, but it's going to be replaced, I'm quite sure, by a far more radical Islamic regime than Qaddafi. Qaddafi we had tamed and pretty much controlled. With Mubarak you had to hold your nose and work with him.

But at the same time, Qaddafi gave up his nuclear program, he gave up his terrorist activities, he was pretty well managed after Lockerbie, the plane explosion. It took Reagan to bomb his headquarters. But Mubarak, we threw him under the bus recently for the so-called Arab spring, which it's not. The only people who are organized are the radicals, the radical Muslims.

Q: I can hardly see a good outcome from all that. It's only going to get worse, as far as Israel is concerned.

Jon Ruthven: Yeah.

Q: Okay, these two things, Israel being all alone, and Russian leader stepping forward to lead the coalition, in your mind, is that something that we're looking at years and years away, or is that something we're looking at that could happen possibly quite quickly?

Jon Ruthven: Well, guaranteed, the moment we're out of the picture, and one EMP bomb can do that, because there's no economic infrastructure to support the military, where do they go to eat, you know? As soon as that is taken care of, there will be an enormous vacuum in the world. And the world's policeman so to speak will be gone. So it won't take much for another coalition to emerge. Relatively much much weaker militarily, but certainly more than enough to do the job. [Q3] And Israel because it's the lightning rod for all the world's troubles, that coalition, it's already in existence, between Libya, northern Sudan, and Iran, and Russia, that combination, and everything in between, for that matter, I think those are just representative nations of the four corners, that invasion, there's nothing to stop it. The other part of it is that there may be a sense of competition. You're not just coming down for Israel; you're coming down for a spoil. Always, always follow the money. Why would they do that? Well, it isn't Israel; Israel doesn't have that much. They just have a lot of tremendous human capital, and a booming economy, but it's not something where you can do all that much looting. But there's still the remaining oil that's in the Middle East, which will attract China's attention, India's attention. It talks about the River Euphrates drying up for that invasion to take place, and I don't know if you've seen the New York Times article about the River Euphrates drying up, it is. It is drying up. Beyond that all it takes is the push of a single button.

Q: Does that have anything to do with why you're living in Idaho?

Jon Ruthven: [Laughter.] Well no, I'll be part of the EMP footprint here.

Q: OK, I was going to say, you're a little bit farther away from ground zero there than I am here in Pennsylvania, probably.

Jon Ruthven: Yeah, but it doesn't make any difference. We'll all go under. The trouble is if you prepare for it, if you collect food and fuel or whatever, all you are is a magnet for violence. So I pity these poor Mormons around here, because they're supposed to have a two year's supply of food, and everybody knows that. I actually talked to a guy about

this, and he said, “The first thing I’m going to do is get a gun, and go raid my Mormon neighbor for food.” He was not a Christian, obviously, but this was his first reaction.

Q: Well, here where I live in Lancaster County, we’ve got the Amish, and great farm land, so at least I can make huge garden, if I’m still alive.

Jon Ruthven: You and everybody else on the eastern seaboard. [Laughter.]

Q: [Q3] Could you comment on the alliances given in Ezekiel’s prophecy and any correlation with current alliances existing or being built in the world today?

Jon Ruthven: As I put in the book, Russia has alliances with Iran, big time. They built their reactor, and are supplying missiles and all kinds of stuff, technology. They don’t seem to have a lick of sense, because Putin claims to be Russian Orthodox Christian, which makes him an automatic enemy of Iran, but he didn’t seem to get that, so he’s arming them, and of course it’s one of the very few sources of income they have besides oil, in a very crippled economy there in Russia. Then they have things going with Sudan and Libya as well. We don’t know what all’s going on. But those alliances at least are very viable.

Q: Isn’t Sudan one of Iran’s strongest allies in this whole thing?

Jon Ruthven: Yes, yes, [...something lost?] As a matter of fact, there was a Libyan-Iranian alliance. I haven’t kept up on this recently at all, since I’ve been writing my book, and that was several years ago, but I know they’re making alliances all the time between each other and trading technology and all kinds of stuff like that. And Iran is very, very close to a bomb. But they don’t need it. North Korea can give them one any time they want, if they don’t already have it.

Q: Well, I’ve heard it said, and from my own limited knowledge, I just affirm it, but if you look at this coalition of nations that Ezekiel describes, never in history has there been a time when there’s been an alliance between these nations, like a Russian-Iranian alliance, there’s never been one. But there is today.

Jon Ruthven: Right. Or even between Iran, Libya, and Sudan. Commentators poo-poo this as being impossible, but that very impossibility is something that makes the prophecy something to be fulfilled in the future. It was written of course for contemporary readers, but it’s point of view is much, much later, and what’s great for these commentators to deny that any such alliance could possible ever exist. They’re thinking locally, they’re thinking in that time frame. Ezekiel is not thinking in that time frame. He’s thinking far in the future. And so it makes the criticism to be ironically a confirmation of that interpretation.

Q: Well, like Turkey. A couple years ago, no way, Turkey’s solidly aligned with the West, they’re an ally of Israel, look how quickly that’s turned around.

Jon Ruthven: Yeah. There's a certain amount of confusion in my book, where all these nations are and everything. Some of it is pretty speculative. But I was really only aiming at one major confirmation and that was the whole problem of Rosh. There's a couple of different lines. One of them is that you have abundant, abundant attestation of the name long before long before any so-called Vikings came in. I'm amazed how the historians hang on to this Scandinavian origin for that name. They have one tiny reference in Sweden, and no real literary or historical connection of the Vikings with the Roslagen in Sweden. It's so tenuous. Whereas, you've got gazillions of references to a RÇsh, R✓sh, in that area, long before the Vikings showed up. And how they say that's a Viking name is absolutely incomprehensible. It's terrible history. It's very, very bad history.

Q: [Q4] Do you see any indicators that modern day Russia would engage in such a war against Israel?

Jon Ruthven: Geopolitically, ever since Peter the Great, Russia has wanted a southern port, southern connections. Of course, they do have that in the Black Sea. They've always wanted to extend their influence toward the south. You control Europe if you control Middle Eastern oil. I don't think the third empire, the third czar, if you will, third Roman empire, which was to be based in Russia. That's why they call them the czar, which is caesar, and they saw themselves as the successor to the Byzantine Empire. So the territory of all of the Middle East, the whole Mediterranean basin, and much of Europe, is seen to be theirs, as the successor to the Byzantines.

Q: [Q5] Do you see any alignment between current events in Iran and the details of this prophecy?

Jon Ruthven: Absolutely. Dictatorships that are imperiled are very dangerous, and they know they don't have popular support. 60%, more than that, of Iran is young, quite young. They don't know the Iranian revolution of 1979 and they could care less. All they know is that they can't listen to their iPods and they can't have fun and they are always being hassled by these Koranic police. They're always hassling them day and night. There's a tremendous alienation between the younger generation and the mullahs. Whereas Ayatollah Khomeini was the great savior of the Iranians from the Shah, the glow has pretty well worn off, to put it mildly, especially with the new generation that knew nothing but these repressive, stupid crazy mullahs, and they don't have much patience with them. The last revolution, the Green Revolution, showed that the kind of freedom that these kids want and what the mullahs are going to give them are very different things. So the point is that the existing crazy regime, crazy in the sense of this apocalyptic Islamic mind-set, realizes that power is slipping from their fingers. And the more desperate they are to hold on, the more desperate things they are going to do to protect that power. So they have to have an outside enemy to mobilize the people. If they succeed in wiping out the Great Satan, for example, that will be a tremendous, tremendous victory. To them, to the younger generation, I think they're going to be horrified, and so they're going to have to do something more to keep them in line. Part of that is just to put them in the military and send them to Israel. That's one way you get rid of them.

Q: [Q6] How do you see Iran's nuclear ambitions playing into this scenario?

Jon Ruthven: No question, that their nuclear ambition isn't just for Israel, it's for us. Believe me, that's the great equalizer, and they've been practicing with EMP's for the longest time, and nations that practice a certain procedure don't waste all those millions of dollars for nothing. It's like early in 1973, in the Great Bitter Lake, in the western part of Egypt, they were practicing amphibious landings, and the Israeli Mossad was aware of that. They were thinking, "What crazy people. Why are you practicing those kinds of things? Are you going to try to invade us?" And they had this post-'67 war arrogance, in early '73, that they were invincible. And the Arabs are too stupid and too uncoordinated to possibly pull off any kind of invasion against us. And they really underestimated them. And then in the Yom Kippur War, the borders were very understaffed with military personnel. And the thing came off without a hitch. It was flawless. And the trouble is, they advanced too far and got out from underneath their air cover. Other than that, they would have probably won that war. But Israel was within an eyelash of going nuclear.

Q: [Q11] I thought you made an excellent point in your book that I've not heard anybody else make, that when you talked about the over-confidence that Israel had after the '67 war, and even that could lend to that sense of security that Ezekiel describes, where "We're okay, we're fine, we don't have to worry about anything, because we're so strong, we can repel anybody." I thought that was a really good point that I've not heard anybody else make, that over-confidence could contribute to their sense of security.

Jon Ruthven: In the '73 war, it was such a surprise that they Syrian tanks had come way down into the Galilee, way past the Sea of Galilee, underneath toward the south. And then they froze, "Hold up, hold up, this is a trap. They're laying a trap for us. There's no resistance whatsoever. We're being lured into some kind of an ambush." There was no ambush. They just caught them flat-footed. And they could have gone all the way almost to Jerusalem.

Q: But for the hand of God, and I do believe that God will preserve them.

Jon Ruthven: And this is what I think is going on with the United States...

Q: Over-confidence?

Jon Ruthven: Well, there's that, and we've never been invaded since 1812, and we have this crazy sense that we got through the Cold War and nothing happened. But at least eleven times during the Cold War, this country came within an eyelash of a total nuclear exchange. One or two times you can contribute maybe to good luck, but not eleven. Just one example was in 1983, the Soviets put up a new geosynchronous satellite, with stays in the same relationship to the earth as it goes around. It was off to the very edge of the United States, so that it could see across the United States, where the United States would be right on the horizon. They did that because any rockets launched into space could be clearly identified against the blackness of space, and they could detect an early launch

and be ready for an attack. Because they were so sure that the Americans were going to do a pre-emptive strike, for the longest time. They went on this hair trigger response to that. Anyway, they put up this new satellite, and suddenly in this bunker, the strategic air command center for Russia, all the alarms went off, everything went crazy, and this thing said that there were five rockets launched from Montana. And the army major that was in charge of responding to this was under strict orders that they fire on signal. In other words, if they got a signal that there was a launch from the United States, he was immediately to issue the order for all the Soviet rocket forces to be released, 5000 of them. And he's paralyzed listening to these squawking alarms, and seeing that over Montana this launch had taken place, and in Russian he said, "My legs went into cotton, and I was terrified." But to himself, there's no fool, not even in the United States, who would be such a stupid fool as to launch a nuclear attack with only five rockets. And they were gawking at him, "Why don't you launch? Why don't you issue the command?" And he froze for the longest time, and finally said, "It's a false alarm," even though he didn't know that. He was fired from his job and demoted for not causing the death of a billion people at least. He was awarded a humanitarian award by the United Nations later on, but he had to borrow money to bury his wife. He was living on \$200 a month pension. But he saved the world. That's one of eleven cases that I know of. He did an incredibly courageous thing, but there would have been nothing to go home to had he launched that order, for sure. But as I say, that's one of eleven cases.

