

Russia *and* Bible Prophecy



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BIBLE STUDY AID

The Russian Bear



Russia's recent actions in Ukraine follow a long history of imperialist oppression. Are these events leading the world back to the brink of nuclear extinction?

by Victor Kubik

ear Reawakens

In the 2012 U.S. presidential election, many scoffed at candidate Mitt Romney when he named Russia as America's foremost foreign policy threat. Wasn't that ancient history with the ending of the Cold War in the 1990s? But not so many are scoffing at the idea now.

To the shock and concern of many, Russia under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin has taken up its old role of destabilizing provocation, first invading Georgia, then the Crimean Peninsula and finally Ukraine itself. This subterfuge, deception and open warfare have dramatically increased tensions between Russia and the West.

As someone with strong ties and current experience in Russia, Ukraine and the former Soviet Union, I have kept a watchful eye on the storm clouds of war gathering over Eastern Europe and Asia.

The fight over Ukraine has led to a great many deaths, including many civilians, children among them. The lives of millions more have dissolved into anonymous refugee status. And the grim possibility of a worldwide conflict at a scale unseen since World War II is shown to be much likelier.

With the 2014 takeover and occupation of Crimea, Russia captured Soviet-era warships and regained a warm-water port—free from the limiting marine ice of Russia's northern coasts—from which to launch its newly commissioned nuclear submarines and battle cruisers.

Peace has all but disappeared in this region—the fervent hopes of continuing

independence after the breakup of the Soviet Union decades ago nearly dashed.

How will the conflict between Russia and Ukraine end? Will it spread to the Baltic nations and beyond? Where is this leading, and what does it mean for you and me?

Increased tensions toward possible nuclear exchange?

The world is quite different today from the times of the resource-draining Cold War during the 1950s and 60s. Back then the fanciful doctrine of mutually assured destruction appeared to hold nuclear protagonists in place, despite the United States and Soviet Union poking and prodding each other in conflicts all over the earth.

Then at the beginning of the 1990s a stunned world watched the Soviet flag descend from atop the Kremlin, the Russian tricolor hoisted in its place. The unthinkable had happened. The once-feared and mighty Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) had crumbled. The Soviet Union was no more, the Cold War at an end.

Today, though, the renewed winds of a dangerous future now cruelly blow in our faces. Hostile national sentiments have been returning. Are we entering into circumstances similar to the lead-up to World War II? Back then, as Hitler encroached on his neighbors with the German people cheering him on, no one was willing to stop him. We all know the end of that story—a worldwide conflagration.

gration with 60 million dead.

With Western nations giving support to Ukraine during the Russian invasion, Russian nuclear sabers have rattled openly as in the Cold War period, only now they do so with new-generation tactical weapons being positioned near the borders of NATO's Eastern European and Baltic nations.

Might such weapons be used? The last Soviet leader and 1990 Nobel Peace Prize winner Mikhail Gorbachev commented on that in early January 2015. In an interview with the German magazine *Der Spiegel*, he warned that growing tensions between Russia and European powers over Ukraine could erupt into major conflict, even a nuclear exchange.

Indeed, a previously unthinkable about-face by Germany's chancellor Olaf Scholz on that country's decades-old pacifist foreign policy has revealed the danger that lies ahead. Besides canceling the highly lucrative and long-contested Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline (which would have allowed Russian gas to be piped directly to Germany, bypassing and therefore isolating Ukraine while increasing Germany's dependence on Russia for its energy needs), Scholz announced his government would be sending arms to Ukraine and increasing military spending by an additional €100 billion in 2022.

We must not forget that the Russian Federation maintains (by treaty) more than 1,600 strategic nuclear warheads deployed on more than 500 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and strategic bombers. In addition, Russia has 2,000 tactical nuclear warheads, some of which have been

redeployed along European borders. An additional 3,700 nuclear warheads are still to be dismantled.

It's been estimated that even a "small" regional nuclear exchange—limited to, say, a single exchange between Russia and Ukraine, between Iran and Israel or between India and Pakistan—could potentially render the entire world uninhabitable for human life. Now consider the fact that well over 17,000 known nuclear weapons exist today. The Bible speaks of the time we're living in, as we'll focus on shortly.

While many in the United States remain remarkably unconcerned about rising nuclear tensions, the infamous Doomsday Clock was moved up to "100 seconds to midnight" at the beginning of 2022—midnight on the symbolic clock denoting worldwide mass destruction and possibly literal human extinction!

The fall of the Soviet empire

In December 1991 the world watched in amazement as the Soviet Union imploded. Almost overnight, 15 separate countries emerged with almost no bloodshed. The Baltic Republics and Ukraine in particular wasted no time in freeing themselves from the USSR's yoke.

How could this world superpower that once dominated the space race shatter so quickly?

I have traveled to the regions of the former Soviet Union many times, starting in 1967 when I visited as a photo-journalist and translator covering the 50th anniversary of the October 1917 revolution that established communism in Russia—the roots of the Soviet Union that soon followed. I have seen firsthand what life has been like in almost all the



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Eastern Bloc countries (the nations under Soviet dominion) before *and* after the collapse of communism.

Before the fall, there seemed no end in sight to what former U.S. President Ronald Reagan called the “evil empire.” But after 70 years, communist rule collapsed under its own rottenness of godlessness, corruption, oppression and a failed economic system.

Billions of people then breathed easier. Clear skies ahead, nearly everyone thought. Doomsday averted! Political, economic and military alliances were quickly redeveloped. We basked in our good fortune. In 1991 nobody wanted to think much about the possibility of other global threats down the line. Nuclear extinction was a thing of the past.

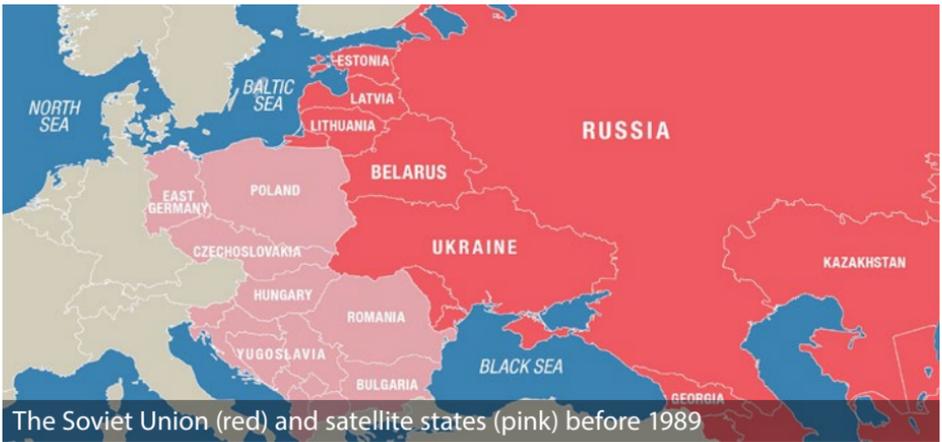
But that was then. More than 2 billion people have been born since the Russian bear went into hibernation in 1991. They have no active memory of what was seared into my mind and the minds of billions of other people who

were around back then. And now that the fearsome Russian bear has awakened, many fail to recognize the danger.

