

Understanding the Russian Invasion of Ukraine

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Host: David Wheaton 00:08

“Understanding the Russian invasion of Ukraine”

That is the topic we'll discuss today right here on *The Christian Worldview* Radio Program where the mission is to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. I'm David Wheaton, the host. *The Christian Worldview* is a non-profit radio ministry supported by listeners like you and our national sponsor, Samaritan Ministries, who provide a biblical and far better alternative to mainstream health insurance. You can find out more.

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Host: David Wheaton 01:00

Well, apparently Russian President, Vladimir Putin, didn't get the memo about the, "New World Order," where mankind lives in, "Peace and security." And apparently, he wasn't too scared off by what Joe Biden said during the 2019 presidential cycle.

Sound bite: President Joe Biden 01:17

“Once again, Putin and the Russians are trying to engage in our elections and decide who the President is going to be. And this time, I'm the object of their attention, because Putin knows if I am president of the United States, his days of tyranny and trying to intimidate the United States and those in Eastern Europe are over. I'm going to stand up to him. He's a bully, just like the president. And I know he doesn't want me to be president. But I tell you what, when I'm president things are going to change. Mr. Putin, the American people decide their elections, not you. Chip in \$1 \$5 \$10.”

Host: David Wheaton 01:53

For some reason, I don't think Putin was quaking in his boots over that comment by now President Joe Biden. Instead, as the world watched in disbelief, Putin ordered a massive military assault against Ukraine, a large sovereign nation in Eastern Europe bordering Russia. The invasion started slowly but has increased in ferocity causing widespread death and destruction. The United States and European countries have expressed outrage at Putin and are sending armaments to Ukraine, who is out-gunned and out-manned, but led by a charismatic president named Volodymyr Zelensky, who is inspiring his people to fight back.

So why has Putin invaded Ukraine? And what should Western nations do in response? And what are the ramifications of a major war on the European continent? Well, joining us today is Soeren Kern. He's a geopolitical analyst with the Gatestone Institute and also a Christian. He joins us from Europe to answer these questions and more, including how the prophecy in Ezekiel 38 and 39 applies to Russia,

who is called "The Army from the North". Let's get to the first segment of the interview with Soeren Kern.

Soeren, it is so good to have you back on *The Christian Worldview* Radio Program, thank you for taking the time. I want to start out as we talk about trying to understand this Russian invasion of Ukraine by asking a fundamental question. Why is Russia, at the order of their President Vladimir Putin, why is he invading Ukraine? And before you answer that, I'm going to play a soundbite from a man named Doug McGregor. He's a retired Army colonel, former senior adviser to the defense secretary. And he was on Fox News program with Tucker Carlson, just this past week, and he was asked this question:

Sound bite: Retired Army Colonel Douglas MacGregor 03:54

[Tucker Carlson] What is Putin's goal here? What's his aim?

[Retired Army Colonel Doug MacGregor] Well, I think Vladimir Putin set out to honor his word of 2007. 2007 at the Munich Security Conference, he said, we will not tolerate the expansion of NATO into, to a point where your NATO, your border, is touching Russia, specifically Ukraine and Georgia. We see these as essentially Trojan horses for NATO's military power and US influence, subversion, and so forth. He then turned to several opportunities to reinforce that over and over and over again, most recently with President Biden, in the hopes that he could avoid taking action to effectively clean out Eastern Ukraine of any opposition forces whatsoever, and to put his forces in a position vis a vis Nato to deter us from any further attempts to influence or change Ukraine into effectively a platform for the projection of US and Western power into Russia.

Now his goal, as we see it, at the moment, is to seize this entire area of eastern Ukraine, that's pretty clear. He's going to roll up to that river up near Kyiv. He has actually moved over the river and is preparing to go in and capture that city entirely. At that point, he has to decide what else he wants to do. I don't think he wants to go any further west. I think he'd be very satisfied to hold that point. But he would like whatever emerges from this that we call Ukraine, whether it's just the western side, or it encompasses some of the east and the west of Ukraine to be neutral, non-aligned, and preferably friendly to Moscow. That he will accept. Anything short of that, his war has been a waste of time.