Another case, and this is kind of personal. I was a young pastor, I had graduated from seminary, I was 24 years old, and I was praying in my church. It was an L-shaped church, with the small part of the L the offices and the main sanctuary. I was lying on the floor praying. It was late, late at night. And suddenly, I felt and saw, my head was down on my arms, but I saw this horrific Satan thing coming through the front door and down the center aisle of the church, getting ready to turn toward me. I went out of my mind with terror. And I was praying frantically, desperately, and confessing any sin I had and whatever. I was scared out of my mind. I wanted to run and I knew that there was nowhere I could run. Suddenly I found myself desperately praying, screaming really, for the country and its safety, that we were in terrible, terrible danger. I felt, and I told friends the next day, this was definitely aluminum foil over the head type of moment, you know, and what kind of voices are talking to you and all this, but I was perfectly sane, it was perfectly clear. I told people later that I really felt that someone had pushed, or was about to push the launch button for some kind of rogue operation that was not authorized by the Soviets. I got that much. For 38 years, I didn't know what to make of that craziness. I remember the next morning opening the door of this church, it was very early spring, and it was extremely warm for that time of year I remember. I looked across, and I saw little tiny leaves coming out on the trees, and I remember thinking, "What if?" Because Omaha Strategic Air Command was just 60 miles away. I could never could figure out what that was all about, for 38 years. Then I found a book called "Red Star Rogue" being reviewed. It was the story of the Glo-Mar explorer, it was this huge super-ship that was designed, they said, to vacuum manganese nodules off the ocean floor. But they wouldn't be spending billions on that in 1974. It was a CIA cover story. But they said, no, it was a Soviet sub that had gone down, and that they were going to recover it. They told that story much, much later. It turns out, and this is the only thing that makes sense, that

March 7, 1968, a team of 11 spuznas (?) (Special operations people) had taken over this submarine and gone out into a box which was to the northwest of Hawaii. They're supposed to patrol that area. But they left that box unauthorized. What happened was, they just got very recent information back on that, that they locked the crew in a separate area, took over, punched in the launch codes, and launched a crude liquid fueled rocket toward Hawaii. A one megaton bomb. There were three tubes on that thing. What happened was, on launch the missile exploded and blew the sub in half and sent it to the bottom, killing everybody. This happened just shortly after 8:00 p.m. Hawaii time. When I calculated that time, it was right around midnight, when I was starting that prayer. I checked the weather records and everything, and sure enough, that morning, it was 66❖, which was very unusual for that time of the year. It had been a very unusually warm winter, and that week was extremely, 15❖ above normal that week, and that would have been enough to bring out the leaves a month early.

Q: We never really know what all is happening, and how the prayers of God's people can make a difference. I don't know if we'll know that until we get to heaven, but it seems like there have recently been so many opportunities, and reasons why God would have brought judgment and destruction upon our country, and yet....

Jon Ruthven: Yeah, but see that the plot, as it turns out...they may have been feeding the CIA, and feeding them...[break] but they were about ready to do something really, really crazy. They had this K-129 old submarine that had the three launch tubes. And the Chinese were liable to do something to Hawaii, just to mobilize their people and keep the revolution that was going on in China at the time, alive. So they went to find out what happened, and the CIA recovered the whole thing. Of course they developed the cover story that they didn't get any of the codes, or they didn't bring up the sub, and what not, but it was a big lie. They did. The proof of that is that they, as a conciliatory gesture to the Russians during the Cold War, they gave them the ship's bell for the K-129. The problem is that the ship's bell was attached right over the conning tower, where the codes were kept, and all of the control center of the ship was. And they said they didn't recover that. [Laughter.] Little error there!

Q: [Q7] While Islam is not mentioned specifically in Ezekiel's prophecy, the coalition coming against Israel in Ezekiel 38-39 is almost completely Islamic. Can you comment on how current Islamic thought may contribute to the fulfillment of this prophecy?

Jon Ruthven: As I said, the best-selling novels, that are very influential politically, just as the Late Great Planet Earth and the Left Behind series and that whole milieu had a real effect on Congress. You can show that. Ronald Reagan, who called them the Evil Empire, which was a phrase right out of Scofield's Notes, on Russia. It was pretty intriguing how much power that had in America. And how it shapes our history. But it also is very, very big in shaping Islamic history. My daughter is working on an kind of expansion of that part in my book for her Ph.D. dissertation. But because the standard Marxist interpretation that dominates our universities today is class struggle. And that it's the poor, oppressed nations of the world, and oppressed by western industrial imperialism, that causes them to go into revolt, and to attack the Jews, which are a

symbol of western imperialist invasion of their land, and that it's a rich vs. poor kind of class struggle that's going on. That interpretation doesn't fit the evidence because many, if not most of the terrorists that work in Al Qaida are quite well educated, and middle class or upper class. Beyond that, you can hardly call Kuwait and Saudi Arabia poor countries, or Iran for that matter.

Q: It's just a question of who has it in the country.

Jon Ruthven: Exactly, exactly. But it's pretty well spread around in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, because they have quite small populations, and a large amount of oil. What's neglected in the conventional wisdom of our time is the spiritual, not just religious, but the spiritual driving force behind this alliance. Revelation talks about coming out of the mouths of the three spirits like frogs, that mobilize the world to come together for this invasion. It's a spiritual kind of thing, just as that horrible thing, that thing that I saw down the aisle. I have never in my life been so terrified. That seemed to be revealed that somebody had pushed a button that was rogue, and apparently that was true. That was what had happened. It was not a decision made by the full Politburo. A couple of guys. One was Mikhael Sislav, the other was Uri Andropov, who later became the first secretary, and they conspired together to do this apparently. Another kind of spiritual event, or psychic event, or whatever, was that the captain of the sub, his wife was at a kind of officer's wives coffee klatch or something, and Vlodovostok, which would be late afternoon, her time, and she suddenly collapsed on the floor, sobbing and screaming. They took her to the hospital and sedated her. When the researchers of this book that recorded all this checked the records, they found that it was exactly the time the sub went down.

[Section 2] Q: The second primary area I'd like to discuss is your understanding of how this war fits in with other end times events.

Q: **[Q9]** Let's start with the broad question first. What are your thoughts as to where this war fits in on the prophetic timeline at the end of the age?

Jon Ruthven: I consciously avoided a time line in my book, because I just don't know. I'm a little leery of those that do. It's too neat. In Revelation it says, between the 6th and 7th seal or something, that there's silence in heaven for half an hour. And the reason that there's that silence in heaven for half an hour is for everyone to rearrange their dispensational end times chart. [Laughter.]

Q: **[Q10]** What specific factors influence your thinking regarding the timing of this war?

Jon Ruthven: One way or another, any hyper-power supporting Israel is out of the picture. The Russians really have to emerge a lot more than they have right now. That's very quickly done in a power vacuum. You don't have to have much of an army to replace the absence of the United States. The vacuum would be huge, and easily filled by very little. So that's very plausible. The other about timing is the growing sense of alienation that Israel has from the rest of the world right now, how that seems to be

growing. It's just uncanny that one little country of five million can according to a poll that was done in the European Union, 60% of people said that of all the obstacle there are to peace in this world, Israel was number one. What a crazy thing! It's not like the Arabs have any responsibility for this. It's all Israel.

Q: [Q11] Ezekiel describes Israel as living in security at the time of this war. Could that describe conditions in Israel at present, or will that condition not be fulfilled until Antichrist's covenant with Israel is established?

Jon Ruthven: I don't know. I haven't really thought about that. I think it would be easy to...people can only stand tension for so long. And after a while they get exhausted, and you just relax, whether you should or shouldn't. Like the United States, we think we're so safe. The delusion that comes over all the world is probably not going to stop at Israel's borders. I think they're going to be deluded into thinking that we can't waste any more of our psychic energy on worrying any more. That's one possibility. Another is that they may think they've got things pretty well handled. But again, I don't know. I just can't speculate on all of that. I do know that the whole world comes down on them. Given Islamic influence in Europe today, and how the number one name of babies that are born is Mohammed, it's crazy how much power that has. In Canada there's a public school, where the cafeteria is turned into a mosque every Friday, and that all of the school children are praying there in a mosque, in flagrant violation of the laws of Canada. If you said the Lord's Prayer, you'd be kicked out of there.

[Section 3] Q: The final primary area I'd like to learn about is how your thinking on this has impacted your current ministry, specifically in the areas of: a) teaching, speaking and writing; b) vision for new ministry; and c) renewed urgency in presenting the gospel.

Q: [Q15] Let's start with the first area. How have your views regarding this war impacted your ministry in the area of speaking, teaching, and writing?

Jon Ruthven: We're putting together a Christian worker training program right now that's aimed at the new super yuppie class in China and in India. Chindia is the future. Several things going on there that suggest bad times for the Chinese economy, not so much so for the Indian economy. Even so, China at least economically, is better managed than the United States by quite a long ways. And more responsibly. Now they're making some mistakes, and there's some demographic issues they're going to have to deal with, like one child policy, supporting two grandparents and all that. Demographically, that's going to be tough. There's about 40-60 million surplus males that are coming into marriageable age right now, and what are they going to do with those? What kind of social pressures is that going to bring to bear on the Chinese government? Where else are you going to put them but in the military? The available manpower for an active military in China is ominous, 210 million, 200 million. And that's according to the CIA fact book. So my sense is that my energy from here on out is going to be focused on the east, because that will be the center of power in the next decades, if it isn't already. It's hard for us to understand that the United States is no longer number one. They're predicting that by 2020 the Chinese economy will surpass the United States, and be based on a much more

solid foundation. And India, similarly. We're going after the yuppie, the young educated professionals, who don't know a thing about God. We're going to start with the most basic stuff and build them to evangelists and apostles.

Q: [Q17] Finally, how has your thinking about this coming war and the end of the age impacted your ministry in the area of evangelism?

Jon Ruthven: I think America's had it's shot, and it's really time to move east for evangelism. That's where we're focusing all of my efforts from here on out. That's what we're working on right now. I work with an evangelist, I will be shortly, an evangelist Randy Clark...and this is not really very Dallas Seminary, I know...but you probably also know that I wrote another book called "On the Cessation of the Charismata." I know that's not a very popular book at Dallas. Unless you talk to Daniel Wallace, who seems to be sympathetic. I really believe that when the Bible says that the gifts, the charismata, and the calling of God are not withdrawn, I really believe it means what it says. And the charismata, in all eight cases in the New Testament, are referring to spiritual gifts.

Q: The Lord has really opened my eyes on that area, I would say, even recently. Particularly in the Middle East, where almost all of the people coming to Christ in the Middle East, from Muslim backgrounds as well as Jewish backgrounds, are coming because they've had visions from the Lord, or a dream, or a miracle, or something such as that. We just had a friend of mine here at my church, who was my tour guide in Israel last time I was there, the son of a very prominent rabbi in the southern Galilee area. He was in the IDF, and was injured in an attack up on the Syrian border, completely paralyzed from the chest down for two years. The Lord healed him miraculously, instantaneously. He got out of bed, it was in the middle of the night, grabbed his Bible, turned it open to Isaiah 53, and said, "It's Jesus, it's Jesus who did this." And he became a believer. A week later his father kicked him out of the house. Then he went to Jerusalem, saw more miracles there. He had a case where he had an angel intervene to get him into a hospital to see a friend of his, and prayed for the guy, and they guy was healed, dramatically healed. So I'm at the place where, although I'd have to admit, it's outside the realm of my personal experience, I can't deny what God is doing around the world. It doesn't always fit the categories I have held sometimes in the past. I don't want to be one to stand in the way, saying, "That can't be God." Well, who is it then? It's obviously God. There's a Palestinian pastor I know who has a shop in the Christian Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, and he pastors up in Ramallah. He tells me that almost every person in his congregation who has come to faith in Christ has had some kind of supernatural dream or vision or miracle or something, in conjunction with the hearing of the gospel, but it has really grabbed their attention and brought them to Christ. So God is doing astounding things.

