

The Battle of Gog, Part 2

📖 Ezekiel 38-39

👤 Pastor Jeremy Thomas

📅 November 13, 2016

🌐 fbgbible.org

📍 Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin Street

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

(830) 997-8834

Last time we studied the major prophetic passage of Ezekiel 38-39. These chapters fall within the restoration section of Ezekiel 33-39. They teach that in the latter days Israel is going to be restored to the land in two stages; first, a physical restoration to the land and second a spiritual restoration to the land. Ezekiel 38-39 describes a conflict that occurs after they are physically restored to the land that is instrumental in bringing about their spiritual restoration.

The chapters are usually referred to as the Battle of Gog and Magog but technically it is the Battle of Gog. Gog is a title for the leader of a coalition of nations that will invade Israel in the latter days. Last time we asked who these nations will be and when they will invade Israel. Who these nations are is described in vv 2, 5 and 6. The problem is these are all ancient names that Ezekiel was familiar with but we are unfamiliar with. So, what nations in modern times corresponds to these ancient peoples? If it is correct to trace the roots of these ancient peoples to their places of migration and settlement then the corresponding modern nations are Russia, Turkey, Iran, Libya and Sudan. Gog is of Magog, which is southern Russia. So, the coalition will be led by a Russian leader. All the other nations are Arab and Russia is heavily pro-Arab and anti-Semitic. At our juncture in history it is not difficult to imagine these nations allying to invade Israel and that should be a major consideration in knowing where we are in God's plan for history. If events that are scheduled to occur in the latter days of Israel are already being set up then how much farther along does that put us in the latter days of the Church? So the stage is being set for an Arab or Islamic invasion of Israel led by Russia.

The more difficult question we asked was exactly when will this invasion occur? The trouble is that excellent bible scholars are divided on this question into six different views. First, some place it at the beginning of the millennium. But this is problematic because there is no war in the millennium. Second, some place it after the millennium. But this is problematic because the weapons must be burned for seven years after the battle and yet God is going to create the new heavens and earth at that time. Third, some place it before the tribulation and we'll talk some more about this view later today. But for now, this is problematic because it is highly questionable whether the conditions of peace and living securely are or will be attained before the tribulation. Fourth, some place it at the end of the tribulation in connection with Armageddon. But this is problematic

because Israel has to be at peace and living securely and the second half of the tribulation is anything but peace and security for Israel. Fifth, some place it at the mid-point of the tribulation or just before. Just before seems to solve some of the problems because Israel is under the protection of the anti-Christ until the mid-point. So that might be a possibility.

The main problem with all of these views, however, is getting two ideas together in one picture. The first idea is that Ezek 38:8 and 11 show that Israel must be physically regathered in the land and living in security with no disturbances and no anxiety. The second idea is that Ezek 39:7 and 22 show that by the end of the battle God's name is no longer profaned and Israel is spiritually regenerated. How do you get those two together into one picture, especially since we know the second half of the Tribulation is a period of great difficulty for Israel? Years ago I was working with this problem and I ran across an article by Harold Hoehner, a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, published in a book called *Integrity of Heart, Skillfulness of Hands*. In that article, he suggested that Ezek 38 and 39 are describing two phases rather than one and the problem all along has been trying to ram, cram and jam all of it into one phase. I found this intriguing. He said, "It is interesting to note that all the...views see the events of Ezekiel 38-39 as occurring at one time. None of the views separates the two chapters. However, these two chapters should be viewed as describing events that are spread over a period of time. Such a solution has some clear advantages textually." I'm not sure I agree with his exact scenario but I do think viewing the two chapters as describing two phases of the battle has a lot of merit. I then discussed this with Andy Woods via e-mail. He had also read Dr Hoehner's view and become convinced of the basic two-phase approach. He says, the "...best view is known as the two-phase view. Simply put this view contends that Ezekiel 38 happens toward the beginning of the tribulation period...Ezekiel 39 is not speaking of the initial invasion but rather its aftermath and lingering effects existing after most of the tribulation period has run its course." I think the two-phase view has the least number of problems but to introduce it and show you several reasons why, someone asked a question that actually helps solve the timing issue. This is another example of why it's so important for you to ask questions. They always help me dig in further and learn more. And especially when we are dealing with prophetic issues, which are difficult for two reasons; one because they have yet to take place and two because there are so many pieces to the puzzle. So always ask questions, don't hesitate, even though I may not be able to articulate a well-thought out answer.

