

THE PROPHETIC WORD IN CRISIS DAYS

Prophetic Messages Delivered at the West Coast Prophetic Congress
in the Los Angeles, Calif. area in mid-1961

by

Various Contributors

Copyright @ 1961

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE PROPHETIC WORD AND RUSSIA

JOHN F. WALVOORD

One of the significant aspects of modern life which all of us have observed in the last fifteen or sixteen years is the remarkable rise of Russia to the place of world prominence. At the close of World War II, Russia as a nation was crushed; its manpower destroyed, its cities in ruin, a nation that would have been utterly defeated if it had not been for American help.

In the last fifteen years, Russia has come back and has become a prominent nation in a way that few nations have ever achieved leadership in the course of human history. Today, as all of us are willing to recognize, Russia is one of the principal competitors with the United States for world fame and world leadership. Through the instrument of communism and the nations which share Russia's convictions on communism, about half of the world's population is in some sense or other in the Russian orbit.

Such a phenomenal rise of a nation, that is so godless and blasphemous, must certainly have some significance.

In the study of prophecy, one should be careful not to invent truth that does not exist. Books have been written that have taken some minutia of the prophetic Word and expanded it into something of great prominence, even though the basis upon which it rested was questionable. Many aspects of prophecy in the Bible may only partially be understood. There are some great themes of prophecy, however, which do not rest just on isolated texts, but upon solid portions of the Word of God. As we study these portions, we can come to some settled conclusions regarding the main movements of God in the prophetic future.

If we would consult a concordance about the nation Russia, we would not find the word Russia anywhere in the Bible. At first glance, it would seem that there is nothing in the Bible that would give us any information about Russia. A more careful investigation, however, reveals that there are two long chapters in the Bible which concern themselves with the nation Russia, and that there are certain other portions of Scripture, which cast added light upon the subject. We will find that not only the Bible has something to say about Russia, but what it reveals is of tremendous significance as we face the question as to what is ahead in God's prophetic program.

In the 38th and 39th chapters of Ezekiel, a description is given of a war between Russia and the nation Israel, and the two chapters mentioned describe the invasion of the land of Israel by the armies of Russia and the nations that are associated with her. The Scriptures are very plain that this is a military invasion. It declares the details about it and the situation that exists at the time of that invasion. The outcome of the battle is the utter destruction of the army that invades the land of Israel. This portion of Scripture was written a long time ago by the prophet Ezekiel, who himself was in exile from the land of Israel. He, of course, was guided by the Spirit of God. A natural question could be raised inasmuch as this was written some twenty-five hundred years ago whether this passage has already been fulfilled.

The land of Israel has been the scene of many wars, and invasions have come from various parts of the world, north, east, and south. Many times the march of soldier's feet has been heard crossing the little nation of Israel. The Bible records some of these wars and some of them have occurred since the canon of Scripture was closed. It will not be possible, of course, to examine the details of all these wars but if one did he would find that none of them correspond to the prophecy that is before us. There never has been a war with Israel that fulfills the prophecies of Ezekiel 38 and 39. If one believes that the Bible is the Word of God and that It is infallible and must be fulfilled, the only logical conclusion is that this portion of Scripture like many others is still due a future fulfillment. The question naturally arises whether this fulfillment may be soon.

First of all in studying this chapter, it is necessary to establish beyond any question that this passage does deal with the nation Russia, inasmuch as the term itself does not occur. There are a number of important aspects of truth, all of which lead to the conclusion that the only nation which could possibly fulfill the specifications of these two chapters is the nation Russia.

First of all, one will notice the geographic description that is given.

A number of times in this portion of Scripture, it is said that the armies come to the land of Israel from the uttermost part of the north or as we would put it from the far north. In the Authorized Version frequently it simply says, "**from the north.**" In this connection verse 6 should be noted where it is describing the house of Togarmah, one of the nations that is associated with Russia in this invasion, it pictures them as in the uttermost parts of the north.

A similar statement is made in verse 15, "**And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army.**" Again in Ezekiel 39:2, God says to them, "**I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel.**" It is stated three times in these chapters, and other intimations are given that this army comes from the extreme north, as represented by Togarmah.

