

The Last Days

An In-Depth Study of Biblical Eschatology The Prophecy of Gog and Magog

Ezekiel 38-39 All Out War Against Israel

An outline of the book of Ezekiel (Chapters 1-48)

- ✧ 1-3 The Prophet Ezekiel ('strengthened by God') is Commissioned
- ✧ 4-24 Judgement of Jerusalem
- ✧ 25-32 Judgement of the Muslim Nations
- ✧ 33-37 Israel's Return to their Homeland
- ✧ 38-39 God's Protection of Israel from the Invasion by Gog and Magog
- ✧ 40-48 Israel in the Millennial Kingdom

The Players in Ezekiel 38-39

Gog Title for the leader of enemy forces against God and His people ^{Revelation 20:8}

Magog Russia, N. of Caspian & Black Seas (Noah's grandson, son of Japheth ^{Genesis 10:2}) (Scythians)

Rosh Either refers to its Hebrew meaning: "head/chief" or the land of Russia

Meshech Modern day Moscow (Muscovy) or N. Turkey (son of Japheth ^{Genesis 10:2})

Tubal Modern day Tobolsk (Thobel) or E. Turkey (son of Japheth ^{Genesis 10:2})

Persia Elam (son of Shem ^{Genesis 10:22}), Iran (Name officially changed from Persia to Iran in 1935.)

Cush Ethiopia+ (south of Egypt) (Sudan & Eritrea) (son of Ham ^{Genesis 10:6})

Put (Phut) Libya+ (north central Africa) (Algeria & Tunisia) (son of Ham ^{Genesis 10:6})

Gomer Near the Black Sea (Turkey) or Germany (son of Japheth ^{Genesis 10:2})

Beth-Togarmah Turkey, Armenia (*Beth*: House of) (Japheth's grandson, son of Gomer ^{Genesis 10:3})

Sheba and Dedan Arabian Peninsula (Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE)

(Ham's great grandsons, Cush's grandsons, sons of Raamah ^{Genesis 10:6-7})

Tarshish S. Spain, W. Europe (Japheth's grandson, son of Javan ^{Genesis 10:4})

Mizraim Egypt (son of Ham ^{Genesis 10:6}) (Named only because startlingly not mentioned in text.)

Most scholars embrace one of three differing views on when this invasion will take place:
pre-Tribulation ^{Matthew 24:6}, post-Tribulation ^{Revelation 19:19} or post-Millennium ^{Revelation 20:7-9}.

Invasion by Gog to Plunder Israel (38:1-16)

38:1-2a Ezekiel used the phrases "The word of the LORD came to me:" forty-nine times to introduce the prophecies given to him, "son of man" ninety-three times to indicate his humanness and "set your face against" nine times to indicate he was to watch out for and be against. This passage is the introduction for Ezekiel 38-39.

38:2b-3 Most scholars agree Gog is not a name, but probably a title for a leader of the enemies of God's people ^{Revelation 20:8}. The "Sovereign LORD" told Ezekiel to prophesy against Gog ^{Ezekiel 38:14, 39:1}, who is described as from "the land of Magog" and the "chief prince of Meshech and Tubal".

An alternate translation of "chief prince of Meshech..." is "prince of Rosh, Meshech...".

- The Septuagint translates Amos 7:1 as: "This is what the Lord God showed me. Behold, a swarm of locusts coming from the east; and behold, one caterpillar, king Gog."
- But Scripture reveals that real locusts do not have a king: Proverbs 30:27 states "locusts have no king, yet they advance together in ranks;"
- So, just as these facts lead to the conclusion that the locusts are demonic in the Fifth Trumpet Judgement ^{Revelation 9:1-11}, shouldn't the conclusion be Gog is a demonic leader?

38:4 This verse reveals the LORD will direct the strategy against the Jews ^{Ezekiel 39:2}, as he did with the Assyrians in 722 B.C. ^{Isaiah 8} and Babylonians in 586 B.C. ^{Ezekiel 21}. The LORD used the earlier nations to enact His judgement against the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, but He will use this assault to once again prove He is the only true God and still treasures Israel ^{Isaiah 43:16-17}.

38:5-6 The LORD (through His prophet Ezekiel) named the primary allies of Magog: the nations of Persia, Cush, Put, Gomer and Beth-Togarmah.

Being mentioned first indicates Persia plays a prominent role in the invasion against Israel.

38:7-9 Gog was instructed by the LORD to prepare his forces ^{Isaiah 8:9}, because when the time is right, He will direct their attack on Israel. These prophetic statements indicate the planning and carrying out of the attack will take "many" years. Israel returned to its homeland following the wars that created the diaspora ("scattered abroad") of the Jewish people. Some of the "wars" were started by:

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Assyria (722 B.C.), Babylon (586 B.C.), Rome (A.D. 70), Germany (A.D. 1940's), etc. The most important regathering began when Israel became a nation again on May 14, 1948 ^{Isaiah 11:12, Jeremiah 16:14-15}, when Israel declared independence, and has continued since that time. The armies are called to ascend ("go up"), because the majority of the battle will take place in the "mountains of Israel" ^{Ezekiel 6:1-3, 19:9} (most of Israel's mountains are in the north on the border with Syria and Lebanon). They will advance "like a storm" ^{Isaiah 28:2} (seemingly unstoppable) and there will be so many, they will look "like a cloud covering the land" ^{v.16, Jeremiah 4:13}.