Host: David Wheaton 05:42

Okay, Soeren, that was Doug MacGregor, retired Army Colonel and former senior advisor to the defense secretary, basically saying that Vladimir Putin has invaded Ukraine because he's concerned that Ukraine is become too Western friendly, possibly a NATO member, which is too close for comfort for Putin. What Putin really wants is the eastern part of Ukraine where there's a large Russian population; doesn't think he'll go to the western half or western two thirds. But there are other possible reasons beyond what he said there. Maybe Putin, some have said, is trying to reconstitute the former Soviet Union, which Ukraine was part of and this is a big country, by the way, Ukraine in Eastern Europe. Or some people have said that Putin wants Ukraine's food and resources. Or another possible reason is Putin is invading because "He just can". The US is weak. After the Afghan pull out, were perceived as weak around the world, we have feckless leadership in this country. What are your thoughts, Soeren, as to why Vladimir Putin has done this invasion of Ukraine?

Guest: Soeren Kern 06:53

There is more than one reason. There are at least five or six overlapping reasons why Vladimir Putin has his sights on Ukraine. I think the idea that Ukraine would join NATO has never really been a realistic option. NATO has never offered membership to Ukraine. It's even unlikely that Ukraine will be a member of the European Union. So I think that's really a pretext for a much larger plan. And at the base of this whole thing is that Putin wants to re-establish Russia as a great power. And so when you think even beyond the Soviet Union, when you think about the Russian Empire, Russia controlled territories well beyond what the Soviet Union did. So I think basically, what he's trying to do, is little by little, trying to regather these countries that they lost during the collapse of the Soviet Union. And then a little by little expand out.

Now, I think in geopolitics it is really important to understand the idea of buffer states. If you look at the geographic terrain of Russia, essentially it's very vulnerable to outside attack, because almost the entire area from Ukraine, Russia, all the way out to the far edges of eastern Asia is all a flat plain. And so in geopolitics, there's the idea of a "buffer state". Buffer states are states that countries like Russia want, so that it's much more difficult for a foreign country, for an enemy, to invade their territory. So basically, the buffer state would be Ukraine, Belarus, to a certain degree, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, Poland, and the Baltic states. I think really what Putin is trying to do is he's trying to get political control over Ukraine by decapitating the government in Ukraine and installing it with a pro-Russian leader. I don't think he has any intention of permanently occupying the country, because that would not really be militarily feasible, a country, a huge country, 44 million people. I think what he wants to do is remove this government because in recent years Ukraine has really become a model of democracy. It's had clean elections, peaceful transition to power, its really a role model of successful democracy. And I think that Ukraine is really a threat to Putin's model of governance, which is authoritarian.

And so what we have essentially is Putin is trying to re-establish Russia as a great power. You can remember that Senator McCain, he said that Russia was a gas station masquerading as a country. Obama said that Russia is a regional power. And I think if you really think about the Russian mentality, you think about the way that Russian elites think, they want to be perceived as a great power. They don't want to be humiliated by the West. This issue of the geography, of re-establishing this idea of a larger Russian Empire is part of it.

There's also the idea of energy. Now off the coast of Crimea, there have been massive discoveries of natural gas. And I think that in 2014, the reason why Putin invaded Crimea and annexed that, is because he was afraid that Ukraine would eventually become the second largest supplier of gas to Europe and it would sort of challenge Russia's gas supremacy. Also, in those parts of Ukraine in the eastern part that are sort of Russian-dominated, there have been discoveries of large amounts of oil under the ground. He essentially wants that oil, he wants that gas, he wants control over all of that, all of those natural resources, because that is a huge amount of revenue that would be coming into the Russian state once those things are developed.

You know, on a much smaller level, I guess you could say, is when the Russians invaded Crimea and the annex, that the Ukrainians cut off the supply of water, there's only real one major supply of water to the Crimean peninsula and that is basically a canal that brings water from the Ukraine into that Peninsula. And it's very interesting that the first thing that the Russians did in this invasion was to re-

establish the flows of water to Crimea. Crimea needs to have almost all of its water imported from Russia to the peninsula and what's costing, you know, Russia, literally billions of dollars a year to keep 2.5 million people who live there with freshwater supplies.

I think also, sort of another fundamental reason is that Putin is very concerned about regime survival. Russian government badly mismanaged the COVID crisis. There's economic problems in the country, there's corruption everywhere. And I think basically that Putin is using this invasion of Ukraine as a way to boost sort of his image. During a recent interview with *The Financial Times* he said, basically, he was asked what was his favorite political leader and he said, Peter the Great, an individual who really was at the creation of the Russian Empire. All of those reasons are part of the calculation of what Putin is trying to accomplish.

Host: David Wheaton 12:13

Soeren Kern with us today here on *The Christian Worldview* Radio Program. A geopolitical analyst for the Gatestone Institute. We have his articles linked at our website, TheChristianWorldview.org,

I have to say Soeren, in all the coverage that I have watched on television, and read online, I haven't heard many of those reasons that you just brought up in that answer there. So thank you for informing us, giving us some more information on that.