Desire to see Russia’s empire restored

In Russia, the sudden loss of the Soviet empire overnight has not been forgotten. To many older Russians—former Soviet citizens—this was a humiliating loss. Today many Russians, including younger people, want their empire back and the legendary greatness of their country restored. President Vladimir Putin believes his mission is to steer Russia toward its past glory as a global superpower.

This is a big part of what’s going on in Ukraine. Having this former Soviet country lean towards the West, towards NATO, rekindles old security fears in Russia. My friends in Ukraine told me that when Russia grabbed Crimea, one of the propaganda messages was that not surrendering to Russian occupation



The Soviet Union (red) and satellite states (pink) before 1989



Russia after 1992, with Ukraine and the Baltic states threatened by Russia

would result in U.S. missiles in Crimea aimed at Russia!

As you can read or watch for yourself, the attempt to restore Russian glory and reach is being done openly. What can the world do? How does the West respond to such aggression, particularly from a nuclear power? Are there more Ukraines in our future?

The small nations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania own beachfront on the Baltic Sea that Russia again covets. In Soviet days the Russians maintained

high-security military bases in the Baltic countries, and many areas were totally off-limits to visitors. One such city was Tartu in Estonia, Russia's major Bear bomber base in the Baltic. Now visitors can freely travel to Tartu. The United Church of God, publisher of *Beyond Today*, has held church services and maintains an office there. The bomber base is abandoned.

But again, what does the future hold? While in Estonia several years ago, a few of my Russian friends came from

St. Petersburg to visit. They were visibly unhappy over a new visa requirement for Russians entering Estonia, an area that a few years back was part of Russia and at that time an easy drive for them. “Let them flap their little wings—for now,” they mocked as they expressed their feelings about a free Estonia. That view is shared by many.

Centuries under authoritarian dictatorship

Russia’s landlocked position has played a significant role in shaping the Russian national character and the imperialist drive of its leaders (see “Russia’s Geographic Outlook” on page 10). And another major factor in the national psyche is centuries of some form of autocratic rule.

From 1240 to about 1480 A.D., the Russians were subject to Mongol rulers. This nearly 250 years of foreign rule is still etched into the Russian mind, playing out to some extent in xenophobic reaction to the neighboring nuclear Chinese—who outnumber Russians five to one and share a 2,700-mile border where military clashes have occurred on occasion in past decades. (However, Russia and China are now coming together more and more in opposition to America and other Western powers.)

After Mongol rule, the regimes of the czars or tsars (the term a derivative of “Caesar”) dominated Russia for nearly four centuries—from 1547 to 1917.

Their despotic control was aided and abetted by the Russian Orthodox Church, the people being oppressed with a singular application of the 13th chapter of Romans, where it reads: “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities.

For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves” (verses 1-2).

As Europe proceeded through the Renaissance and Reformation and into the Enlightenment, Russia remained stuck in the medieval past, the czars continuing to deal ruthlessly with dissent. Subservience to totalitarian oppression was a Russian hallmark.

Communist revolution and its aftermath

After the First World War broke out, Russia suffered grievous losses and defeats from incompetent leadership, coupled with millions of casualties. The oppressed people could finally stand no more from the corrupt government, and a grassroots uprising by women in St. Petersburg struck the spark that flamed into a coup. The last czar, Nicholas II, was dethroned in the February 1917 revolution. He and his family were then executed in July 1918.

The new provisional government was short-lived, overthrown later the same year in the October Revolution by the Bolsheviks, creating the communist state. A protracted civil war between the “Reds” (Bolsheviks) and the “Whites” (anti-socialist factions) ended in Bolshevik victory and the establishment of the Soviet Union in 1922. Its first leader, Vladimir Lenin, died shortly after in 1924.

Lenin was succeeded by one of the most brutal human leaders of all time, at least in terms of scale, Joseph Stalin. My mother was born in Stalin’s Ukraine.

Stalin's extremely brutal 29-year absolute rule of the USSR was filled with atrocities, including purges, expulsions, forced displacements, imprisonments in labor camps, manufactured famines, torture and acts of mass murder and massacres. The total number of Stalin's victims is debated but is estimated to be in the tens of millions, besides those killed as a result of World War II.

My Ukrainian mother was eight years old when she survived Stalin's deliberate starving of the people of Ukraine in 1933. Six million died that year. As she would later tell me, she remembered bodies of the dead being placed outside homes to be picked up continually in her town.

In 1949, not long after I was born, my parents came to the United States as refugees. I remember how people who had come over together cheered at the announcement of Stalin's death in 1953. Psychopathic and immoral, this evil dictator had no regard whatsoever for human life and eliminated anyone thought to be a threat to his power.

Devastation of World War II

World War II, known in the USSR as the Great Patriotic War, was a savage conflict rebuffing Germany's Operation Barbarossa that started in June 1941. Those under Russian rule had suffered from the deaths of millions through World War I, the Bolshevik Revolution and Civil War and Stalin's purges, and now they experienced another 20 to 40 million military and civilian deaths. These are staggering numbers—unthinkable to us!

When I traveled to the Soviet Union in 1967 translating for a magazine editor and college professor who was then 38,

he noted how he saw a complete void of men his age. He was right. They didn't exist. Of those in the USSR who entered the military at age 19 in World War II, only one in a hundred returned.

While visiting a military cemetery in Kharkov, Ukraine, I saw stone after stone with inscriptions and asked about what they represented. I was told that each stone represented 14,000 dead!

Soviet cemeteries and memorials are huge. I was in Stalingrad (now Volgograd) shortly after the unveiling of the impressive 272-foot-high Mamayev Hill Mother Russia statue honoring the millions who died in the battle there. German generals were amazed at Russian military leaders having so little respect for their men as to send vast numbers forward as cannon fodder. Today we see awesome war memorials in Kiev and Moscow, with great honor and respect being shown the dead. If only such honor had been shown for them while they were alive!

Communism's demise and new hopes now crushed

The history of the Soviet Union is indeed miserable, as is its economy and failed society. The ideology of communism, which the Soviet government worked to instill in the hearts and minds of its population, never really took firm root.

When we traveled through the USSR in 1967 we were surprised at the low outputs of the huge collective state farms. In contrast, the small private plots people were allowed were very productive—a sizeable part of the national produce coming from these small gardens.

Notions of equality and justice were

seen as the underpinnings of communism, but its purveyors and advocates greatly misunderstood human nature. People were told they were in a “worker’s paradise,” but everyone knew they were not. As the national joke went, people *did* become equal—*all equally poor*.

In 1985 Gorbachev came into power after almost seven decades of national tragedy and economic failure under oppressive socialist dictatorship. The country was suffering severe stagnation and deep economic problems. Gorbachev tried to be revolutionary and introduced a two-pronged approach to reviving the nation. He initiated *glasnost* or “voicing” to the public—that is, publicity or openness in the operations of government, which invited increased freedom of speech. The other prong was *perestroika*, which means rebuilding or restructuring.

As I traveled through the USSR during this time, the word was that it would take five years, maybe 10, maybe a generation before the real changes the people wanted.

However, by allowing freedom of expression, Gorbachev unleashed pent-up passions and political ideas that burst forth in an unexpected rush. Economic reform was slow and ineffective. Results that people hoped for were not mate-

rializing. With their new freedom the Soviet people turned on Gorbachev, and it became his undoing.

