

Ezekiel's Vision of Gog's Attack and Judgment

Ezekiel 38-39

Ezekiel 38:1-16 – “Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ²“Son of man, set your face against 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, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. ⁴ I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords. ⁵ Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; ⁶ Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north and all its troops—many people are with you.

⁷“Prepare yourself and be ready, you and all your companies that are gathered about you; and be a guard for them. ⁸ After many days you will be visited. In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely. ⁹ You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you.”

¹⁰“Thus says the Lord God: “On that day it shall come to pass that thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will make an evil plan: ¹¹ You will say, ‘I will go up against a land of un-walled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates’— ¹² to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places that are again inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land. ¹³ Sheba, Dedan, the merchants of Tarshish, and all their young lions will say to you, ‘Have you come to take plunder? Have you gathered your army to take booty, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to take great plunder?’”

¹⁴“Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “On that day when My people Israel dwell safely, will you not know it? ¹⁵ Then you will come from your place out of the far north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great company and a mighty army. ¹⁶ You will come up against My people Israel like a cloud, to cover the land. It will be in the latter days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me, when I am hallowed in you, O Gog, before their eyes.”

Background Notes

The three big questions about the interpretation of these chapters are the following:

1. Who is “Gog” and what is the “land of Magog”?
2. When is this “battle of Gog and Magog”?
3. Are the weapons of war here literal, or merely symbolic for modern weapons of war?

Question 1 - Who is “Gog” and what is the “land of Magog”? There’s a lot of speculation in the commentaries. Some writers are very dogmatic that Gog is the End Time leader of Russia, because he is said to be “prince of Rosh” - and the “land of Magog” includes Meshech and Tubal, which these commentators say would be Moscow and Tbilisi. But we can’t be dogmatic, because there are too many other possibilities.

However, we can be sure from 38:6 & 15 and 39:2 that Gog and the land of Magog are north of Israel - in fact, from the remote parts of the north. In addition, we can be sure some of Gog's allies for this end time invasion of Israel will be Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya (v5).

We'll discuss *Question 2* under our first Doctrinal Point.

Question 3 - Are the weapons of war in these chapters literal, or do they merely symbolize modern weapons of war? Are they literal horses, shields, swords, spears, bows and arrows, or are they symbolic?

Apocalyptic literature is the record of prophetic visions of the future (such as the book of Revelation), and symbols are used in this type of literature. But apocalyptic literature is not *entirely* symbolic. Even in apocalyptic literature there is much that is literal. However, if the weapons of war here are literal, it would indicate that modern weapons of war such as tanks, planes and missiles have either been destroyed, or that the world has run out of fossil fuel, or that modern weapons will become ineffective in some way.

Doctrinal Points

1. Gog will invade the land of Israel.

In verses 1-16 there is no doubt that Gog and his coalition of forces will invade Israel at some time in the future. The question is – When? Will it happen before the Tribulation period of the last days? At the beginning of that 7-year Tribulation period? At the middle of the Tribulation period, at the beginning of the Great Tribulation? At the end of the Tribulation period, and is it the same as the so-called “Battle of Armageddon”? Is it the invasion of the “King of the North,” prophesied in Daniel 11? Is it at the beginning of the Millennium, or is it at the rebellion that takes place at the end of the Millennium?

Verses 8, 11, and 14 are key verses in determining the “when” of this invasion. They tell us that it will take place when Israel is “dwelling in safety,” so that certainly can't be the present time! And it can't be during the last part of the Tribulation period, when we know there will be no peace for anyone on this earth. But it could be at the *beginning* of the Tribulation period, when Israel is back in the land as a nation, and the 7-year peace covenant of Daniel 9 will have been signed. Israel will be living in a temporary peace with her neighbors before the peace covenant is broken in the middle of the Tribulation period. However, there are some points in Ezekiel 39 that do not seem to support the idea that the battle of Gog and Magog is at the beginning of the Tribulation period.

What about at the end of the Millennium? Israel will be dwelling securely in peace at that time - but Revelation 20 refers to that final rebellion of the nations at that time as Gog and Magog (Revelation 20:7-9). The problem with this view is that events following the defeat of Gog in Ezekiel 38-39 do not line up with the events following the final rebellion in Revelation 20. In Revelation 20, the Great White Throne Judgment will follow the end of that rebellion, and then the New Heavens and the New Earth. So it looks like the terms “Gog and Magog” in Revelation 20 are used in a symbolic way, and do not refer to the same time as the events in Ezekiel 38-39.

Perhaps the invasion of Gog in Ezekiel 38-39 is at the beginning of the millennium, when the Lord has established peace for Israel, but the judgment of the nations known as the “judgment of the sheep and the goats” (Matthew 25) has not yet taken place. Leading up to that time, the Lord will bring Gog and his allies back to Israel for judgment (38:4). They will be involved in the battles against Israel at the end of the Tribulation period, but Gog and his allies will return to what they think will be an easy victory, with large spoils of war (v11-12).

