

CONCERNING THE WAY

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LESSON 53: PROPHECY SERIES — THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL



Ezekiel 38-39 – The Coming Islamic Invasion of Israel

These chapters are the most famous and well-known chapters in Ezekiel. No prophecy study would be complete without them. They describe a tremendous invasion of Israel by a coalition of nations that is bound to completely wipe her off the map. It takes Israel by surprise and she is utterly helpless before this massive attack. But just as the armies of these nations are massing on the borders of Israel, God intervenes and devastates the attackers.

This is an event that has never happened in history, although, as usual, preterists try and fail to place it somewhere in the past.

- Note the placement of this in the book – after the chapters about Israel coming back to their land, and before the chapters about the Millennial Kingdom (40-48). This gives us a clue about when these events will happen.

There is very little disagreement on anything in these two chapters. The only point of contention is on the timing of it. We will go through chapter 38 first, and then we'll look at the different views on when it will occur.

Chapter 38

Ezekiel 38:1-3 And the word of the LORD came to me saying, (2) "Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him (3) and say, "Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal.

"Set your face toward" is like saying, "it's time to pay attention to".

The first thing we notice is that there is someone mentioned here that gets no introduction. He seems to come from nowhere. Is it a title? Is it a person? Is it a nation? It is unusual for the Bible to introduce a major character without some sort of background. We infer from the grammar that Gog is the leader of a people called Magog. And he is the prince of Rosh, Meshach, and Tubal. You can go through a lot of commentaries and no one seems to know exactly who this is. We may have a clue in an obscure passage from the prophet Amos:

Amos 7:1-3 Thus the Lord GOD showed me, and behold, He was forming a locust-swarm when the spring crop began to sprout. And behold, the spring crop was after the king's mowing. And it came about, when it had finished eating the vegetation of the land, that I said, "Lord GOD, please pardon! How can Jacob stand, For he is small?" (3) The LORD changed His mind about this. "It shall not be," said the LORD.

What is this about? Well, we see the prophet Amos arguing with God about something, just like Moses did in Numbers 14:11-21. So the Lord changed His mind, and this prophesied event never happened. So why is this here in the first place? Well, whenever there appears to be detail in scripture that is meaningless,

there is deeper meaning there. But the Septuagint, which is about a thousand years earlier than our earliest Masoretic text that most of our Bibles translate the O.T. from, says this in verse 1:

The Lord has shown me, and behold, a swarm of locusts were coming, and behold one of the young devastating locusts was Gog the King.

Now this can't be real locusts here, because locusts have no king (Proverbs 30:27). But Revelation 9:1-11 says demon locusts do. So, the thinking is that Gog is a demon king, or at least a man who is possessed by a powerful demon. Remember in our Daniel study we saw that the Bible teaches that powerful fallen angels are in control of the nations of the world. That appears to be what's going on here in Ezekiel with Gog.

The demon king identity would solve a couple of interpretive problems:

1. It would give us the missing background on a key prophetic person.
2. It would explain how Gog and Magog could appear again at the end of the Millennium (Revelation 20:8). Magog is a people, Gog is a title. Many people get this passage confused.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum says: "Who Gog will be can only be determined at the time of the invasion, for 'Gog' is not a proper name but a title for the ruler of Magog, just as the terms 'pharaoh,' 'kaiser,' and 'czar' were titles for rulers and not proper names."

Then we have a list of other strange names. Why does the Bible use such strange names? Why doesn't it use names we can recognize? Well, it's our fault. We keep changing the names of things. Examples: St. Petersburg became Leningrad and then back to St. Petersburg. Byzantium was renamed Constantinople and then Istanbul. Cape Canaveral was changed to Cape Kennedy and then back again. Isaiah had to prophesy about Persia long before there was a Persia. See, there's only one thing that doesn't change - we don't change the name of our ancestors. So Isaiah referred to Persia as Elam. You will find most of these names listed in the table of nations in Genesis 10. The prophets used names that their audience in that day would have been familiar with.

The Table of Nations – Genesis 10

Noah		
Shem	Ham	Japheth
Elam	Cush	Gomer
Asshur	Mizraim	Magog
Arphaxad	Put	Madai
Lud	Canaan	Javan
Aram		Tubal
		Meshach
		Tiras

Magog, Meshach, and Tubal are listed in the table of nations. Their founders were sons of Japheth, and grandsons of Noah. So, we must identify in history where these people groups ended up.

Magog

- Hesiod, Greek Didactic Poet, 8th century b.c. said that the "Magogians" were the Scythians.
- Herodotus, the "Father of History," in the 5th century b.c. said that the Scythians (10th - 3rd century b.c.) dominated the area from the Ukraine all the way to China.
- Ancient historians Philo, Josephus, and others said that the Great Wall of China was called the "Ramparts of Gog & Magog."
- Soviet Archaeologists' discoveries have shown much about the Scythian lifestyle.

