

THE COMING INVASIONS OF ISRAEL:

Reexamining Ezekiel 38 & 39

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Ezekiel 38

In a fifteen-part presentation on Ezekiel 38 and 39, Tommy Ice begins with this statement: “The battle of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38 and 39 is one of the most debated items in the area of biblical prophecy.”¹ He then cites Ralph Alexander who wrote: “One of the perennial enigmas of Biblical prophecy has been the Gog and Magog event described in Ezekiel 38 and 39.”²

Questions surrounding Ezekiel 38 and 39 include: Do these chapters speak of one invasion of Israel or two; what are the identities of Gog, Magog, and others mentioned; and, finally, what is the timing of the invasion(s)?

¹ Thomas Ice, “Ezekiel 38 and 39,” at https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=pretrib_arch, accessed December 18, 2021, I:1.

² Ralph H. Alexander, “A Fresh Look at Ezekiel 38 and 39,” *Journal of The Evangelical Theological Society*, vol. 17 (Summer, 1974), p. 157.

Regarding this last question, some Bible teachers believe this invasion will transpire prior to the initiation of the Dan 9:27, seven-year, treaty with Israel.³ Others feel it will occur in the first half of the tribulation period,⁴ while others see the timing as sometime between the end of the tribulation period and the return of Christ.⁵

Could it be that none of these options are correct? And could it be that Ezekiel 38 and 39 present two different scenarios, neither of which occurs in any of the aforementioned timings?

To answer these questions, we will first view clues in Ezek 38 as to its timing; then we will look at Ezek 39 to see when it will be fulfilled. Finally, we will view the evidence of these chapters as they relate to the book of Revelation in order to come to the realization that Ezek 38 and 39 predict two different eschatological invasions of Israel.

Before looking at the details of Ezek 38 and 39, it will help to understand the background and overview of the context of these chapters. In doing so, we will see God's purpose in communicating these chapters, as well as the message He seeks to convey.

³ Included in that group are: Tommy Ice, "Ezekiel 38 and 39," I:1; Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, *Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth's Last Days* (Carol Stream, IL; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1996), pp. 9-15; Joel Rosenburg, *The Ezekiel Option* (Carol Stream, IL; Tyndale House Publishers, 2005); Rosenburg, *Epicenter* (Carol Stream, IL; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2006), pp. 251-256; Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003), pp. 106-25; Don Koenig, "When Is the War of Ezekiel 38 and 39 and the War of Psalm 83?", <http://www.thepropheticyears.com/comments/When%20is%20the%20war%20of%20Ezekiel%20chapters%2038.htm>, n.d., accessed November 12, 2010; David R. Reagan, "The Wars of the End Times: How Many and When Will They Happen?", http://www.lamblion.com/articles/articles_tribulation1.php, n.d., accessed November 12, 2010; Jon mark Ruthven, *The Prophecy that Is Shaping History: New Research on Ezekiel's Vision of the End*, (Longwood, FL; Xulon Press, 2003), pp. 117-128. These do not necessarily believe the Ezekiel 38 invasion will occur prior to the rapture. Those who see it occurring before the tribulation period, but not necessarily prior to the rapture of the Church, see a possible time differential between the occurrence of the rapture and the initiation of the seventieth week of Daniel (the seven-year tribulation period), which this writer does not see (see John Claeys, *The Impending Apocalypse*, (Sisters, OR; Deep River Books, 2014), 14-17) and is, quite frankly, absent from Scriptural evidence or indication.

⁴ John F. Walvoord, *The Bible Prophecy Handbook* (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, 1990), 190; Charles H. Dyer, "Ezekiel," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, ed. by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1300; and David Jeremiah, who believes the scene described in Ezekiel 38 will occur "shortly after" Israel signs a treaty, at which time it will be at peace (David Jeremiah, *What in the World Is Going On?: 10 Prophetic Clues You Cannot Afford to Ignore* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2008), p. 162).

⁵ Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of the Lord* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 218-19.

Background and Overview

At the time Ezekiel was given the visions of chapters 38 and 39, Jerusalem, both the capital city of southern Israel and its religious epicenter, had just fallen to the Babylonians. Just before the Jewish exiles to Babylon heard this devastating news, God reveals a series of messages to Ezekiel in one night, which are presented in 33:21-39:29.