Now, for listeners, just understanding the geography there, the southern part of Ukraine borders, has a large coastline of the Black Sea and Crimea as Soeren was referring to as a peninsula within that coastline of southern Ukraine. And so I think that also might be another part of the reason he's invading because he will have that whole coastline for his naval superiority along the southern part of Ukraine.

Let's get into Ukraine, more about this country. Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky, who I believe is Jewish, is being portrayed as a heroic figure, Soeren. He's not fleeing the country, but he's fighting. Obviously, they are huge underdogs against the Russian military. When the US apparently offered to help him get out of the country, to flee his own country, he said, "I don't need a ride, but I need ammunition."

And so this has endeared himself, not only to his people who are fighting as much as they can, but to the world. There's videos and speeches that he's been giving, appealing for help, as opposed to someone like Putin who's portrayed as isolated and kind of this cold, calculating, ruthless person. So the sympathies and the aid for most of the world are with Ukraine. But what kind of country actually is Ukraine? You talked about it becoming more democratic and so forth. But I've heard people, even Tucker Carlson say that Ukraine's not a democracy, that Zelensky has jailed opposition and shut down media and that proves it's not a democracy. So tell us more about that country, because we also know, Soeren, that there have been lots of dealings with the Biden family, Joe Biden and his son Hunter in Ukraine. I think the Clintons have been involved with him. There's a lot of corruption going on it seems like with Ukraine. Tell us more about Ukraine itself.

Guest: Soeren Kern 14:32

Americans need to understand that everything that people like Tucker Carlson (and I respect him, I like a lot of what he says) when on foreign policy, I have a lot of discrepancies with his outlook. So when

American television personalities are discussing the Ukraine crisis, they're always doing it through the lens of American domestic politics. It's intending to manipulate public opinion to their side of the argument. As I mentioned earlier, it is true that Ukraine has been previously one of the most corrupt countries in Europe. Ukraine really has been changing a lot. And especially after the revolution in 2013 2014, there have been successive governments in place that have really begun to crack down on corruption.

Zelensky is cracking down on [corruption], that's one of the reasons why he won in a landslide election in April 2019. The election in Ukraine was far more fair than the 2020 election in the United States. Let's just put it that way. So if you're talking about Ukraine not being a legitimate democracy, I just don't buy that. As I mentioned earlier, one of the reasons why Putin is worried about this democratic transition in Ukraine is because that's a completely different governance model than Putin has. His is autocracy, it's a dictatorship. And what he's very concerned about is that this democracy continues to take root in Ukraine and then it will basically, eventually move over to Russia.

So I think that's a very big part of Putin's calculations is to put somebody in government in Ukraine that does away with the move towards stomping out corruption, and does away with the westernization of the country. I think that Ukraine is a model country. They've applied to be in the EU, I don't know if that will ever happen. But after this invasion of Russia, that Ukraine has a permanent identity as a Western country, that does not become a member of the EU, it will most certainly have very close ties and relationships and trading privileges with the EU. This innovation is a turning point in Ukrainian history, and there's no going back. And so Vladimir Putin has to know that he has failed in his objectives. I see things a little bit different. Ukraine really is a model that the West should be supporting.

Host: David Wheaton 17:06

That's all contingent on their future and whether they're able to survive this invasion, because it started sort of slow, but it's certainly picking up steam now. And it seems like Russia is basically decimating the country. And I think it's very unclear whether Ukraine as its entity right now is going to be able to survive this.

Okay, we need to pause for a moment. You are listening to *The Christian Worldview* Radio Program. I'm David Wheaton. Would you like to help The Christian Worldview continue broadcasting on the radio station, website, or app on which you're listening today? You can support us by calling 1-888-646-2233, visiting TheChristianworldview.org, or writing to Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331.

Featured Resource: Enemies Within: The Church 17:50

"What happened to the church?"

"How do you break down American Christianity?"

"Whiteness has caused blackness of heart."

"That message that they're going out and taking the world is not, you need to repent of your sin, receive Christ. Instead, the message that you actually have is, they are under the weight of racism, or sexism, or homophobia."

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National Sponsor: Samaritan Ministries 18:52

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Host: David Wheaton 19:56

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Host: David Wheaton 20:11

Now back to the interview. Soeren Kern with us today on *The Christian Worldview* Radio Program, a geopolitical analyst for the Gatestone Institute.