Jon Ruthven: I'll have to send you my new book. It's called, "What's Wrong with Protestant Theology," the subtitle is "Traditional Religion versus Biblical Emphasis." I'm a charismatic, not because I want to add to the Bible. I'm a charismatic because the Bible emphasizes that. And proof of that is this, it's a long proof: how does literature emphasize things? When your mother says, "How many times do I have to tell you?"

repetition is one of those. Column inches is the space devoted to a subject. You have summary statements of larger amounts of material, like a summary of Jesus' ministry, and a summary of Paul's ministry. When the disciples are commissioned to do whatever it is Jesus tells them to do, what do they do? In the commissioning accounts in Luke 9 and 10, for example, Matthew 10, what is the new covenant, which is the whole point of the Bible, the covenant that leads to the new covenant. We call our Christian Bible the New Testament, the New Covenant. What does that covenant say? What turned me around on this covenant thing was when I read the punch line to the Pentecost sermon by Peter, there was something in there that triggered something in me, and I said, "That's a quote." What is it citing? Because it says, "Brethren, what shall we do?" It says, "Repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of your sins. Period." That's where protestantism puts the period. It's over there. But it goes on to say, "And you will receive the gift of the Spirit, for," gar, a simple little indicator, sometimes, of the quotation, "for" this epangelia, this promised covenant, for you and for your children, for those who are far off. And in typical rabbinic shorthand, Peter was condensing a larger quote, which I believe is from Isaiah 59:21, totally, totally, ignored in the literature. And it goes on to say, what the quote is, this is my covenant, my evangelia, with them. The Spirit that I put upon you, Jesus, Isaiah 61:1-2, and the words I put in your mouth, prophetic words of power, will not part from your mouth, nor will they depart from the mouths of your children, or your children's children, ad olam, forever. That was the punch line of the charter message of Christianity, the keynote address of all of Christian theology. The summary statement of where the whole thing was going, was the fulfillment of that prophecy. Then I went on to write a paper that went on to show what the context of Isaiah 59:19-20-21, ...the structure and the content for Acts 2, point for point for point for point for point. It was an expansion of that prophecy, leading to the fulfillment of this covenant. I thought, "Wait a minute, this is revelation of the prophetic into us as the punchline of the Pentecost sermon." It fulfills John the Baptist's message, which was the same as what Peter said, "Repent and be baptized," which is what John the Baptist says. He says, "I baptize you in water, but one more important and might than I comes to baptize you in the Holy Spirit." The focus that John the Baptist was saying, "I'm preparing you, I'm preparing the way by repentance and baptism." For protestantism, that's all there is. Be good, go to heaven, accept Jesus in your heart, take away your sins, in response to the question, "How much does it cost to go to heaven?" because the priests were charging an arm and a leg to get you out of purgatory. And they were saying, "That's wrong!" And so to address that issue, they were saying, "Well, what is the right answer?" Well, the right answer is, it's not the merits of the saint that you apply to your soul to get you out of purgatory, it's the unmerited favor of the ultimate martyr, who is Jesus, to be applied to your sins. That's free, you don't have to pay a priest for that. And so it's the free gift of salvation, which is grace, which reinterpreted what the term "charis" meant. Charis...mata, grace, or the gifts of God, or the Spirit. So there's a whole theology that I started developing here where the whole focus of the emphasis pattern that you find in the Bible are really aimed at not just us repenting and being baptized, that's preparation, but for us to be commissioned as disciples, to heal the sick, raise the dead, and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come to you." Our mission is not just to get to heaven, our mission is to the work of the one who has sent us.

Q: Now that's a message that the Lord has been reminding me about over and over. We talk so much about the gospel, it's all in terms of being saved, going to heaven, and the focus is way out there someplace. It's an area where I think the evangelical church, maybe the Christian church in general, misses it. Yeah, that's part of it, but we're to live lives of fruitfulness right now. It's not just about what happens after I die. I've got a whole life between now and then. What am I going to do with it? I think we do miss it. The focus is on, "Okay, I'm good, I'm going to heaven," and that's the end of it. That's really missing the point.

Jon Ruthven: My sense was, and the whole point of my book, is the central issue, when you look at the temptation narratives, the central issue is hearing the voice of God. And the first words out of the serpent's mouth is, "Did God really say...?" And then, how do you conduct your life, by listening to what God says, or are you going to use your common sense? Get smart, wise up, what's the matter with you? Raise your consciousness and look at how exciting that trip is, this educational experience that you're going to have here. And the mirror image of that is the temptation of Jesus, where the thesis statement of that temptation was, the affirmation, not by bread alone, but every word that comes from the mouth of God. And there, the questions was about halacha, do you take the tradition of men, and determine the meaning of God's message to us through Scripture, and other ways, or what's your starting point? And Jesus says that the starting point is every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. In other words, it's revealed to you first. Flesh and blood has not revealed this, but my Father who is in heaven. That's the way Christ comes to you, just like your friends in the Middle East. That's normative.

Q: You were mentioning Peter's sermon and earlier, he starts out that sermon quoting Joel, and this phrase has been coming to my mind a lot these recent days also, where God says, "In the last days I will pour out my Spirit on all people, your sons and your daughters will prophecy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams." You've got the Muslim world...I know missionaries where they have labored over there their whole lives, and they hardly see a single person come to faith in Christ. And now, all of sudden, there's revival, widespread revival breaking out all over the Middle East, where people of Muslim backgrounds, young men seeing visions, old men dreaming dreams. This Palestinian guy I told you about, he's Christian and Missionary Alliance affiliated, and he said, "I just went to a conference recently with pastors from all over the Middle East. You know where the biggest church is in the whole Middle East? Widespread across the country. It was Iran, where people are coming to Jesus in droves in Iran. It's through these visions and miracles and dreams. Maybe there's a near fulfillment and a far fulfillment that Joel talked about, which Peter quoted, and he's talking about the last days. In the last days, this is what God's going to do, he says.

Jon Ruthven: I tend to believe that the last days were everything since the ascension.

Q: I agree with you. There's another sense in which the latter days that Ezekiel talks about, even going to the end of this age....

Jon Ruthven: I'll send you a copy of my new book. Jesus' attack on the scribes, John 5:37, was very, very revealing about what the essence of a relationship with God was about. The scribes were saying, it was torah, and the study of Scripture. And Jesus was saying, "No. You have not heard his voice, you have not seen his form in a vision. The Word of God is not in your heart." Now in Semitic biblical style, word of God is not written Scripture, memorized. It's the message, it's a prophetic message in your heart, a revelation. Word of God is not in your heart, otherwise you'd know who you're looking at. He says, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life." What he was hinting at right there, and John was written maybe the last decade of the first century, he was hinting at rabbinic Judaism and their epistemology, which was based on an understanding of Scripture. Jesus said Scripture itself points you to the word of God coming to you in revelation. Now compare that to what you've learned at Dallas. [Laughter.]

Q: Everybody I've talked to, I'm learning something new from, new perspectives, and it helps me to understand the broader scope of interpretation and application, and to hold positions loosely. At least some positions, there are some I would die for. But as it comes to this prophecy in particular, or end times prophecy in general, it's just not quite so hard and fast as we might like to think it is. That's one lesson I really want to learn. I have my own conclusions, but I don't want to say that this is absolutely the way it is, because I might be wrong.

[Section 4]

Jon Ruthven: [Regarding those who do not see Russia at all in this prophecy, or think it's Turkey] The name, it's really "Rossia," that's the way they say it. It was derived from the Byzantines, who took the Ros Moseck type Tobol [?] of Ezekiel in the Septuagint, they took that Ros and applied it to the Rus, that had come down to check them out on a spying mission, and it freaked them out. And they renamed the Rus Rosh. And the name stuck. Rossia, forever after, gets its name from Ezekiel's prophecy.

Q: You've answered that question forever in my mind. Even in the translations, obviously, there's a debate over which way to put that, but I don't anybody who's given the depth of research to that that you obviously have, so I really appreciate that. I think it's foundational to understanding the whole prophecy.

Jon Ruthven: Oh my, yes, if you don't get that right... I've run that by one of the most prominent scholars in the world on the near eastern languages, and he bought it. He bought the hermeneutic that Ezekiel himself is insisting that that is a proper name. So I was encouraged by that, because he's no big fan of mine. He has a mind of his own, let's put it that way, and he bought it as being the way to go on that.

Q: Most of the people I have been talking to and reading, it seems to me that the consensus supports your conclusions, or vice versa, whichever way you want to put that, that most everybody I've interacted with so far does see Russia, or a man from Russia, as

the leader of this coalition. So I sense that that question is, perhaps partly because of your work, starting to fade.

Jon Ruthven: I don't know if it has that much influence, but a lot of the more recent major commentaries on Ezekiel kind of blow that off. A lot of the prophecy stuff would probably support the Russian thing, but the heavy duty commentators, Walter Zimmerleaf, for example, blocked his major new commentaries and eased by that. But the trouble is that they rather incestuously read each other, rather than do their own homework. Word for word, I don't know how I could have put any more work into this book than I did. Duke University, going through the Akkadian literature of the conquest narratives of Ashurbanipal, and checking city by city, to see where you can bracket "Tubalisha" or other names. What is it between, how would that help locate it, that kind of thing. Original historical geography was going on there. I went through the literature of seven different empires, the original literature, and it was a lot of work.

Q: One subpoint in your book, but I appreciate it, was when you were talking about how the land had been a waste. You documented that with different people who had been there from the 1800's and so forth. Also what you wrote about the so-called Palestinian people and they weren't there, they didn't come until just about the same time the Jews were coming, and because the Jews were coming.

Jon Ruthven: Migrant workers, they came for work.

Q: Yeah, and that's something that has huge political implications, but you just never hear that anywhere. Honestly, I don't know if I fully understood that myself. I thought that was very helpful information there to describe.

Jon Ruthven: Gaza has always been Egyptian, and the West Bank, they did DNA studies of the so-called Palestinians in that area, they're all from Syria.

Q: Of course, the Palestinians are pawns. And it's unfortunate, they do suffer, but they're just pawns in the hands of the big power brokers of the Middle East, who don't want to see them absorbed into their nations, where they easily could be.

Jon Ruthven: Oh my, no. They're too useful.

Q: Way too useful. In fact the next few months could get very interesting, as there are all these U.N. resolutions pending, and if they're going to unilaterally declare a state, and who knows what's going to happen there.

Jon Ruthven: The trouble is, there's an awful lot of them. The leadership does not want to declare a state, because then they've got to start picking up the garbage and fixing the roads and doing all the stuff that states do. That's going to turn attention on them, and they're incompetent.

Q: Incompetent is the word. They've just never been able to govern themselves. Every time they've tried, it's been a disaster. So now you've got Hamas, as one of the governing powers, and it's a terrorist organization. It's a mess.

Jon Ruthven: All they can do is destroy and fight and kill. They can't manage a country, and make it prosper. All they can do is tear down somebody else. It's a terrible travesty. But that's the satanic spirit. Those are the frogs at work. It really is a spiritual thing. It's no less spiritual than that thing coming down the aisle of my church. It's terrifying. And we only exist right now, as the United States. We exist for one reason only, and that's the hand of God.

Q: I do fear for the future of our country, because honestly, I think one of the few reasons I can think of why God has spared our country so far is that we have been a friend to Israel. And yet, when I read these Scriptures, I realize that the day is coming when we're not going to be any longer. I think that will spell the end for us, one way or the other. Even in the last couple years, where all of sudden, everybody in Israel knows that they no longer have a friend in the White House. My Jewish friend who was just here was encouraged, because the perception in Israel is that the whole of America has turned against Israel. My friend realized that no, America is filled with friends of Israel, and what our government policy is is not necessarily the same as what the consensus of the nation is. That was encouraging to him.

Jon Ruthven: Next election, that will tell us a lot about what's going to happen to us.

Q: But in the end, we will turn away. I don't say that because I'm wishing for that, but what you said when you first started, Israel has to be alone in the end before this prophecy can really come to pass. I just shudder wondering how close we could be to that. All of a sudden, it's not so unthinkable.