What the person asked me was about the weapons and the burning of the weapons. How can modern weapons be used as firewood? That doesn't fit with modern weaponry. I agree so let's look at Ezek 38:4. This is the description of the weapons that are used by these Islamic nations in the invasion. "...horses and horsemen, all of them splendidly attired, a great company with buckler and shield, all of them wielding swords..." The battle is led by men riding horses, wielding swords. That doesn't seem to fit very well in our modern context, even though there are environments in certain parts of the world that demand the use of horses and primitive weaponry in warfare. Ezek 39:9-10 gives another description of these weapons and how they'll be burned as fuel in the aftermath. "those who inhabit the cities of Israel will go out and make fires with the weapons and burn

them, both shields and bucklers, bows and arrows, war clubs and spears, and for seven years they will make fires of them. They will not take wood from the field or gather firewood from the forests, for they will make fires with the weapons; and they will take the spoil of those who despoiled them and seize the plunder of those who plundered them..." So after the war, the weapons will be lying all over the land of Israel and the inhabitants of Israeli cities will use them as firewood. People think this is a problem if they burn these weapons during the millennium. For example, Tim LaHaye says, "It is unthinkable that this would go on during the Millennium..."¹ Really? Maybe you're not thinking. How is free firewood for heating your home a problem? Anybody here have a problem with free energy? Free energy for the first seven years of the millennium is not a problem. It actually solves a lot of problems because they will be able to spend their time and money doing other things. And if you look at the end of verse 10, what really seems to be going on is the outworking of the Abrahamic Covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant promised blessing for blessing and cursing for cursing. At times in the OT you see someone trying to curse Israel and then divine irony strikes and what they were trying to curse Israel with becomes a curse on them and a blessing for Israel. Think of Pharaoh cursing Israel, God's firstborn son. So what is the tenth plague? God cursing Egypt by the death of the Egyptians firstborn son. Think of Haman in the Book of Esther. Haman hated Mordecai and had gallows built for Mordecai to hang on. But who ended up hanging on the gallows? Haman. It's divine irony, an outworking of the Abrahamic Covenant. Here you see the same thing, the very weapons these Islamic nations bring to destroy Israel actually get used by Israel to bless them with free energy for the first seven years of the millennium. I don't see this as a problem at all. I see this as a blessing. It also fits the fact that in the millennium all weapons of war will be demolished. Isa 2:4 says "...they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks." And by the way, the weapons are described here as ancient as well, presupposing that the weapons used in the Tribulation time are ancient not modern. The reason all weapons will be destroyed at Christ's second coming is because in the millennium there won't be a single war, not for a thousand years will there be a war. So what would you need them for? They're just going to sit around and rot or rust so you might as well turn them into something useful like farming equipment (also cf Micah 4:3). My point is that burning weapons in the millennium is just not a problem. What seems like a difficulty to many people is figuring out how the weapons used in this war are not modern weapons. How could Russia, Iran, Turkey, Libya and Sudan get into a position where the weapons they use are fundamentally different than modern weapons so that they can be burned as firewood? Let's think about the description of the weapons? The invaders are invading on horses with shields, bucklers, bows and arrows, war clubs and spears. How are we to understand this language? One way is to say that Ezekiel saw modern weapons in his vision but he wasn't familiar with them and so he just used equivalent ancient descriptions. Horses might correspond to moving military equipment like tanks...shields, bows and arrows, war clubs and spears might correspond to modern small arms. However, if you go that route you're still left with the problem that you can't burn tanks and small arms as firewood to heat your home. That just won't work. Now some have tried to get around this by suggesting that research and development has shown a manufacturing technique that compresses wood so tightly that it can be used to make small arms. However, why would one exchange the many advantages of