- Magog today probably represents the former underbelly of the Soviet Union: Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. Afghanistan could also be part of this territory. All of these nations are dominated by Islam with a combined total population in excess of 60 million.
- From the “remote parts of the north” (verse 15) – this area is directly north from Israel

Rosh

Rosh is not found in the table of nations. The name *Rosh* is found at least twenty times in other ancient documents, it was apparently a well-known place in Ezekiel’s day. In the sixth century B.C., when Ezekiel wrote his prophecy, several bands of the *Rosh* people lived in an area to the north of the Black Sea.

After providing extensive evidence of the origin and early history of the *Rosh* people, and then tracing them through the centuries, Clyde Billington concludes: Historical, ethnological, and archaeological evidence all favor the conclusion that the *Rosh* people of Ezekiel 38–39 were the ancestors of the Rus/Ros people of Europe and Asia. . . . The *Rosh* people were well-known to ancient and medieval writers by a variety of names which all derived from the names of Tiras and *Rosh*. . . . Those *Rosh* people who lived to the north of the Black Sea in ancient and medieval times were called the Rus/Ros/Rox/Aorsi from very early times. . . . From this mixture with Slavs and with the Varangian Rus in the 9th century, the *Rosh* people of the area north of the Black Sea formed the people known today as the Russians.

The identification of *Rosh* is one of the most controversial and debated issues in the entire Gog and Magog prophecy, even though it should not be. We do not have the time or space here to devote to laying out the evidence, but I believe when one looks at the evidence it is overwhelming that this is a reference to the modern Russians.

Meshach and Tubal

Meshach was the barbarous people known as the Moschi who dwelt in the Moschian mountains; some think this is the root from where the city of Moscow gets its name. But the preferred identification is that Meshech and Tubal are the ancient Moschoi and Tibarenoi in Greek writings or Tabal and Musku in Assyrian inscriptions. The ancient locations are in modern Turkey.



In the 7th century B.C., the Scythians swept across the area, displacing the Cimmerians from the steppes of the Ukraine east of Dnieper River, who fled from them across the Caucasus. (*Herodotus 4.12.*) Even the name “Caucasus” appears to have been derived from *Gog-hasan*, or “Gog’s Fort.” (Dr. John Gill, *A Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1748.)

The Scythians occupied territory from the Danube to the Don; the northern boundary extended beyond the latitude of Kiev. (Note Georgia, who Russia just invaded recently, blocking the way south...) Paul even mentions the Scythians in his letter to the Colossians:

Colossians 3:11 *Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.*

“The depth of this background has endowed this vibrant people with the beauty of Pushkin, Dostoyevsky, and Tchaikovsky, but has also given them the cruelty of Ivan IV, the intensity of Lenin, and the brutality of Stalin.” Chuck Missler

Russia has risen to world prominence, which is a necessary prerequisite for this invasion. Along with the United States, Russia (previously the Soviet Union) has been the world’s great military power. Although some hopeful signs of democracy appeared in Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, there are growing fears that Russia today is regressing back to her old totalitarian, autocratic ways.

Russian president Vladimir Putin and all of the key leaders in his government come from the upper ranks of the KGB. Putin has made numerous moves in recent months to centralize authority. Russia has a vital interest in the Middle East and Persian Gulf. Some control over this area is vital to Russia’s national security. For Russia, an invasion of Israel with an Islamic coalition would be an opportunity for her to reclaim her lost glory and assert control over the Middle East.

Ezekiel 38:4 *"I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them splendidly attired, a great company with buckler and shield, all of them wielding swords;*

Just as a whole host of Israel’s enemies down through history have not wanted to do what God has asked them to do, so will Gog, like Pharaoh, be made to follow His will, even though their intentions are 180 degrees in the opposite direction. *“Like a ring in the nose of a captive or a great hook in the jaws of a crocodile, God will pull Gog and his allies out for this invasion when he is ready for them,”* notes Mark Hitchcock. *“Gog will do God’s bidding and will act according to God’s timetable.”* Arnold Fruchtenbaum summarizes this section by reminding us: *“It is God Who is in control; it is He who is bringing the invasion about. Thus, while studying this passage, one should note the sovereignty of God in this invasion. This will be the means by which God will punish Russia for her sins. The key sin is her long history of anti-Semitism, a problem that persists in Russia to this day.”*

We shouldn’t get too caught up in the use of words like “horses”. The Hebrew word is *soos*, which means leaper, (from a root, “to skip”) translated “bird” in (Jeremiah 8:7); and “chariot rider” (Exodus 14:9). This could be literal horses, or some kind of more modern transportation.

