

The Prophets Still Speak
Ezekiel 38

Well, Thanksgiving is over now so you know what that means, right? Christmas will be here in about 10 minutes. But if you didn't have a calendar, would you know that Christmas was on its way? Sure, you would. You just have to look outside to see the leaves falling and the days getting shorter. The nights are getting cooler. We have even had a freeze this month. So, you know that fall is here and winter is coming and Christmas is right around the corner. Just going to retail stores wouldn't be all that helpful since they have had their Christmas stuff out for months now. But even without a calendar, you would know that Christmas is coming soon. Are you looking forward to it? Are you planning for it? Are you prepared? I look forward to Christmas. I enjoy it. But maybe you don't. Maybe it's not really something you look forward to for whatever reason. Well, I want to give you something to look forward to. It's something that could very well happen even before Christmas comes this year and it's kind of a big deal. No. Not Black Friday shopping day. That's over. I'm talking about the rapture of the church when Jesus meets us in the air and escorts us back to Heaven to be with Him forever. Now that is something to look forward to.

Now, I am not predicting or prophesying that the rapture will happen before Christmas. I'm not. But I am saying that there is no reason why it couldn't happen. And all you have to do is look around. Just like you can look around and see that Christmas is coming even if you didn't have a calendar. You can look around and see that Jesus is coming soon. Are you looking forward to it? Are you planning for it? Are you prepared? And I hear ya. *"Todd, how do you know? How can you tell that He is coming soon?"* Well, there are several clues to watch for and for today's clue, I want to show you what a guy told me just this week about how soon it could be. His name is Ezekiel and he actually told me this nearly 2600 years ago. But just in the past few weeks and months, it has become more and more valid; more and more real. No, we don't know a date but we can tell it's coming soon.

Turn to the Old Testament book of **Ezekiel**. It is between **Lamentations** and **Daniel**. We are continuing our quick look at a few of the prophets to see if what they wrote all those years ago is still useful for us today. Do the prophets still speak? I believe they are speaking louder than ever before and it can be a little bit scary in some ways but it is very exciting at the same time. If you are truly saved and are a follower of Jesus, this ought to excite you and motivate you at the same time. When you watch the news and see the whole world just falling apart at the seams, I want you to also see that all the pieces are falling into place just like God said they would. Ezekiel was a priest but he was also a prophet and he prophesied to both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel. If you remember, Israel was divided in two not long after King Solomon died and because of their great sin, God allowed the northern kingdom that was still called Israel to be taken into slavery. The southern kingdom was called Judah and you would think Judah would learn a big lesson from watching Israel be conquered. Jeremiah and Daniel and other prophets had warned them what would happen and it came to pass and Judah was also conquered and taken into captivity.

But at the same time, you can sort of understand Judah's lack of belief or maybe it was a lack of understanding because prophecy can be tricky. The prophets just spoke what God told them and what He had revealed to them. And sometimes what was revealed was hard to make out. Let me give you an illustration. If you see a mountain range way off in the distance, you can't really tell which mountains are where. From a long distance, it might look like this mountain was in front of that one or that one was in front of the others and you can't tell until you are much closer. They might all look like they are right next to each other when in reality, one mountain might be ten or twenty miles from the other one. The prophets were told to say what God wanted said and God didn't usually give dates. And sometimes those prophecies came true in the prophet's lifetime and those same prophecies will come true in our lifetimes. They sometimes had dual timelines like only God could do. Sometimes those prophecies were fulfilled in their lifetime and in our lifetime and also

will happen when we get to Heaven. So, you have to be careful when reading prophecy that you always keep it in that context.

We are going to be looking at **Ezekiel chapter 38** this morning but in **chapter 37**, God reveals to Ezekiel that even after all of Israel has been captured and dispersed and enslaved and killed, they will live again. Ezekiel 37 is the famous chapter about the dry bones that God brings back to life. God revealed that to Ezekiel but Ezekiel never saw that. In fact, nobody saw that until maybe 1948 and one could make the case that it wasn't until 1967 that Israel really became a sovereign nation again. And in the view of world history, 1967 was just a few minutes ago. So, I want to read Ezekiel chapter 38. It is a bit long but I think you need to read the whole thing to get what God wants you to understand in this chapter. I will explain more about it after we read it but for now, I want you to know that all the biblical experts and all the commentaries pretty much agree that when it is talking about Gog and Magog that Gog is the leader of a country called Magog and most all experts agree that Magog is what is now called Russia. We can't be 100% certain but it makes the most sense by far. Other nations that may be mentioned here are Iran, Turkey, Germany, France and Britain. Those are not as certain but very probable. Hopefully that helps you understand the passage a little better. Let's dive into Ezekiel 38.