Ukraine is of course outgunned and outmanned. Yet, so far at least, they have been able to slow to some degree the Russian assault. So how do you explain, Soeren, that the Russians haven't made quicker work of the Ukrainians? Did Putin miscalculate in some way here, the kind of resistance he would face? And what are the risks to Putin if this continues to drag on, and he's not able to overwhelm the country and install his own puppet leader of Ukraine?

Guest: Soeren Kern 20:56

Sure, I think that Putin did miscalculate. The Ukrainians unearthed some invasion documents from some of the abandoned military vehicles. And what is clear is that this was supposed to be a 15-day operation, maximum. I think that Putin thought that within two days, the Ukrainian government would capitulate, and Putin could have his guy installed and it would be basically over. You know, what Putin really wants is that the Ukrainian government acknowledges or recognizes that Crimea is now a part of Russia. In the 2014 invasion, the Ukrainian military just crumbled. An army that had military equipment

from the Soviet era, most of it didn't work, most of the missiles, most of the artillery didn't work, trucks didn't work.

And so since 2014, Ukraine has done a very good job of building its military, building up a capable army, there have been multiple deployments of civilians. So you have at least 600,000, possibly more military aged men who are civilians, but they have military experience. Ukrainian nationalism is something that Putin did not understand, that people really love their country, that they want to be free, that they want to be part of the West. And I think it's important to understand that Putin is an autocrat. And what you can see is that his senior advisors are giving him bad advice, because they're afraid to tell him things that he does not want to hear.

And so I think he probably got advice from the senior military people that this would be a cakewalk, that Ukraine will capitulate within a few days, and it will be over. And I think it's very important the language that Putin has been using, because he's not described this ever as a war, or as an invasion, he said it was a military technical operation. And if you look at the initial days of the invasion, it's exactly the same playbook that he used for Georgia, and for Crimea. And so it's clear to me that he never expected this to go as wrong as it has gone. So the question really now is, what happens?

From the images that we're seeing in Kharkiv, and in some of the eastern Ukrainian cities is that, Putin is just going to bomb it into oblivion. I think he just wants the territory. He doesn't care if people live in it, or if it's livable, but he wants control over the territory. And I think that he will do whatever he can. There is no way that he can occupy that country, because now you have Ukrainians who are willing to fight. And you even have Russian troops, who have Ukrainian family members who live in Ukraine. They don't even understand what this war is about. So you see a lot of Russian troops who are abandoning their vehicles, who are surrendering, who really do not want to fight this war. Ukraine really has the advantage here. Ukraine also has the advantage in terms of social media, in terms of the propaganda.

The Russians have not handled this very well at all. And I think it's because it's such a closed society. Two days ago, President Putin ordered that all independent media in Russia be shut down. So the information that, you know, the Russians are getting is only the state version, the Russian state version of what's going on. So my fear is that Putin cannot win this, that he will destroy as much as he possibly can until the clock runs out. And that he's going to be cornered. His comment the other day about using, you know, nuclear weapons, Lavrov, his foreign minister, said that a third world war is going to be nuclear and very disruptive. They're throwing out the word nuclear quite a bit. You know, I don't think it will come to that. The Russians understand that nuclear war is unwinnable. But the fact that they are saying that, it seems to me that the Russians government understands that they're cornered and that there is very little option for them to get out of this situation.

Host: David Wheaton 25:05

Soeren Kern with us today here on *The Christian Worldview* Radio Program coming to us from Europe, where he is based. He's a geopolitical analyst with the Gatestone Institute. Let's get on to what the United States and Western Europe should do about this. Let me play another sound bites from Douglas MacGregor when asked about whether the US should enforce a no-fly zone over Ukraine.

Sound bite: Retired Army Colonel Douglas MacGregor 25:29

Well, you end up at war with Russia because the Russians are not going to allow Western aircraft, US aircraft, flying over the battlefield in eastern Ukraine under any circumstances. And Stoltenberg, the Secretary General of NATO flew to Poland, to stop the Poles from essentially offering MIG 29 aircraft that were improved and modernized to the Ukrainians, allowing their pilots to come to Poland, fly these into Ukraine. He put a stop to it saying, anything like that could lead to war, and NATO will not go to war.

And see this is the interesting part. Now everyone is talking about spending lots of money on defense and lots of money for NATO. But very shortly, people are going to begin to ask, Why? Why are we doing [this]? Because it's patently obvious that NATO is not in a position to fight, not in a position to challenge the Russians.