The night, most likely, symbolizes Judah's dark and depressing circumstances. Like all of our gloomy experiences, the Jews, undoubtedly, were tempted to ask questions such as: "God, where are You?"; "Lord, what are You doing?"; and "Have You abandoned us?" Therefore, God comes to Ezekiel in the night to assure southern Israel that He is with them; He is faithful; and He will fulfill His word to them.

Ezek 33:21 begins this series of messages with this chronological notice: "And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month, that one who had escaped from Jerusalem came to me and said, 'The city has been captured!'" Each of these night visions commences with: "Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying (way^ehi debar-yhwh 'elay le'mor)."

Alexander helpfully states: "The six[?] messages provide a singular proclamation of hope and encouragement to the exiles who will shortly hear of the fall of the holy city, Jerusalem."⁶

Alexander sees the delineation of the series of messages in this way:⁷

⁶ Alexander, 158.

⁷ See Alexander, 158-159.

1) 33:23-33: This revelation answers Judah's question, "Why, Lord, have You abandoned us to this foreign land?", with this answer: "The land is lost because Israel has disobeyed the Mosaic covenant. Thus, Judah, you are reaping what you have sown (cf. Gal 6:7)" [the present writer's loose paraphrase]. This message is followed by visions of hope.

2) 34:1-31: The Lord will remove Israel's false shepherds; He will deliver Israel from her enemies; and He will become Israel's Shepherd.

3) 35:1-15: God will clear the land of Israel's invaders to prepare for the restoration of Israel to the land.⁸

4) 36:16-37:14: "Yahweh will restore the people physically to the land and cleanse them spiritually as they become participants in the New Covenant."⁹

5) 37:21-28: The Lord will unify Israel under one shepherd / Shepherd,¹⁰ under whom the people will walk in obedience to the Lord.

6) 38:1-39:29: Under the Shepherd's rule, foreign oppressors once again will seek to invade Israel, but the Lord will destroy His enemies, once and for all, not allowing His name, His people, or His land and city to be defiled.

⁸ While Edom is the subject, it represents the long line of Israel's oppressors throughout her history.

⁹ Alexander, 159.

¹⁰ Though David is explicitly mentioned twice in this section, Alexander understands David to represent the Lord Jesus Christ. This writer agrees with Alexander that Jesus will be the King of kings, ruling from Jerusalem; and this writer is willing to possibly see this representation in the first mention of David (37:24), referred to as king; however, this writer sees the second mention of David (David, the prince) to literally refer to David. Why could David not rule over Israel under the rulership of Lord Jesus? That seems to be what is being revealed in Eze 37:25 by calling David prince.

Alexander sees Ezek 38 and 39 as describing the same invasion of Israel,¹¹ with chapter 39 functioning as a restatement of 38.¹² He cites Claus Westermann to show that this restatement “is common to the judgment speech genre toward the end of the sixth and the beginning of the fifth centuries B.C.”¹³

However, of all of the visions of the night, why would the Lord restate the fifth message and no other? Alexander does not attempt to answer that question.

Alexander links chapters 38 and 39 to both Rev 19 and Rev 20.¹⁴ However, this creates a problem to his view that Ezek 38 and 39 describe the same invasion of Israel since Rev 19 portrays the return of Jesus to the earth at the end of the tribulation, while Rev 20:7-10 (which Alexander cites) occurs at the end of the Millennial Kingdom (MK). Alexander calls his view that of “multiple fulfillment,” and charges that those who oppose that view take an understanding that “creates complications and arbitrariness in discerning an accurate interpretation.”¹⁵ However, that is exactly what his view creates.

While Alexander believes Ezek 39 restates 38, he admits he is positing two distinct positions in how they are fulfilled. He understands they are fulfilled through: 1) the Beast of Revelation (as the first Gog) when the armies of the world invade Israel in preparation for the battle against the Messiah at His return; and 2) Satan (the ultimate fulfillment of Gog) when he gathers an innumerable army to invade Israel at the end of the MK.

¹¹ Alexander, 159.

¹² Alexander, 160.

¹³ Alexander, 160; Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, trans. Hugh Clayton White (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), 181-194.