The word of the Lord came to me: 2 "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshek and Tubal; prophesy against him 3 and say: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against you, Gog, chief prince of Meshek and Tubal. 4 I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army— your horses, your horsemen fully armed, and a great horde with large and small shields, all of them brandishing their swords. 5 Persia, Cush and Put will be with them, all with shields and helmets, 6 also Gomer with all its troops, and Beth Togarmah from the far north with all its troops—the many nations with you. 7 "Get ready; be prepared, you and all the hordes gathered about you, and take command of them. 8 After many days you will be called to arms. In future years you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. They had been brought out from the nations, and now all of them live in safety. 9 You and all your troops and the many nations with you will go up, advancing like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land. 10 "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: On that day thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil scheme. 11 You will say, "I will invade a land of unwalled villages; I will attack a peaceful and unsuspecting people—all of them living without walls and without gates and bars. 12 I will plunder and loot and turn my hand against the resettled ruins and the people gathered from the nations, rich in livestock and goods, living at the center of the land. " 13 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?" 14 "Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: In that day, when my people Israel are living in safety, will you not take notice of it? 15 You will come from your place in the far north, you and many nations with you, all of them riding on horses, a great horde, a mighty army. 16 You will advance against my people Israel like a cloud that covers the land. In days to come, Gog, I will bring you against my land, so that the nations may know me when I am proved holy through you before their eyes. 17 "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: You are the one I spoke of in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel. At that time they prophesied for years that I would bring you against them. 18 This is what will happen in that day: When Gog attacks the land of Israel, my hot anger will be aroused, declares the Sovereign Lord. 19 In my zeal and fiery wrath I declare that at that time there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. 20 The fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the beasts of the field, every creature that moves along the ground, and all the people on the face of the earth will tremble at my presence. The mountains will be overturned, the cliffs will crumble and every wall will fall to the ground. 21 I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Sovereign Lord. Every man's sword will be against his brother. 22 I will execute judgment on him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning

sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him. 23 And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the Lord.'

So, with all that is going on in the world, with Hamas attacking Israel and people protesting all over the world in favor of one side or the other and with China poised to attack Taiwan and Russia invading Ukraine, North Korea making noise and with wars and rumors of wars all over the globe, the question is, are we seeing this happen today? Are we seeing Ezekiel 38 being played out in front of us? And the answer is, no, we are not...not yet. But just like if you were watching a master play a game of chess and you would see him move one piece over here and this piece over there and that move didn't look like it even did anything but then all the sudden, BOOM, checkmate. We are seeing all the pieces being moved around on the board and God is the Master player.

Notice that it is God who is behind all the moves in this passage. God says to the ruler of Russia, *"I will put hooks in your jaws and drag you into war with Israel."* Now why would God do such a thing? He tells us in the very last verse but we will get there in a minute. I read one commentary that said those hooks might be the treble hooks of a warm-water port for their ships to move cargo, the oil and gas that Israel has and for the mineral deposits in the Dead Sea. (J. Vernon McGee, pg. 196& 197) Maybe that's it or maybe it is just God giving them the desire to conquer Israel so God's plan can be fulfilled. So, of course we are all wondering when this will happen. Well, I found a commentary that has it all figured out. This guy said, *"The events and details of Ezekiel 38-39 are relatively easy to understand. The major interpretive difficulties in these two chapters are the identity of characters and places, as well as the time when these events occur."* (Expositor's Bible Commentary, pg. 928) So, in other words, we don't know who, what, when or how but we do know where. So, yeah, that's easy to understand. Somebody is going to bring a bunch of other armies to attack Israel sometime.