Host: David Wheaton 26:16

Soeren, what should be the US and Western Europe's, NATO's response? We could just stay out of it. There can be sanctions, you can turn off the oil from Russia going into Germany. And by the way, we get, currently get, which is incredible, we get oil from Russia. We could be energy independent, but Biden chose for us not to be. You could arm the Ukrainians, which I think is going on. Shut down the airspace or attack that convoy, you know, outside Kiev. You know, of all these different options, what do you think the United States and Western Europe should do?

Soeren Kern 26:51

No-Fly Zone is out of the question. That would really be putting the United States and NATO in direct confrontation with Russia. I think actually that the West has done a very good job in recent days, supplying Ukraine with weapons that can take out airplanes and can take out tanks. It's really what is needed. And I think that the economic sanctions opens up a whole new dimension of warfare against Russia. I don't think that Putin was expecting a unified stance between NATO and the United States.

My understanding is that weapons are flowing in from many different European countries moving into Ukraine, and I guess that's all that can be done at this point, provide Ukraine with the arms that it needs, but to remain uninvolved, directly, militarily in that conflict. This conflict in Ukraine is an extremely important war to win because if Putin is successful, it's clear that when he rebuilds his military over time, the Baltic countries are next, possibly Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary. What we're talking about is that if the West does not stop Putin at Ukraine, the incentive for Putin is going to be more and more and more to go to what I explained at the beginning of this program is that Putin really is trying to re-establish Russia as a great power. He's trying to, little by little, recover all of these territories, these states that were lost at the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Host: David Wheaton 28:25

Soeren Kern is our guest today here on *The Christian Worldview*. You can find out more about him at our website, TheChristianWorldview.org. Just a real brief question here. Putin, who is amassing troops and weapons at the border of Ukraine for months, and yet the West seemed to be caught unprepared that he actually did this huge invasion. Why wasn't the US arming Ukraine months ago, in preparation for this invasion?

Guest: Soeren Kern 28:51

The Biden administration knew, at least in November, that Putin was amassing troops, and that there was a very good possibility that he would be, he was planning, an invasion of Ukraine. The Biden administration shared that intelligence with European allies. Apparently, the United States has intelligence capabilities that go right into the heart of the Kremlin, because a lot of European countries were shocked at the amount of detail of the American intelligence.

That being said, the American intelligence was wrong with the lead up to the Iraq war in 2003. But I think there's a lot of skepticism in Europe about American intelligence assessment. In Europe, there is a lot of economic incentive to do business with Russia. Countries were reluctant to jeopardize those economic relations. But now that the intelligence has become a reality, and the invasion has happened, I think countries like Germany are taking a completely new evaluation of their relationship with Russia, of their relationship with NATO, of the need to spend money on defense. What the earlier speaker said, that it doesn't make any sense to spend money on NATO because it's not offensive. NATO is a defensive organization.

What President Trump was saying is that the NATO members need to pay their fair share. You know, Germany pays 1% of GDP less than it should. That amounts to billions and billions of dollars every year. What Trump was saying is that it's not fair that the United States is paying for German defense and on the other hand, Germany is buying billions of dollars worth of oil and gas from Russia, essentially financing the army that the United States is paying to defend Germany against. Angela Merkel, I think of all of the individuals, is the most responsible for this invasion of Ukraine, because she, for 16 years in office, has been very friendly to Putin. He has slowed Ukrainian ties with the EU, with the westernization of the Ukraine. She has sought everything possible to appease Vladimir Putin. And I think that now that she's out of office, and there is a new government in office, it's been a very good opportunity for Germany, and really, for other European countries to reassess their security realities.

Host: David Wheaton 31:21

Let's play one more soundbite from Douglas MacGregor. Talking about China's involvement in this:

Sound bite: Retired Army Colonel Douglas MacGregor 31:30

Mr. Putin sat down with Xi in Beijing, and made it very clear what he was going to do, what his goals were in eastern Ukraine and only Eastern Ukraine initially. And I think he got, he got the conditions he wanted from Xi of support and assistance through this process, because he knew what we would try to do to him. We would try to destroy Russia financially, economically. China needs Russia in order to secure Central Asia and all the routes to Europe. China wants to do business with Europe. That's why the Chinese would like Mr. Putin to end this quickly.

Host: David Wheaton 32:04

Okay, Soeren, that was Douglas MacGregor talking about the partnership really between Russia, the army of the north, and then China, the army of the East. That seems again like another end time scenario. How does China figure into this invasion into Ukraine? And there's already rumblings that China is going to go after the country they want, which is Taiwan. What do you think?

