

Identifying the Gog Magog Invaders

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The purpose of this paper is to discuss a very common error made in the interpretation and identification of the peoples and places mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39. The error, as we will discuss below, is the use of both improper and inconsistent methods of interpretation. First, we will briefly discuss the proper method to interpret the names in Ezekiel.

The Historical-Grammatical Method

The proper method of interpretation simply seeks to understand the original context of any given passage in accordance with how the earthly author of that passage and his immediate audience would have understood it. This thoroughly context-driven approach is most often referred to as the historical-grammatical method of interpretation. It is the most recognized and accepted approach to interpreting the Bible among virtually all trained, conservative, evangelical interpreters. In the case of Biblical prophecy, what this means is, if for instance, Ezekiel mentions the name, "Gomer," the interpreter attempts to identify how Ezekiel and his audience would have understood this term in their day (the early 6th Century BC). Since Gomer is recognized as being associated with, and dwelling in Asia Minor in Ezekiel's day, then it is understood that the modern nation of Turkey, which now occupies that area is likely the ultimate last-days fulfillment of Ezekiel's reference to Gomer. When attempting to identify the last days relevance of various peoples and names within ancient Biblical prophecies, this method could be called "the geographic-correlation-method." Gleason L. Archer, the well-known scholar of Old Testament and semitic languages, and one of the fathers of the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary on Daniel*, explains the historic-geographic-correlation method:

Likewise, the ancient names of countries or states occupying the region where the final conflict will be carried on are used in the prediction, though most of those political units will no longer bear these names in the last days. Thus Edom, Moab, Ammon, Assyria, and Babylon which are mentioned in eschatological passages, have long since ceased to exist as political entities, their places having been taken by later peoples occupying their territories.

Dr. Thomas Ice of the Pre-Tribulation Research Center also champions the geographic-correlation method as the proper method to interpret prophecies such as Ezekiel 38 & 39:

It appears that Ezekiel is using the names of peoples, primarily from the table of nations, and where they lived at the time of the giving of this prophecy in the sixth century B.C. Therefore, if we are able to find out where these people and places were in the sixth century B.C. then we will be able to figure out who would be their modern antecedents today.

The Bloodline-Lineage-Migration Method

The other method widely employed by many popular prophecy teachers, and that which I would argue is a faulty method of interpreting Ezekiel's prophecy is what I have coined as "the bloodline-lineage-migration method." This method begins with an ancient Biblical name or people, and then seeks to follow this people down through history to their modern day, physical, bloodline descendants. I also sometimes call this method "the historical wild-goose chase method" because it relies on extensive, and often very complicated and even speculative efforts to track the nearly endless migrations, intermarrying, mixing, and mingling of various people groups down through history, relying on the limited historical sources at our disposal. As faulty as this approach is, it is the method of interpretation most widely used by popular prophecy teachers, many who are otherwise accepted excellent teachers. This is the primary method behind efforts to connect the name "Magog" from Ezekiel's prophecy to the modern day nation of Russia. Despite its common and popular use, when attempting to interpret the meaning of the various names used within Ezekiel's oracle, this method should be rejected by all careful and responsible interpreters.

Inconsistent Interpretive Methods

While a careful survey of popular prophecy books on Gog and Magog will reveal that most popular prophecy teachers lean heavily on the bloodline-lineage-migration method to interpret the names found in Ezekiel, many interpreters also switch from one method to the other, from one name to the other, mid-stream. Further yet, some interpreters use what we might call, "a limited bloodline-lienage-migration method." Rather than attempting to trace any given name down to its modern descendants, they will trace them down to some particular moment in history, when the people resided in some particular land or region that the interpreter wishes to emphasize. This inconsistent mishmash of

interpretive methodologies allows the interpreter to essentially create whatever end result they wish to arrive at. If the author or teacher wishes to show, for example, that a coming Russian led invasion of Israel will be find much of its support from European nations, then they may easily switch interpretive methods from one name to the next to create a wide range of end results, thus creating the illusion of “proof” from the Bible for their own particular prophetic theory.

Having summarized the primary methods used by interpreters to understand the nations in Ezekiel’s oracle, let’s consider using different methods will create drastically different results. Let’s begin by listing the nations in Ezekiel’s prophecy:

The Nations of Ezekiel 38 & 39

Listed within critical oracle are the following names described as joining together for a last days invasion of the land of Israel:

- Magog
- Meshech
- Tubal
- Persia
- Cush
- Put
- Gomer
- Togarmah

Now let’s consider the dramatic differences that one might arrive at depending on which method of interpretation they use.

The Bloodline-Lineage Migration Method

- **Magog** (Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Chechnya, Dagestan, Hungaria, Yugoslavia, Finland, Estonia, Siberia, Poland, Czech Republic, Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Georgia, Scotland, and others.)
- **Meshech** (Russia, Latvias, Lithuania, Romania, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, and others.)