This directly led to the dissolution of the USSR on Dec. 26, 1991—the various countries of the union now becoming



President Vladimir Putin believes his mission is to steer Russia back toward its past glory as a global superpower.

independent states. Boris Yeltsin took over then as the first president of the Russian Federation. He was succeeded by former KGB officer Vladimir Putin on Dec. 31, 1999.

Dreams of a better world remain unfulfilled

It initially appeared that we might see a new civilized Russia turned from its traditional past of belligerence and intimidation. Sadly, that was not to be. The same spirit that drove the czars and Soviet bosses is alive and well.

As hopeful as we once were about a change in the nature of nations and people, the words of the prophet Isaiah ring

out: “The way of peace they have not known, and there is no justice in their ways” (Isaiah 59:8).

On one Russian trip I had a lengthy talk with a female conductor on a train. She asked, “Why do you want war when we want peace?” I was astonished that she would think this! What had she been taught? How had her mind been so manipulated?

The sad experience of history is one warring tragedy after another. And

what’s now on the horizon in this region will predictably lead to more misery through oppressive government, war and death. This impacts me deeply, as I have extensively worked in and love this part of the world. My ancestral roots are here.

The Russian people can be some of the most generous, hospitable, kind and caring people you will ever find. The same is true of Ukrainians. I know so many from not only traveling in these countries, but from working with them through

Russia’s Geographic Outlook

Russia often doesn’t make sense to the West. In 1939 England’s wartime prime minister Winston Churchill famously said, “Russia is a riddle wrapped in mystery inside an enigma.” But considering the power in the hands of this nation, we

world. It’s a rich land not only agriculturally, but in minerals, with enormous oil and gas reserves in Siberia.

In spite of its massive size, Russia has very poor access to the open seas and natural pathways to the rest of the



should seek some understanding of what Russians call the *Rodina* or Motherland.

Russia is huge, spanning 11 time zones and thus stretching halfway around the

world. This has played a critical role in the shaping of the Russian mindset. In his book *Peter the Great: His Life and World*, author Robert Massie described

humanitarian and church initiatives.

Yet because the Russian people can be so compliant and humble toward authority, they unwittingly give themselves over to opportunistic leaders who cunningly fill voids of power and then turn around and abuse, oppress and destroy them, as evidenced by a string of belligerent leaders of Russia and the USSR. Putin is simply the most recent manifestation of this.

What will Putin do next? He seems

unperturbed by what the West does and appears bent on an agenda to regain what was lost in the breakup of the USSR. He wants the resources and 45 million people of Ukraine to be part of a new Russian empire. Will he stop there? The West remains accommodating in talking with Russia in spite of Soviet-style big lies and denials about its actions. But with power and lack of resistance you can do what you want.

(One aspect of this to consider is that,

17th-century Russia this way: “Like a giant closed up in a cave with only a pinhole for light and air, the great land mass of the Muscovite empire possessed but a single seaport: Archangel, on the White Sea. This unique harbor, remote from the Russian heartland, is only 130 miles south of the Arctic Circle. Six months of the year, it is frozen in ice.”

Peter the Great fought a war against the Swedes to gain another outlet to the world—seizing from them swampy land with access to the Baltic Sea and founding St. Petersburg there in 1703. However, even today ships from St. Petersburg must sail past Finland, Estonia and Poland, under a bridge connecting Denmark with Sweden, then past Norway and the United Kingdom to reach the Atlantic Ocean.

In the south, the Ottoman Turks long controlled the Black Sea. And when the Russians finally gained access to it, their ships still had to pass through the

narrow Bosphorus Straits, sailing under two Turkish bridges, then through the Dardanelles and the length of the Mediterranean Sea before passing through the Strait of Gibraltar to reach open seas.

Some of Russia’s greatest rivers flow nowhere. The Volga empties into the landlocked Caspian Sea. Great Siberian rivers flow north into the frozen Arctic. It’s a very awkward geography that has contributed to the frustration and aggressiveness of Russian rulers with ambitions of greatness on the world stage. (The geography of the United States and Britain, in contrast, is very different, with plentiful rivers and warm-water ports and harbors with full control of key naval gateways.)

These geographic shortcomings helped mold the Russian national psyche, fostering a xenophobic viewpoint—an intense or irrational dislike or fear of people from other countries.



The Bible says a time of restoration—for Russians, for Ukrainians, for all people—is coming, but it’s not here yet.

as pointed out in the next chapter, Bible prophecy foretells the rise of a revived European-centered Roman Empire in the last days. And Russia’s recent actions have provoked serious discussion among European nations about turning from dependence on the United States for their safety and taking security matters into their own hands, including establishing a European military force.)

Awaiting the sure solution

Those of us with strong ties to the people in these areas also have strong feelings and desires for them to enjoy peace and a normal life. And even apart from such ties, everyone should feel

compassion for those suffering under such plights. Yet humanly we feel helpless about what we can do. So what’s the answer?

In a lengthy prophetic outline of end-time events, Jesus Christ stated that in the last days before His return “there will be great distress [called in other translations “great tribulation”], unequaled from the beginning of the world until now” (Matthew 24:22, New International Version). So bad will it be, He goes on to say, that if those days are not “cut short, *no one would survive*” (verse 22, NIV, emphasis added throughout). Ominously, human extinction through mass destruction is now possible!

But here's the good news for a world facing the specter of nuclear war and catastrophic devastation. Jesus then stated, "But for the sake of the elect [the people of God] those days *will* be shortened" (NIV). Humanity *will* survive!

This period of great end-time calamity is foretold in many different Bible prophecies. The outcome, however, is always intervention and salvation. That is where we secure our confidence and hope. We don't need to live in fear or bury our heads in the sand. Our faith needs to be in the comforting and authoritative words of Jesus Christ our Savior.

A time of restoration—for Russians, for Ukrainians, for all people—is coming, but it's not yet here. We live in the critical time just before that. We desire it greatly, but we must wait a little while longer.

At the same time that we approach these terrible days of survival, the world has almost universally sunk to the basest levels of behavior. Even so, the Bible clearly instructs us to embrace hope and the ways of God, holding fast as we near the end of this age.

The promises of the age to come are worth waiting for. For those of that time, God says, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you" (Ezekiel 36:26). Indeed, God says, "I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh" (Joel 2:28)—on all

peoples, the Russians and Ukrainians and everyone else. God will change our very nature to His own loving nature!

Yet what about now? Difficult and challenging times lie ahead, but God gives those of us who will follow Him now the power and direction to survive and be victorious! He commands us to change the way we think, to accept and embrace the new heart that He wants to give us today.

As Jesus Himself tells us: "The time has come . . . The kingdom of God has come near. *Repent* and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15, NIV). The word translated "repent" here means to change one's mind or purpose—to turn from our own ways to seek God and His ways.

What is God's direction for us today? "Be saved from this perverse generation" (Acts 2:40).

We do not need to feel helpless and hopeless with the increasing darkness that is coming over this world. While the world will be rocked by terrible devastation, apparently including nuclear war and other weapons of mass destruction, this will not be the end of the human race—or of God's plan for mankind. It's darkest before the dawn, and a new, glorious dawn is coming—maybe not as far off as we might think. Then there will at last be world peace. May it come swiftly!

Where Does Russia Fit in End-Time Prophecy?