Soeren Kern 32:28

Sure. I've written a number of articles about this in recent weeks, and there is an alliance. It's really a strategic relationship between China and Russia. Both of these countries have one thing in common, they're autocracies. I call them the the axis of autocracy, or the access authoritarianism. And both the Chinese and the Russians, if you look back over even decades of speeches and interviews and lectures and statements, is that they want to replace the existing American-led world order, just sort of called the "liberal democratic world order" and they want to replace that with an authoritarian type of order.

One of Putin's main objectives is to re-establish Russia as a great power. Russia becomes one of the main foundation stones of this new authoritarian order and China becomes the other part of it. Both Russia and China have the same interest in undoing the order, the world order, that the United States established 75 years ago, after the end of World War II. And if the United States and NATO, the West, is not more forward thinking, more strategic thinking, I'm afraid that China and Russia are going to be successful.

And I've said this many times, that we definitely don't want to be living in a world in which Russia and China are making the rules. We want to be in a world where we have individual liberty, where we have freedom, where we have free market economic system, because what is coming in China, total social control, that's not what we want. And that is what is coming. Xi, he's observing very carefully, the West's reaction to Ukraine. He must be shocked at the degree of unity that the West has exhibited towards Russia with the sanctions. And I probably think that Xi will now think twice before moving on Taiwan, because he will see that there is a tremendous cost to pay for the conquest of Taiwan. In one sense, it's very positive, I think, the West's response so far, but really, we need to be looking at the big picture of what's going on. And this is really an attempt to reconfigure world order.

Host: David Wheaton 34:50

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Featured Resource: Biblical Foundations for Economics 35:08

Recent guest, Cal Beisner, defines economics as, "Moral philosophy applied to marketplace relationships." So it makes sense that as our nation's judgment of what is right and wrong has moved away from biblical morality, our economic policies have gone the same wrong direction. So what is the Christian worldview on economics?

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Host: David Wheaton 36:08

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Host: David Wheaton

Thanks for joining us today on *The Christian Worldview*. I'm David Wheaton. Just a reminder that today's program and past programs are archived at our website, [The Christian Worldview.org](http://TheChristianWorldview.org). Transcripts are also available. Now back to the interview.

Host: David Wheaton 37:28

Soeren Kern again with us today here on *The Christian Worldview* Radio Program, geopolitical analyst with the Gatestone Institute. You should read his columns. You can get connected with him by going to our website, TheChristianWorldview.org.

Let's get into some of the biblical end-times scenarios here, Soeren. We've referenced it a couple of times in the program with Russia, the strengthening of Russia and China and so forth.

A recent article in *Tablet Magazine*, just going to read a couple of paragraphs:

"While Moscow ratchets up military and economic pressure on Ukraine, using forbidden types of weapons and indiscriminate firepower against civilians, many in Israel, fear that Moscow's next move will happen in the Middle East, where Moscow was formerly aligned with Israel's worst enemies." [Moving on...] "Israel and Russia maintain tactical cooperation over Syria and run a deconfliction center in order to prevent Russian and Israeli forces from clashing. In 2014, one year before Russia became Israel's neighbors on its northern border in Syria, Israel refused to condemn Russia's annexation of Crimea, despite some pressure from the Obama administration to do so. 2022 isn't 2014. Israel Foreign Minister Yair Lapid first timidly condemned Russian behavior in a TV interview. He then announced that Israel will vote with the United States and EU countries against Russia in the UN General Assembly." It goes on to say, "So what might be the repercussions for Israel, of its public anti-Russian stance, however mild?" So we know from Scripture, Ezekiel, 38 and 39, I won't read the passage right now, listeners can do that on their own. You have Gog as a person, Magog is a land in the Far North. I think most biblical scholars believe that is for sure Russia, and some other countries as well, but for sure, Russia. What do you see, Soeren, from an end-times perspective here with Russia now all of a sudden really going into a big country like Ukraine? You said he has designs on other countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union or Russian Empire and his involvement now in the Middle East, this is

going to isolate Putin. So he's going to go to countries like Iran and so forth. And those are the arch-enemy of Israel. How do you see this lining up in end times scenario?