If one takes any map of the world and draws a line north of the Holy Land, the land of Israel he will inevitably come to the nation Russia. As soon as the line is drawn beyond Asia Minor and the Black Sea it is in Russia and continues to be in Russia for many hundreds of miles all the way up to the Arctic Circle.

Russia, as you know, spreads east and west some 6,000 miles, a tremendous distance, and the line directly north of the Holy Land goes right through a portion of Russia. One cannot escape Russia if he goes north of the Holy Land. On the basis of geography alone, it seems quite clear that the only nation which could possibly be referred to as coming from the far north would be the nation Russia.

As the Scriptures are further examined, not only geographic data but also some confirming linguistic evidence is discovered. In the opening portion of this 38th chapter, verses 1 through 6, some names are mentioned which identify the invaders. This portion indicates that the Word of the Lord came to Ezekiel saying,

“Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee” (Ezekiel 38:2-6).

Most of these terms in this portion of Scripture are quite strange to us and they do not immediately connote anything relating to Russia. Certain things are discovered as the passage is examined more particularly. This portion of Scripture is a message from God delivered by the prophet Ezekiel, directed to a person whose name is Gog, who is described as of the land of Magog and apparently the ruler of this land. The term “**Magog**” is mentioned in Genesis 10:2. There we learn that Magog was the second son of Japheth, a son of Noah.

Magog is to be identified with the ancient Scythians, a people descended from Magog. The ancient historian Josephus makes that identification and we have no reason to question it. The Scythians apparently lived immediately to the north of what was later to be the land of Israel, then some of them emigrated north, going all the way up to the Arctic Circle. In other words, their posterity was scattered precisely over the geographical area that we today call Russia. It should be quite clear that they were absorbed with other people and became the race we know today as Russian.

In this portion of Scripture Gog is described as “the *prince of Rosh*” in the American Standard Version. The Authorized Version expresses it as the “**chief prince.**” The translation, “*the prince of Rosh,*” is a more literal rendering of the Hebrew, “*Rosh*”. This term “*Rosh*” is the root of the modern term, Russia.

In the study of how ancient words come into modern language, it is quite common for the consonants to remain the same and the vowels to be changed. In the word “*Rosh,*” if the vowel “o” is changed to “u” it becomes the root of the modern word, Russia, with the suffix added. In other words, the word itself seems to be an early form of the word from which the modern word, Russia, comes.

Genesius, the famous lexicographer, gives the assurance that this is a proper identification, that is, that Rosh is an early form of the word from which we get Russia.

The two terms, “**Meshech**” and “**Tubal**,” also correspond to some prominent words in Russia. The term “Meshech” is similar to the modern name Moscow, and “**Tubal**,” obviously, is similar to the name of one of the prominent Asiatic provinces of Russia, the province of Tobolsk. When this evidence is put together, it points to the conclusion that these terms are early references to portions of Russia, and therefore, we have not only the geographic argument but we also have the linguistic argument in support of the idea that this invading force comes from Russia.

As this portion of Scripture is examined further it becomes quite obvious that the invaders utterly disregard God, because any nation that attacks the nation Israel by so much is disregarding the Word of God. The godlessness of this invading army attacking Israel also points the finger to the nation Russia.

On the basis of these three arguments, the geographic argument, the linguistic argument, and what might be called the theological argument, it may be concluded that the reference is to the nation Russia. In fact, there is no other reasonable alternative. The nation Russia is the only one which seems to fit the picture.

A number of nations are associated with Russia in the invasion, but not too much is known about them. Persia, of course, is in that general area. Cush is another name for Ethiopia, which poses a problem because today Ethiopia is to the south. There are some, however, who believe that the same term was applied to other geographic areas, possibly to the north of the land of Israel.