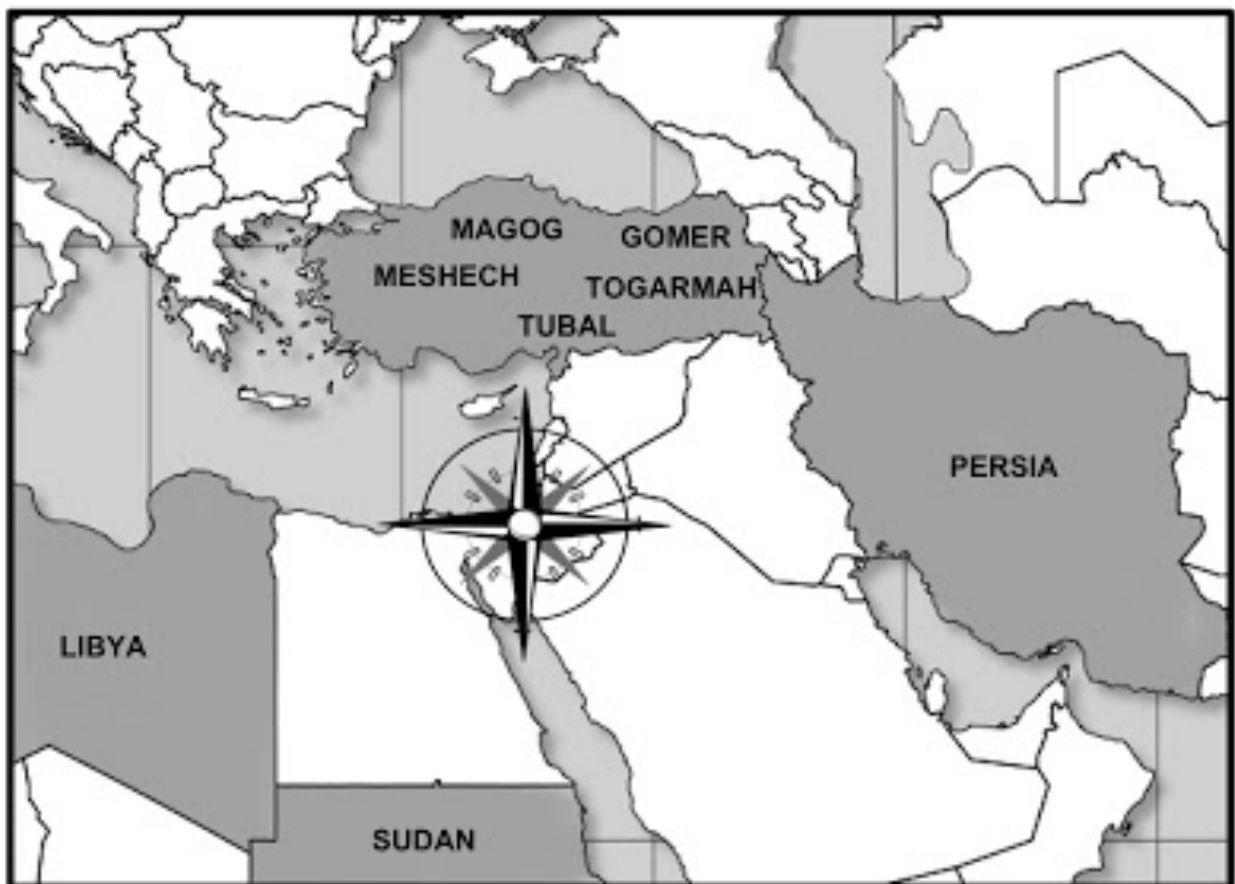
- **Tubal** (Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England, United States, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Spain, Portugal, Mexico, South America, Russia, and others.)
- **Gomer:** (Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, United States, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, Austria, Switzerland, and others.)
- **Cush:** (Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Djibouti, Uganda, and others.)
- **Put** (Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania, and others.)
- **Persia** (Iran, Spain, Portugal, Germany, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Austria, England, Switzerland, the United States, Australia, South Africa, South America, and several others.)

The point in listing most of the ancestors of the peoples listed by Ezekiel as the Gog-Magog invaders, is to show that if we consistently use the bloodline-lineage-migration method, then we must conclude that dozens upon dozens of modern nations will be involved in Ezekiel's invasion. Much of the world in fact. While the above lists are certainly not comprehensive, they do fairly represent how a consistent use of the bloodline-migration-method will produce a massive litany of names. When we assess the many efforts among prophecy teachers who use the bloodline-lineage-migration method to identify the nations that will comprise the Gog of Magog invasion however, only a small fraction of the nations in this list are ever included. Why? Why, for instance, is Russia always included, but Ireland, Canada, and Mexico always omitted? Why are so many prophecy books and endless internet articles concerned with, "The Coming Russian Invasion of Israel," but no similar articles or books are written warning of the, "The Coming Irish Invasion of Israel"? If we are to be honest, we must admit that this is due to a confused and inconsistent mishmash of interpretive "methods."

The Historical-Geographic-Correlation Method:

Now let's consider the end result we arrive at when we use the best historical data and a consistent historical-geographic-correlation:

- **Magog** (Turkey)
- **Meshech** (Turkey)
- **Tubal** (Turkey)
- **Persia** (Iran)
- **Cush** (Sudan)
- **Put** (Libya)
- **Gomer** (Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan)
- **Togarmah** (Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan)



In considering the layout of the nations on this map in relation to Israel, several commentators and scholars have suggested that the LORD, through

Ezekiel, essentially specified one modern nation from all four corners of the compass as representative of a massive coalition that most likely includes several nations beyond those specifically listed. These additional, unspecified nations is assumed through the fact that the LORD declares to Gog that beyond the nations listed, he would also be accompanied by “many nations with you” (38:6).

Conclusion

In conclusion, in interpreting Ezekiel’s prophecy of Gog and Magog, there is the need for a consistent methodology among prophecy teachers and exegetes. If someone wishes to argue that we should in fact use the bloodline-lineage-migration method, not only would I argue that this methodology is an improper approach, but I would also demand that it be used consistently, thus involving roughly two-thirds of the nations of the earth—a position I have yet to see a single interpreter argue for. If we are to follow the historical-grammatical method, then let us also be consistent.