We’re not saying they are not literal, but they don’t have to be. In Isaiah it says “they shall beat their swords into plowshares,” and it’s Isaiah’s way of saying you’ll convert the war weapons of that future time to farming tools. It doesn’t mean the farms in the millennium are going to go back to using plowshares, it is the prophet’s way of describing things in his day that correspond to things of the future. And if you question that, let me remind you that in this country when the railroad first came in the 19th century they called it

the “iron horse”. Everyone called it the iron horse and thought nothing of it. It’s the same thing when in prophetic portions of the Bible they speak of horses and chariots and so on.

Some think that the weapons and tactics that are used in Ezekiel 38 and 39 could be a nuclear exchange. There’s definitely some indications in these chapters of something extremely powerful happening, but it really could be conventional weaponry. I think it’s possible that armies in the future, just before Christ, might be forced to downgrade their military to more primitive weapon systems. You’ll have major earthquakes and catastrophes all across the face of the earth in the tribulation. What do earthquakes do to pipelines? What do they do to stored fuel resources? What do the geophysical disturbances do to radio transmission? What about EMP attacks? When you start asking these questions you realize that sophisticated military technology may not operate in the chaos of the tribulation in the end times, and so commanders will have to downgrade their weapons systems to systems that are functional.

Ezekiel 38:5-6 Persia, Ethiopia and Put with them, all of them with shield and helmet; (6) Gomer with all its troops; Beth-togarmah from the remote parts of the north with all its troops--many peoples with you.

Persia is easy, we know it today as Iran, Persia became Iran in 1935. Ethiopia, or Cush in some translations, would include current day Ethiopia and Sudan and perhaps other areas near there. Put, or Libya in some translations, mean the settled lands west of Egypt. This would be today’s nation of Libya, and perhaps other countries of what we know as North Africa.



As you see in this map, Gomer has often been identified as Germany, or more particularly East Germany before the fall of communism. His descendants are usually identified as the Cimmerians who moved onto the stage of history from the area north of the Black Sea in the eighth century B.C. However, the descendants of Gomer were pushed out of that area and into “the area of Cappadocia, which today is in central and north-central Turkey. Josephus noted that the Gomerites were identified with the Galatians who inhabited what today is central Turkey. Togarmah means Armenians, today’s Turkey and Turkestan.

TURKEY - Currently Turkey is not aligned with Russia and Iran since it technically became a secular state with a Muslim heritage after the breakup of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. Turkey has long been a member of NATO and has wanted to identify with Europe rather than Asia, most likely for economic reasons. Turkey is a nation in which a small part of it is in Europe while most of it is in Asia. Turkey has applied for membership in the European Union, but the rest of the EU is concerned that if they admit Turkey then it will be a conduit through which Muslims would easily be able to move back and forth throughout the rest of Europe. Even though they are still going through the motions of application, there is no way the EU will ever accept Turkey. Once they are finally rejected, it is a foregone conclusion that Turkey will seek alignment with Russia and their Islamic brothers.

The last few years has seen an Islamic majority emerge in Turkey’s Parliament and an Islamic Prime Minister is now in place. The breakup of the former Soviet Union included the independence of five Islamic republics: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kirghizia, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. Hitchcock notes that *“Turkey has clearly been drawn to these former Soviet republics for economic reasons, Turkey also shares strong linguistic and ethnic ties with these nations. All of these nations speak Turkic languages with the exception of Tajikistan, where the language is similar to Iranian Farsi.”* Turkey sees itself as the economic developer of the vast natural resources like gold, silver, uranium, oil, coal, and natural gas that are found in these five new states. Once Turkey is spurned by Europe, she will have motive enough to enter into league with Russia and the other Islamic nations which will set the stage for the fulfillment of this prophecy.

SUDAN - Today Sudan is one of the most militant Islamic nations in the world. I was surprised to also learn that Sudan is the largest nation in territory on the African continent and has a population of 26 million. It is interesting to realize that Iran and Sudan have become the closest of allies during the last twenty years. They have entered into trade agreements, militaries alliances, and Iran also operates terrorist training bases in Sudan. Sudan also is the place that protected Osama bin Laden from 1991 to 1996 until he went to Afghanistan. Based upon current alignment of nations that we see today it is not a surprise to think that Sudan will be one of the nations that attack Israel in the last days with Russia, Iran and others.