modern materials used in weaponry for an inferior material that could burn? I think there is a better textual explanation. Turn to Rev 6:1. What if the world is heading toward global disarmament? What if world politics ultimately gets what they've always wanted; to destroy all weapons or the ammunition necessary to use those weapons so that they can get so-called peace? The first seal is Rev 6:1-2 and I have argued that that is exactly what it is describing; the rise of false Christ's who issue in global disarmament in order to establish a false peace. Wouldn't that be a good counterfeit to the true Christ who establishes true peace in the millennium? John says, "I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer." The white horse. What does the white horse symbolize? Well, the red horse in verse 4 symbolizes war, he takes peace from the earth. So what does the white horse symbolize? Peace. Who is the rider on the white horse? Everyone says Christ or the anti-Christ. Well, if the rider on the white horse is an individual then don't you have to identify the rider of the red horse as an individual and the rider of the pale horse as an individual and the rider of the black horse as an individual? And nobody wants to do that. My point is that the riders on the horses are not individuals but merely representative features. Matthew 24:4 chimes in to help here because Matt 24:4-8 is parallel to the first six seals. And if that parallel is correct then Jesus tells us that the rider represents many false Christ's. The Book of Daniel actually tells us there will be ten of these false-Christ's. They will be the ten kings that rule the ten kingdoms on the earth at the beginning of the tribulation. Now notice what are these false Christ's carrying? A bow. A bow is a weapon. But what are they not carrying? Arrows. What's the point? A form of disarmament. It doesn't really matter whether you destroy the weapons or the ammunition. The first seal is disarmament under false Christ's. And what will their campaign slogan be? "If you give up your weapons there will be world peace!" And what are they wearing on their heads? Crowns, given rule, they are the ten kings. And what do they do? They go forth conquering and to conquer. What are they using to conquer? The message of world peace through global disarmament. Of course, it's a false peace. It won't last. How do we know? Because the second seal is the red horse and what is he granted in verse 4? "it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another, and a great sword was given to him." So we have war under the second seal, but due to the global disarmament what weapons will they be forced to use? Ancient weapons, weapons like bows and arrows, spears, shields, etc... weapons that have been burned and do burn. That's just one of the reasons I believe the Ezek 38-39 has to occur after the first seal during the first half of the tribulation. There has to be a global disarmament brought about by the ten false Christ's who promise peace. And the stage is already being set for global disarmament because the arguments that are being made all over our world are that if we just get rid of all the weapons what will we have? World peace. Doesn't that sound good? It does sound good. Even Christians want world peace. But the only One who can bring it is the true Christ. So at the very beginning of the tribulation ten false Christ's come on the scene promising what only the true Christ can give. Most of the world will fall for this deception. And what it will do is set the stage for all the conflicts of the Tribulation being fought with ancient weapons. This is another strike against the before the Tribulation view which is held by many of my esteemed colleagues like Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Thomas Ice, Randall Price and popular prophecy teachers like Joel Rosenberg and the late Tim LaHaye. They think the

conditions for this battle are already in place today and that the battle can happen any time. But a problem is that if Russia, Iran, Turkey, Libya and Sudan invaded today they wouldn't do it with horses and horsemen and shields and bows and arrows, they would do it with modern weapons. But those things don't burn. So before this battle occurs you have to have global disarmament and that doesn't happen until the first seal in the tribulation time. And if you're wondering how Islamic nations will give in to the pressure of disarmament, I don't know all the details but I do know this, many Muslim nations already fight wars with primitive weapons and the fact they have lost four major wars against Israel with modern weapons may lead them to think they would have an advantage if everyone disarms. In fact, learning to use many ancient weapons takes a lot of training. Longbows were a weapon that required training starting in childhood. Other weapons like swords and spears could be used within a few weeks but only those with extensive training and strength could use them effectively. Riding a horse into battle has its own challenges that require extensive training. A modern American soldier simply could not survive on a field of battle in the ancient world and this seems to be the agreed upon analysis of military experts and historians. If you think America will not disarm you are forgetting that the Rapture will have already occurred and the Christian values present in our society will have vanished. We are talking about a different world.