Guest: Soeren Kern 39:55

Everything depends on if Putin is successful or not in Ukraine. I think if he is successful, to the extent that he gets a change in the government in Ukraine, he gets the recognition of the Crimea. He wants ownership of the energy resources there. If he's successful in that, there's really nothing stopping him from more of these sorts of military operations. And so we don't know exactly when this northern invasion of Israel happens. And some Bible scholars believe it will happen before the tribulation, some after the tribulation. Speculating, I don't really usually do that, but basically, Putin has all of the characteristics of Gog. And so if we're really at the end times, like many people believe the signs are there, it wouldn't be surprising to me if Putin were not Gog. What Israel is trying to do right now, it's immediate concern is Iran. And so Russia controls the skies over Syria. That's where Iran is shipping weapons from Iran into Lebanon through the Syrian territory. Up until now, there's been a relatively, an agreement between Israel and Russia that whenever the Israelis have intelligence that there are dangerous categories of weapons being shipped across Syria, that Russia has given Israel a green light to attack those, you know, those shipments.

And so I think Israel right now is very concerned, in the sense that it needs for public opinion, it needs to be viewed as being on the western side and not on the Russian side. And on the other hand, it needs to be careful not to disrupt this agreement with Russia, that is preventing Iran from you know, really bringing very powerful weapons to Lebanon. It's really hard to tell right now, what significance that would have in the Ezekiel 38 and 39 scenario. But if Putin is successful, who knows what will happen next?

Host: David Wheaton 42:03

You mentioned a couple answers ago, just about this potential new world order with Russia and China leading it, they want to overtake the US as the superpower of the world. I mean, let's face it, the EU or NATO, and so forth, they're all dependent on the technology and military of the United States. The countries of Europe, Western Europe have very little shot of being able to defend themselves without America. And after we saw the pullout, the shameful pullout that Joe Biden orchestrated from Afghanistan, do you think the United States with our current political situation, the cultural situation in America, do you think that the US has the will, the leadership, and even the ability to counter these emerging stronger powers of Russia and China going forward?

Guest: Soeren Kern 43:00

Sure, I think the United States is very divided in almost every dimension. And that is very dangerous, because there's not even unity on the most basic concepts of American foreign policy. This is very, very dangerous. President Putin is taking advantage of this moment in time because he sees a United States that is very weak. He sees the question of legitimacy of the Biden administration, he sees a lot of corruption within the American system.

With the pullout of American forces in Afghanistan, I think Putin just saw that this was the moment. I don't believe for a moment that he would have ever done this if President Trump were still in office. And I think Putin might be calculating that Biden will be replaced in two or three years. And that this is his

moment to act. Looking at this like in an end-time scenario, everything depends on the continued dominance of the US dollar. Because if something happens to the US dollar, and it's very shaky grounds, there is so much debt in America, so much money has been printed during the COVID pandemic, any sort of major calamity could really bring the collapse of the US dollar.

Just the nuclear thing that Putin and Lavrov has been talking about, can you imagine just one nuclear bomb in New York or Washington DC? I think that would be enough to collapse the US dollar. And without the US dollar, the entire military infrastructure collapses, because without the economic base, this military presence around the world is impossible to sustain. I mentioned earlier that all of these Western sanctions against Russia are positive but there is one important caveat to that. Basically, I think China is watching what the western countries are doing economically to Russia. And they are going to try to create a alternative economic system, digitized system, an alternative to Swift, to the international currency banking system that will make China impervious to any future sort of efforts by the West to sanction, to impose sanctions.

So what we're seeing basically is the emergence of serious rivals to the US dollar. And I think we're going to see this, you know, accelerating in coming years. And I think the other major observation that I would make is, we're really seeing the EU becoming a significant geopolitical player. I've written a lot about the EU, the difficulties that the EU had during COVID, it was very divided, the borders were closed, there were a total lack of coordination or total lack of, you know, in the early time, early moments of the COVID, there was no sharing of medical equipment. And so you could really see unraveling of the European Union.

And I think that Vladimir Putin has really, what he has done is he's given the European Union a new purpose. And he's unified all of these countries, even pro-Russia countries like Hungary, are coming on board to the EU. And so I think that the EU, we know that Europe will be one of the major players during the end times. It's been very weak up until now. But I do think that what we're going to see coming out of this Ukraine conflict, however it ends up, is the EU in a much stronger geopolitical position.

Host: David Wheaton 46:41

Just to conclude our interview today, what should Christians be thinking and doing at this time? Give us some encouragement, exhort us in some way as to what our stance should be.