LIBYA - Just like Iran and Sudan, Libya is a radical Islamic nation headed by Mu’ammar al-Gadhafi. Like Iran, Gadhafi has tried to develop nuclear weapons in the past, but claims to have given up all attempts to produce them. *“Ever since the rise of Colonel Mu’ammar al-Gadhafi to power in 1969,”* notes Mark Hitchcock. *“The nation of Libya has been a constant source of trouble and terrorism for both the West and Israel. Libya would certainly jump at the chance to join forces with the Sudan, Iran, Turkey, and the former Muslim republics of the Soviet Union to crush the Jewish state.”*

I want to point out that we are not simply doing newspaper exegesis, and reading into this current day events. The fact is when you study where these people groups settled, you can determine with some certainty the modern nations that correspond to the people groups. All the nations that will participate in the battle of Gog and Magog can be seen in the following chart:

Ancient Name	Modern Nation
Magog (Scythians)	Central Asia and possibly Afghanistan
Rosh (Rashu, Rasapu, Ros, and Rus)	Russia
Meshech (Muschki and Musku)	Turkey
Tubal (Tubalu)	Turkey
Persia (Elam)	Iran
Ethiopia (Cush)	Ethiopia, Sudan
Libya (Put or Phut)	Libya
Gomer (Cimmerians)	Turkey
Beth-togarmah (Til-garimmu or Tegarma)	Turkey

Based on these identifications, Ezek 38–39 predicts an invasion of the land of Israel in the last days by a vast confederation of nations from north of the Black and Caspian Seas, extending down to modern Iran in the east, as far as modern Libya to the west, and down to Sudan in the south. Russia will have at least five key allies: Turkey, Iran, Libya, Sudan, and the nations of Central Asia. Amazingly, except for Russia, all of these nations are Muslim nations and Iran, Libya, and Sudan are three of Israel's most active opponents. Iran is one of the "axis of evil" nations, and is trying desperately to attain nuclear weapons. Many of these nations are hotbeds of militant Islam and are either forming or strengthening their ties as I'm writing this. This list of nations reads like the Who's Who of this week's newspaper. It does not take a very active imagination to envision these nations conspiring together to invade Israel in the near future.

Ezekiel 38:7 "Be prepared, and prepare yourself, you and all your companies that are assembled about you, and be a guard for them."

Remember who God is speaking to here, it is a fallen angel, a demon king by the name of Gog who has been in control of this area for thousands of years. So who is currently providing Persia, Cush, Phut, Gomer and Togarmah their arms? Russia. (This was written 2600 years ago!) Russia appears to be the one that is leading this invasion.

God is telling Gog and his allies that they better make sure that they are fully prepared for their attack on Israel, because it is an attack on God, which is something that humans can never really prepare for.

Ezekiel 38:8 "After many days you will be summoned; in the latter years you will come into the land that is restored from the sword, whose inhabitants have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel which had been a continual waste; but its people were brought out from the nations, and they are living securely, all of them."

You see in this verse that this invasion will happen "after many days", and "in the latter years". References to the latter days phrases include the 70th week of Daniel or the tribulation period, the millennial kingdom and could also include some events that might take place shortly before the tribulation, like the Gog and Magog invasion. These phrases are used a total of fifteen times in the Old Testament. They are always used to refer to either the Tribulation period (Deuteronomy 4:30; 31:29) or the Millennium (Isaiah. 2:2; Micah 4:1). These phrases show that the general time period is future even from our day.

It is very interesting that the phrase "restored from the sword" is used here. The land of Israel before World War I was a wasteland and had been controlled by Islam (or the Crusaders) for more than 1200 years. Islam historically has always been spread by the sword, and it is a symbol of Muslim nations. I believe this verse could be speaking of the land of Israel that has been restored from the ravages of Islam.

The phrase "they are living securely" causes many to time this event after the beginning of the Tribulation period, when Israel will be under a covenant with the antichrist, and therefore living in peace and security. But this phrase doesn't necessarily preclude this attack occurring today. The Hebrew word for "securely", or "safely", as it says in some versions, means false confidence. They think they are secure, but they are not. Fruchtenbaum maintains that the Hebrew root *batach* which appears in Ezekiel 38:8 and 11 simply means "security." He says, "This is not a security due to a state of peace, but a security due to confidence in their own strength. This is also a good description of Israel today. The Israeli army has fought four major wars since its founding and won them quickly each time. Today Israel is secure, confident that her army can repel any invasion from the Arab states. So, in that sense, Israel is dwelling securely."

Ezekiel 38:9-11 "You will go up, you will come like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your troops, and many peoples with you." (10) "Thus says

the Lord GOD, "It will come about on that day, that thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil plan, (11) and you will say, 'I will go up against the land of unwalled villages. I will go against those who are at rest, that live securely, all of them living without walls and having no bars or gates,

Keep in mind that all villages in those days had walls; Ezekiel had probably never seen a city without walls. Today cities in Israel have no walls, except for the remaining ancient walls around the old city portion of Jerusalem. Israel has built a security fence on the border between them and the Palestinian-controlled areas to keep the terrorists out, but this wall isn't around any city or village. So you can't necessarily say that this attack can't happen yet because of walls. So it is true that the inhabitants of modern Israel live in unwalled villages and have some degree of security due to their military might. However, it's hard to argue that they are "at rest" as required by verse 11. The Hebrew word translated "at rest" means to "be quiet, undisturbed." This hardly describes Israel today. The nation is one huge armed camp. The people are disturbed on a regular basis by threats, rocket attacks, and homicide bombings. Since 1948, Israel has lived under the constant threat of terrorist attacks and invasion by her neighbors. And it is obvious that Israel will not be suspecting this attack, it will take them by surprise.