There are recent signs of God's command to Magog (Russia) to "Get ready; be prepared." Over the last 10-15 years, Russia has sold billions of dollars worth of weapons and nuclear technology to Iran and other Muslim nations. One possible indication of a pre-Trib invasion.

38:10-13 Once again ^{v.3}, to emphasize the following plans are from Almighty God, the "Sovereign LORD" will speak into Gog's mind when to conceive "an evil scheme". Gog will think how easy it will be to gain victory, because of the "peaceful and unsuspecting people" ^{Genesis 34:25, Jeremiah 49:31} of Israel. He will also believe the conquest will allow the allies to readily gain the great wealth of Israel ^{Jeremiah 15:13}. In these instructions, the LORD seems to indicate no other nations will come to Israel's military defense (this is part of His plan). However, the nations of Sheba, Dedan and Tarshish will question the allies about their motivation for the attack.

The LORD will not force Gog and His allies to do anything they do not desire to do. He will simply use their innate evil hatred ^{Psalms 36:4, Isaiah 29:20} for the Jews to achieve His purposes.

There are several curious statements which may be clues to the timing of the attack: "all of them live in safety" ^{v.8,14}, "land of unwallled villages" ^{v.11}, "peaceful, unsuspecting people" ^{v.11}. On the surface, one time-frame that seems to fit is at the end of the Millennium, because it certainly does not sound like the end of the Tribulation. However, does it fit today? Saddam Hussein & Yasser Arafat are dead; Israel has formal peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan; Israel has a strong, well-trained, well-equipped army; Israel's Arrow missile defense system is steadily improving; Israel's economy is healthy and growing; etc. Also, since 2006 there have been rare terrorist attacks in Israel and tourism has been increasing (with 2013 being a record-setting year). Thus, there is a sense of increasing safety in Israel today.

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Another puzzling issue involves the attack motivation. The LORD said their incentive is a greedy desire for wealth, and not an irrational hatred for Israel, like what exists today. Israel has no need for man-made walls; the LORD "will be a wall of fire around it" *Zechariah 2:5*.

38:14-16 This part of the prophecy is a general repeat of the previous verses ^{v.3-9}: (A) the apparent safety of Israel, (B) Gog and Magog will ally with many nations to create a mighty force and (C) the army will be so big that they will "cover the land". However, there are two new aspects to the prophecy: (1) the main force under Gog will come from the "far north" *Ezekiel 39:2* and (2) the LORD's purpose for using them in the attack is to "show [Himself] holy" *Leviticus 10:3* (indicating His righteousness and sovereignty) "through you before their eyes". By using Gog and his army, the LORD will be glorified before Israel and all the "nations" (gentiles) *Ezekiel 38:23, 39:21*.

Intervention of God to Protect Israel (38:17 – 39:8)

38:17 The LORD reminded them He spoke earlier through other "prophets of Israel" about His judgements for attacks upon His people. *Daniel 2:44, Joel 3:9-17, Zephaniah 3:8*

38:18-20 The evil of Gog's army will be used by the LORD to attack, but once they do, He will unleash His "hot anger" upon them and thwart the invasion He has forced Gog to plan against Israel. His wrath will begin with an earthquake *Revelation 16:17-18* like no other that will have devastating effects in Israel, as well as throughout the entire world *Psalms 18:7, Haggai 2:6-7,21*. The power of God will be felt by all people, land animals, sea creatures and birds, and they will all tremble *Exodus 15:14, Nahum 1:5*. Geologic features *Revelation 16:20* and man-made structures *Revelation 16:19* will crumble.

"The floodgates of the heavens are opened, the foundations of the earth shake." *Isaiah 24:18b*
Isaiah's description of God's response "in my zeal and fiery wrath" to the attacks on Israel.

38:21-23 God's wrath will be directed against Gog's armies on the mountains of Israel next by His sword *Isaiah 66:16* of judgement *Isaiah 34:5, Hebrews 4:12, Revelation 19:21*, and by confusing them into fighting among themselves *1 Samuel 14:20, 2 Chronicles 20:20-24*. The LORD will also use diseases *Genesis 12:17* ("plague and bloodshed" *Ezekiel 14:19-20*), "torrents of rain" *Ezekiel 13:10-12*, "hailstones" *Exodus 9:18, Joshua 10:11, Revelation 16:21* and "burning sulfur" *Genesis 19:24* for His judgement. This section of Scripture closed with the LORD restating His intent to show His "greatness and holiness" *Ezekiel 36:22-23*, so "they will know that I am the LORD" *Ezekiel 37:6*.