The term, “**Put**,” is another difficult expression about which little is known. In verse 6 the term, “**Gomer**,” is identified by most as referring to the ancient Cimmerians, a portion of whom lived in what we would today call southern or western Germany. Togarmah is commonly recognized as referring to the Armenians, who at one time lived immediately north of the land of Israel, and they, too, to some extent emigrated to the north. The nations which accompany Russia, for the most part, fit properly into the picture of assisting Russia in this invasion of the land of Israel.

The actual invasion is described in Ezekiel 38:8-12. Some of the distinctive facts mentioned about the particular situation which will exist when this war begins are of utmost significance in the light of the world situation today. In this passage the “**thou**” refers throughout to Russia or to Gog. The term “**they**” is used to refer to Israel. Beginning in verse 8, the passage reads as follows:

“After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them. Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee.”

“Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land” (Ezekiel 38:8-12).

The passage continues:

“Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil? Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it? And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes” (Ezekiel 38:13-16).

Some highly significant facts are given in this passage concerning the precise situation existing when this invasion takes place. There are a number of references to the fact that the people of Israel are back in their ancient land. This of course is of tremendous importance because it is only in our generation that the people of Israel have gone back to their ancient land. You recall that in A. D. 70 Titus, the Roman general, conquered Jerusalem, utterly destroyed it, and killed a quarter of a million of the Jews.

He systematically went throughout the entire land of Israel destroying every building, sawing down or uprooting every tree and doing everything he could to make the land totally uninhabitable. The result was that the land of Israel lay in waste for several generations. The children of Israel from that day to this have been scattered over the face of the earth.

At the close of World War II the children of Israel began to return to their ancient land in large numbers. Some had gone earlier, but they were few in number. They built up their strength and numbers until finally they were able to be recognized as a little nation in May, 1948.

At that time one million Jews were assembled back in their ancient land.

In the years since a second million have gone back; and today there are two million Israelites back in their ancient land under their own flag, speaking the Hebrew language, and reviving and restoring their ancient land to a land of fertility and wealth and prosperity. These facts are tremendously significant, for this return of Israel has occurred in our generation.

Ezekiel's prophecy obviously could not be fulfilled prior to 1945, for the nation Israel was not regathered to their ancient land.

Until our generation, Israel's situation did not correspond to that which is described in Ezekiel's passage. Again and again throughout this passage, Israel is referred to as being in the land, as being gathered out of the nations, as being restored to their ancient land. Ezekiel's prophecy of twenty-five hundred years ago seems to have anticipated the return of Israel to their ancient land as a prelude to the wind-up of this present age.

Another important aspect of this prophecy is found in verse eleven where it states that the people of Israel will be **“dwelling securely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates.”**

It was customary in ancient times, whenever a city prospered, to build a wall around it. One can go to ancient lands and see the ruins of walls around most important cities. They would, at least, have a fortress with a wall around it to which they could retire, if the houses themselves were scattered and a wall about them was impracticable. In other words, it was customary to build walls about cities. In our modern day, this custom has been discontinued for the obvious reason that a wall today is no protection against modern warfare.

If one goes over to Israel today, though one can see many fabulous cities being built and marvelous developments taking place, one will not find a single city with a wall built around it. They are cities without walls. How did Ezekiel know that at a future time the war situation would be such that cities would be built without walls?

Of course, the answer is a simple one. He was guided by the inspiration of God, and it was not a matter of his own wisdom. It was a matter of God's guidance. But in describing this scene he is describing a modern situation, something that could not and would not be true back in the days of old, before Christ. This detail is very important because unwalled villages point to the situation in the land of Israel today.

A third feature may also be observed.

This portion of Scripture is very explicit that one of the reasons why Russia wants to conquer the land of Israel is that it had become a land of great wealth. Russia comes to take a prey, to take silver and gold, and the wealth that has been accumulated (cf. Ezekiel 38:12-13).

Until our generation, the geographic area of the land of Israel was anything but something to be prized. It did not have any wealth; it was a land that was strewn with stones; a land that was backward as far as civilization is concerned. Many of the areas that at one time were very fruitful in Bible times were unused with the land eroded and useless as far as agriculture is concerned.

