

Ezekiel
February 10, 2008
Chapters 38-39

I. Who is Gog?

The identity of Gog, Magog, Meshech, and Tubal are often debated. Most try to identify them with Russia but some also with Mesopotamia. Probably the best identification is the part of Russia north of Iran, the Caucasus nations and/or northern Iran given that:

-Herodotus identified the Moschoi and Tibarenoi as Meshech and Tubal and as living in the mountains SE of the Black Sea: the Caucasus nations, and/or northern Iran.

-Josephus identifying Magog with Scythians, a tribe of southern Russia. Block makes the case that Gog, Meshech, and Tubal are in modern-day Turkey, based on Assyrian records. However, typically invasions from the “north” were from today’s Iraq where the invaders followed the Fertile Crescent.

Magog is the land of Gog. Gog appears to be a name; one of Reuben’s descendants had this name, per 1 Chron. 5:4.

Potential times when the prophecy could occur are:

1. Anytime in the church age, but probably toward its close.
2. During Daniel’s seventieth week after the rapture of the church (probably the easiest to rationalize if we assume that the Revelation 20 is a second event)
3. After the visible return of Christ to the earth
4. After the millennial reign (Note Revelation 20 passage)

Some attempt to suggest that this chapter is symbolic, but there is nothing at the beginning of the chapter to alert the reader to this possibility.

Chapters 38-39 are usually classified as apocalyptic for these reasons:

1. Setting in the end times
2. Conflict between God and the forces of evil
3. Cataclysmic display of divine power
4. Replacement of this present age of violence and wickedness
5. Encouragement to patient faith for God’s oppressed people.

II. Background for the Attack

Ezek 38:10-13

10 "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On that day thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil scheme. 11 You will say, "I will invade a land of unwalled villages; I will attack a peaceful and unsuspecting people — all of them living without walls and without gates and bars. 12 I will plunder and loot and turn my hand against the resettled ruins and the people gathered from the nations, rich in livestock and goods, living at the center of the land."

NIV

In this scenario, Israel has returned to the land as per Chapters 36-37. They have been in it for many years and have enjoyed peace when Gog decides to attack it to plunder Israel because of its prosperity.

Note the weapons of this war appear not to be modern weapons. Even the mentioning of “unwalled villages” implies it. If we take the description of the battle literally, then the implication is that there will be a retro-gradation of weaponry, perhaps of the entire industrial capability. We are not told that this is the case specifically; we are not told also why this might have happened earlier, such as nuclear war or a lack of petroleum fuels.

III. God Fights the Battle

Ezek 38:18-23

18 This is what will happen in that day: When Gog attacks the land of Israel, my hot anger will be aroused, declares the Sovereign LORD. 19 In my zeal and fiery wrath I declare that at that time there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. 20 The fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, every creature that moves along the ground, and all the people on the face of the earth will tremble at my presence. The mountains will be overturned, the cliffs will crumble and every wall will fall to the ground. 21 I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Sovereign LORD. Every man's sword will be against his brother. 22 I will execute judgment upon him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him. 23 And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.'

NIV

(NOTE on Verse 18: Revelation also speaks of Gog and Magog attacking Israel:

Rev 20:7-8

7 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth — Gog and Magog — to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore.

NIV

All nations appear to be with Gog in Revelation, but this does not appear to be the case in Ezekiel. Ezekiel's situation might have occurred during the battle of Armageddon or as a precursor to it.)

Gog attacks Israel. Yet, it is not clear if Israel has to do any fighting, as the LORD appears to do it all. Notice all that will happen to the forces of Gog.

IV. Reason for God's Actions

Ezek 39:7-8

7 "I will make known my holy name among my people Israel. I will no longer let my holy name be profaned, and the nations will know that I the LORD am the Holy One in Israel. 8 It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign LORD. This is the day I have spoken of.

NIV

By challenging Israel's prosperity given by God, the troops of Gog have basically attacked God. If the attackers had taken out Israel, then they would have showed that God was not really God. Instead, by God showing that He is God, he shows His power and His holiness.

V. Extent of Gog's Destruction

Ezek 39:9-10

9 "Then those who live in the towns of Israel will go out and use the weapons for fuel and burn them up — the small and large shields, the bows and arrows, the war clubs and spears. For seven years they will use them for fuel. 10 They will not need to gather wood from the fields or cut it from the forests, because they will use the weapons for fuel. And they will plunder those who plundered them and loot those who looted them, declares the Sovereign LORD.

NIV

Notice how God has turned the tables on Gog. Gog had attacked Israel because of its wealth. However, God will not take the resources of Israel, but will rather provide resources to Israel.

VI. It Lives!

Ezek 39:11-16

11 "On that day I will give Gog a burial place in Israel, in the valley of those who travel east toward the Sea. It will block the way of travelers, because Gog and all his hordes will be buried there. So it will be called the Valley of Hamon Gog. 12 "For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land. 13 All the people of the land will bury them, and the day I am glorified will be a memorable day for them, declares the Sovereign LORD. 14 "Men will be regularly employed to cleanse the land. Some will go throughout the land and, in addition to them, others will bury those that remain on the ground. At the end of the seven months they will begin their search. 15 As they go through the land and one of them sees a human bone, he will set up a marker beside it until the gravediggers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon Gog. 16(Also a town called Hamonah will be there.) And so they will cleanse the land.'

NIV

The extent of the destruction continues to be described in utterly amazing terms.

VII. Return

Ezek 39:25

25 "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will now bring Jacob back from captivity and will have compassion on all the people of Israel, and I will be zealous for my holy name.

NIV

Apparently there are still some Israelites living outside the Palestine at the time that Gog attacks, even though the Israelites have already had a gathering back to Israel. Apparently, the situation before the attack is much the same as today for the Jews. Many live in Israel, but many also still live in Diaspora. The big difference is that Israel is not at peace.

VIII. Jerusalem Falls

Many fanciful stories have been written concerning Ezekiel 36-39; some of them might even be correct. The big problem is that the text is not totally clear as to how it relates to other Scriptures. As such, people speculate many possibilities, but really cannot verify exactly what God is going to do.

As such, we might have to wait until the Lord decides to reveal it to us, even if some of the speculation can be fun in the meantime.

To me, the clear teachings of these four chapters are:

- Israel has sinned in the pass and will be judged for it. Part of the judgment includes/included the scattering of the Israelites among the gentiles.
- God will miraculously bring His people back from the places where they have been scattered.
- When He brings them back, He will also bless them richly.
- The blessing will eventually include the receipt of God's spirit.
- They will live peacefully in the land.
- However, God's enemy will not want them to live peacefully there and will eventually attack them.
- God will miraculously destroy those who attack His people.
- Israel will have even more blessings.

Basically, these chapters are an indication on the continuing blessings that God will pour out on the Israelites, despite their rebellious nature. The difficulties that they face in the earlier parts of this book do not detract from God's future love for Israel.