Verse 10 gives us a clue about why this invasion happens. Why are these nations attacking Israel? Well, where do evil thoughts, evil plans come from? Satan. What has Satan always tried to do to the Jews? Wipe them out. So anti-Semitism is one reason for this attack. Satan is trying to keep the Kingdom from coming, trying to defeat the promises of God. This is the source of anti-Semitism.

Ezekiel 38:12-13 to capture spoil and to seize plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places which are now inhabited, and against the people who are gathered from the nations, who have acquired cattle and goods, who live at the center of the world.' (13) "Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish with all its villages will say to you, 'Have you come to capture spoil? Have you assembled your company to seize plunder, to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to capture great spoil?'"

Again we see that this attack is against Israel after they have been regathered from the nations, which places this event in the end times. And notice Israel is considered by God to be the center of the world, geographically and spiritually. Israel and its chief city Jerusalem was created by God and placed in the center of the earth so that she could be a light to the nations as the Lord desired to use her to spread His message across the earth.

Sheba and Dedan is today's Saudi Arabia. These nations appear to be bystanders? It is interesting that Saudi Arabia stays out of this coalition.

Who is Tarshish?

There are many theories on Tarshish, a lot of research has been done. The best and most commonly held view is that the merchants of Tarshish appear to refer to the Phoenician maritime and trading community located in Spain during the general time of King Solomon, 3,000 years ago. The merchants of Tarshish, during the last 500 years, developed into the modern mercantile nations of Western Europe like Spain, Holland, and Britain. Hitchcock concludes: "Tarshish, or modern Spain, could be used by Ezekiel to represent all of the western nations which Saudi Arabia will join with in denouncing this invasion." It is possible that Ezekiel used the far western colony of Tarshish to represent the end-time empire of the Antichrist.

Another reason why this coalition of nations attacks Israel is given here. It is to plunder Israel's wealth.

Most people don't know this, but Israel has become one of the richest countries in the world. A recent article in the Jerusalem Post said the following:

- Despite a population of just over 7 million people, Israel is now home to 7,200 millionaires.
- Of the 500 wealthiest people in the world, six are Israeli, and they had 35 billion in assets in 2007.
- Israel's GDP is almost double that of any other Middle Eastern country.

Israel has transformed from primarily an agricultural economy to a burgeoning high-tech industry. Today she has developed a productive economy via research and development in the area of technology. Also, she is perhaps the most productive country per capita in the world agriculturally. Israel has long controlled the diamond business and is the world leader in generic pharmaceuticals. Wikipedia says, "Israel is considered one of the most advanced countries in Southwest Asia in economic and industrial development. . . . It has the second-largest number of startup companies in the world (after the United States) and the largest number of NASDAQ-listed companies outside North America."

One can also assume from these verses that the other goal of these nations is to slaughter the Jews and completely conquer the nation.

Ezekiel 38:14 "Therefore prophesy, son of man, and say to Gog, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "On that day when My people Israel are living securely, will you not know it?"

The phrase "...my people Israel" leads some to believe that this event occurs after the church is in heaven, after the Rapture. They believe that while the church is on earth, they are "His people", but after the church is gone, then God deals with Israel again and they return to being "My people Israel".

Regardless of what the world thinks and the news media will say about Israel in that day, the Lord God says that the people who will be invaded are "My people Israel." As Paul says of Israel in the New Testament, "God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew" (Romans 11:2). Why can Paul say this? Because "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:28).

Gog sees that Israel is living in false security and thinks it is a perfect time to strike.

Ezekiel 38:15-17 "You will come from your place out of the remote parts of the north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great assembly and a mighty army; (16) and you will come up against My people Israel like a cloud to cover the land. It shall come about in the last days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me when I am sanctified through you before their eyes, O Gog." (17) 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Are you the one of whom I spoke in former days through My servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied in those days for many years that I would bring you against them?"

This would seem to suggest that these armies will assemble to the north of Israel, since it says they will come from the north. Notice throughout these chapters how many times God speaks of Himself – My people, My land, My servants, and in the next verse, My fury, My anger, and My zeal. And look at verse 17. We don't know of this event being prophesied in other books of the Bible, so apparently there were other prophetic books that we do not have today that spoke of this attack.