Phil Steyne Interview
July 20, 2011 (by telephone)

Q: This particular prophecy, Ezekiel 38-39, has really got my attention. It almost seems like a *lost* prophecy to me, because most Christians just don't know much about it. You can talk about the rapture, the great tribulation, Antichrist, Armageddon, second coming, and they know all about it. But you mention Gog and Magog and most believers don't have a clue. Yet it seems to me it's one of the biggest of all end-times prophecies, and when I look at the world around me, it really makes me wonder if it's getting close.

Phil Steyne: And [Ezekiel] 36-37 really lead up to it, don't they?

Q: Absolutely. They all go together. 36 and 37 talk about the new heart that the Lord's going to put in the Jewish people. And yet I don't think it really comes to pass until after this war has been completed, and they know that the Lord is God. It's a fascinating prophecy to me.

Phil Steyne: I agree with you. And about the bones coming to life, and so on, even though the breath comes into them, they have not yet come to know the Lord. But they've come back, that's the important thing. And they did it for his name's sake.

Q: And it's interesting how among the Jewish people, they're starting to come to faith. We had a fellow here in church the Sunday before last whom I met when I was in Israel last time. He's the son of a rabbi. His father is a very prominent rabbi in the southern Galilee area. This fellow was paralyzed from a rocket attack up on the Golan Heights, in a hospital for two years, and the long and short of it is that he was healed dramatically. He opened up Isaiah 53 to see who it was who did it, and he came to faith in Christ. It's just incredible how the Lord is starting to bring Jews to faith in Jesus. It's just a trickle right now, but boy, it's exciting time to be alive.

Phil Steyne: Yes, it is. Indeed it is. Very challenging; we face enormous challenges, but at the same time, God is still on the throne.

Q: I read the paper you sent me, the Eighth Kingdom. It was very interesting and I ordered the book you recommended. Is the book along the same lines as far as the Eighth Kingdom being Islam?

Phil Steyne: Yes it does claim that but I only was introduced to this book very recently, and to me this is a phenomenal volume, and one of the statements that he points out all the way through all the nations which were mentioned concerning those who will come against Israel – anti are all Muslim nations. He knew that even when Daniel wrote and when Ezekiel wrote, he knew all of that will transpire. It is a very interesting take.

[Section 1]

Q: **[Q1]** Based on your familiarity with this prophecy, do you think it is possible that Ezekiel's war could be approaching soon?

Phil Steyne: Yes I do **[Q2]** for the reasons that the Arab spring has come about, the Muslim brotherhood is taking over, the nations are certainly anti. Turkey, a few days ago they said they are patching up the news, and then no they are not, etc. All of these events just point out there will be some kind of an encounter in the not too distant future.

Q: **[Q3]** Could you comment on the alliances given in Ezekiel's prophecy and any correlation with current alliances existing or being built in the world today?

Phil Steyne: Yes, I believe they are totally of Middle Eastern origin. For example, Togarmah, Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, Magog, they are all in old Turkey way back. And of course Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Sudan, all of them are allied and forming that kind of a caliphate in order to take control of that small little piece of land in the Middle East. Even though the Shiites and the Sunnis do fight each other and may do so again, the point is ultimately their enemy happens to be Israel as well as the United States.

Q: **[Q4]** Do you see any indicators that modern day Russia would engage in such a war against Israel?

Phil Steyne: I was checking that again and Charles Ryrie says about the translation of Rosh as Russia. He says it really is better translated the Chief Prince of Meshech and Tubal rather than Russia itself.

Q: So do you not see Russia in this prophecy?

Phil Steyne: I did at one time. I know that they are arming all of these nations and I had the idea that maybe they would give the leadership but again they are having their own problems with Muslims. You wonder if this will be so. It seems to me that Rosh is really not Russia. It is rather as Ryrie and I agree with him. In spite of Hitchcock says and several others, who claim that it is Russia.

Q: What about the references to the nations coming out of the remotest parts of the north?

Phil Steyne: That again it seems like in the day when this was written Turkey was way up there. Now it could be some of the CIS states and some of the former Muslim areas of Russia that will participate in all of this because Islam has a tremendous hold and ever since the fall of the U.S.S.R., of course Islam has come to the fore again and filling the vacuum so all of that may be involved but whether it is really Russia, you really have to bend somewhat here. Furthermore as I have been looking at this, it tells me that this whole idea of Russia or Rosh came about as a result of the Viking invasions which happened much later and when Ezekiel was writing that was certainly not the area. There is just some questions about that.

Q: [Q5] Do you see any alignment between current events in Iran and the details of this prophecy?

Phil Steyne: Yes. Iran is aligning itself with Syria, with Hezbollah, and now forming some kind of an alliance with Egypt so it may have a significant role in all of these events.

Q: [Q6] How do you see Iran's nuclear ambitions playing into this scenario?

Phil Steyne: From my perspective yes as soon as they have it they will intimidate Saudi Arabia and Saudi Arabia may want to also develop this but I think they will control the oil fields, they will probably take over because of what is happening in Bahrain with the Shiite majority there but if it was not for Saudi Arabia, the king of Bahrain would not even be there. So all of these events, we just don't know how Sunnis and Shiites are ultimately going to fight out but even in Iraq, the Shiites have really taken over the Sunni minority is not much in control any more.

Q: One scenario I pondered would be if Israel would carry out a preemptive attack against Iran to knock out their nuclear capabilities and if that could in turn precipitate the formation of this final alliance among the Muslims, saying okay that's it we are going to get rid of you once and for all. Any thoughts about that scenario?

Phil Steyne: Certainly this is a part of what is happening today. The U.S.A. won't do anything with Iran, that is obvious with this administration that isn't going to happen. Then added to that the present administration is very pro-Palestinian and so even Saudi Arabia knows they can't count on the U.S.A. anymore because they forsook Mubarak, and now the fellow in Yemen and all the rest. What I do think is going to happen is it is quite likely that Israel may do a preemptive strike short of living in fear all the time. I don't know. But added to that if they do, it may precipitate all of this other taking place as you suggest.

Q: [Q7] I realize it is just speculation but trying to tie together what I see in the Word with what I see going on in the world and it makes you wonder. While Islam is not mentioned specifically in Ezekiel's prophecy, the coalition coming against Israel in Ezekiel 38-39 is almost completely Islamic. Can you comment on how current Islamic thought may contribute to the fulfillment of this prophecy?

Phil Steyne: [Q8] The fact that Islamic eschatology claims that they must be a time of great chaos and then the Mahdi would appear or at least he would initiate some of it and this certainly is part of the eschatology with their Twelfth Imam. And even though the Sunnis have not subscribed that much to the Twelfth Imam they are more and more subscribing to something like that. So it seems to me that through of this, if there should there be a preemptive strike it will precipitate and all of these other nations simply saying you have had enough and who knows the armaments are there already so it is nothing new.

[Section 2]

Q: [Q9] One thing I have given a lot of thought to is the timing of this war. There is a lot of debate about that. Where do you think this war fits in, the Ezekiel 38 and 39 war in the prophetic timeline at the end of the age?

Phil Steyne: We will probably overlap with some of your other questions, [Q10] but I believe it must take place prior to the Great Tribulation for the simple reason that the armaments to be burned, the bodies to be buried and for Israel to have a time of such peace as the Antichrist will make an agreement with them and then break it three and a half year later, all of this I believe is part of it. While in the Tribulation I don't see how in the world they could be saying here is the bones and here is this, etc. etc. All of that I believe puts it somewhere before and furthermore that is part of end time events which have been playing out ever since 1948.

Q: I think we have talked before about the Rapture of the church and I think you put the rapture some place in the middle of the Tribulation. I don't remember exactly.

Phil Steyne: Pre-trib, Pre-mil and as Tony Campolo used to say, I am so pre that I don't even eat Post Toasties.

Q: So any thoughts whether this could be before the Rapture or possibly between the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation?

Phil Steyne: No, I think with all that is happening, I think we will still be here and know something about what is happening in this war.

Q: So probably even prior to the rapture?

Phil Steyne: Yes, this is my thinking.

Q: [Q11] Ezekiel describes Israel as living in security at the time of this war. Could that describe conditions in Israel at present, or will that condition not be fulfilled until Antichrist's covenant with Israel is established?

Phil Steyne: When I think of what God has so graciously enabled the Israelis to do in spite of all of those seeking to destroy them, in spite of the encounters with terrorism, they certainly have developed a civilization, a culture, a society that is exceptional in every way, that even exceeds that which is in the United States. You feel safer there sometimes than you do here. It seems to me that they live in a relatively good time of, quote, unquote, "peace." So to me it seems like they are, in many ways, living in a time of peace, and facing their enemies as they come.

Q: [Q12] Are there any interpretive factors in your mind which force the fulfillment of this prophecy into the tribulation period?

Phil Steyne: No. Several, of course, are putting it really simultaneous to Armageddon. Quite a number do in fact, and well none of us are totally sure but it appears to me with all that is transpiring so rapidly that it is prior and could not possibly be put mid or the end because of all of the issues related to it. Ezekiel 38 and 39 describes it very well, so it must be an event that takes place before.

Q: **[Q18]** What is your understanding of the phrase “the latter years” in Ezekiel 38:8? Some say that refers to the 70th week of Daniel, those seven years. Do you have any thoughts related to that?

Phil Steyne: I wrote something on this too, the 70th week of Daniel, when did it begin. It is very difficult because it could have started way back when the Jewish state was initiated, and that the middle of it was the Holocaust, etc. Well that is a possibility but none of us really know.

Q: **[Q13]** Does the doctrine of imminence influence your thinking about the possible timing of this war?

Phil Steyne: There is nothing that has to take place prior to the Lord calling us home. In fact I pray for this every day. Maybe this is the day. When I think of all of this, of course, none of us have the final word, we are just looking at events that are transpiring before us and attempting especially how to interpret them, but I don't think it circumvents imminence. It certainly says the Lord can come today, prior to the event, after the event, whatever. It just seems to me that the events are taking place this way.

Q: **[Q14]** Do the seven months of burial and the seven years of burning impact your thinking about the timing of this war?

Phil Steyne: I said it seems to me it has to be prior to, which will also allow for the earthquake which already comes about, Dome of the Rock, allows for the erection of the temple because all the materials are there and all the preparation is there, and all of these things are already in place so it is quite likely, not like some suggest, that it could culminated on the same mount but that earthquake would be the destruction.

[Section 3]

Q: **[Q15]** How have your views regarding this war impacted your ministry in the area of speaking, teaching, and writing?

Phil Steyne: It has given me a whole new perspective and it is evidence in whatever I am seeking to communicate. Urgency, but more so, a new understanding of even Scripture, and for that I am deeply grateful. Now I can go back to Isaiah and see so many things that were foretold back there taking place in our day and all of these events rapidly unfolding since even January of this year. None of us could have expected what was happening and they are just rapidly unfolding before us. All of these things have certainly given a great

urgency and motivation and perspective, new understanding. None of us, when I think back to this whole matter of prophecy which takes place over the many years I have been looking at it, words, listen to people, even Walvoord and all of those people, they had no idea that Islam would be the power that it is today. It was somewhat discounted because the Ottoman Empire ceased in 1924, and so now, who knows? But as I look at all of this, it seems to me that the rise of radical Islam and then you go back in history and you discover that John Wesley spoke about some of this, about Islam. Others did also like even Fulton Sheen spoke something of it. Now Gregory Palamus of Thessalonica, 1354, spoke about it. Another fellow by the name of Josiah Lakes in 1840 did, Sir Robert Anderson was being sort of a mainstay in the world prophecy indicates some of this. And Iran being ultimately no longer associated with Kurdistan and so on and then you even go further and you find Sybilla of Jerusalem way back in 1586 and you can go on John of Damascus, 677. One of my former students just wrote his PhD on this for London University, on John of Damascus. You even have Martin Luther, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, all of these people referring to Islam, and you say where in the world were our prophecy pundits?

Q: [Q16] What about vision for new ministry? As a result of your thinking about this war, or the proximity of other end times events, have you begun or considered any new areas of ministry?