So, why am I even bringing this up if it's not clear? Well, just like you can tell when Christmas is getting close, you can tell that this is getting closer as well. This is going to happen in the very last days. This may be the trigger that sets off the rapture but it probably happens after the rapture and we can already see how things are coming together in our crazy world like nobody has ever seen before. In the past 2600 years, nobody has ever seen all of prophecy be fulfilled and all the pieces on the board come together like we are now just in the past two months since Hamas attacked Israel. Before that, Israel was living in as close to peace as they have in years. It hasn't really been peaceful over there since Solomon was king but up until two months ago, they were doing pretty good. They were *a peaceful and unsuspecting people* as it says in **verse 11**, *rich in livestock and goods*.

And for 2,000 years every preacher since the Apostle Paul has been saying that Jesus could come again any day so be ready. And they weren't wrong. The Father could send the Son any time but now that Israel has become a nation again, there is really no more prophecy that needs to be fulfilled. And we can see how Iran is backing Hamas that attacked Israel. That's no secret. And Russia has been working with Iran. Iran was called Persia until 1935. So, that one is obvious. And scholars have identified Gomer that is mentioned there as Germany along with France and Britain. The USA is not mentioned in scripture and you can see how all of that is possible just in the past couple of months and years. Up until recently, Germany, France, Britain and the United States have all supported Israel and some of us still do. Thank you, Lord, because the Abrahamic Covenant still applies where God said those that bless Israel will be blessed and those that curse Israel will be cursed. But in so many countries around the world including Germany, France and Britain, radical Islamists are taking over and violently protesting with huge mobs of people overtaking streets and towns and even parts of governments.

Our country has supported Israel in solid ways. We have provided bombs, missiles and ammo to Israel and I give our President a rare "attaboy" for having come out with some strong statements in support of Israel. But think about the position we are in militarily right now. First, our military is as small and weak as it has been in decades. Nobody wants to join for any number of reasons. Also, we have given so much money and military supplies to Ukraine that ours are

running low. We have to be prepared for China to invade Taiwan. North Korea is always a threat and worst of all we have millions and millions of illegal aliens pouring over our southern border, many of whom are radical Islamists. They are setting up right here all over our country and so you can see how The US might not be able to help anybody pretty soon. Everything has changed just in the past few years and it is continuing to change faster and faster than we have ever seen. So, time is short. We have to make sure that every one of us has a solid relationship with God through His Son Jesus. And we have to make sure – right now – that our friends and families do as well. All of that is obvious,

But I want to bring out something else that has always fascinated me since I figured it out. That part at the beginning where God is telling Russia that He will put hooks in their mouth and drag them into war. That sounds mean. That sounds bad. That sounds like people are going to lose their lives and God is going to instigate it.

Does it look that way to you? It does to me and it does because it is true. The same God we worship today is the same God that said in **Isaiah 45:6-7**, *“so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting people may know there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is no other. 7 I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things.”* God says in our passage here at the very end, *“I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the Lord.”* The sovereignty of Almighty God is the scariest thing in the world to an unbeliever but it gives great hope and peace to a true believer. God is sovereign and He is just. Yes, He is loving and good and generous but this whole prophecy from Ezekiel is God’s judgment against Israel’s sin. We are living in sovereign God’s world and He is the One who ordains the times. David said in Psalm 2, *“Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? 2 The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, “Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.” 4 The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. 5 He rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, 6 “I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.”*

Jesus is the King. Jesus is God and He is coming soon. He has warned us all through scripture that this is what the end is going to look like. Be ready. This is not the time to sorta, kinda be a Christian. The world is falling apart just like God planned and only Christians have the answer. My dear family, how can you live like you have all the time in the world? You keep saying one of these days you are going to break that habit. You keep saying one of these days you are going to make church a priority. You keep saying one of these days you are going to tell your neighbor or your friend about Jesus. Well, today is the day because we might not have tomorrow!

There is so much more that could be said about this incredible passage. Please come back tonight and I will show you some more of what I have learned about this and why I so firmly believe that this plane is about to land. We have circled the airport for a while now but the “fasten seat belts” sign has come on and I feel my ears popping. God is about to land the plane and call His people home. Are you looking forward to it? Are you planning for it? Are you prepared?

You can be. All you have to do is believe that Jesus is God and died on the cross for all your sins. Ask Him for forgiveness of those sins and then repent of that lifestyle. Do it right now so you can then tell others how to be prepared as well. Do it right now as the music plays.