More than three decades after the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia is aggressively reasserting itself on the world stage, raising fears of a renewed Russian expansionism. How might this play out in Bible prophecy?

by Mario Seiglie

With the continued aggression by Russia against former Soviet bloc countries Georgia and Ukraine, Europeans and other neighbors are quite alarmed, fearing it might spill over to other European territories neighboring Russia, such as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

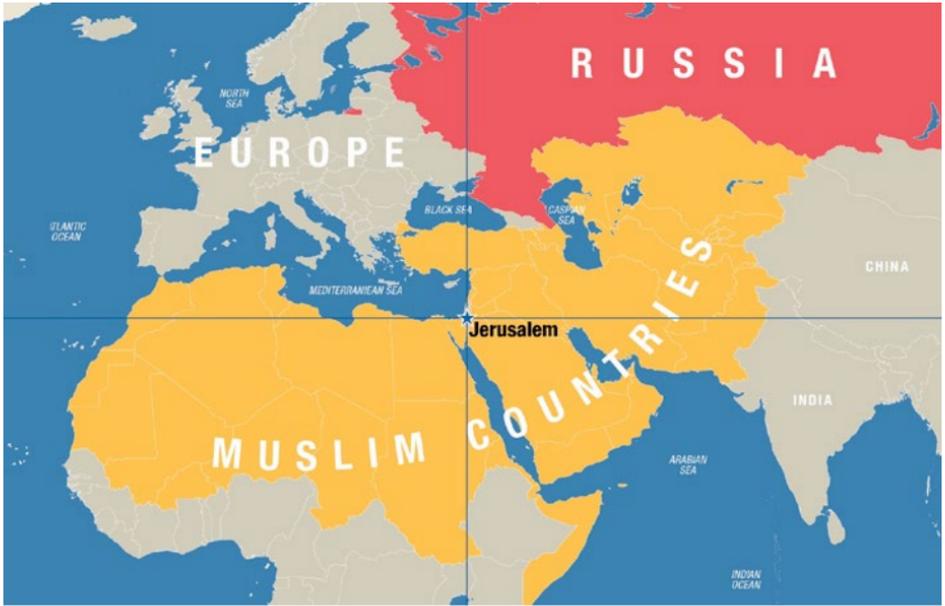
God's "time machine"

Naturally, many readers will want to know what the Bible has to say about Russia. This country is one of the great

world powers, with one of the world's most formidable, modern and well-equipped militaries.

It also has by far the largest territory of any nation on earth—with almost twice the land mass of the world's second-biggest country, Canada.

We don't have a crystal ball, but we do have something far better—God's Word. As God said in Isaiah 46:9-10, "Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declar-



Any European-led invasion of the Holy Land, as foretold in this prophecy, would be viewed by Muslims in these regions as another “Crusade” against Islam.

ing the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure’—that is, whatever He pleases. Only He knows for sure what the future holds!

The apostle Peter wrote of “the prophetic word . . . which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation [or origin], for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:19-20).

So the Bible can be viewed as a sort

of time machine in a sense, faithfully describing from God’s point of view events in the past, present and future. Although prophecy had much to say about events that followed in ancient times, there is one period still ahead that it refers to more than any other. That time is referred to in Scripture by several terms, such as “the end time,” “the time of the end,” “the latter days” and “the last days.”

God reveals what will happen during this period immediately before the second coming of Christ. Of course, He is able to know what will happen far in the future and knows what nations will be involved during this crucial time. And one of them, from the historical and geographical description given in the

Bible, appears to be Russia.

In this regard, it's important to note that when prophecies are mentioned in the Scriptures, they are usually given from the reference point of the Holy Land, the land of Israel and its capital Jerusalem. God describes this as the place to which Jesus Christ will one day return to rule all the earth.

The prophet Zechariah even mentions where Christ will place His feet when He descends to this planet: "Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east . . . And the LORD shall be King over all the earth" (Zechariah 14:3-4, 9).

So where does Russia fit in? From the geographical description given in a biblical prophecy, there is strong indication that Russia will play a significant role in end-time events.

Armies arrayed for battle

Let's see a description of the end time in the book of Daniel, which refers to a number of the nations involved.

Notice what it says in Daniel 11:40 to 12:3: "At the time of the end the king of the South [from the perspective of the Holy Land] shall attack him [a king of the North]; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon.

"He [the king of the North] shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; also the Libyans and Ethiopians shall follow at his heels. But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many. And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and [or at] the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.

"At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt."

It's important to include these last few verses in the context because some Bible interpreters believe this section is actually talking about a time in the past. But as you can clearly read, these events are referring to the last days, from shortly before Jesus Christ returns to the resurrection of the dead at His coming (compare 1 Corinthians 15:22-23; 1 Thessalonians 4:16), something that has not happened yet.

So we have in this section a glimpse of end-time conflict between several alliances of nations, one led by a ruler called "the king of the South," another known as "the king of the North," and then forces to "the east and the north"

(or possibly “northeast,” for which there is no equivalent Hebrew term) of the Holy Land that will eventually enter the fray.

We cover this prophecy of Daniel in more depth in our free study guide *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. Here we will note some highlights.

eventually led to the worldwide blood-bath that was World War II.

So this “king of the North,” the final revival of the European-centered Roman Empire called the Beast in the book of Revelation, is destined to arise, as we understand it, one last time—at the time of the end (to learn more, search *The*



Bible prophecy gives strong indication that Russia will play a significant role in end-time events.

The kings of the North and the South

During the time in which Daniel wrote this prophecy, the region of the king of the North was governed by the Persian Empire. Then it was conquered by the Greek Empire, which was subsequently absorbed by the Roman Empire. Although the original Roman Empire collapsed in A.D. 476, there have been periodic revivals in Europe all the way up through the 20th century (often called “the Holy Roman Empire” or an equivalent term).

For instance, the alliance of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini (who proclaimed in Italy that he was restoring a version of the ancient Roman Empire)

Final Superpower at ucg.org to find our study guide on this topic). After being provoked, the European ruler’s forces will sweep down and occupy the lands of a final king of the South.

We can see from Daniel 11 that the end-time king of the South will be a leader commanding a confederation of nations predominately to the south of Israel, but also stretching to the east and west since the Scriptures name several of them—Edom, Moab, Ammon (their ancient territory now making up a large part of modern Jordan), Egypt, Libya and Ethiopia.

Note that Scripture says of this region that “many countries will be overthrown” (including Israel), implying

it can encompass other nations in the general vicinity east, south and west of Israel that are not mentioned by name. The two common factors in the particular countries mentioned, excepting the Glorious Land of Israel, are that they are mostly of Arab descent and their religion is Islam.

It appears that this confederation of the South is made up mainly of Arab nations with Islam as their religion—perhaps a reborn Islamic caliphate, long the dream of millions of Muslims. It is also the dream of many Muslims to conquer Europe—reliving the glory days of earlier Islamic empires that invaded and in some cases held for centuries parts or all of Spain, Portugal, France, Eastern Europe, Sicily and Italy.

Over recent years several Muslim leaders and religious figures have boasted of their desire to capture Rome, which they see as the seat of Europe and Christianity—the conquest of which in their minds would prove the superiority of Islam over Christianity.