Guest: Soeren Kern 46:52

The number one thing is that we just have to realize that God is in sovereign control. That, you know, throughout history there have always been wars and conflicts. I think what we're seeing in all of this is spiritual warfare. Humans are influencing Putin, and they're influencing a lot of the things that are going on in geopolitics. So it's something that we really don't have control over in any way, except for prayer. And we're asking the Lord that His will is done. We should be all looking for the rapture. We should be looking for the return of Christ. Because really, that's our only hope, long-term. And if something happens to the United States, where the United States ceases to be the dominant superpower in the world, conditions in the world are going to change dramatically from what we've known over the last 80 or so years.

Christians need to be alert, need to be wise, not worried and concerned, knowing that God is in sovereign control. I think that this materialism in the United States needs to be put on the back burner. And there needs to be a refocus on our relationship with Christ. And I think that's the only advice that I can give.

Host: David Wheaton 48:06

Soeren that is excellent and biblical advice. And we thank you for concluding our conversation that way. We're always so appreciative to have you come on *The Christian Worldview* Radio Program. Thank you for your insight and studying this so much with a strong biblical foundation. And we as always, just wish and pray all of God's best and grace to you and your family.

Guest: Soeren Kern 48:29

Thank you.

Host: David Wheaton 48:31

Well I hope you found that interview with Soeren Kern insightful. If you missed any of it, you can always go to our website, TheChristianWorldview.org, to hear a replay of the program or read or order the transcript. There's no doubt this is a difficult situation. It's very hard to watch the demolition of a sovereign nation and, more importantly, the people of Ukraine are suffering greatly. If there's no resistance to this bully, Vladimir Putin, it only emboldens him as Soeren said to do more.

Putin is a Soviet style tyrant. He kills those in opposition to him whether on the street of Russia or poisons them abroad. He fixes elections in his favor. He's enriched himself with billions of dollars illegitimately. And the only thing he fears is losing face, so being shamed, and he's not gonna let that happen in Ukraine, he'll keep pounding away, so he doesn't have to go home with his tail between his legs. He fears losing power, as all tyrants do. And of course, he fears losing his own life as well. He's only going to respond to those who he fears are stronger than himself. And I think one of the reasons he went into Ukraine at this moment is that he's not very afraid of the United States. We are a country led by depraved fools. And I say those words intentionally.

Romans 1 says; "*And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a depraved mind, to do those things that are not proper.*" In other words, when a leadership of a country just flagrantly rejects God, God gives them over, he removes his restraint. And he gives them over to this depraved mind. And they are fools. Psalm 14:1; "*The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'*" A fool is not someone who is uneducated or not intelligent. No, there's lots of educated, highly intelligent fools in the world. The fool is one who thinks and lives like there is no God, lives in rebellion to God. And tragically, that characterizes the leadership in our country right now. So this is bad news for the people of Ukraine, because they can't rely on the United States to be a hedge against this kind of aggressive move by a country like Russia. And so we need to pray for the people of Ukraine. And let's do that.

Host: David Wheaton 50:52

So, Lord, we don't know all that is going on, and all the factors that have led to the situation in Ukraine, but we do want to pray for the people over there, even the missionaries over there, just the general population who are in the midst of just unthinkable suffering at this particular time. Of course, there is

justice and oppression going on all over the world. But the situation in Ukraine is in the top of the news right now.

So we do want to remember them in prayer, we pray for justice and peace. And yet knowing that only true justice and peace will come when you send your son Jesus Christ to rule and to reign in our fallen world. We look forward to that time. But in the meantime, Lord, let us trust in your sovereignty knowing that you allow things like this, you take away your restraint of evil from time to time, and this is what the manifestation of that looks like, Lord. We need your restraint of Your Holy Spirit on this world so this world doesn't implode on itself. So we pray all this Lord. We remember the people of Ukraine and the leaders. Give them strength to carry on. We pray this in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Thank you for joining us today on *The Christian Worldview*. Thanks also to our listeners and Samaritan Ministries for funding today's program. In just a moment, there will be information on how you can hear a replay of today's program, order transcripts and resources, and support this nonprofit radio ministry.

You know, we do live in a challenging world. We see the situation over there right now and know how much evil is present and lurking in this world. But we know where hope is. The Bible says, Jesus Christ and His word are the same yesterday, and today and forever. If you do not know Him, if you have not believed in Him as your Savior and Lord, I encourage you to go to our website and click on the page, "What must I do to be saved?" Do that today. So until next time, "Think biblically, live accordingly, and stand firm!"

Host: David Wheaton 53:00

The mission of *The Christian Worldview* is to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. We hope today's broadcast encouraged you toward that end. To hear a replay of today's program, order a transcript, or find out, "What must I do to be saved?" Go to TheChristianWorldview.org or call toll free 1-888-646-2233.

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