¹⁴ Alexander, 168, 169.

¹⁵ Alexander, 169.

There is an alternative view which eliminates the problem he has created. That view sees Ezek 38 being displayed by Rev 20:7-10 and Ezek 39 being pictured by Rev 19:11-21. If we understand chapters 38 and 39 in this way, then we see *seven* night messages to Ezekiel, rather than six.¹⁶ So, let's analyze this alternative view.

Gog & Magog

Upon reading Ezek 38, the reader will immediately notice the strange names of "Gog and Magog."¹⁷ Interestingly, those names are used together in only three chapters of the Bible—Ezek 38, 39, and Rev 20:7-10.¹⁸ While we are dealing here with the question of when Ezek 38 and 39

¹⁶ Seven is the number of God and the number of completeness and perfection, while six is the number of man (cf. Rev 13:18) and the number of incompleteness and imperfection. Then, if the postulation fits, why not seven messages in the night, instead of six, particularly if they point to the Lord's victory over men who attempt to conquer God's land, city, and people?

¹⁷ Though there is debate regarding the identities of the names and places listed in these verses, it seems they represent surrounding nations of Israel. "Gog" may represent Gentile nations in the future (Allen declares that "Gog" was a once-powerful king who prefigures a future threat, as he refers "to one known by the Greeks as Gyges and to the Assyrians as Gugu, who was a powerful king of Lydia in west Asia Minor in the first half of the seventh century" (Leslie C. Allen, *Word Biblical Commentary: Volume 29: Ezekiel 20-48* (Nashville; Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), 204); Fruchtenbaum views "Gog" as "a title for the ruler of Magog" (Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah* (Tustin, CA; Ariel Press, 1982), 70); Pentecost sees Gog as "the prince of Rosh (J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), 327). "Magog" seems to refer to Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), though some believe it could refer to Central Asia; however, Anderson understands Magog as the nations that follow Gog (Anderson, 167); and Allen seems to agree, as he sees "Magog" as referring to "the people" of Gog (Allen, 207). "Rosh" means "chief" or "prince" and seems to refer to the chief prince of "Meshech and Tubal." While Ice cites C. F. Keil and Wilhelm Gesenius for his argument that "Rosh" is a proper name (more properly, "Ros") referring to Russia (Ice, III:1-V:2), Feinberg refutes that idea (Feinberg, 220). "Meshech" also seems to refer to Asia Minor (Eastern), which is where modern-day Turkey resides (Allen, 204; Ice, V:2-3). "Tubal" most likely also refers to Asia Minor (Southern) (Allen, 204). "Persia" refers to modern-day Iran (Pentecost, 328-29). "Ethiopia" is actually the land south of Egypt, Northern Sudan. "Libya" refers to modern-day Libya. "Gomer" relates to north central Asia Minor (Cappadocia)—not Germany, as some have proposed. "Togarmah" seems to refer to southeastern Asia Minor (the southeastern part of modern-day Turkey, near the Syrian border).

While these names can relate to specific locales, Anderson appears to be correct in stating that Ezek 38 and 39 "enumerate nations from every direction of the compass as members of Gog's entourage" (Anderson, 167). The line-up of nations cited in Ezek 38 is not a full listing of all the invaders of Israel. Instead, it is simply representative of the nations that will invade Israel in the future. The Lord, having gotten His point across regarding the enormity of the entourage, abruptly stops the listing by announcing: "There are *many* people who are with you!" (Ezek 38:6) No matter how the names listed seem to be interpreted, Rev 20:8 reveals that Gog and Magog represent "the nations which are in the four corners of the earth."

¹⁸ Though Gog also appears in 1 Chron 5:4 (in a genealogical listing), Magog is not found in that context.

will occur, we *do* know the timing of the scene starring Gog and Magog, as portrayed in Rev 20:7-10.

The context of those verses is set at the end of the MK, as demonstrated by verses 7-8:

Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number *is* as the sand of the sea.

This usage of Gog and Magog by the Apostle John raises this question: Why would John drop those names in the midst of his description of the final rebellion of mankind without explanation? After all, John could certainly have provided a depiction of this scene without the use of Gog and Magog. In fact, the citation of Gog and Magog by the apostle almost seems to stand as a stark and disjointed comment within the account presented in verses 7-10.