Ezekiel 38:18-19 "It will come about on that day, when Gog comes against the land of Israel," declares the Lord GOD, "that My fury will mount up in My anger. (19) "In My zeal and in My blazing wrath I declare that on that day there will surely be a great

earthquake in the land of Israel.

Is this great shaking something that is just felt locally in Israel, or is it felt worldwide? The Hebrew literally says “upon”, or “above” the land of Israel. The next verse tells us:

Ezekiel 38:20 "The fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all the creeping things that creep on the earth, and all the men who are on the face of the earth will shake at My presence; the mountains also will be thrown down, the steep pathways will collapse and every wall will fall to the ground.

Wow, that sounds like it will be global – all men on the face of the earth. This sounds like more than just a typical earthquake, but maybe a cataclysmic planetary event. It will be centered in Israel, but so terrible that the entire earth will feel it. Keep in mind that there is a great fault line that runs through the heart of Israel, it runs up to the north all the way to Europe, and to the south all the way through Africa.

Ezekiel 38:21 "I will call for a sword against him on all My mountains," declares the Lord GOD. "Every man's sword will be against his brother.

So it appears that not only will God knock them flat, once they get up on their feet, they'll be fighting each other instead of worrying about Israel. It will be such a tremendous earthquake that the earth will roll and huge clouds of dust will rise, and this will cause extreme terror in this army, they'll start killing anything that moves. It looks like “friendly fire” will be an extreme problem for them!

Ezekiel 38:22-23 "With pestilence and with blood I will enter into judgment with him; and I will rain on him and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire and brimstone. (23) "I will magnify Myself, sanctify Myself, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations; and they will know that I am the LORD."

The third weapon God uses against this army is some kind of disease that prevents them from fighting, and then, if that were not enough, the Lord will rain down death from the sky, perhaps with volcanic eruptions (fire and brimstone). The burial instructions in chapter 39 would lead you to believe it could even be some sort of nuclear attack. Whatever form they take, with these four methods God will completely obliterate Gog's army.

And God will magnify Himself, make Himself bigger in the eyes of the world, because He has intervened in this battle and defended Israel. Will this bring great revival to the world? There will be no doubt that this is God who has done this. Will great masses of people turn to Him because of it? Possibly, but many will still reject Him. At the least, any atheistic ideas will have to be thrown away. No one will be able to say there is no God. They will be forced to accept Him or reject Him. And I believe this will be the event that will begin Israel's return to God. They probably will still not accept Jesus as their Messiah, but it will cause a reawakening of a desire to worship God in Israel, and may be what inspires them to build a temple.

"This sets the stage for the final jihad into Israel. For these Islamic allies the Gog and Magog invasion will be an opening to drive Israel into the sea and lure the West into a final clash of civilizations since Israel will be protected by her covenant with Antichrist. Ironically, Islam has its own version of the Battle of Gog and Magog called the War of Yajuj and Majuj. In two places the Koran specifically mentions "Gog and Magog" (Yajuj and Majuj) by name (18:96; 21:96).

Islamic eschatology teaches that there are ten major signs that signal the approach of the end and the day of resurrection. There are various opinions about the order of these signs, but in at least one list Gog and Magog is the number four sign. According to Islamic teaching, Gog and Magog are two groups of Turks that were spreading corruption through the earth during the time of Abraham. Finally, to keep them in check they were enclosed behind a great barrier. They tried in vain to climb over it and have been trying to dig under the wall for centuries, but they will not be able to get out until Allah decrees that they can be released. Then, the barrier will collapse, and Gog and Magog will pour out in all directions rushing into the land of Israel to attack the Muslims there. When Jesus prays against Gog and Magog, Allah will wipe them out by means of some kind of disease or plague that he will send upon them. The disease is described as either infectious, lethal boils, or a disease that eats the flesh from their bones. If that sounds familiar, it should. It was evidently taken by Mohammed straight from Ezekiel 38 with a few convenient changes to fit his own ends. Ezekiel 38:22 specifically says that God will destroy the invaders with disease and with blood. Therefore, while Muslims believe in the prophecy of Gog and Magog, they appear to be totally ignorant of the fact that all the nations in Ezekiel 38 that will be destroyed by God are Muslim nations today, with the exception of Russia. One of their ten great signs of the end will actually be fulfilled by them when they attack Israel in the last days." *Mark Hitchcock*

Timing of the Gog Magog Invasion

Now let's explore when the invasion of Ezekiel 38-39 might occur. To do that let's read a couple of passages from other sections:

Daniel 11:40-41 "At the end time the king of the South will collide with him, and the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen and with many ships; and he will enter countries, overflow them and pass through. (41) "He will also enter the Beautiful Land, and many countries will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon.