Phil Steyne: Well at my age I am doing all I can making people aware. I just gave a whole session and wrote a document on the impact of Islam on the western world, specifically the United States how they are gaining ground rapidly. I don't know if you were aware of the day to honor Jerusalem which took place in Washing DC last night and we just happened on the station and watched the whole program and heard several speak and it was quite something about how desperately we need to stand with Israel because of the darkening picture in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Q: [Q17] How has your thinking about this coming war and the end of the age impacted your ministry in the area of evangelism?

Phil Steyne: It is a great motivation to do so. There is a Pioneer mission organization in the southwest U.S. and Mexico on some of the issues related to spiritual warfare and you can be sure it all comes down to motivation to really know that we are in a battle and God intends that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance and he has empowered us to do, just go to Ephesians and you will discover all the resources that we have already and you think of the church in Acts 19 when Ephesus was started and what it was like, etc. Yes this is the day that we need to impact the world with the glory of God as never before.

[Section 4]

Q: [Q18] One of the things we touched on a little already, this phrase in Ezekiel 38:8 where it talks about the "latter years." Is that a reference to the tribulation period specifically, or could it include the period leading up to the tribulation in your mind?

Phil Steyne: As I said earlier, I believe the latter years really started in 1948, when they gained access to the land. They affirmed that even more so when they took over Jerusalem, and ever since the events have just been rapidly unfolding before us, so all of that to me is part of the latter years, and not necessarily just the seven year period.

Q: [Q19] Many Bible scholars put the war someplace in the first half of the tribulation. One question that has come to my mind about that, the covenant that he will have with Israel as I understand it is partially a covenant of protection, they are under his protection during that time so that raises the question then if Israel is under Antichrist's protection, he is still honoring that covenant, how could he allow this invasion to take place? Have you given any thought to that?

Phil Steyne: In the first place, the temple has to be there. [Q22] For the temple to be there, this is how I read Scripture in Revelation, then at the same time for the Antichrist to enter, etc., the point goes back, would he dare *not* to make a peace after the defeat of all of these nations? So, therefore, it seems to me that it must be prior, and then there may be a seven year period of peace for all we know, but we know the covenant will be made for 3½ years. But is it a result of what he saw and now will protect you because anti-Semitism is not just a Muslim problem, it is also a European problem, a South American problem, it is an American problem – the world against Israel.

Q: What you said reflects my thinking too, if God so dramatically intervenes to deliver the Jewish people and the whole world is knowing that the Lord is God, that doesn't mean they are bowing the knee to him necessarily but they know that Israel has a defender in God, if that were to happen just before the mid-point of the Tribulation where some put it, it just doesn't make sense to me that the Antichrist would turn around right after that and institute yet another persecution against the Jews. It kind of makes more sense to me that there would be a few years that would go by, people would forget like we do and then he would launch his persecution.

Phil Steyne: That is sort of my take.

Q: [Q20] What about the statement in 38:20 that the earthquake will cause "every wall to fall" in the land? What does that mean? If this earthquake is that severe that it is basically knocking everything down, I am thinking about what is up there on the Temple Mount. Either the Dome of the Rock or the Temple itself. If it was the Dome of the Rock, it would pave the way for the building of a Temple, if it was mid Tribulation someplace, then that means that the Temple itself could be knocked down but I know at the mid-point of the Tribulation, the Temple will be standing because the Antichrist goes in and desecrates it so that tends to push it in my mind to a pre-tribulation event when possibly it could even pave the way for the construction of the Temple.

Phil Steyne: I agree with you and I believe it is prior to the great Tribulation and I believe it is primarily focused on the Al Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock, and of course perhaps

some surrounding buildings will also be destroyed. Ultimately it opens the way for the temple to be erected.

Q: [Q21] The biggest timing factor of all is the seven months of burial to cleanse the land and the seven years of burning these weapons. I have not heard many good explanations of how that could happen if this war was taking place during the middle of the Tribulation.

Phil Steyne: I agree with you. It just doesn't sit. Then you have to put this war, like I think Hal Lindsey does, simultaneous to Armageddon. Then it will initiate during the Millennium.

Q: [Q23] This really ties in with what you sent me about the Eighth Kingdom. I see that this war in my mind is really going to knock Islam down, maybe not completely destroy it, although it could, but at the very least it is going to be subdued. So as you picture that, with your understanding of where this war fits, how might that tie in with other end times events?

Phil Steyne: Good question. In the first place, I think the coming Mahdi is the description of the Antichrist and may very well be the Antichrist. And when you think of the empires, even this book I referred you to explains how this was all primarily in eastern part of the empire and the eastern empire did not go very far and cover much of it. The Grecian empire under Alexander with his four generals taking over, they were all in Asia Minor, in that area down to Egypt, etc. All of this just suggests to me that the Antichrist is probably Islamic, but then at the same time if they are subdued, there will again be those who still claim that they are the final revelation and out of that will come. We saw what happened to the other people and the Muslims before and now we will protect you, but ultimately God will bring about the destruction. But I believe at Armageddon there will be western nations also because of their anti-Semitism.

Q: [Q24] The Jews obviously have been returning to the land. I look at Ezekiel 36 and 37 as a prophecy that fulfillment has begun where God is calling the Jewish people from the nations back to the land, but at the very end of chapter 39 in verse 28, it says "then they will know that I am the Lord their God," (this is after the war) "for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind." So it seems to me that this war stimulates the final return of Jews to the land. How does that fit in with your understanding?

Phil Steyne: I agree with you, because of just thinking of where the Jewish people are today and some of them rather than staying in Israel, even getting out of Israel because of the insecurity that they feel. At the same time, they are going to countries which are not that secure either. The final will be yes then they will come back.

Q: It seems to me that there has to be time for that final return to take place. Here again if it's midtribulation there is not time, the Jews are fleeing out of the land at that point, not coming into it. So that argues in my mind that it is more likely before the tribulation,

when there is time for that to happen. It also sobers me when I consider that that means the biggest population of Jews in the world right now outside of Israel is right here in America. And that means they are going to leave America and usually they leave because there is some kind of persecution. That is sobering to me.

Phil Steyne: How these Jewish people in this part of the world can support the present administration, although according to some he is losing the Jewish vote but how they could put him in, and how the American people could put somebody in like this, is beyond me. But God is sovereign.

Q: It seems to me again that in the end, Israel has nobody who comes to her defense, not even big brother America. And so as America, through our presidency, pulls back from supporting Israel, in that sense even there it is fitting the picture that I see in Scripture, that in the end Israel is going to stand alone.

Phil Steyne: The United States might not even be a power.

Q: Exactly. We tend to think that we're going to be here forever, but we don't know that. There could be economic collapse, there could be an attack that could devastate us, we just don't know.

Q: [Q25] Do you see any ways in which the movement toward the construction of the third Jewish Temple ties in with this prophecy?

Phil Steyne: The earthquake will precipitate this. It can be rebuilt. And of course if this happens, then it must be there in the mid-trib, so it must be starting to be erected sometime before that. That is why it seems to me that it will be there, it will be erected and I have many reasons to believe that.

Q: [Q26] Are there any insights we have not discussed that you would like to share?

Phil Steyne: It seems to me from what I am reading and what I am being exposed to and I am finding so many other sources which are not the usual that the Islamic coalition is going to be headed up by Turkey rather than by Russia and that Turkey is forming the alliances with all of these other Muslim nations and will be the leader. It's sort of a resurrection of the old Ottoman Empire coming into vogue again, and that will be the center of the caliphate. It seems to me something like that is developing already very rapidly. Something that we could not have imagined not so long ago when Turkey and Israel were partners in many ways even naval exercises together, military exercises together, and that stopped. No longer a secular government, they are now becoming an Islamic government.

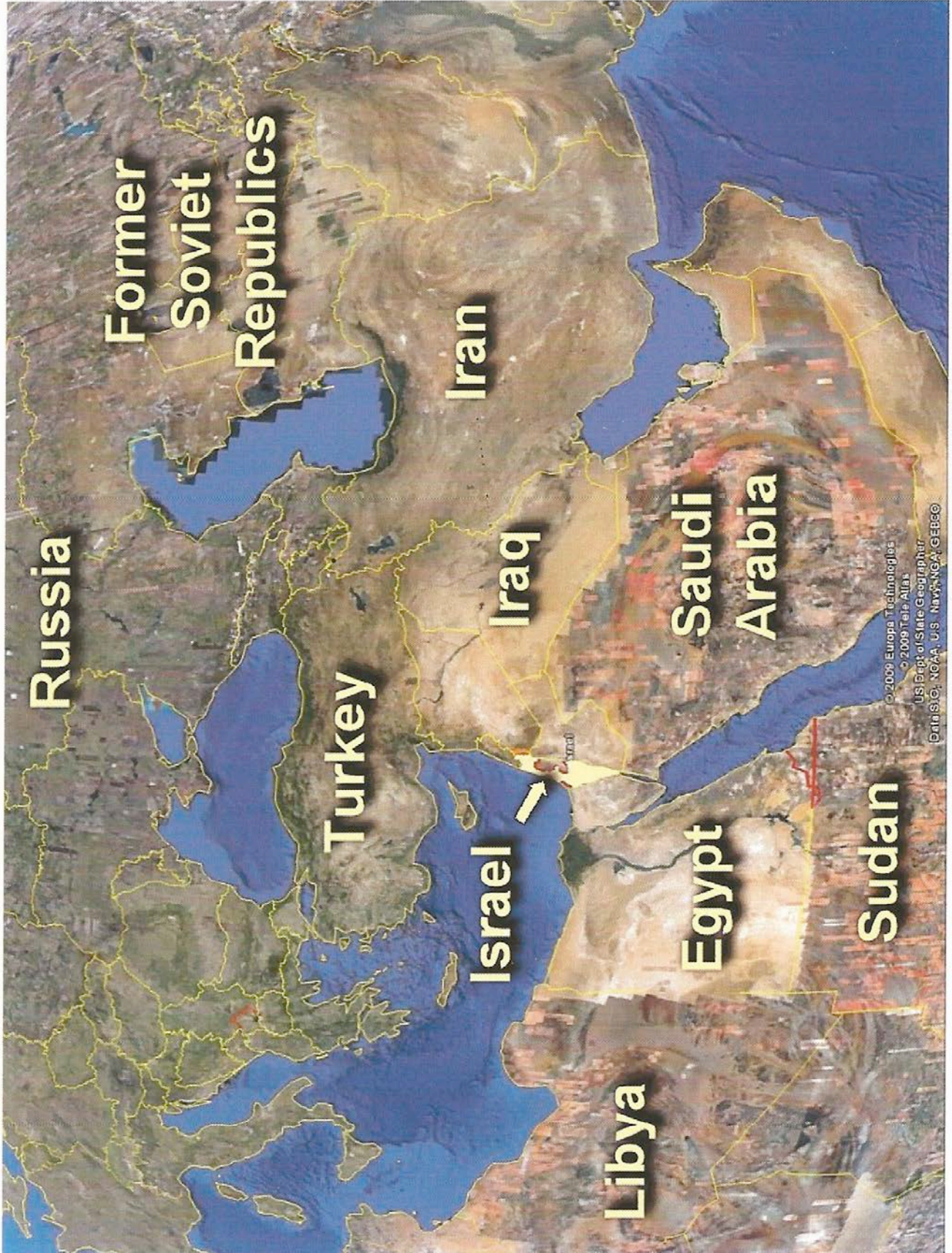
Q: That is an interesting thought. That is actually a new thought to me. I have not thought about that before. But one question I have had that would support your view on that, in Ezekiel 38:2 where it says, "son of man, set your face against Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal." Meshech and Tubal I think we can pretty comfortably place in