Since Gog and Magog do not seem to add to the contextual understanding of Rev 20:7-10, there appears to be no other reason for their listing other than to alert the reader that what is described in verses 7-10 has been described elsewhere in Scripture.¹⁹ Because there is no explanation of Gog and Magog in 20:7-10, the simple dropping of the names Gog and Magog indicates John knew his readers had a prior understanding of these terms. This also indicates the intent of the apostle to point the readers back to another context where these names have

¹⁹ James Moffatt identifies the scene in Rev 20:7-10 with that of Ezek 38 (see James Moffatt, “The Revelation of St. John the Divine,” *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), V:474). Mounce, also, believes that John mentioned Gog and Magog in order to identify with Ezek 38, signaling that this “war . . . follows the thousand-year reign.” (Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), p. 362.)

previously appeared. In other words, the listing of Gog and Magog in Rev 20:7-10 points the reader to another passage for more detail on this rebellion.²⁰

Thus, by the rare tandem usage of Gog and Magog in Rev 20:7-10, the Apostle John signals his readers he is referring them back to Ezek 38.²¹ This means Rev 20:7-10 presents the same event as portrayed in Ezek 38, though the two passages are communicated from different perspectives.²²

The End of the Kingdom?

²⁰ In the original (Greek) of Rev 20:7-10, the definitive article (“the”) appears before each. Since the Greek article does not normally appear before proper names, this appearance seems to indicate two things: 1) These are not proper names of individuals (instead, they are representative nouns); and 2) the articles indicate previous reference. Thus, “Gog and Magog” point us to a previous Scripture passage (Ezek 38) where we should go for more information on this rebellion.

²¹ It is more natural to see the reference as Ezek 38 rather than 39, as it is the first occurrence of this tandem of names; and chapter 38 provides a closer connection between Gog and Magog, as the names appear within the same verse (v 2: “Gog of the land of Magog”), while the names are separated by several verses (Gog appearing in v 1, while Magog appears in v 6) and several names (e.g., Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal). As mentioned, Moffatt sees this mention of “Gog and Magog” as referring back to Ezek 38 (Moffatt, V:474), as does Mounce (*Revelation*, 362).

²² Ezek 38 looks at the invasion from viewpoint of mankind: Men, moved by greed and jealousy of the bounty of Israel, determine to invade the land (and particularly Jerusalem) to “obtain” the bounty God has given to Israel. Rev 20:7-10 pulls back the curtain to show us what is really going on: Upon Satan’s release from his thousand-year prison sentence, he moves in the hearts of unbelieving mankind to use their greed and jealousy to invade Israel for his benefit. (To see a discussion of unbelievers in the Millennial Kingdom, see John Claeys, *A New World Coming* (Longview, TX: 289 Design, 2016), 136-145.) Satan’s purpose in invading Jerusalem is to seek to gain back the world as his kingdom. Currently, he is the ruler of this world (Lk 4:6; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor 4:3-4; 1 John 5:19); but Jesus won back the world at His crucifixion (cf. Heb 2:14) and will take back the title deed of the world at His return (Psa 2:8-9; Rev 2:26-27; 19:11-20:3). Upon his release, at the end of the Millennial Kingdom, Satan will desperately seek to regain his status as ruler over the world. Thus Ezek 38 presents the picture from the human point of view, while Rev 20:7-10 shows the scene from the standpoint of what is *really* going on—a battle of Satan for God’s kingdom.

In addition to the connection of “Gog and Magog,” there are other clues indicating Ezek 38 and Rev 20:7-10 portray the very same invasion of Israel. First, both picture a great multitude invading Israel.²³ Second, the result in each passage is the same; God destroys them by fire.²⁴

Thirdly, we discover that the scene in Ezek 38 will occur at the end of the MK, the time at which the Rev 20:7-10 scenario occurs. This scenario is presented as the state of peace and total security Israel will be experiencing when the nation is invaded by the hordes. Ezek 38 pictures this state of peace and security by the presentation of phrases such as, “a land of unwalled villages”;²⁵ “a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates”;²⁶ and “Israel dwell[ing] safely.”²⁷ These descriptives indicate a state in which Israel has no fear of enemies. Clearly, Israel is not now dwelling in the kind of security described in Ezek 38; for Israel is on constant alert for missiles being fired from Hamas

²³ Compare Ezek 38:4-7, 9, 15 with Rev 20:8-9.