So my view is that the Battle of Gog occurs after the disarmament occurs under the first seal. The only thing that will be available are ancient weapons. The battle will have two phases. The first phase is described in Ezek 38 will occur during the first half of the Tribulation when Israel is living in security under the anti-Christ. The first half of the Tribulation fulfills the condition of 38:8 that Israel must be living securely, all of them, and 38:11, that Israel will be "at rest." The Hebrew for securely is *betah* and means a false security. The security they will be living in will be false because it is the security of the anti-Christ who will eventually turn against them at the midpoint. The Hebrew for "at rest" is *sakat* and means "undisturbed, at peace, lacking anxiety." At the present they are not living undisturbed lives and lacking anxiety. But in the first half of the tribulation they will be. Walvoord said, "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)." Therefore, the first phase of this battle will occur in the first half of the Tribulation after the anti-Christ's treaty with the nation Israel and global disarmament. The second phase is described in Ezek 39 which describes the aftermath of the war, dovetails with Armageddon and fulfills the condition of 39:7 and 22, that God's name will not be profaned anymore and Israel will be spiritually regenerated. These things simply cannot fit with a before the tribulation view like so many are claiming. God's name will be profaned for the entire second half of the tribulation by the abomination of desolation and all the nations until Christ returns and removes them from the planet. An even bigger problem with the before the tribulation view is that Israel will not be spiritually regenerated before the tribulation but near the end of the Tribulation. If they were converted before the Tribulation then a major purpose of the tribulation is removed. The purposes of the tribulation are to purge Israel to faith and punish the nations. So to put Israel's conversion before the tribulation removes a major purpose of the Tribulation. Andy Woods says,

"Now it seems strange to think that Israel will be converted before the tribulation period ever begins. The very purpose of the tribulation period is to convert Israel (cf. Dan. 9:24)."² Those who hold the before the Tribulation view sometimes suggest that it *could* be before the Rapture. This creates an even greater problem. If Israel is spiritually regenerated as a result of this war and it occurs before the Rapture then they would be a part of the Church and would be raptured. That is wildly untenable. The best view and the only view that satisfies all the data is that the actual war will occur during the first half of the tribulation after the disarmament when Israel is living under the false security of the anti-Christ and at rest, completely undisturbed by her terrorist neighbors. The aftermath of the war will dovetail with Armageddon and the second coming of Christ when the carnage left from these two battles will be picked clean by the birds of the air and beasts of the field. Ezek 39:4 says of Israel's enemies, "You will fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who are with you; I will give you as food to every kind of predatory bird and beast of the field." Ezek 39:17 says again. "Speak to every kind of bird and to every beast of the field, "Assemble and come, gather from every side to My sacrifice which I am going to sacrifice for you, as a great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood. You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, as though they were rams, lambs, goats and bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan. So you will eat fat until you are glutted, and drink blood until you are drunk, from My sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. You will be glutted at My table with horses and charioteers, with mighty men and all the men of war, declares the sovereign God. And I will set My glory among the nations." This is clearly at the second coming in conjunction with Armageddon. The language of Rev 19:17-18 agrees, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great."