Since Israel has gone back to their ancient land, they have done fabulous things. They have taken rocky fields and gathered the stones and put them in piles along the edge and cultivated the ground, irrigated it and made the ground to bring forth abundantly. They have reclaimed great areas of swamps where mosquitoes and malaria made impossible cultivation before. In fact, the first people that tried to do something about it lost their lives because of the unhealthy situation.

These swamps, now drained, are today one of the richest areas of farm land in the entire world. It is almost incredible what has occurred there since 1948. They have spent money, they have put forth extreme effort, and from one end of Israel to the other, tremendous progress is in evidence. The result is today that Israel is beginning once again to be a nation that has wealth. They are exporting a great deal to other countries. The money is beginning to flow back to the little nation of Israel.

In addition to agricultural wealth, there are some factors that Ezekiel did not know which we know today.

One of them is that to the east of the land of Israel are tremendous oil reserves. One of the largest and richest oil fields in the entire world is in the Middle East. It is outside the present geographic area of the land of Israel, but the nation that wants to control that oil land must control the nation Israel. It is obvious that the tremendous oil reserves of the Middle East are one of the prizes which Russia wants to secure.

Another aspect of wealth which has come to light in modern times is the chemical value of the Dead Sea area, where water has gone for centuries and evaporated, leaving its mineral deposit. Israel has established a plant at the south end of the Dead Sea and is reclaiming these chemicals.

Israel is shipping millions of dollars of chemicals derived from the Dead Sea and they have just begun to tap this wealth. Ezekiel anticipated this modern situation, when the land of Israel would be fabulously wealthy.

In addition to all these factors, it is obvious that the geographic location of the Middle East, being as it is a hub between three major continents, Europe, Asia, and Africa, is of tremendous strategic importance to any nation that wants to dominate the world. 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 its control. The hordes of Russians and their allies as they come down are seeking to claim this for themselves. Again Ezekiel anticipates the modern situation which exists today.

When this Russian army comes down upon this land they are met with complete and utter destruction. Strange to say, as we examine the Scripture, we do not find them being destroyed by an opposing army, but rather it seems to be by divine intervention. Somehow God by His own power destroys this army. In Ezekiel 38:19, 20 a description is given of earthquakes, mountains falling, and other disturbances which hinders their progress.

Then God declares,

“And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD” (Ezekiel 38:21-23).

In the thirty-ninth chapter the destruction of this army is portrayed. In Ezekiel 39:4, God declares,

“Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy hordes, and the peoples that are with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured.”

In other words, this army is completely destroyed, and the means used are earthquakes, hailstones, fire and brimstone. It seems also that parts of the army begin to fight each other, so that every man's sword is against his brother, with the result that this entire army is completely destroyed.

Some natural questions are raised about this. Some have suggested that this description of hailstones, fire and brimstone might be Ezekiel's way of describing modern warfare, such as atomic warfare. There is a possibility that Ezekiel was using terms that he knew to describe a future situation for which he did not have a vocabulary.

The language of Scripture indicates, however, that this victory over this invading horde is something which God does. It is God, Himself, who is destroying this army.

In any case regardless of the means the army is completely destroyed and chapter 39 goes on to describe the aftermath. For months thereafter they have the awful task of burying the dead. For a long period after that men are given full-time employment as additional bodies are discovered, and the process of burial goes on for a considerable period. Then it also describes the debris of the battle. The debris of the battle is used as kindling wood for a period of some seven years. The general character of this battle and the outcome of it seems to be quite clear, even though we may have some questions and problems about the details.

One of the principal questions one could ask about this battle is, “When is this battle going to occur? It has not occurred in the past. What indication do we have in this portion of Scripture that this battle will occur at a specific time?”

Unfortunately, various opinions have been offered by capable Bible scholars on this point, and there has been considerable disagreement. Some have felt that this battle will take place before the rapture; others believe it will take place in connection with the battle of Armageddon, or the battle of the Great Day of God Almighty, at the end of the great tribulation. Some place it at the beginning of the millennium, as an act of rebellion against Christ. Some find it at the end of the millennium, for there is a reference to Gog and Magog in Revelation 20. Others put it in the earlier part of Daniel's seventieth week, just before the great tribulation.