We've just recently studied Daniel so you should remember this verse. The "him" is the antichrist, and this is speaking of the events that will lead up to Armageddon. And the countries in verse 41 are the area of Jordan today. So things begin to get out of hand for the antichrist here, namely the king of the south and the king of the north. Let's correlate this with Revelation 16:13, a fore view of the end time looking at the beast.

Revelation 16:13-16 And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; (14) for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. (15) ("Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.") (16) And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.

That means that Satan speaks through the beast. And this beast, when he utters political announcements

to the world in the final hours will be speaking things that will be demonically inspired.

Here we have the gathering of the kings of the world for the final battle, and the gathering point is Armageddon, or the Mount of Megiddo; that is where all the armies of the world gather together for their final conflict, the final world war. By the way, it's not the "battle of Armageddon", it is called in the Scripture "the war of that great day of God Almighty." That's the official Biblical title for the last world war.

Then there's Ezekiel 38 and 39. The problem is how do all these events fit together in the last time? Are these three passages describing the same event? Are they describing different events? And if they are describing different events then in what sequence do these events happen? It's a difficult question and many men have come up with different answers.

Now don't be discouraged because good men disagree. It's just the fact that prophecy by nature is somewhat ambiguous for the simple reason it hasn't happened yet. Prophecy is difficult to get together. So when we discuss these differences we are not discussing a test of orthodoxy; this is not a major area of disagreement among premillennialists. There are seven views:

Preterist View – Gary DeMar insists that Ezekiel 38–39 was fulfilled by the events described in Esther 9 occurring in about 473 B.C. in the days of Queen Esther of Persia. However, a simple reading of the two passages show that they cannot possibly be describing the same event. Israel was not even a nation in those days, they were scattered. This prophecy speaks of a time when Israel is in the land.

End of the Tribulation View – This is Hal Lindsay's view. There are two main strengths of this view. First, the invitation in Ezekiel 39:4 and 39:17-20 for the birds and beasts to feed on the carnage after the battle of Gog and Magog seems to be similar to the description of the great supper after Armageddon in Revelation 19:17-18. Second, this view fits nicely with the statements about Israel's salvation after the invasion since according to Zechariah 12:10 Israel will turn to the Lord as a nation at the end of the tribulation. Ezekiel 39:22 and 29 says the same thing.

There are four main obstacles to this view. First, Ezekiel 38 names specific allies, whereas Armageddon involves all the nations of the earth. Second, in Ezekiel 39 the destruction is on the mountains of Israel while at Armageddon it stretches from Megiddo in the north to Petra in the south. Third, in Ezekiel the armies are destroyed by convulsions of nature, but at Armageddon they are destroyed by the personal appearance of Christ. Fourth, and most importantly, at the end of the tribulation Israel will not be "at rest" or "living securely." Many will have fled into the wilderness and the rest of the Jewish people will have endured three and a half years of persecution by the antichrist. The end of the tribulation will be one time when Israel will not be "at rest" or "living securely."

Beginning of the Millennium View

This view is not very commonly held today, that the invasion will be part of the judgment of the nations after the Second Coming of Christ. Arno Gaebelein, the main proponent of this view, used two main arguments to support his position. First, he argued that the restoration and rest language in Ezekiel 38:8 points to a time "when the Lord has brought back His people and resumed His relationship with the remnant of Israel." Second, Gaebelein believed that the judgment of the living nations in Matthew 25:31-46 will cover a considerable period of time and that the Gog and Magog invasion will be the climax of that judgment. There are several problems with this view, but the main obstacle is that it is after this invasion that Israel returns to the Lord according to Ezekiel 38:23; 39:6-7, 25-29. Adopting this view would place the repentance of Israel at the end of the 75-day transition period between Christ's second coming and the official beginning of the millennium.

Two Phase Fulfillment View

Harold Hoehner contends that Ezekiel 38–39 will be fulfilled in two phases. He believes that Ezekiel 38 will be fulfilled early in the tribulation and that Ezekiel 39 will be fulfilled at the end of the tribulation. The strength of this view is that it harmonizes the text well with other related texts such as Rev 19. However, the main weakness of this view is that Ezekiel 38 and 39 appear to be describing the same invasion and its aftermath not two distinct phases separated by several years.

Along these same lines, Ralph Alexander contends that Ezek 38–39 have a double fulfillment in Revelation 19:17-21 at the end of the tribulation and in Revelation 20:8 at the end of the millennium with the former fulfillment prefiguring the latter. Although prefiguring, foreshadowing, and typology are present in the Old Testament, I reject the idea of double fulfillment or double meaning in prophecy. Neither the text nor the context of Ezekiel 38–39 provides any indication that it will be fulfilled on two occasions.

