



March 11, 2026

# MESSENGER

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## SPOTLIGHT ON IRAN

This article is not about politics; it's about Biblical history and prophecy.

**Iran** is never mentioned in the Bible by its modern name, but the land it occupies was the home of the Elamites, important neighbors to the northeast of God's chosen people Israel as they began their national history. Elam had been a dominant force in the Middle East from 3,000 BC until their defeat by the Assyrians in 647 BC. After that, Elam became a province of a larger state which became known as Persia. The Persians were part of Assyrian, Babylonians, Greek and Roman Empires, in that order, through the six centuries before Jesus' time.

During one period, 550 to 330 BC, the Persians themselves controlled the Middle East empire, from Turkey and Egypt in the west, all the way to the border of India in the east. They inherited control of captive peoples, including the Israelites. This experience is reflected in the Old Testament books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther and Daniel. Persian emperors Cyrus, Darius, Xerxes and Artaxerxes are mentioned in these books. Interestingly, their rule is remembered as more humane and benevolent than those of other controlling dynasties. The Biblical story of Esther reflects this, as she was able to win a better life for her people by negotiation, rather than rebellion. This is celebrated annually at the Jewish festival of Purim.<sup>1</sup>

**What about prophecy?** In the current conflict focusing on Iran, some prominent Christian leaders have justified U.S./Israeli attacks as fulfillment of Biblical end-times prophecy. It's even reported that some high-level American military officers have given their troops pep-talks based on their particular church's prophetic teaching.<sup>2</sup> I believe this is a misuse of Scripture and needs to be called out as false teaching.

Those who write and talk about Iran being an end-times force in prophecy base this on three Biblical passages, from the Old Testament prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel and from the last book in the New Testament, Revelation. For context, it's important to remember that both Jeremiah and Ezekiel had completed their prophetic ministries and died **before** the two-hundred-year Persian Empire rule even began. Their "future"-oriented prophecies are, therefore, more likely to refer to that period, 550-330 BC, than to something happening in AD 2026.

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**Jeremiah 49:34-39** – The reference is not to “Iran” or “Persia,” but to “Elam.” This great kingdom of the past has already fallen and is presented by Jeremiah as an example of the destiny that awaits all those who oppose God. It’s interesting that Jeremiah ends with a word of hope, not judgment, for Persians: “But in the latter days I will restore the fortunes of Elam, says the Lord” (verse 39).

**Ezekiel 38:1-6** – If you have time, read all of chapters 38 and 39. This is a very elaborate vision, mentioning places like Gog and Magog, Meschech and Tubal, all of which have been identified with a wide array of locations, times and dramas. However, this is all speculation, with no solid evidence. In a list of people groups mentioned in verse 5 you’ll find “Paras,” which is a form of the word Persia. This is part of a very vivid and elaborate set of Ezekiel’s visions, which include the Valley of Dry Bones (chapter 37) and the idealized eternal Temple (chapters 40 to 47). It’s hard to know how literally Ezekiel meant any of these visions to be taken.

**Revelation 16:12-21**- The Apostle John’s vision of end-times events doesn’t include any mention of Iran, Persia or Elam. But there is a brief reference (Revelation 20:8) to the Gog and Magog of Ezekiel’s vision, and that seems to be enough for some prophetic teachers to read Iran into the elaborate images of a final Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16.) This unidentifiable place is mentioned nowhere else in the Bible, yet countless prophecies (not to mention Hollywood movies) have been based on the terror described as its ultimate judgment.

Most modern Evangelical believers have no idea how recently-developed some of the current popular prophetic beliefs are. The fascination with futuristic timelines and charts began in the late nineteenth century as part of an obsession with novel aspects of Biblical interpretation that ultimately spawned a

number of cults and mini-denominations. It ‘s not part of the long-term body of Christian truth that has been embraced by the Church worldwide.

Why the American and Israeli governments decided to begin a war with Iran at this moment in time has not been fully explained. However, it should be made clear that it was not to fulfill some Biblical prophecy. Military and political strategists can’t blame the Bible for this one.

Pastor George Van Alstine

<sup>1</sup> What a strange irony that the U.S./Israeli bombing of Iran began on the eve of Purim (March 2), the celebration of a time when Esther helped her people avoid war through diplomacy!

<sup>2</sup> Fox news report: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0ixjngRw30>

<sup>3</sup> I was moved while listening to a YouTube video of professional singer Pink and her daughter singing “Hopeless War, which is originally from a musical about street gang conflicts: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Gqdc1CjJU&list=RD5Gqdc1CjJU&start\\_radio=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Gqdc1CjJU&list=RD5Gqdc1CjJU&start_radio=1)