²⁴ While Ezek 38 presents other ways God will judge the invaders of Israel—such as earthquake (38:19-20), sword (38:21), pestilence (38:22), “flooding rain” (38:22), “great hailstones” (38:22), and brimstone (38:22)—fire is certainly included in God’s destruction of these enemies of Israel (38:22). Though Rev 20:7-10 only mentions fire as God’s instrument of judgment, this does not mean He will not use other means, as well. The judgments mentioned in Ezekiel are intended for all who enter into the land of Israel at that time with evil intent; however, it may be that the judgment of fire may specifically be reserved for those who surround Jerusalem (“the camp,” *parembole* [see Mounce, 363, and Moffatt, V:474, who identify “the camp” with Jerusalem]), as described in Rev 20:9. (Also, see Mounce, 363, who connects the judgment by fire in Rev 20:7-10 with that of Ezek 38:22.) With such a massive number of invaders of Israel (“whose number is as the sand of the sea” [Rev 20:8]), it is likely that only a representative number of them (though a large number, at that) will actually surround Jerusalem, while others will be judged in other regions of Israel. (Or it could be that those who surround Jerusalem are those who are left after the other judgments have come against the rest of the invaders of the land of Israel. If so, the number surrounding Jerusalem could still be extremely large; in fact, they could be the majority number of invaders, while the minority will be killed in other ways—in the northern part of Israel.) If so, then the description of their number in Rev 20:8 represents *all* who fall under Satan’s deception to enter into Israel with the intent of taking great booty from the land, while those mentioned in verse 9 of Rev 20 are *representative* of the entirety of that number, though, as mentioned, the group cited in verse 9 could still be a majority of those so deceived.

²⁵ See Ezekiel 38:11.

²⁶ See Ezekiel 38:11.

²⁷ See Ezekiel 38:14.

and Hezbollah and the build-up of Iran in the region. Certainly, Israel is not at a point in which it is dwelling without walls; for it currently has a 403-mile wall around it.

In fact, Israel will not experience the state of security described in Ezek 38 even after the Dan 9:27 (seven-year) treaty goes into effect.²⁸ The only time Israel will dwell in the kind of security emphasized in Ezek 38 will be during its existence in the MK.

Based on this alone, the invasion of Ezek 38 will not occur until sometime after Jesus begins to rule on the earth. The connection with Rev 20:7-10 shows this invasion will occur at the end of Jesus' thousand-year rule on the earth. Furthermore, there are still at least two more pieces of evidence that show Ezek 38 will be fulfilled within the MK.

The Wealth of Israel at that Time

One of those is the description in verses 12 and 13 that at the time of this attack, Israel will exist in a state of bountiful possession. As these verses indicate, the wealth of Israel will be such that it will tempt a vast multitude to risk coming into Israel (while Jesus is ruling from Jerusalem) to plunder the nation. This is the kind of prosperity Israel will enjoy during the

²⁸ One clue indicating that Israel will not be in total security after signing the end-times (seven-year) treaty is that Israel's leaders will make a secret treaty with the king of the North (Claeys, *The Impending Apocalypse*, 83-85). Since the "beast" of Revelation will begin his rule over the world from Jerusalem at the point the treaty is broken—three and a half years into it—the secret treaty will need to be confirmed prior to that point, as beyond that point, Israel's leaders will not be in control and will not be able to make a treaty after the midpoint of the tribulation period. (Also, the leaders of Israel will make the secret treaty with the king of the North who will be "replaced" by the Beast at the midpoint of the tribulation; see Claeys, *Impending Apocalypse*, 83-94.)

kingdom age.²⁹ However, there is currently no talk, or even hint of a talk, of invading Israel because of its bountifulness.³⁰

The Result of God’s Judgment upon Gog

The result of God’s judgment upon Gog in Ezek 38 is that God will be known and magnified and hallowed in the eyes of the nations. According to verse 16, the result of this “battle” is “that the nations may know Me, when I am hallowed in you, O Gog”; and in verse 23, God announces this result: ‘ “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.” ’

Though this is to be the daily prayer of believers today,³¹ God is not “known in the eyes of many nations” today, and will not be known in that global sense prior to the MK; this will only be true in the kingdom.³² This means that Ezek 38 will be fulfilled within the MK; and, as the connection with Rev 20:7-10 shows us, the Ezek 38 scenario will occur at the very end of the MK.