That basically solves the timing. The third question we want to ask is why? Why will they invade Israel? There are two reasons. The first is anti-Semitism. Ezekiel 38:10 says, "It will come about on that day, that thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil plan." The one who puts these thoughts in their mind is Satan. Satan is the source of all anti-Semitism. He wants to destroy every last Jew on the planet. Why? Because for Jesus to come back the nation Israel must welcome him back according to Matt 23:39. Jesus said, "You will not see me again until you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." Jesus was quoting Ps 118:26. Unless the nation Israel utters this Jesus will not come back. If the nation Israel is exterminated from the planet, Satan reasons, they cannot utter this and Jesus will not come back. So His plan in the last days is to eliminate Israel from the planet. He is the one who will put these thoughts into these nations minds in the same way that he has put evil thoughts in the minds of others throughout history. Verse 16 says "...and you will come up against My people Israel like a cloud to cover the land." So the first reason they will invade Israel is anti-Semitism, to destroy Israel. The second reason is wealth. Ezekiel 38:12 "...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 navel of the world. 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?'" Therefore, they will invade for wealth. What is the wealth? There has been a lot of speculation. Some, like John Brown, think it will be oil. John Brown is the CEO of Zion Oil and Gas. He's from TX. Robin and I met him in Israel last year. He is convinced there is a lot of oil to be discovered in Israel. When I asked him how many wells they had drilled and how much oil they had found he said they had punched over 100 holes and not found one drop of oil. Still, many think this will be a major source of wealth for Israel in the future and that is what these Islamic nations are coming for. It seems very unlikely to me considering how much oil Islamic nations already possess. Another suggestion has been the Dead Sea salts. These salts are sold all over the world in many products. It is estimated in the billions of dollars. However, this also seems unlikely to me. The most likely source will be the very literal things stated here that will be very valuable in that time, precious metals and food. How will Israel acquire precious metals? One of the scrolls discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls in the Cave 3, high on the cliffs above Qumran, is known as the Copper Scroll. It was discovered in 1952. Essentially this scroll contains a treasure map of places where communal treasures were hidden so the Romans could not find them. The map has never been deciphered. It lists a massive amount of precious metals hidden in three areas; the Yarmuk area, the Jericho area and the Jerusalem area. Just look at these numbers; at location 36 in the Yarmuk area 17 talents of gold and silver, at 37 four talents, at 38 66 talents. A talent was a measurement of weight between 58-75 pounds. So each talent is somewhere between 58-75 pounds of gold and silver. And the list of all these hidden caches goes on and on; 70 talents of silver, 22.5 talents, 22 talents, 9 talents, 12 talents, in the Jericho area, 200 talents of silver, 17 talents, much silver, in Jerusalem, it goes on and on, in Jerusalem one cache lists 900 talents of gold, at minimum that's over 52,200 pounds of gold. These are some serious numbers. Furthermore, some of the lost articles of the Temple are associated with these scrolls, which is a possibility. I realize the controversies over the Copper Scroll but most of these have been answered and in my estimation this will be the source of wealth that Russia and these Islamic nations will invade Israel to take. So the two reasons they will invade are anti-Semitism, to destroy the Jews and for spoil, for great wealth.

The fourth question is how, how will God destroy them? Two main ideas here. First, by confusion. Ezek 38:21, "I will call for a sword against him on all My mountains," declares the sovereign God. "Every man's sword will be against his brother." The invading armies will be struck into confusion so that they fight against one another. God has done this before among armies, such as during the war of Judges 7; He will do it again in the future. Muslims killing Russians and Russians killing Muslims and Muslims killing Muslims. God will create calamity among them. Isa 45:7, so often misused, "The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing peace and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these." This doesn't mean God does good and evil. It means that He brings good on those aligned with Him and He brings calamity among His enemies so that they go to destruction. So the first way God will destroy them is by causing confusion among them. Second, by catastrophe. God will initiate an earthquake resulting in torrential rain, hailstones, fire and brimstone falling on

His enemies. Ezek 38:19 and 22, "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." The results are in verse 22, "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." So God will send a great catastrophic event to befall Gog and his armies, much like He did in the days of Joshua 10 by the hailstones on the Ammorites or in Gen 19 at Sodom and Gomorrah by the earthquake raining down fire and brimstone. So His ancient ways will be revived as He goes forth to defend Israel, the apple of His eye by confusion and by catastrophe.