Other non-Arab countries like Pakistan, possessing dozens of nuclear warheads, and Iran, which may soon have them, are also almost entirely Islamic—as are the Arab nations that could come together to prevent Iranian dominance over them. It should be recalled that several militant strains of the Islamic religion took many in the West by surprise, such as al-Qaeda and the so-called Islamic State (commonly referred to as ISIS), for a while disrupting a large swath of the world stretching from the Atlantic coast of North Africa all the way to Afghanistan and India. Their power and reach was greatly diminished and nearly crushed

by Western intervention, in some cases after years of bloody conflict against both local populations and foreign fighters. Nevertheless the swift rise of ISIS illustrates how the right conditions can summon believers from all over the globe into a major force if they believe the cause is righteous.

“News from the east and north”

Where Russia seems to come into the picture in Daniel’s prophecy is the indication that after the king of the North invades the Holy Land, “news from the east and the north shall trouble him” (Daniel 11:44). Since several nations in this region will be invaded and conquered by the king of the North, there is naturally going to be a reaction from major powers to the north and to the east (or, again, possibly northeast) of that region.

To the east of the Holy Land lies a large swath of Muslim nations that would be incensed at a takeover of Islam’s third-holiest city, Jerusalem. Among them are Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and several predominately Muslim nations from the former Soviet Union, plus India and Indonesia with their 200 million Muslims each. To the north of the Holy Land are yet more Muslim nations—Lebanon, Syria and Turkey, plus areas of Russia with large Muslim populations.

Any European-led invasion of the Holy Land, as foretold in this prophecy, would be viewed by Muslims in these regions as another “Crusade” against Islam. Although that sounds odd to Western ears, this is exactly what many

Muslims termed the U.S.-led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. In the minds of millions of Muslims, the Crusades never ended, and Islam remains at war against Christianity in a battle for supremacy—as we see reflected in the words and actions of many jihadists today.

No doubt a Western takeover of Jerusalem and the Holy Land would rally many Muslims to fight and throw out the “Crusaders”—exactly as happened in Iraq and Afghanistan, leading to humiliating Western withdrawals and resulting chaos as militant Islamic groups swept into the void.

A look at a map shows that beyond these Muslim nations and above the Middle East (and east of the area of the European king of the North) there is only one major power, and that is Russia. Moscow is almost due north of Israel. And if the correct translation of the verse in question is the “northeast,” that still fits Russia, as its territory stretches farther to the east than any other Asian power. But the prophecy does not limit the involvement to one nation, and it seems likely that a group of Asian nations would be involved—those mentioned above plus what is now the dominant nation in Asia, China. We’ll see more about this in another prophecy momentarily.

It should be added that Russia has an intense interest in the Middle East for political, economic, military and religious reasons. In the last 200 years, a historical pattern has emerged when European powers have sought to conquer the Middle East—sooner or later, Russia will usually get involved, since this region significantly affects its national interests.

“Kings from the east”

Again, Daniel 11:44 tells us that “news from the east” (if that is a single direction), will greatly trouble the king of the North. What might this be referring to?

The book of Revelation, expanding on aspects of Daniel’s prophecy, describes two major troop advances involving the Euphrates River, the ancient boundary between the Roman Empire and adversaries to the east. No doubt these movements from the east will be in response to the takeover of the Holy Land by the king of the North—and in retaliation for a months-long campaign of torment with apparently advanced weaponry conducted by the European Beast forces, referred to in Revelation 9 as the first of three woes (verses 1-12; compare 11:7; 17:8).

The eastern powers will form a massive 200-million-man army and will launch an apparent counterattack called the second woe, when a third of mankind will be killed—evidently through the unleashing of weapons of mass destruction (Revelation 9:13-18). Then later, just before the returning Jesus Christ descends to the earth, a force led by “the kings [rulers] from the east” will cross the Euphrates, then dried up, in the sixth of the seven last plagues, these collectively referred to as the third woe (Revelation 16:12).

As noted above, to the east of the Holy Land are a large number of Muslim nations. Even further east are the major powers of India, China and Japan, plus other Islamic nations such as Indonesia and Malaysia. Some of these nations could likely form an alliance since the Middle East also concerns their national interests. Middle Eastern oil is very



The eastern powers will form a massive 200-million-man army and will launch an apparent counterattack called the second woe, when a third of mankind will be killed—evidently through the unleashing of weapons of mass destruction (Revelation 9:13-18).

important to some of them, and those of the Islamic faith in Asia look to Jerusalem and Mecca and Medina, in Saudi Arabia, as their holy cities.

Clearly it would be unacceptable to them to see their holy cities threatened with takeover by a European power. Also with a European force ruling at least a part of the Middle East, the balance of power and wealth would now be shifted and tilted against these powers.

Another possibility for the identity of these eastern forces could be China and its Asiatic allies, including Russia, that often share common economic, political and economic interests. In fact, a great many of these Asian nations, including the Asian Muslim nations, are already formally aligned together in a bloc called the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, dominated by China. It should be noted that a prophecy in Ezekiel ties many of

these countries together in a coalition against Israel some while after Christ's return, but it's reasonable to see them tied together even prior to His coming (see "Gog, Magog and the Prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal" beginning on page 22).

Any number of factors could draw these Asian powers into a Mideast conflict, such as a threat to oil supplies and vital sea lanes, or any sense that a powerful Europe is bent on expanding its power eastward. China and India, with populations of around 1.44 and 1.38 billion respectively, could certainly contribute to a huge military force, and Russia's military power and technology are still formidable.

It should be noted that the Asian powers and others around the world may initially submit to European economic and military dominance to an extent,

as Revelation presents all the world as effectively worshipping or being prostrate before the Beast, or Babylon as it is also called. But that will not last.

Regarding the European king of the North, the Bible says he will contend with those who eventually form an alliance against him and will “go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many” (Daniel 11:44).

Again, we see two major movements of geopolitical forces to the east and north of the Holy Land, beyond the Euphrates River, and several leading candidates to form these forces. These will likely include the vast number of Muslims across southern Asia as well as the people of Russia, China, India and Japan.

The final march to vie with European forces in the Holy Land will lead them to gather at Armageddon, or Megiddo in northern Israel, but they will not fight each other there. Rather, with Christ then coming down to Jerusalem, they will fight Him there, seeing Him as their common enemy—and in that great battle both the European and eastern forces will be destroyed. (To learn more, download or request our free study guide *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*.)

It thus appears that the rise of Russian power and Russian entanglement with China and other Asian powers are destined to have a major impact on these end-time events leading to Christ's return. So it behooves us to be alert in watching world news dealing with these leading nations.

Good news in the end for Russia and the rest of the world

Yet there is good news in the end for

Russia—and the rest of the world. Jesus Christ is returning to put an end to human politics, greed and war.

One of the most encouraging scriptures in this regard is found in Isaiah 2:2-4, which describes what will happen after this time of global turmoil ends and Christ comes to rule the nations.

It is our hope and ultimate goal to be part of His coming Kingdom—for then there will finally be peace and harmony on the earth. Would you like to be part of that Kingdom as well? That is what *Beyond Today* is ultimately about.

We offer you these verses from Isaiah 2:2-4 to meditate on, since they describe that wonderful coming solution to war: “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it.

“Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

“He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”

Remarkably, the Soviet Union presented a statue representing this passage to the United Nations. But man, despite his best attempts, has not been able to achieve peace on his own. Thankfully God will bring the peace man has long sought.