The Timing of Ezekiel 38

²⁹ See, for examples, Isaiah 30:23-25; Ezekiel 34:26; 36:29; Zechariah 8:11-13, 23; 9:16-17; Joel 2:21-27; and Amos 9:13-14.

³⁰ Iran has spoken of destroying Israel for its mere existence in the Middle East but not because of its bountifulness. See, for examples, “Iran Supreme Leader Touts 9-Point Plan to Destroy Israel,” by Stuart Winer and Marissa Newman, Nov 10, 2014, at [Iran supreme leader touts 9-point plan to destroy Israel | The Times of Israel](#), accessed January 23, 2022; “Iranian General: Death to Israel Not Really a Metaphor,” by Daniel Greenfield, May 29, 2021, at [Iranian General: "Death to Israel" Really Not a Metaphor | Frontpagemag](#), accessed January 23, 2022; “Israel Should be Wiped Off Map, Says Iran’s President,” by Ewen MacAskill and Chris McGreal, October 26, 2005, at [Israel should be wiped off map, says Iran's president | Israel | The Guardian](#), accessed January 23, 2022.

³¹ Cf. Mt 6:9-13; see Claeys, *A New World Coming*, 76-78.

³² Knowing God reflects a relationship with Him which comes via the reception of eternal life (by faith in Jesus Christ); see John 17:3, for example.

Thus, we have seen that the invasion of Israel described in Ezek 38 will occur at the end of the MK of Jesus Christ, but we have not yet brought Ezek 39 into this discussion. This may seem strange since many teachers of Bible prophecy today view chapters 38 and 39 as a unit.³³ However, upon closer examination, we will see that the two chapters describe two different invasions, occurring at two different periods of time.

Ezekiel 39

While Ezek 38 provides parallels with Rev 20:7-10, Ezek 39 describes Rev 19:11-21—the return of Christ to the earth. If this is true, then while Ezek 38 will occur at the end of the MK, Ezekiel 39 will occur at the end of the seven-year tribulation period.

One piece of evidence indicating the two chapters represent two distinct invasions commencing at different times, is the repetition in the announcement from God to Ezekiel that He is “against Gog,” found in 38:1-3 and 39:1. Both proclamations address Ezekiel as “son of man,” followed by the announcement. The original Hebrew wording of the beginning of this proclamation is exactly the same in each incident—down to the very letter—which is represented well by the New King James Version rendition in this way: “ ‘ “ ‘Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal’ ” ’ ”.³⁴

³³Representatives of this view include: Charles H. Dyer, “Ezekiel,” 1299-1302; Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of the Lord* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), p. 227; Leslie C. Allen, *Word Biblical Commentary: Volume 29: Ezekiel 20-48* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), p. 202; and C.F. Keil, “Ezekiel, Daniel,” C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), IX: 171.

³⁴ See Ezekiel 38:3 and 39:1. The Hebrew phrase is: ותבל הנני אליך גוג נשיא ראש משך (hnyy 'lyd nvn nshy' r'sh mshch ytbl)

Interestingly, some view this repetition as simply a reiteration of the first, indicating an emphasis by repetition.³⁵ However, why would God announce to Ezekiel that He is against Gog, then describe the invasion of Israel by this multitudinous army of invaders, stop in the middle of that description to state once again that He is against Gog, only to continue to describe the same battle? Would it not make more sense to see the second statement of God “against Gog” as showing *another* reason why He is against Gog—by describing another invasion of Israel by Gog?

To see the second proclamation as distinct from the first makes sense since the details that follow it in Ezek 39 are different from those found in Ezek 38. If the second proclamation was simply a repetition while continuing to focus on the same battle, one would expect to find repetition of other elements, as well, which appear to be absent in Ezek 39.