Finally, the fifth question is what, what will be the results? There are two results. First, the nations will know that the God of Israel is the one true God and they will no longer profane the name of God. This is part of the aftermath of the war and tied in to Ezek 39 which is at the end of the Tribulation. Ezek 39:7, "My holy name I will make known in the midst of My people Israel; and I will not let My holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel." There will be no question just as there was no question in OT times when God delivered Israel through the Red Sea from the Egyptian army. Everyone knew that the God of Israel was the one true God and that He had done this. So the nations will know. Second result, so that Israel is spiritually regenerated. As Andy Woods said, "The aftermath of this war is a converted Israel." Ezek 39:22, "And the house of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God from that day onward." There will not be another apostasy of Israel after this day. From this day on forever they will be a spiritually regenerate nation. Verse 25, "Therefore thus says the Lord God, "Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name. ²⁶"They will forget their disgrace and all their treachery which they perpetrated against Me, when they live securely on their *own* land with no one to make *them* afraid. ²⁷"When I bring them back from the peoples and gather them from the lands of their enemies, then I shall be sanctified through them in the sight of the many nations. ²⁸"Then they will know that I am the Lord their God because I made them go into exile among the nations, and then gathered them *again* to their own land; and I will leave none of them there any longer. ²⁹"I will not hide My face from them any longer, for I will have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel," declares the Lord God." That is all in the kingdom.

In summary, I think it is best to view this battle as having two phases, the battle phase and the aftermath phase. Ezekiel 38 describes the battle phase which will occur in the first half of the tribulation. Five Islamic nations will invade Israel for spoil during the first half of the Tribulation when Israel is at rest and living under the false security of the anti-Christ. God will destroy these Islamic invaders by supernatural means of confusion and catastrophe. Ezekiel 39 describes the aftermath phase which will occur at the end of the Tribulation. The obvious supernatural victory by God will be a testimony to all nations and will be an instrument to bring about the conversion of Israel. The weapons will be burned as free fuel by Israeli's for the first seven years of the millennial kingdom. The multitude of dead bodies from the battle of Gog and Armageddon will be picked clean by the birds and the beasts and cleaned up as a transitional issue going into the kingdom. The clean-up will last seven months and the bones will be buried in a valley re-named Hamon-gog as a memorial to God's victory. A city will

be built for the clean-up crew given the name Hamonah, another memorial to God's victory. These two memorials will remain throughout the entire 1000 years serving as a warning against any who might consider revolting against Christ's kingdom rule. However, these warnings will not be heeded. When Satan is released after the millennium the final battle of Gog and Magog will occur when all the nations come against Israel for the very last time.

I think some practical application of this that I am trying to get you to realize is that so much of the stage has already been set for this battle to occur. If that is the case, how much nearer must we be to the Rapture which will occur before this battle? What I am trying to do is get you to re-evaluate your priorities in life. What are you doing with your life? What are you doing with your time? What are you doing with your resources? Hopefully you are realizing that there really is not much time left and if you are trying to build some kind of kingdom in this world all that is going to go up in smoke in a very short while. I honestly don't think we have much time. Paul says, "buy up the time," "make the most of the time." How could we not conclude that we are living at the very tail end of the Church age since God is already setting the stage for the Tribulation; Israel is back in the land since 1948, Jerusalem is in Israeli hands since 1967, anti-Semitism is once again on the rise, globalist dreams abound, Islam is advancing, Arab nations are aligning with Russia, the list goes on and on...how much longer can it really be?

¹ Tim LaHaye, *Revelation: Illustrated & Made Plain*, 102.

² Andy Woods, *The Middle East Meltdown: The Coming Islamic Invasion of Israel*, p 43.