Daniel 12 speaks of an extra 75 days during the time of transition between the Tribulation period and the Millennium. Maybe the battle of Gog and Magog fits in there. In any case, in the last days, Gog will invade the land of Israel.

2. Gog will be defeated by the God of Israel.

Ezekiel 38:18-23 & Ezekiel 39 - *“And it will come to pass at the same time, when Gog comes against the land of Israel,” says the Lord God, “that My fury will show in My face. ¹⁹ For in My jealousy and in the fire of My wrath I have spoken: ‘Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel, ²⁰ so that the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all creeping things that creep on the earth, and all men who are on the face of the earth shall shake at My presence. The mountains shall be thrown down, the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.’ ²¹ I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all My mountains,” says the Lord God. “Every man’s sword will be against his brother. ²² And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. ²³ Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the Lord.”*

Ezekiel 39: *“And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal; ² and I will turn you around and lead you on, bringing you up from the far north, and bring you against the mountains of Israel. ³ Then I will knock the bow out of your left hand, and cause the arrows to fall out of your right hand. ⁴ You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who are with you; I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. ⁵ You shall fall on the open field; for I have spoken,” says the Lord God. ⁶ “And I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in security in the coastlands. Then they shall know that I am the Lord. ⁷ So I will make My holy name known in the midst of My people Israel, and I will not let them profane My holy name anymore. Then the nations shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel. ⁸ Surely it is coming, and it shall be done,” says the Lord God. “This is the day of which I have spoken. ⁹ “Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and bucklers, the bows and arrows, the javelins and spears; and they will make fires with them for seven years. ¹⁰ They will not take wood from the field nor cut down any from the forests, because they will make fires with the weapons; and they will plunder those who plundered them, and pillage those who pillaged them,” says the Lord God.*

¹¹ “It will come to pass in that day that I will give Gog a burial place there in Israel, the valley of those who pass by east of the sea; and it will obstruct travelers, because there they will bury Gog and all his multitude. Therefore they will call it the Valley of Hamon Gog. ¹² For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them, in order to cleanse the land. ¹³ Indeed all the people of the land will be burying, and they will gain renown for it on the day that I am glorified,” says the Lord God. ¹⁴ “They will set apart men regularly employed, with the help of a search party, to pass through the land and bury those bodies remaining on the ground, in order to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make a search. ¹⁵ The search party will pass through the land; and when anyone sees a man’s bone, he shall set up a marker by it, till the buriers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon Gog. ¹⁶ The name of the city will also be Hamonah. Thus they shall

cleanse the land.”¹⁷ “And as for you, son of man, thus says the Lord God, ‘Speak to every sort of bird and to every beast of the field: “Assemble yourselves and come. Gather together from all sides to My sacrificial meal which I am sacrificing for you, a great sacrificial meal on the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood.”¹⁸ You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams and lambs, of goats and bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan.¹⁹ You shall eat fat till you are full, and drink blood till you are drunk, at My sacrificial meal which I am sacrificing for you.²⁰ You shall be filled at My table with horses and riders, with mighty men, and with all the men of war,” says the Lord God.²¹ “I will set My glory among the nations; all the nations shall see My judgment which I have executed, and My hand which I have laid on them.²² So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day forward.²³ The Gentiles shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity; because they were unfaithful to Me, therefore I hid My face from them. I gave them into the hand of their enemies, and they all fell by the sword.²⁴ According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I have dealt with them, and hidden My face from them.”²⁵ “Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘Now I will bring back the captives of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name—²⁶ after they have borne their shame, and all their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, when they dwelt safely in their own land and no one made them afraid.²⁷ When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies’ lands, and I am hallowed in them in the sight of many nations,²⁸ then they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their land, and left none of them captive any longer.²⁹ And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,’ says the Lord God.”

Once again in these verses there are some details that must be harmonized with whatever position we take on when this battle and defeat of Gog and Magog will take place. Geological disturbances, including a great earthquake, will be involved in Gog’s defeat. The Lord will also use torrential rain, hail, and fire and brimstone in Gog’s defeat. Ezekiel 39:8-9 says that Israel will burn the wooden weapons of war of defeated Gog for seven years, and 39:12 says that it will take seven months for Israel to bury all the dead of Gog’s defeated armies. They will be buried in a valley east of the Dead Sea, which will then be part of Israel.

As a result of the defeat of Gog and his forces, God will be glorified among the nations (39:21), and the nations will know that God has brought His people back to Himself and to their Land (39:28-29). So we may not be able to pinpoint the exact time of Gog’s invasion of Israel, but we do know that the God of Israel will defeat Gog!

Practical Application

Get ready for the Rapture!

We don’t know how close we are to the End Times. However, if in the midst of the present Middle East conflict you hear rumors about a seven-year peace treaty between all sides, then get ready for the Rapture!

Of course we should be ready for the Rapture at any time, no matter what is happening in international politics. However, based on Daniel 9, we know that the signing of a seven-year peace covenant will signify the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation period of the End Times. We believe the Rapture of the Church will precede the Tribulation period.

So - stay tuned! And **get ready for the rapture!**