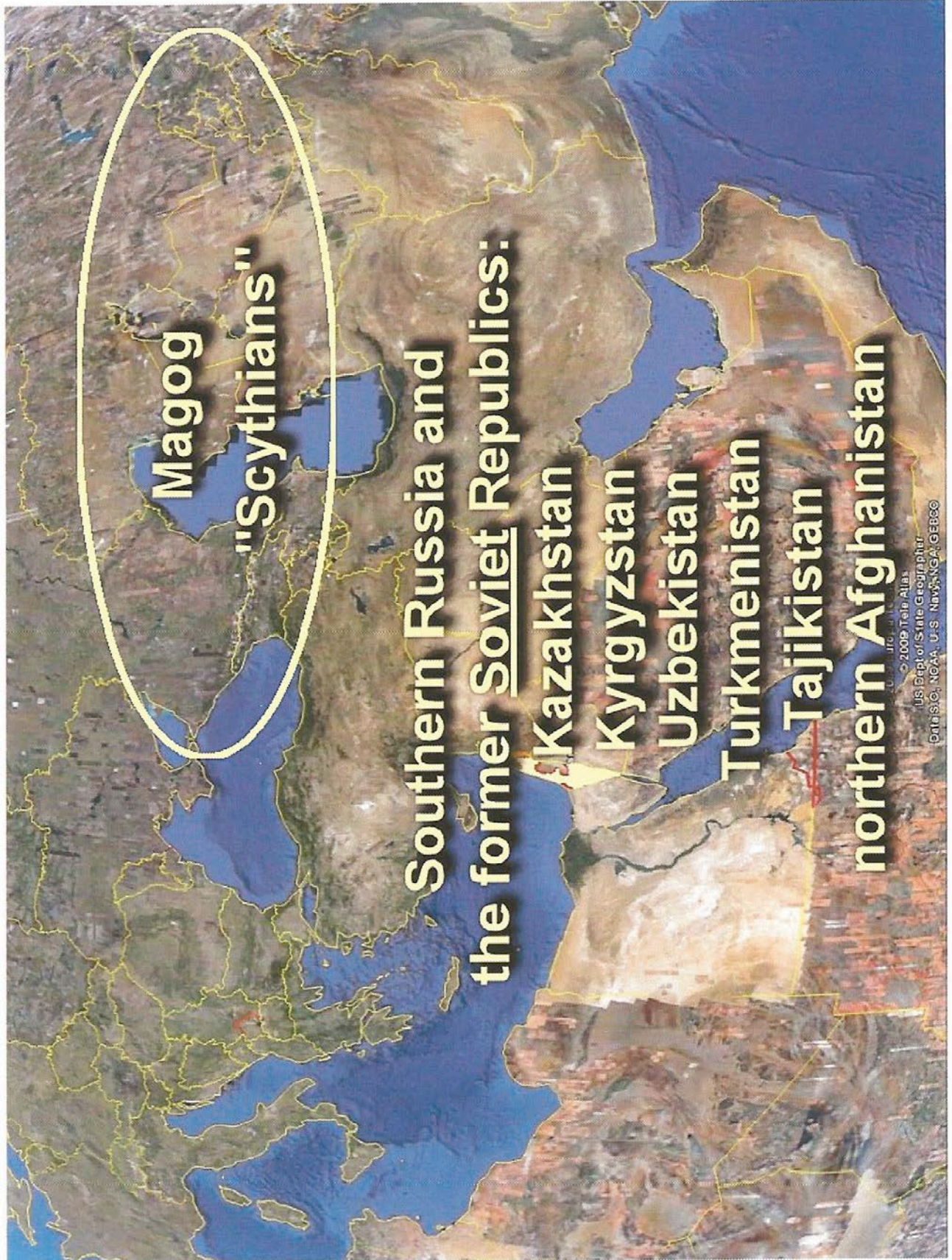
modern day Turkey, so I thought, that means that Gog is the prince of Meshech, and the prince of Tubal, which if that is Russian, then somehow Turkey would have to fall under Russian domination which of course has not happened quite yet. So your view that it is not Russia at all, it is Turkey, fits that picture.

Phil Steyne: When I think back to where Gomer was supposed to be eastern Germany, etc. Tobolsk was Tubal, we didn't know our history too well.

APPENDIX 5

MAPS





Magog
"Scythians"

**Southern Russia and
the former Soviet Republics:**

Kazakhstan

Kyrgyzstan

Uzbekistan

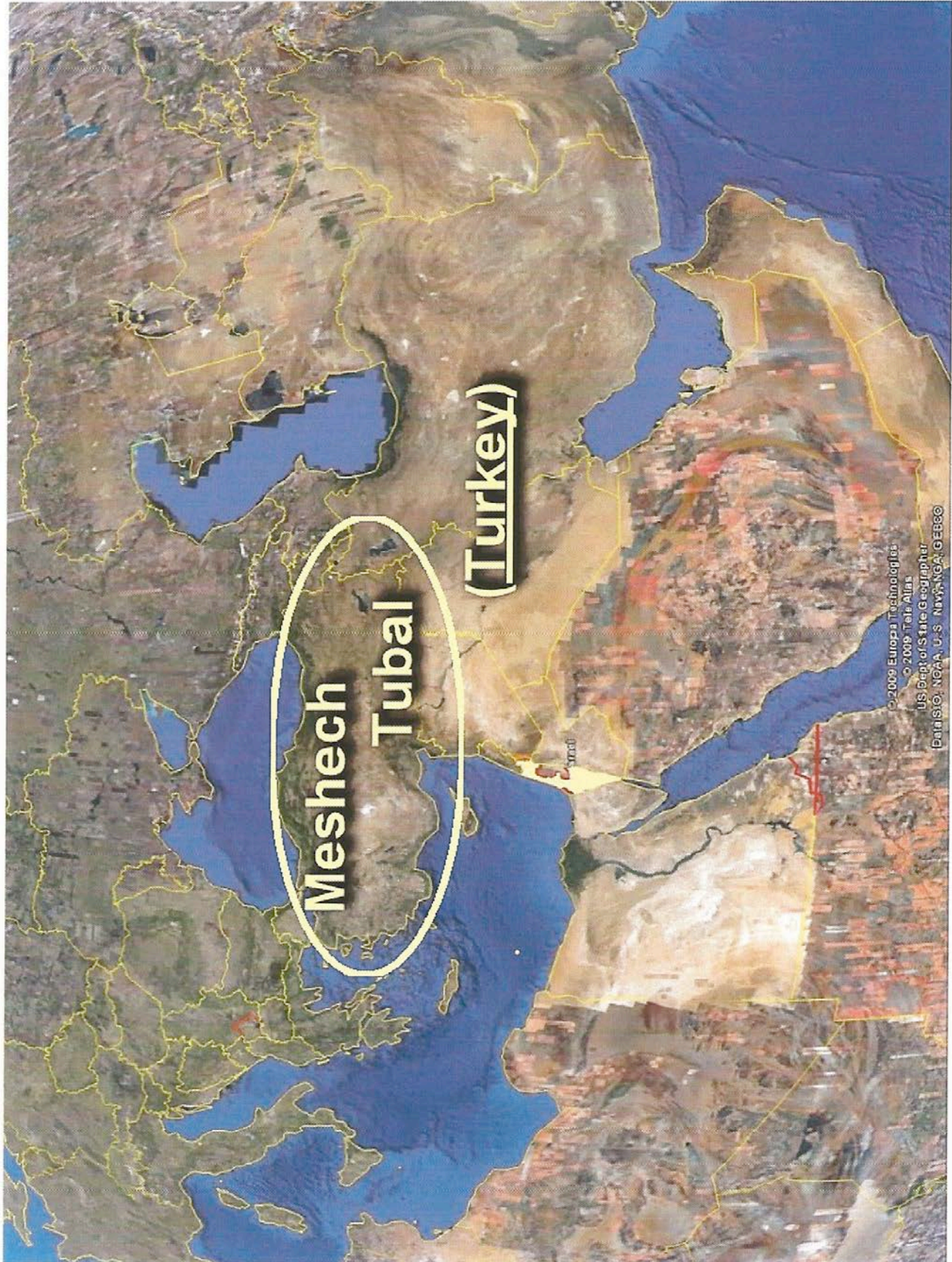
Turkmenistan

Tajikistan

northern Afghanistan

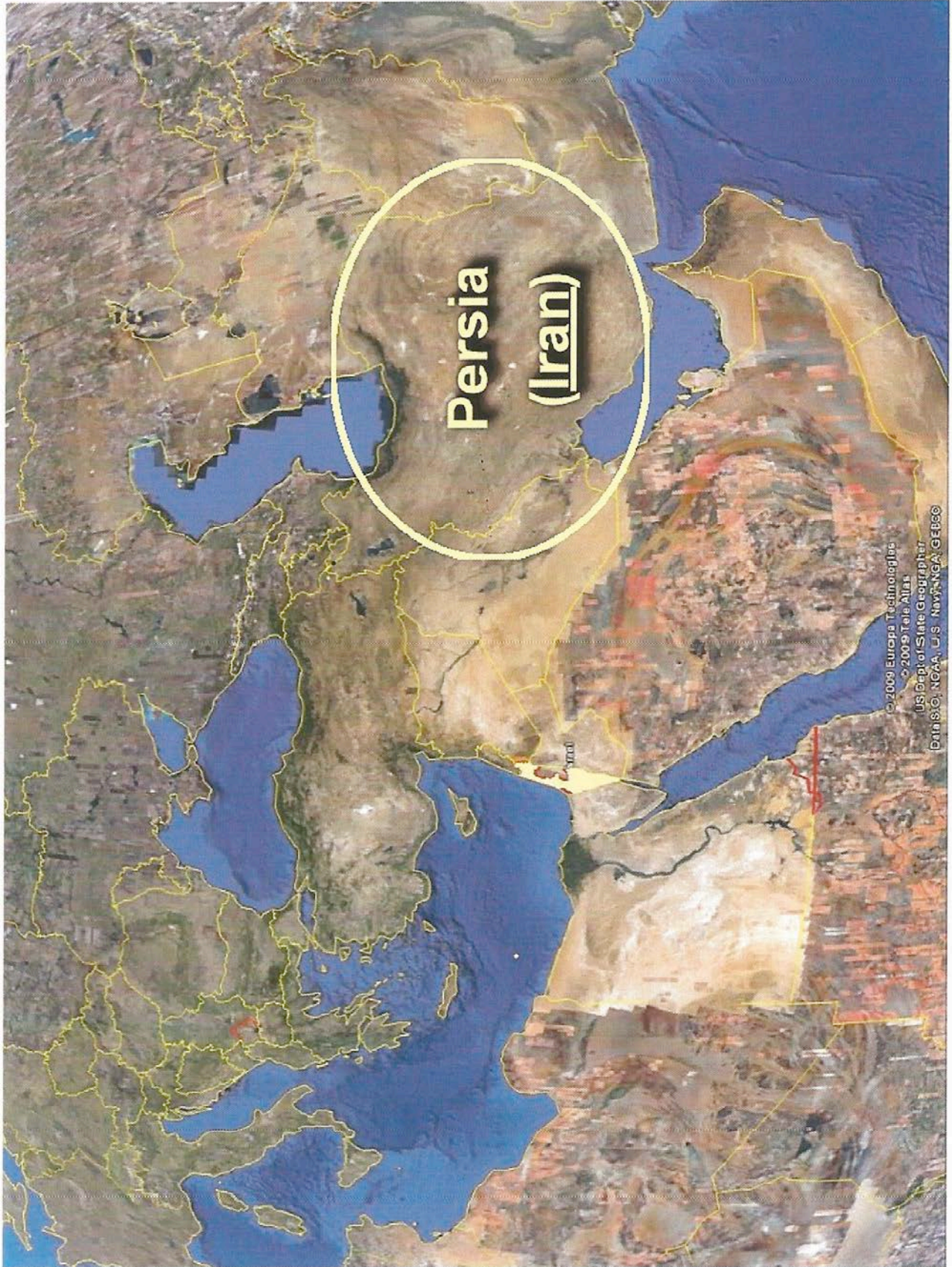
© 2009 Tele Atlas
US Dept of State Geographer
Data S.O., NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO





Meshech
Tubal
(Turkey)

© 2009 Europa Technologies
© 2009 Tele Atlas
US Dept of State Geographer
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. NAVY, NGA, GEBCO





(Sudan and Ethiopia)

Cush

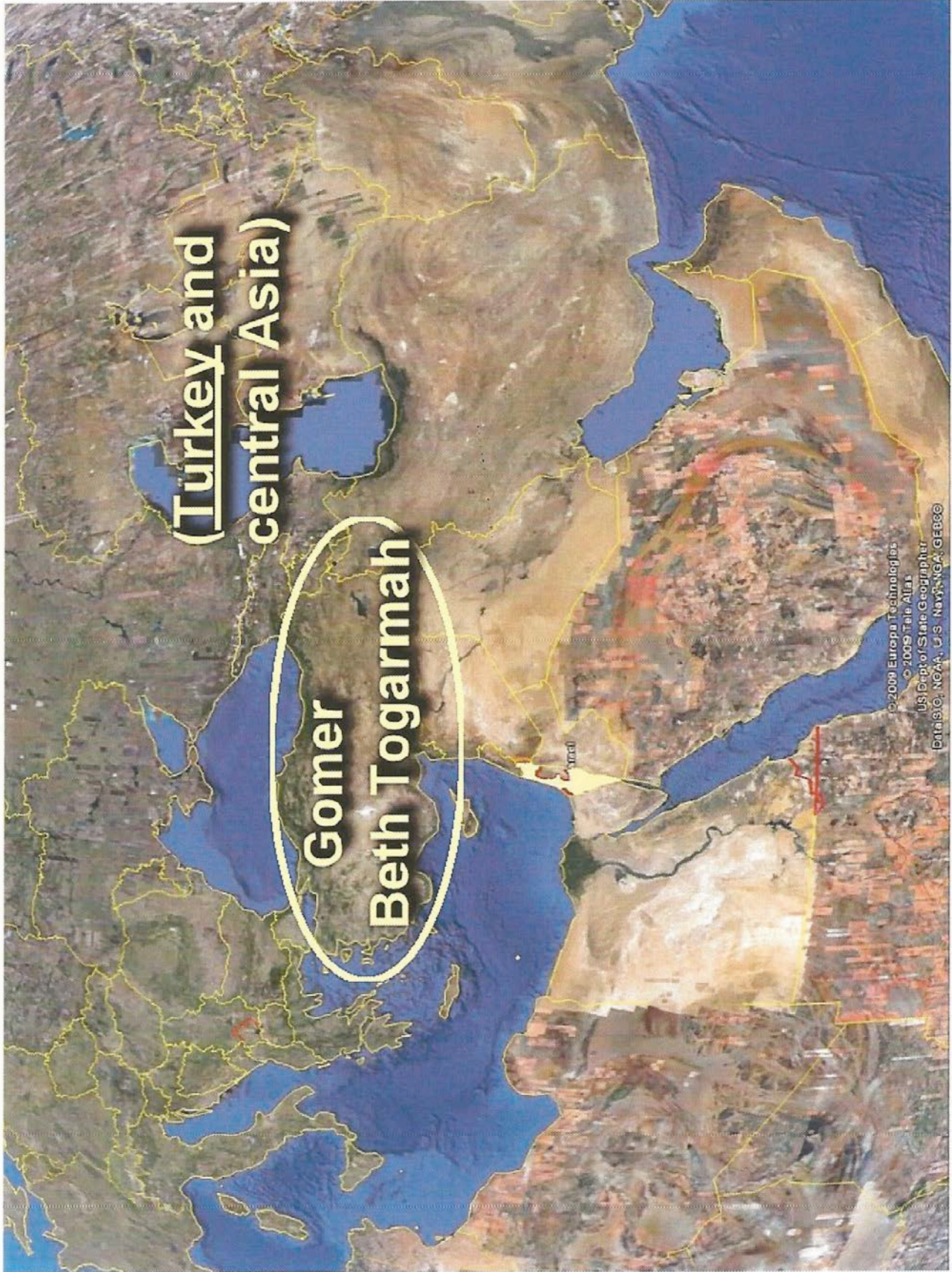
© 2009 Europa Technologies
© 2009 Itale Atlas
US Dept of State Geographer
© 2009 NOAA, © 2009 US Navy, NGA, GEBCO



(Libya and northern Africa)

Put

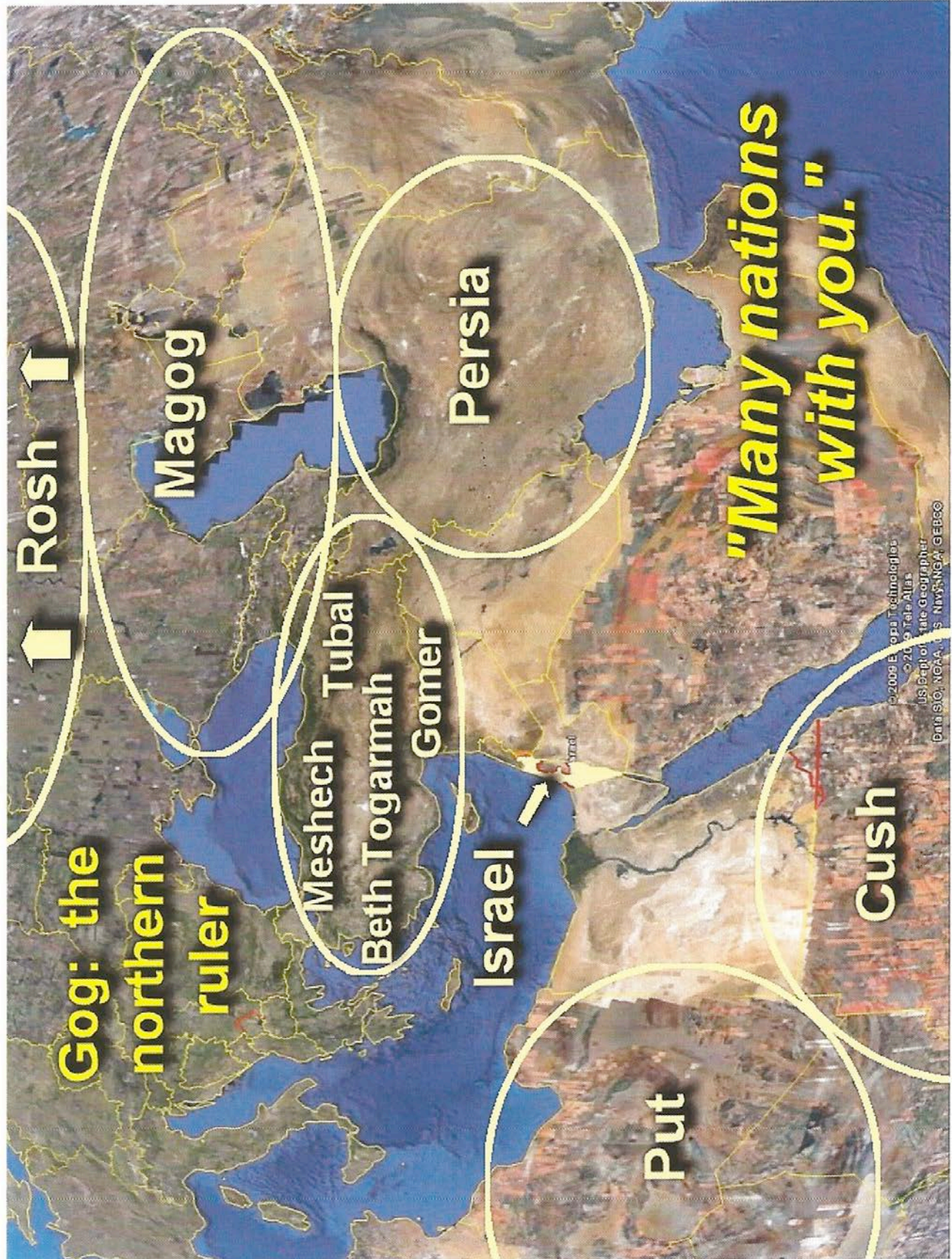
© 2009 Europa Technologies
© 2009 Tele Atlas
US Dept of State Geographer
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO



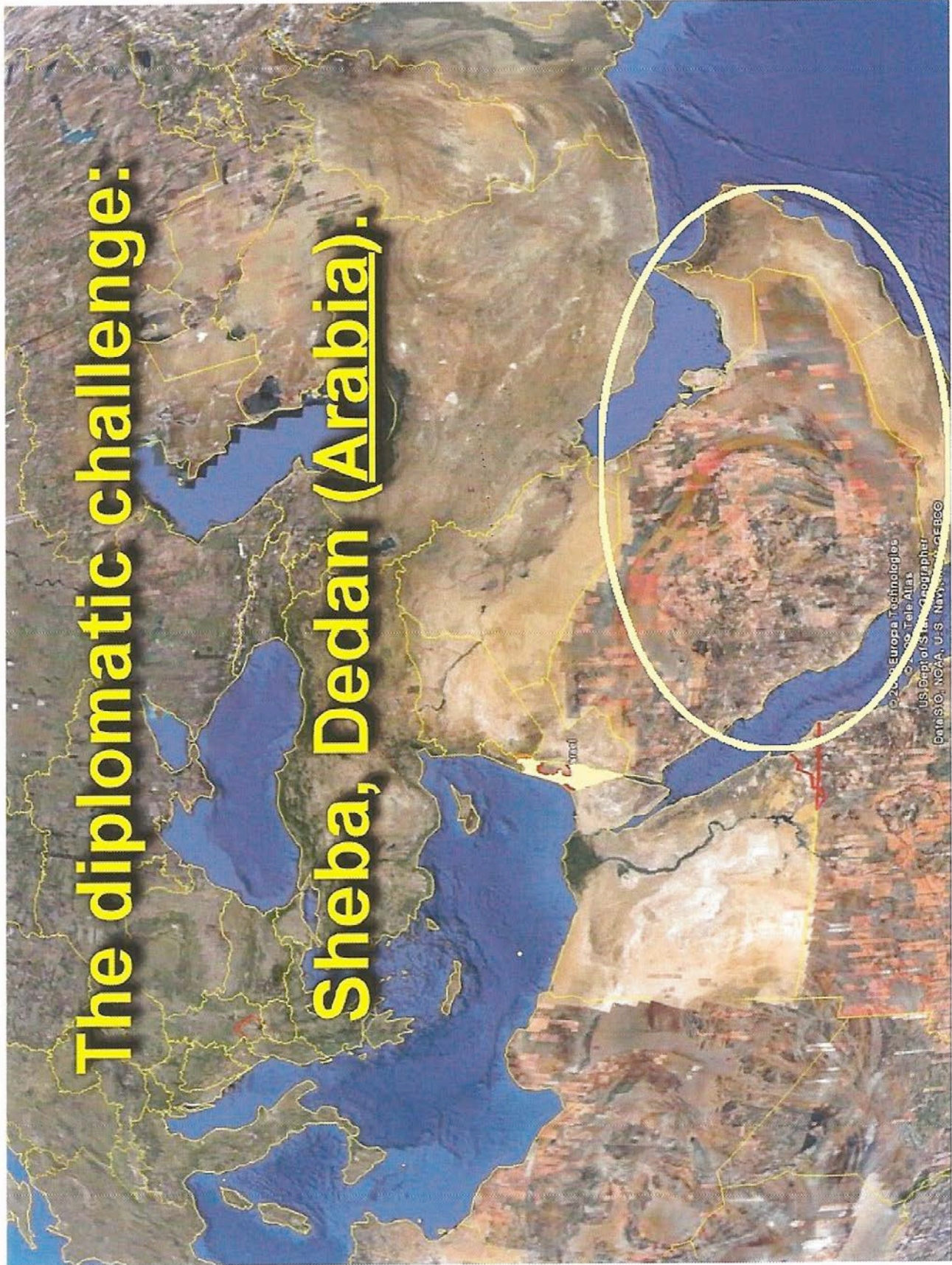
**(Turkey and
central Asia)**

**Gomer
Beth Togarmah**

© 2009 Europa Technology, Inc.
© 2009 Tele Atlas
US Dept of State Geographer
ENTALISTO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO



The diplomatic challenge: Sheba, Dedan (Arabia).