It will not be possible to consider all these views in detail, but there are some hints which provide a good clue as to when this battle will take place. One of the hints given is that this battle takes place at a time when Israel has been regathered into their ancient land, and are dwelling securely and at rest. There are not too many times when Israel is at rest in God's prophetic program.

They are restless people. They have been scattered and persecuted over the face of the earth, and there are not too many periods when Israel will be at rest, even in the future.

Certainly Israel is not at rest today. Israel is an armed camp. They are living under a truce with their Arab neighbors about them. The Arabs would drive every Israelite into the Mediterranean Sea and kill them if they could. Humanly speaking, the reason that they do not is because Israel has a very good army. They are the match for their neighbors. There is an armed truce between them at the present time with a no-man's land separating Israel in a number of places from their enemy.

In Israel, every young man is required to have two and one-half years of military training. Every young woman has to have two years of military training. While they train the women for jobs that are not necessarily of combatant type, they also train them to use weapons, so that if an occasion comes and they need to fight, they can.

The young people of Israel are trained for war. When they finish training, many of them are settled in villages near the border, where they can serve a double purpose. They follow their occupation, whatever it is, but at the same time they serve as guards for the border of Israel. Israel is not at rest now. It is almost in a state of war, cold war, at least. This does not correspond to Ezekiel's prophecy. If Russia should invade the Middle East today, it would not be a fulfillment of this portion of Scripture. It has to be at a time when Israel is at rest.

There are not too many times in their divine program when Israel is at rest.

One of them, however, would be the millennial kingdom, itself. But we are told expressly, that in the millennial kingdom, there will be no war (Isaiah 2:4), and only when the rebellion occurs at the end when Satan is let loose (Revelation 20:7-9) does there occur any war in connection with the millennium. Certainly Israel is not going to be at rest under these circumstances, either, once Satan is let loose.

Some have suggested that Israel will be at rest in the period of great tribulation, and that the prophecy of Russia will be fulfilled at that time. In the time of great tribulation, Israel will not be at rest, for Christ told them to flee to the mountains to escape their persecutors; therefore the invasion described by Ezekiel could not be a part of the battle of Armageddon, or the battle of the Great Day of God Almighty.

There is only one period in the future that clearly fits this description of Ezekiel, and that is the first half of Daniel's seventieth week of God's program for Israel (Daniel 9:27).

After the Church has been raptured and saints have been raised from the dead and the living saints have been caught up to be with the Lord, there will emerge in the Mediterranean Sea a confederacy of nations. Out of that confederacy will come a strong man who will become its dictator. He is described in Daniel 9:26 as "**the prince that shall come.**" He will enter into a covenant with the people of Israel as described in Daniel 9:27. That covenant will be a covenant of protection and peace. It is going to be a covenant designed to run for seven years.

Under that covenant, Israel will be able to relax, for their Gentile enemies have now become their friends, and have apparently guaranteed their borders and promised them freedom. During that first three and one-half years, we have the one time when Israel is at rest and secure. Apparently Russia will invade the land of Israel during that period, possibly toward its close, and this Scripture will then be fulfilled.

There are some other problems in the passage which merit study. In this portion of Scripture a reference is made to bows and arrows, to shields and chariots, and to swords. These, of course, are antiquated weapons from the standpoint of modern warfare. The large use of horses is understandable as Russia today uses horses a great deal in connection with their army. But why should armor, spears, bows, and arrows be used? This certainly poses a problem.

There have been two or more answers given. One of them is this: some believe that Ezekiel here is using language with which he was familiar, the weapons that were common in his day, to anticipate modern weapons. What he is saying is that when this army comes, it will be fully equipped with the weapons of war. This is a possible interpretation, but it too has some problems. We are told in the passage that they used the wooden shafts of the spears and the bow and arrows for kindling wood. If these are symbols, it would be difficult to burn symbols. Even in modern warfare, however, there is a good deal of wood in connection with various things. Possibly this is the explanation. We are not in a position today to settle this with any finality.