Gog, Magog and the Prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal

Besides more general prophecies we've seen in this chapter of powers north and east of the Holy Land advancing against a final revival of the Roman Empire in Daniel 11:44 and Revelation 9:13-19 and 16:12-16, there is evidently a specific mention of Russia alongside other Eurasian nations in a prophecy recorded in Ezekiel 38 and 39. Here we read of a massive end-time invasion of the land of Israel by a coalition of forces coming out of the far north under the direction of "Gog of the land of Magog" and the further distinction "the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal" (verses 2-3). Some believe this invasion will precede the return of Jesus Christ and look for it to happen any day now. But the wording of the prophecy should make clear that what it describes will transpire a short while after Christ has come—though the coalition here may come together before His arrival and could well be represented in the eastern powers mentioned above.

Let's notice more about the particular people groups laid out here. This Gog of Magog and prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal is allied with Persia, Cush and Put (the latter two typically denoted as Ethiopia and Libya), as well as the nations of Gomer and Togarmah. These various peoples are listed in the table of nations in Genesis 10, which shows the families descended from Noah. From his son Japheth came several peoples, including Gomer, Magog, Tubal and Meshech. And from Noah's son Ham

came the peoples of Cush and Put, which do seem to be the origin of the African peoples, yet there is more to their story.

Magog means the country of Gog, perhaps denoting a high ruler, the Assyrians calling these people Mat Gugi. Through ancient writers and geographical studies we can trace the movements of these people over the steppes of southern Russia across to the land of China. From them came some of the Central Asian Turkic peoples along with the Mongols and Moghuls and others in the area of China. Many of the eastern Turks also appear to descend from Togarmah, mentioned above—these having earlier lived in eastern Asia Minor and Armenia in early biblical times. Bordering them at that early time were the Mushki and Tabali, mentioned on Assyrian monuments. At length these people made their way north of the Caucasus Mountains into the area of Russia. *The Scofield Reference Bible* notes that the "reference to Meshech and Tubal (Moscow [the Russian capital] and Tobolsk [in West Siberia]) is a very clear mark of identification."

And then there is the name *Rosh*. Some see it as the Hebrew word for "head" and translate here "chief prince" rather than "prince of Rosh." Yet many see Rosh as a name, especially as the Mitanni kingdom next to the ancient Mushki and Tabali became known as the land of RASHU, a word denoting blond.

Again, ancient historians help us to trace the people of Rosh up into southern Russia. It's commonly believed among Western scholars that Russia derived its name from the Varangian Rus, Swedish Vikings, but Soviet historians contended that the Rus were Slavs from the southern steppes. It's possible there was a combination of factors. In any case, it's reasonable to conclude that Rosh, Meshech and Tubal as mentioned in Ezekiel denote western, central and eastern Russia ranging to western Siberia, with eastern Siberia containing many of the Turkic people of Togarmah.

Gomer mentioned in the end-time alliance is evidently the people of south-east Asia, the Khmer Empire centered in Angkor in Cambodia lasting hundreds of years in medieval times, the name preserved in the Khmer people of Cambodia and numerous other regional distinctions.

Persia is modern Iran as well as certain areas to which some of the ancient Persians migrated. We have so far accounted for much of Asia except for the Indian subcontinent of South Asia. But the people of that area are evidently mentioned too. Cush and Put might seem to be the odd men out in denoting peoples of Africa. It helps when we realize that the people of ancient Cush migrated out of ancient Babylon in two directions, some going to Africa as the Ethiopians and others journeying to India, giving their name to the Hindu Kush mountains and other places. Likewise the same appears true of Put, becoming not just the Libyans in the west but leaving their name to the

Rajputs (meaning rulers of Put) in India. Thus, Cush and Put in this prophecy might not denote the African branches of these families at all but could rather exclusively concern the Asian branches in India and Pakistan—thus rounding out the vast Eurasian coalition.

As for the timing of this end-time invasion headed up by China and Russia, consider that they contemplate the land of Israel, with its exiles returned, as a land at peace without walls, bars or gates—easy plunder for an invader. That definitely does not describe Israel today, which has an actual wall and defense installations protecting it. And Israel is armed to the teeth. The time that best fits what is described in Ezekiel 38 and 39 is after the Israelites have been regathered to their land at the beginning of Christ's millennial rule, when they will need no material armaments, being under the direct protection of Christ and His saints and angels.

How will this come about? We know from Revelation 16 and 19 that as Christ returns, eastern forces will come down into the Holy Land to confront the European Beast forces but that both will be destroyed together when they attempt to fight Christ at His coming. Yet consider that the Eurasian army is incredibly vast and will likely still be ranging far across Eurasia, with only the vanguard of this force having made its way down into the Holy Land when Jesus destroys those fighting against Him there.

Apparently these forces will regroup and attempt to assess what has happened, still not grasping or believing that the divine Messiah has taken over the rule

of the planet. After some time, seeing the returned exiles seemingly weak and unprotected, the Eurasian powers will swarm into the Holy Land for conquest. But the invasion does not end well for these peoples of Magog, Rosh, Meshech, Tubal and their allies. People will be burying their remains and burning their equipment over a lengthy period.

We can see here that evidently the conquest of the world by divine forces will be in stages. Jesus will not take over the world all at once. It starts with Israel and then expands to the surrounding nations and finally the whole world, but it's a process that will take some time. There will be this one last battle and then peace for the rest of the Millennium. There's no indication in the Bible of any major military resistance during the Millennium after that. Scripture does talk about rebuking peoples far off and bringing discipline through withholding rainfall in some cases—so there may be occasional problems here and there in the early years of the Millennium. But soon the whole world will be at peace, with none causing hurt or destruction throughout God's Kingdom, the earth then being as full as the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9-10).

It should be noted, however that there will be one last battle against God at the *end* of the Millennium when Satan is released from imprisonment to again deceive the nations, as described in Revelation 20:7-10. Those who follow him to attack God's people are referred to as "Gog and Magog." Some believe the invasion in Ezekiel 38 and 39 is the same as that in Revelation 20, but there are several

indications that these are different conflicts. Note, for instance, that the nations in Revelation 20 are said to come from "the four corners of the earth," meaning the whole world and not the particular geographical region of Eurasia pointed to in Ezekiel. It seems we are meant to understand the Gog and Magog invasion near the beginning of the Millennium as a type and forerunner of the final rebellious invasion by people of all ethnicities at the end of the Millennium. In both cases, the enemies of God are vanquished, with His people delivered.

While the invasion described in Ezekiel 38 and 39 is not imminent as some proclaim, since it will follow the return of Christ, that does not mean we should ignore signs of this developing coalition. As already noted, it may well be that it will form prior to Christ's return in opposition to the European Beast power that will rise in Europe. In fact, we could be seeing the beginnings of this coalition even today with the strengthening ties between Russia, China, India, Iran and other Asian powers. The membership listing of the China-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization yields virtually the same roster of nations presented in Ezekiel's prophecy. There is much to be alert to in this regard even now.

For more details about the identities of Gog and Magog and Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, and their allies, read our online commentary on Ezekiel 38 and 39 at our website (available at ucg.org/bible-study-tools/bible-commentary/bible-commentary-ezekiel-38-39).