Post-Millennial View

The strength of this view is that a battle of Gog and Magog is mentioned in Rev 20:7-10 after the Millennial kingdom in conjunction with the release of Satan from the abyss. Although the mention of Gog and Magog in both texts makes this view initially feasible, there are two main reasons for rejecting it. First, Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38–39 is before the millennium which is described in Ezekiel 40–48; whereas, in Revelation 20:7-10 the battle of Gog and Magog is after the millennium described in Revelation 20:1-6. Second, in Ezekiel 39 the bodies of Gog and his troops are buried for seven months and the weapons are burned for seven years after the battle, yet in Revelation 20–21 the Great White Throne, new heaven and new earth, and eternal state immediately follow the battle of Gog and Magog. The post-millennial view would require the burying and burning to continue into the eternal state. So, the mention of Gog and Magog in Revelation 20:7 is not the fulfillment of Ezekiel 38–39.

Pre-Tribulation View

This view is held by Tim LaHaye, Mal Couch, Chuck Missler, Arnold Fructenbaum, Thomas Ice, Zola Levitt, Randall Price, and Charles Clough. Those who hold this view believe that the invasion will occur before the tribulation begins, and possibly even before the rapture. However, in keeping with the immanency of the rapture, they carefully avoid saying that it must occur before the rapture.

The pre-tribulation view has two main strengths.

1. It fits well with the seven years for burning the weapons and seven months to bury the dead in Ezekiel 39:9-12. Under this view, the seven years in Ezekiel 39:9 corresponds with the seventieth week of Daniel 9:27.
2. It provides a reasonable explanation for how the Jewish people will be able to construct a temple on the temple mount in Jerusalem. If the armies of many of the major Islamic nations are decimated in Israel before the tribulation begins, the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem could be accomplished with much less Muslim resistance.

This view has one main weakness. The invasion will occur at a time when Israel is “at rest,” “living securely,” and dwelling in “unwalled villages.” As we mentioned earlier, today Israel is secure, confident that her army can repel any invasion from the Arab states. So in that sense, Israel is dwelling securely. However, they are not “at rest” as required by Ezekiel 38:11. The Hebrew word translated “at rest” (jqv) means “be quiet, undisturbed.” This doesn’t describe Israel today. Since 1948, Israel has lived under the constant threat of terrorist attacks and invasion by her neighbors. However, there may be another way that she becomes “at rest”; we’ll look at that next lesson.

First Half of the Tribulation View

Another common view is that the invasion will occur during the first half of the tribulation. This view is held by John Walvoord, J. Dwight Pentecost, Charles Ryrie, Mark Hitchcock, and Herman Hoyt. There are two main strengths of this view.

1. First, it provides a good explanation for Israel's peace and security described in Ezekiel 38:8 and 11. As John Walvoord states, *"One of the hints given is that the battle takes place at a time when Israel has been regathered into their ancient land, and is dwelling securely and at rest. There are not too many times when Israel is at rest in God's prophetic program. They have been scattered and persecuted over the face of the earth, and not even in the future will Israel have many periods of rest. Certainly, Israel is not at rest today. Israel is an armed camp. . . . There is only one period in the future that clearly fits this description of Ezekiel, and this is the first half of Daniel's seventieth week of God's program for Israel (Daniel 9:27). After discussing the coming ruler who will arise from the ten-nation confederacy after the rapture and make a seven-year covenant with Israel, Walvoord concludes: "Under that covenant, Israel will be able to relax, for their Gentile enemies will have become their friends, apparently guaranteeing their borders and promised them freedom. During that first three and one-half years, we have the one time when regathered Israel is at rest and secure. Apparently Russia will invade the land of Israel during that period, possibly toward its close, and the Scripture will then be fulfilled."*
2. This view provides a reasonable scenario for the Antichrist's ascent to world domination at the mid-point of the tribulation. If the armies of Russia and her Islamic allies are wiped out in Israel some time before the mid-point of the tribulation, this would create a massive power vacuum and a dramatic shift in the balance of power that would allow the Antichrist to ascend to world domination as predicted in Revelation 13.

The primary weakness of this view is that it does not deal very well with the seven months of burying the dead and the seven years of burning the weapons, described in chapter 39. However, if the invasion occurs at least one year before the mid-point of the tribulation, then it is possible for the dead bodies to be buried before the Antichrist invades Israel and begins his reign of terror. The burning of the weapons could continue into the beginning of the millennial kingdom.

The first seal in Revelation brings in the antichrist, who brings peace. The 2nd seal brings in war. That seems to be what is described in Ezekiel 38-39. First there is peace, and then there is war. So in this view, the invasion will happen during the Tribulation period after the 1st seal is opened.

Next week we will go over chapter 39, where we see what happens after the invasion, and we'll discuss a new idea floating around these days that may give more support to the Pre-Trib view.