A second solution has been given, namely, that this battle is preceded by a disarmament agreement between nations. If this were the case, it would be necessary to resort to primitive weapons easily and secretly made if a surprise attack were to be achieved. This would allow a literal interpretation of the passage.

The general character of this passage, the nature of the war, the invasion when it comes and the outcome is, however, perfectly clear. What significance does this have as compared to the modern scene?

First of all, if we understand this passage correctly, Russia, instead of being a nation which is going to dominate the whole world, is headed for a tremendous military defeat. It is not possible to predict what is going to happen between now and the time this battle takes place, but the Bible seems quite clear that there is no room for a world empire which Russia will dominate. The Bible prophesies only four world empires.

The empire of the great tribulation period which will come as a form of the revived Roman Empire, the fourth empire of Daniel, not a Russian empire. This, in turn, will be succeeded by the millennial reign of Christ.

This portion of Scripture seems to confirm that Russia, instead of becoming a world power which is going to dominate the whole world, is instead headed for an awful defeat, a judgment from God because of its blasphemy and ungodliness. If this becomes true during the time of the seventieth week of Daniel, it may explain something that otherwise might be difficult.

We know that in the last half of Daniel's seventieth week there will be a world government headed by the ruler of the Mediterranean confederacy. The question is how does he forge this world empire so quickly and so easily, and apparently without fighting for it?

We learn in Revelation 13:4 that the question is asked, “**Who is able to make war with him?**” i.e., the Beast.

The answer is that nobody is able to make war with him. It should be obvious that 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. Nobody is able, for at least a time, to contest their right to rule.

The destruction of the Russian army may be then the preface to the world government which will sweep the world during the last half of Daniel's seventieth week and be in power at the time Christ comes back to establish His millennial kingdom.

These two portions of Scripture, while they concern themselves with a future war, are of tremendous significance as we face the present world scene and the dominance of Russia as a military power. We can trust that God, in due time, and perhaps sooner than we think will bring these Scriptures to their sure conclusion and fulfillment.

There is another aspect of this problem that is worthy of careful consideration.

What is the relation of all this to what we today call communism? It must be recognized that communism and Russia are not synonymous, for there are nations which are communistic which are not necessarily following Russia's leadership. Communism is a form of political philosophy; it is a form of religion. It is an ideology which is not limited to the Russian nation even though Russia has provided the major spark for it.

As communism is examined, it is revealed to be an atheistic religion, a religion that denies that God exists, a religion that denies that there is anything that is supernatural, a religion that recognizes only material force. If these facts are kept in mind, it becomes a most significant fact that in the false religion which will sweep the world during the time of the great tribulation, there are precisely the same elements present.

The false religion at the tribulation time is described in Daniel 11:36-38.

This portion of Scripture describes the king who shall do according to his will, i.e., an absolute ruler. This king is believed by many to be the future world ruler of which the Scriptures speak. He may be “**the prince that shall come**” of Daniel 9:26. In Daniel 11:37, it states of this ruler, “**Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all.**”

In other words, this ruler will push aside any previous kind of religion, any god which had been previously worshipped, and in their place he will put himself as the object of universal worship.

In explanation of this, it states in Daniel 11:38, “**But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces.**” It is a recognition of the power to make war. This Scripture tells, in a word, that the only deity this man will recognize and respect is the power to make war. He is an absolute atheist, an absolute materialist.

It should be clear that in the rapid rise of communism in our generation, it has swept within its folds almost half of the world's population, a phenomenon without parallel in the history of the world. While the ultimate false religion will not be communism in the form we know it today, communism may very well be the forerunner and preparation for this future world religion that will sweep all the world into its fold during the time of the great tribulation.

Millions of young people today are being systematically taught atheism, denying that any god of kind exists. They are taught to give their complete allegiance to their political leaders, and to die, if need be, for the cause that this represents. Certainly, as they are being conditioned and being brainwashed, and trained to think this way, the ground is being prepared for the future atheistic, blasphemous worship of this one who is Satan's man, — Satan's substitute for Christ who alone has the right to rule, as King of kings and Lord of lords.