Tom Robinson

Russia's Influence on America and the World

The communist revolution that began in Russia more than 100 years ago ultimately swept up many nations in its grip. And although the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Russia's influence on America and the rest of the world continues in ways few people realize or admit.

by Scott Ashley

Russian election interference did not win the U.S. presidency for Donald Trump in 2016, as many political adversaries argued, but it should come as no surprise that Russia, long a rival to the United States, would be trying to sway the outcome one way or the other. There's no doubt that Russia, like most other significant world powers, has long tried to influence the rest of the world to its advantage.

Some of those efforts, such as invading other nations by force, have been

evident and overt. Other efforts—such as those we'll review here—have been much more subtle, but just as dangerous in the long run!

Russian goal of world domination

Long before the communist revolution swept Russia, Karl Marx, one of the intellectual architects of communism along with Friedrich Engels, wrote: "The policy of Russia is changeless. Its methods, its tactics, its maneuvers

may change, but the polar star of its policy, *world domination*, is a fixed star” (emphasis added throughout).

When Russia became communist, it indeed tried to dominate the world through *spreading* communism. After the 1917 revolution, other former territories of the Russian Empire banded together in 1922 to form the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). To expand its influence, the Soviet Union established communist fronts in many countries through workers’ unions, youth and sports organizations, humanitarian aid groups, and the like.

During this same period, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Joseph Stalin, a former seminary student turned ruthless hard-core communist, consolidated power. His goals to transform Russia led to millions being sent to prison camps and executed, and millions more dying by famine.

After helping defeat the Axis Powers in World War II, the Soviet Union gained control over much of Eastern Europe, where it installed communist governments in many countries. The USSR also strongly supported openly communist movements in Central and Western Europe and again established many communist front organizations around the world through unions and youth, women’s and peace groups.

As conflict grew between the West and the Soviet Union along with its Eastern Bloc satellite nations, the Cold War began—a decades-long period of tension and rivalry that occasionally saw “hot”

wars break out between the major powers’ proxies, as in Korea and Vietnam.

In 1949 the Soviets won a major prize when China fell to Mao Zedong’s communist revolutionaries—leading to the execution of 1 to 2 million landlords and the later deaths by starvation of some 45 million in Chairman Mao’s “Great Leap Forward” social reformation.

“We will bury you!”

Cold War tensions grew ever more strained as Russia (and later China) developed atomic bombs, followed shortly by much more powerful hydrogen bombs. Relations between East and West hit bottom in late 1956 when, at a reception at the Polish embassy in Moscow, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev boasted to a group of Western diplomats: “Whether you like it or not, history is on our side. *We will bury you!*”

“The policy of Russia is changeless. Its methods, its tactics, its maneuvers may change, but the polar star of its policy, world domination, is a fixed star.”

When Khrushchev spoke those words, a third of the world’s population lived under some form of communist government.

In addition to the Soviet Republics, the following countries would become communist at some point in their history: Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Croatia, Cuba, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, East Germany, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Hungary, Laos, Mongolia, Montenegro, Mozambique,

North Korea, Poland, the Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, Vietnam and Yemen.

The Soviets were hard at work on their goal of a world dominated by communism. For many, it appeared that Khrushchev's boast might well come true!

And this is where the history of Russian attempts to influence America and the West get really interesting.

Defeating the West by other means

With the Soviet Union and the United States armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons, both sides knew that an all-out war was out of the question. Both recognized that nuclear war was unwinnable because much of the world would be annihilated in a nuclear holocaust.

So the Soviets turned to other methods that had proven successful in the 1920s and 30s—infiltrating the West through communist front groups, organizations and agents. Such efforts had never really ceased during intervening years; now they simply intensified.

On March 26, 1947, J. Edgar Hoover, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (or FBI), who had been fighting communist influence since 1919, addressed the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities. He warned of widespread communist efforts to infiltrate American society—specifically through Hollywood movies, radio entertainment, labor unions, the federal government and various front organizations.

He noted that in the previous few years the FBI had investigated almost 6,500 cases where government employees were suspected of being involved in

organizations advocating the overthrow of the U.S. government, resulting in almost 2,000 employees resigning or being discharged.

He warned that even government programs were being used as fronts to advance communist/socialist aims. He cautioned that even religion and education were fertile fields for the advancement of communist ideology:

“I do fear so long as school boards and parents tolerate conditions whereby communists and fellow travelers, under the guise of academic freedom, can teach our youth a way of life that will eventually destroy the sanctity of the home, that undermines faith in God, that causes them to scorn respect for constituted authority and sabotage our revered Constitution.”

In 1959 Hoover published a book titled *Masters of Deceit: The Story of Communism in America and How to Fight It*. In the foreword he warned: “There is no doubt that America is now the prime target of international communism . . . But we may not learn until it is too late to recognize who the communists are, what they are doing, and what we ourselves, therefore, must do to defeat them.”

Predictions of a transformed America and transformed world

In 1958, as Hoover was writing *Masters of Deceit*, another book titled *The Naked Communist* was published. Its author, Cleon Skousen, was a police chief, attorney and former FBI agent who had spent much of his FBI career studying communist ideology, methodology and infiltration, much as Hoover had. The book was quite popular, and over time

sold more than a million copies.

What is remarkable about *The Naked Communist* is a section in which Skousen listed 45 “current communist goals.” Having researched communism

for years as an FBI agent, Skousen was highly familiar with its aims, plans and methodology. His list was so prescient that it was read into the Congressional Record on Jan. 10, 1963.

Russian and American Dominance Predicted by Character Assessment

For half a century after World War II the world was divided in two in terms of international power—split between the American-led free world and the Russian-led Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc.

Remarkably this bipolar world had been predicted almost prophetically more than a century earlier by the French political historian Alexis de Tocqueville in his 1835 book *Democracy in America* on the basis of national character and condition.

Consider that when the following was written the British Empire was the dominant power on earth. Russia, while a great power, was by no means yet a global superpower, this being nearly a century before the Soviet Union, and neither was the newly formed United States, which was still in its pre-Civil War days. The national character De Tocqueville described back in 1835 remains deeply ingrained:

“There are at the present time two great nations in the world, which started from different points, but seem to tend towards the same end. I allude to the Russians and the Americans . . . All other nations seem to have nearly

reached their natural limits, and they have only to maintain their power; but these are still in the act of growth . . . These alone are proceeding with ease and celerity [swiftness] along a path to which no limit can be perceived.

“The American struggles against the obstacles that nature opposes to him; the adversaries of the Russian are men. The former combats the wilderness and savage life; the latter, civilization with all its arms. The conquests of the American are therefore gained by the plowshare; those of the Russian by the sword.

“The Anglo-American relies upon personal interest to accomplish his ends and gives free scope to the unguided strength and common sense of the people; the Russian centers all the authority of society in a single arm. The principal instrument of the former is freedom; of the latter, servitude. Their starting-point is different and their courses are not the same; yet each of them seems marked out by the will of Heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe.”

This is utterly stunning. Clearly there is such a thing as national character—and it certainly matters.

Tom Robinson

Space doesn't permit listing or commenting on all 45 goals. Interested readers can find them online, in Skousen's book, or in the 2011 book *The Naked Truth: The Naked Communist—Revisited* by James Bowers. However, we will examine a few of the listed goals here—*keeping in mind that these were published more than 60 years ago.*

Communist goals attained on the international scene

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, it's obvious that a number of the goals on the list would not ultimately be achieved. But it's astonishing how many *were* achieved in such a short time!