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39:1-6 Prior to adding detail to His earlier account of the army's ruin ^{Ezekiel 38:18-23}, the Sovereign LORD repeated the prophecy basics: He is "against" Gog and his army, but will bring them "against the mountains of Israel" "from the far north". He will then: (1) disarm the soldiers ^{Psalm 76:3, Hosea 1:5}, (2) kill the soldiers ^{Amos 2:15}, (3) let the birds and animals feast on the dead bodies ^{Genesis 40:19, Revelation 19:17-18, 21} and (4) send "fire" (war ^{Ezekiel 30:8, Amos 1:4}) on Magog and others "in the coastlands".

39:7-8 The LORD stated His patience is gone for the misuse of His "name" ^{Exodus 20:7}. He vowed the time "is coming" when all will know He is Israel's "Holy One" ^{Isaiah 12:6}.

The only reasonable interpretation of the sentence: "I will make known my holy name among my people Israel." is that it refers to the time of the Seventieth Week of Daniel ^{Daniel 9:27} (the Tribulation) when, through twenty-one judgements, Jesus will complete the restoring of the Jews by making them understand He has always been the genuine Messiah ^{Isaiah 49:26}.

The Aftermath of the War (39:9-29)

39:9-10 Then the Israeli army was told to collect plunder from those who had intended to gather wealth from them ^{Habakkuk 2:8a} and to use ("burn") all of the weaponry from the entire attacking invaders as a fuel source for seven years.

There are two aspects to these circumstances that would appear to lead to a conclusion that some of the text in this section of Scripture must be taken symbolically ^{v.3,9}.

1. It seems very unlikely that any large scale invasion in the future will be fought with the primitive weapons described here ^{v.3}. Gog and his allies will undoubtedly be using present-day conventional and nuclear armaments.
2. Also, the idea of the primitive weaponry "burning" for seven years also seems dubious. Certainly Ezekiel had no concept of nuclear energy, nor has anyone since, until the twentieth century, so the Lord described the weapons Ezekiel could relate to. The gathering of nuclear weapons, extracting their nuclear payloads and using them in nuclear power plants seems like a much more credible explanation of what will happen.

Since the LORD explained that the energy needs of Israel would be met for seven years ^{v.9}, perhaps this is an indication that the attack will take place pre-Tribulation, and the nuclear material will be sufficient to supply energy for Israel throughout the Tribulation.

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39:11-16 For seven months, the Jewish people will be expected to help bury the vast number of dead bodies "in order to cleanse the land". This will be done with a sense of urgency ^{Deuteronomy 21:22-23}, especially because of the mess created by the birds and animals ^{Isaiah 34:3} who gorged on the carcasses. The bodies will be buried east of the Dead Sea in a place called the "Valley of Hamon Gog" (lit: "Valley of the Multitude of Gog"). After the seven months are over, the completion of the land clean-up will be done by professionals ("regularly employed" and "gravediggers"). Any overlooked bodies will also be taken to the valley, near Hamonah, and buried.

Some of the language in this passage seems to indicate the clean-up (especially by the professional workers) may include things in addition to the dead bodies. Nuclear material?

39:17-20 The LORD directed Ezekiel to "call out to every kind of bird and all the wild animals" ^{Isaiah 56:9} to "eat flesh and drink blood", because they are to be the LORD's final insult to God's enemies (they are to be a "sacrifice" to God). ^{Revelation 19:17-18, 21}

39:21-24 The LORD used the Babylonians to attack Israel to achieve His judgement against the Southern Kingdom of Judah, but the LORD will use the attack and defeat of the armies of Gog as a way to show His love for and protection of Israel and His sovereignty ^{Exodus 9:16} over all nations and armies. These situations will prepare Israel to enter into the Tribulation – a time of cleansing and restoration of the Jews. Satellite TV will allow everyone around the world to "see" the LORD ^{Isaiah 37:20}.

39:25-29 In a summarizing statement about His plans for restoring the nation of Israel ^{Jeremiah 30:3, Daniel 9:24-27}, the LORD spoke of regathering them in the land (because of His compassion ^{Jeremiah 30:18}) and showing them His holiness through the expressions of His authority for the sake of His name. His power will also display His mercy to the "nations", because it will provide them an opportunity to turn to Him before it is too late. The Lord concludes with a great promise to Israel ^{Zechariah 12:10}.

An interpretation of the events are: the return from "captivity" and "have gathered them" may refer to the rebirth of the nation of Israel ^{Ezekiel 37:21-22}; the "unfaithfulness" of Israel "when they lived in safety" may refer to the relative safety they will have just before the Gog attack; and both the time when the LORD "will gather them to their own land" and when He will "pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel" ^{Isaiah 44:3} surely applies to the Millennium.