In the rise of communism, we observe something different than the rise of Russia. While the Scriptures seem to indicate that Russia as a political power will go down, the philosophy and the godlessness and the atheism which it has spawned in our modern day seems to be just the beginning of that which is some day going to sweep the entire world.

Those who have put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ can certainly have a wonderful refuge in the Word of God in facing these facts. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming first, before these things come to their consummation, before Russia ever attacks the land of Israel, before this godless religion ever sweeps the world. But the very fact that these forces are in the world today, Russia, a great nation, poised to the north of the Holy Land, Israel in its place, already a nation of wealth and significance and a prize to be sought, indicates that the end may be near.

Ezekiel described the building of cities without walls and anticipates a time when Israel would be secure and at rest. We see today the remarkable preparation for events which will take place after the rapture of the Church. God is setting the stage in Israel, in Russia, and in communism for world events that will end the age.

We certainly must realize that this situation is not going to remain static that it is moving very rapidly to a consummation.

In that consummation we believe the first important event will be Christ's coming for His own. If there ever was a generation of Bible-believing Christians who had a right to look forward to the coming of the Lord momentarily day by day, on the basis of what they see in the world, it is our present generation.

Even unbelievers are telling us today that things cannot go on much longer.

When we were over in Israel, we had a very interesting experience of hearing one of the outstanding leaders of Israel. He lectured for an hour, and then gave us an opportunity to ask questions for another hour.

One of the questions asked of him was this: "What is the solution to the present tension between Israel and the Arab world?"

He explained what some of us already knew, that there is a fanatical corps of Arabs who will assassinate any ruler who makes peace with the people of Israel. One king has already been assassinated. He went on to say: "Sooner or later there will rise someone who will make a covenant with the people of Israel, and as soon as he does it, while he may be very unpopular before he does it, he will be hailed as a hero and as a leader in the Middle East."

In Daniel 9:26 there is the prophecy of "**the prince that shall come**" who will make a covenant with Israel. We cannot presume that the covenant this man was talking about necessarily is Daniel's covenant, but it might be.

When this Israeli leader was asked when this might come about, he replied, "It could be any day."

This coming from the lips of one who is not of the Christian faith and who does not know the prophetic Scriptures was certainly almost prophetic in its character. It led many of us to realize that the hour of the Lord's return may indeed be very, very near.

If what has been said is true, there are two facts which are most important.

First of all, if one is Christian, he must face the fact intelligently that he may not have three-score years and ten to serve the Lord. It may be that our earthly pilgrimage is destined to be cut short at any moment. Only what we have been able to accomplish up till then will be what we have done for God. If these things are true, it should urge us on, to walk in close fellowship with God, and to pour out our lives and our strength and our time and our money for the things of God while we have opportunity.

We know when the rapture occurs we will leave behind all these opportunities of service and devotion for our blessed Lord.

These Scriptures have a word directed to those who are not ready for the Lord's return, because they have never put their trust in Christ. God is a merciful God, and the Scriptures explain that the rapture of the Church has been delayed up till now because God is long-suffering (II Peter 3:9). He is not willing that any should perish; He is still waiting for souls to come to Himself. Many are glad He waited.

A few years ago some who are now saved were not ready. God waited for them, and He is still waiting for others. One of these days, He is not going to wait any longer. It is inevitable that He is coming, and when He comes, unbelievers will not be included in that throng to be caught up to be with the Lord.

They will be facing the most awful hour of human history, the time of great tribulation, described so graphically in the book of Revelation and elsewhere in the Bible.

If one has never put his trust in Christ this is not an hour to trifle with God. One should not presume upon His grace, but avail himself of His wonderful gift of salvation before it is too late. He should put his trust in Christ, and receive Him as the One who died on the cross for his sins, as the One who took his place in judgment, the One who is able to offer forgiveness of sins, and life eternal, because He Himself paid the price.

Christ said, **“Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.”**

It is tragic to be heedless of this warning and not avail oneself of the grace of God.

~ end of chapter 11 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