- Number 7 on the list, for example, was "*Grant recognition of Red China. Admission of Red China to the UN.*" From 1945 to 1971, the Republic of China (now referred to as Taiwan) was a charter member of the United Nations and one of five permanent members of the Security Council. But in 1971, the communist dictatorship the People's Republic of China was given UN membership as well as the Security Council seat (and accompanying veto power) of the Republic of China—with the latter being unceremoniously kicked out of the UN, the only nation ever so expelled!

- Number 44 on the list was "*Internationalize the Panama Canal.*" After it was opened in 1914, the Panama Canal was hailed as one of the seven wonders of the modern world, benefiting all nations. But in 1977, after relentless pressure from U.S. President Jimmy Carter and Panamanian dictator Omar Torrijos, the U.S. Senate abolished the treaty under which America controlled the canal, leading to gradual transfer

to Panama in 1999. While Panama now owns the canal, who owns and manages the ports that control traffic through the canal? Two Chinese companies with strong ties to the communist Red Chinese government!

- Number 43 on the list was "*Overthrow all colonial governments before native populations are ready for self-government.*" While freedom is a great blessing, freedom given or gained at the wrong time or too early, without proper preparedness, can end up becoming a curse.

The list of countries given independence since 1958, when Skousen wrote these words, includes many nations that have been wracked with wars, corruption, famine, civil unrest and virtually every human-caused curse imaginable—mostly due to the fact that they were nowhere near ready for or capable of self-government. Most are far worse off today than when they were governed by other nations.

Transforming America and the West from within

The three geopolitical goals listed above certainly weakened the international standing of America and the West. But equally if not more damaging were the goals aimed at weakening Western society from within. Let's notice a few:

- Number 28: "*Eliminate prayer or any phase of religious expression in the schools on the ground that it violates the principle of 'separation of church and state.'*" In 1962 and 1963 the U.S. Supreme Court removed prayer and Bible reading from public schools, ending practices that had been common for almost two centuries since the nation's founding. These deci-

sions in effect expelled God not only from America's public schools, but from public life. The framework of public school curricula shifted to a nihilistic, evolution-centered viewpoint, with devastating impact on the lives of millions of schoolchildren.

- Number 40: *"Discredit the family as an institution. Encourage promiscuity and easy divorce."* The family is clearly under assault from every direction. The 1960s saw a major cultural revolution in the United States. Birth-control pills

While the Soviet Union itself collapsed a generation ago in 1991, the tentacles of communism remain alive and well in the socialism that has spread throughout Western governments.

largely removed one of the major consequences of extramarital sex, and rates of premarital sex skyrocketed. From 1958, when Skousen listed these goals, until 1990, divorce rates more than doubled. Now roughly half of U.S. marriages end in divorce. The divorce rate has flattened in more recent years, but only for the simple fact that many couples today never bother to marry at all!

- Number 25: *"Break down cultural standards of morality by promoting pornography and obscenity in books, magazines, motion pictures, radio, and TV."* This goal has been so thoroughly accomplished that a majority of Westerners are no longer aware of a time when entertainment *wasn't* saturated with sex, nudity, profanity, bathroom humor and gore. Pornography is now so widespread on the Internet and electronic devices that some researchers have estimated that the average age of first exposure to pornography is *eight*.

- Number 26: *"Present homosexuality, degeneracy, and promiscuity as 'normal, natural, healthy.'" Before prayer and Bible reading were banned in U.S. schools, it was common for a certain level of morality to be taught. How that has changed! Today many school systems pass out free condoms to students (with sex education classes giving graphic demonstrations on how to use them). Some schools have outraged parents by giving classes on homosexual and lesbian sex, transgender exploration, and*

generally encouraging any and all kinds of sexual exploration.

- Number 17: *"Get control of the schools. Use them as transmission belts for socialism . . . Soften the curriculum. Get control of teachers' associations. Put the party line in textbooks."* In addition to examples such as those above, public schools' educational curricula have been radically changed in recent decades as leftist-leaning teachers and administrators have consolidated control.

Schools and universities have indeed become "transmission belts" for socialist ideas to the point that clear majorities of Americans under age 30 now view socialism positively and do not support capitalism or free enterprise. And while U.S. education spending ranks at or near the highest in the world at more than \$13,000 per student, American students rank only barely above the middle in science, math and reading skills compared to other civi-

lized countries—with scores stagnant or declining.

Many students graduate from high school unable to read or requiring remedial classes in college. Armed guards and police are a fixture at many schools. All this in a nation that for decades was a model for the world!

What is the source of your values and beliefs?

The world today, human society, is not God's world. The Bible tells us that *Satan the devil* is “the god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4). This evil being is the one who reigns over the earth today! He deceives all of humanity into following his ways rather than God's (Revelation 12:9). God tells us that “The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one”—under Satan's powerful influence and control (1 John 5:19).

It was certainly under Satan's influence that Karl Marx, the human mastermind behind communism, said, “My object in life is to *dethrone God* and destroy capitalism.” He also said, “The first requisite for the happiness of the people is *the abolition of religion*.” We should not be surprised that an ungodly, *anti-God* system like communism should hold millions in its grip—or that it would seek to expand that influence over the entire world. Like many other forms of human *misrule*, it's had a powerful spiritual influence at work behind it.

While the Soviet Union itself collapsed a generation ago in 1991, the tentacles of communism remain alive and well in the socialism that has spread throughout Western governments. As Vladimir Lenin himself put it, “*The goal of socialism is communism.*”

Let us not forget that one of the major U.S. presidential candidates in 2016 and again in 2020 was an avowed socialist who ran on a socialist platform. A recent survey by the American Culture and Faith Institute showed that 40 percent of all Americans now prefer socialism to capitalism. Obviously many have forgotten the backward, crumbling economies and failed socialist and communist governments of a generation ago and fail to see the danger of the direction America and the West are headed. (For more on what the Bible says about their future, download or request our free study guide *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.)

We should further remember that as the Soviet leadership pointed the finger at Western nations as increasingly decadent, soft and corrupt, they were intentionally contributing to that downward spiral through the undermining of Western values in hopes of bringing these countries under communist dominion. Ironically, today's Russian leaders further decry the degradation of Western morality while Russia itself has repudiated various aspects of its communist past. Yet its leaders suffer their own moral corruption, as they seek to further weaken the West while increasing their own power and control over their own people and other nations. This is Satan's own strategy against all of mankind.

Let us resist corrupting influences intended to weaken and destroy us, turning to God and His Word for ultimate deliverance. Thankfully the day is coming when He will guide the Russians, Americans and all people into His ways of righteousness and peace.

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Sidebar: Russia's Geographic Outlook

14 **Where Does Russia Fit in End-Time Prophecy?**

More than three decades after the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia is aggressively reasserting itself on the world stage, raising fears of a renewed Russian expansionism. How might this play out in Bible prophecy?

Sidebar: Gog, Magog and the Prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal

25 **Russia's Influence on America and the World**

Although the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Russia's influence on America and the rest of the world continues in ways few people realize or admit.

Sidebar: Russian and American Dominance Predicted by Character Assessment