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alexander, Ralph H. "A Fresh Look at Ezekiel 38 and 39." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 17, no. 3 (Sum 1974): 157-69.
- Armerding, Carl Edwin. "Russia and the King of the North." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 120, no. 477 (Jan-Mar 1963): 50-55.
- Barr, James. *The Semantics of Biblical Language*. London: Oxford University Press, 1961.
- Bates, Leon. *Projection for Survival*. Sherman, TX: Bible Believers' Evangelistic Association, 1977.
- Bauman, Louis. *Russian Events in the Light of Bible Prophecy*. Philadelphia: The Balkiston Co., 1942.
- Berry, George Ricker. "The Date of Ezekiel 38:1-39:20." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 41, no. 3-4 (1922): 224-32.
- Billington, Clyde E. Jr. "The Rosh People in History and Prophecy," part 2. *Michigan Theological Journal* 3, no. 2 (1992): 142-74.
- Billington, Clyde E. Jr. "The Rosh People in History and Prophecy," part 3. *Michigan Theological Journal* 4, no. 1 (1993): 38-62.
- Block, Daniel I. "Gog and Magog in Ezekiel's Eschatological Vision." In *Eschatology in Bible & Theology*, edited by Kent E. Brower and Mark W. Elliott, 85-116. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997.
- Boyer, Paul S. *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Brower, Kent E. and M. W. Elliot. "The Reader Must Understand:" *Eschatology in Bible and Theology*. Leicester: Apollos, 1997.
- Cooper, David L. *When Gog's Armies Meet the Almighty*. Los Angeles, CA: Biblical Research Society, 1940.
- "Decade of Destiny." *Time*, June 11, 1973.
- DeYoung, Jimmy. *Revelation: A Chronology*. Chattanooga, TN: Shofar Communications, 2010.

- DeYoung, Jimmy. "Prophetic Prospective on the News: China, Russia, And Iran Will Remain Aligned Together," *Until Newsletter* Volume 16 Issue 4 (Dec 2011): 6.
- Dyer, Charles H. *Storm Clouds on the Horizon: Bible Prophecy and the Current Middle East Crisis*. Chicago: Moody Press, 2001.
- Dyer, Charles H. "Ezekiel." In *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, 1225-1322. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985.
- Dyer, Charles H. *World News and Bible Prophecy*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993.
- Evans, Mike. *The Final Move Beyond Iraq*. Lake Mary, FL: Front Line, 2007.
- Feinberg, C. L. *The Prophecy of Ezekiel*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1969.
- Fruchtenbaum, Arnold G. *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*. San Antonio, TX: Ariel Press, 1982.
- Fruchtenbaum, Arnold G. *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*. Rev. ed. Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2004.
- Fruchtenbaum, Arnold G. "A Review of *After the Empire* by Mark Hitchcock." Presented at the conference of the Pre-Trib Study Group, 1995.
- Gabelein, Arno C. *The Prophet Ezekiel: An Exposition*. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1918.
- Gaffney, Frank. *War Footing*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006.
- Gesenius, Wilhelm. *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952.
- Hagee, John. *Jerusalem Countdown: A Prelude to War*. Lake Mary, FL: Front Line, 2007.
- Herodotus, *The Histories*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2003.
- Hitchcock, Mark. *After the Empire: Bible Prophecy in Light of the Fall of the Soviet Union*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1994.
- Hitchcock, Mark. *Iran the Coming Crisis: Radical Islam, Oil, and the Nuclear Threat*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 2006.
- Hitchcock, Mark. *The Apocalypse of Ahmadinejad: The Revelation of Iran's Nuclear Prophet*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 2007.

- Hitchcock, Mark. *The Coming Islamic Invasion of Israel*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 2002.
- Hitchcock, Mark. *The Late Great United States: What Bible Prophecy Reveals About America's Last Days*. Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2009.
- Hitchcock, Mark. *The Second Coming of Babylon*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2003.
- Hitchcock, Mark and Thomas Ice. *The Truth Behind Left Behind: A Biblical View of the End Times*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 2004.
- Hoehner, Harold W. "The Progression of Events in Ezekiel 38–39." In *Integrity of Heart, Skillfulness of Hands*, edited by Charles H. Dyer and Roy B. Zuck, 82-92. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1994.
- Ice, Thomas. "Ezekiel 38 and 39," part 4, *Pre-Trib Perspectives*, vol. VIII, no. 44, April 2007.
- Ironside, H. A. *Expository Notes on Ezekiel the Prophet*. New York: Loizeaux, 1949.
- James, William T., general editor. *Forewarning: Approaching the Final Battle between Heaven and Hell*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1998.
- Jeffrey, Grant R. *Armageddon: Appointment with Destiny*. Toronto, Ontario: Frontier Research Publications, 1988.
- Jeffrey, Grant R. *Final Warning*. Toronto, Ontario: Frontier Research Publications, 1995.
- Jeremiah, David. *What in the World Is Going On? 10 Prophetic Clues You Cannot Afford to Ignore*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008.
- Jeremiah, David. *Study Guide: What in the World Is Going On? 10 Prophetic Clues You Cannot Afford to Ignore*. San Diego, CA: Turning Point, 2008.
- Jeremiah, David and C. C. Carlson. *Escape the Coming Night*. Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1997.
- Johnson, Stephen L. "The Time of Gog's Invasion in Ezekiel 38 and 39." Th.M. diss., Grace Theological Seminary, 1983.
- Josephus, Flavius. *The Antiquities of the Jews*, trans. William Whiston, in *Josephus: The Complete Works*. Nashville: Nelson, 1998.
- LaHaye, Tim F. "Russia on Edge." In *Foreshadows of Wrath and Redemption*, edited by William T. James, 164-68. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1999.

- LaHaye, Tim F. *The Coming Peace in the Middle East*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984.
- LaHaye, Tim F., and Edward E. Hindson. *Global Warning*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2007.
- LaHaye, Tim and Jerry B. Jenkins. *Are We Living in the End Times? Current Events Foretold in Scripture...And What They Mean*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999.
- Lalonde, Peter and Patti Lalonde. *The Edge of Time: The Final Countdown Has Begun*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1997.
- Laurie, Greg. *Signs of the Times*. Dana Point, CA: Kerygma Publishing, 2010.
- Lindsey, Hal and C.C. Carlson. *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970.
- Mason, Clarence E. Jr. "Gog and Magog, Who and When?" In *Prophecy in the Seventies*, ed. Charles Lee Feinberg. Chicago: Moody Press, 1971.
- McCall, Thomas S. and Zola Levitt. *The Coming Russian Invasion of Israel*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1974.
- Melman, Yossi and Meir Javedanfar, *The Nuclear Sphinx of Tehran: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the State of Iran*. New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2007.
- Missler, Chuck. "The Russia, Muslim, Magog Whirlwind." In *Forewarning: Approaching the Final Battle Between Heaven and Hell*, edited by William T. James, 223-34. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1998.
- Moskala, Jirí, "Toward the Fulfillment of the Gog and Magog Prophecy of Ezekiel 38–39." *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 18, no. 2 (Aut 2007): 243-73.
- Neff, Patrick. "The Russian–Persian Alliance." *Israel My Glory* (September/October 2009): 24-25.
- LaHaye, Tim F. *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984.
- LaHaye, Tim F. "Where Do the Events of Ezekiel 38–39 Fit into the Prophetic Picture?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 114, no. 456 (October 1957): 334-46.
- Phillips, John. *Exploring the Future: A Comprehensive Guide to Bible Prophecy*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2003.

- Piland, Mark A. "Program Development, Implementation and Evaluation of 'Armageddon and Beyond: Multimedia Presentations.'" D.Min. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2002.
- Price, James D. "Rosh: An Ancient Land Known to Ezekiel," *Grace Theological Journal* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 67-89.
- Price, Randall. "The Prophecies of Ezekiel." Unpublished commentary, received via personal email from the author, July 5, 2011.
- Rhodes, Ron. *Northern Storm Rising: Russia, Iran, and the Emerging End-times Military Coalition against Israel*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2008.
- Rimmer, Harry. *The Coming War and the Rise of Russia*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1940.
- LaHaye, Tim F. *Epicenter 2.0: Why the Current Rumbblings in the Middle East Will Change Your Future*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2008.
- LaHaye, Tim F. *Inside the Revolution*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2009.
- LaHaye, Tim F. *The Ezekiel Option*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005.
- Rosenberg, Joel C. and Skip Heitzig. *Epicenter: A Video Documentary*. DVD. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2008.
- Ruthven, Jon and Ihab Griess. *The Prophecy That Is Shaping History: New Research on Ezekiel's Vision of the End*. Fairfax, VA: Xulon Press, 2003.
- Ruthven, Jon. "Ezekiel's Rosh and Russia: A Connection?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 125, no. 500 (Oct-Dec 1968): 324-33.
- Ryrie, Charles. *Ryrie Study Bible*. Chicago: Moody, 1995.
- Salus, Bill. *Israelestine: The Ancient Blueprints of the Future Middle East*. Crane, MO: High Way, a division of Anomalos Publishing, 2008.
- Savyon, A. and Y. Mansharof. "Ahmadinejad's Messianic Policy." *Israel My Glory* (September/October 2009): 18-20.
- Savyon, A. and Y. Mansharof. "The Doctrine of Mahdism." *Israel My Glory* (September/October 2009): 14-15.

- Shaw, Benjamin. "Gog of the Land of Magog: The Analogy of Scripture and the Interpretation of Ezekiel 38–39." Paper presented at the Southeastern Regional Conference meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Jackson, TN, March 10-11, 2000. [Series title: Evangelical Theological Society papers; ETS-0905.]
- Spence, Michael S. "The Participants and Timing of the Gog-Magog Invasion of Ezekiel 38–39." Th.M. diss., Grace Theological Seminary, 1982.
- Swindoll, Charles R., John F. Walvoord, and J. Dwight Pentecost. *The Road to Armageddon: A Biblical Understanding of Prophecy and End Time Events*. Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1999.
- Tanner, J. Paul, "Rethinking Ezekiel's Invasion by Gog." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39, no. 1 (March 1996): 29-46.
- The Third Jihad: Radical Islam's Vision for America*. DVD. Grawn, MI: The Clarion Fund, 2008.
- Timmerman, Kenneth R., *Countdown to Crisis: The Coming Nuclear Showdown with Iran*. New York: Crown Forum, 2005.
- Voltaire, Marie Francois Arrouet de. *A Philosophical Dictionary*. New York: Coventry House, 1932.
- Voltaire, Marie Francois Arrouet de. *Portable Voltaire*, edited by Ben Ray Redman. New York: Viking Penguin, 1977.
- Walvoord, John F., *Major Bible Prophecies: 37 Crucial Prophecies that Affect You Today*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991.
- Walvoord, John F., "Russia: King of the North." *Fundamentalist Journal* 3, no. 1 (January 1984): 34-38.
- Walvoord, John F., "Russia: King of the North." *Fundamentalist Journal* 3, no. 2 (February 1984): 23-27.
- Walvoord, John F. and Mark Hitchcock. *Armageddon Oil and Terror: What the Bible Says about the Future*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007.
- Walvoord, John F. and John E. Walvoord. *Armageddon Oil and the Middle East Crisis: What the Bible Says about the Future*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976.
- What Makes Tehran Tick: Islamist Ideology and Hegemonic Interests*. Washington, DC: Iran Policy Committee, 2006.

Yamauchi, Edwin M., "Meshech, Tubal, and Company: A Review." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 19, no. 3 (Sum 1976): 239-47.