Another Clue: An Invitation to Feast on Flesh

Thus, it seems Ezek 38 and 39 present two different prophecies to be fulfilled on two separate occasions. While Ezek 38 will be fulfilled at the end of the MK, clues within Ezek 39 indicate its fulfillment will take place at the end of the tribulation period.

Compare, for example, the description of Ezek 39:17-20 with Rev 19:17-18.

Ezekiel 39:17-19

“. . . thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Speak to every sort of bird and to every beast of the field: “Assemble yourselves and come; gather together . . . to My sacrificial meal which I am sacrificing for you, a great

sacrificial meal . . . , that you may eat flesh and drink blood. You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, . . . at My sacrificial meal which I am sacrificing for you. You shall be filled at My table with horses and riders, with

³⁵ See, once again, Dyer, Allen, and Keil and Delitzsch.

mighty men and with all the men of war,” says the Lord GOD.

Revelation 19:17-18

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, “Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.”

As in Rev 19, which is set at the return of Christ,³⁶ Ezek 39 provides an invitation to the birds to eat the flesh of the mighty men who have come out to war against Jesus at His return. The invitation in Rev 19 is clearly the same one presented in Ezek 39; for there is the same call to the birds of prey to feast upon the carnage of men, including (in both passages) the flesh of the “mighty” and rulers, the flesh of “horses” and their riders, the flesh of “all the men of war” (quoted from Ezekiel 39:20 but clearly portrayed in Rev 19:18-21), and the explicit statement in each passage that the birds of prey will eat till they are full.³⁷

As he did in Rev 20:7-10, the Apostle John in Rev 19 purposely provides an allusion (in this case, to Ezekiel 39) to show the connection with the previous description. More specifically, the apostle demonstrates by that reference that the invasion of Ezek 39 is the same described in Rev 19.³⁸

Three More Pieces of Evidence

Just as Rev 19 describes an event occurring prior to the MK, Ezek 39 indicates the same by three aspects of God’s announcement to Ezekiel. God reveals that, following the battle of Ezek 39, He will regather into the land of Israel those Jews who had been scattered due to persecution,³⁹ He will pour out His Spirit upon Israel,⁴⁰ and He will be “hallowed” in Israel in

³⁶ See Claeys, *Impending Apocalypse*, 205-208.

³⁷ Compare Ezek 39:19 with Rev 19:21.

³⁸ This identification is seen by Mounce, 348. John Walvoord sees the apparent connection, but, while admitting that Rev 19 alludes to Ezek 39, he, for some unknown reason, states that the battle of Ezek 39 will occur prior to the scene in Rev 19 (John Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 278-279).

³⁹ See Ezek 39:25.

⁴⁰ See Ezek 39:29.

the sight of all the nations,⁴¹ all of which are connected with God’s promises to Israel regarding the coming kingdom.

Following the seven-year tribulation period—in preparation for the establishment of His kingdom upon the earth—God will regather the Jews.⁴² It will be at the end of that seven-year era when God will pour out His Spirit upon believing Israel,⁴³ providing Jews with a new and glorious relationship with God that will last forever.⁴⁴ Then God will be revered (“hallowed”) in Israel before all nations (in the MK), setting His “glory among the nations” for the entire world to see.⁴⁵

How Chapter 39 Can Occur Before Chapter 38

It should be noted that the book of Ezekiel is not a chronological presentation⁴⁶ but a series of visions God manifested to the prophet on specific themes.⁴⁷ The book itself presents, basically, a chronologically-ordered presentation of Ezekiel’s life in connection with the times at

⁴¹ See Ezek 39:27. The word “hallowed” (qadash) is used a number of times in Ezek to refer to the reverence given to God by those dwelling in the MK (Ezek 20:41; 28:22, 25; 36:23; 38:16; 39:27). This is what Jesus meant in Mt 6:9 when He instructed His followers to pray “hallowed be Your name.” It is when the kingdom comes to the earth that God’s name will be hallowed among Israel and before the nations. See Claeys, *A New World Coming*, 76-78.

⁴² This scattering due to persecution will take place during the last three and half years before Christ’s return. For more on this, see Claeys, *Impending Apocalypse*, 41-48, 101-122, 191-208.

⁴³ See Zech chapters 12-14 and the commentary in Claeys, *Impending Apocalypse*, 191-205.

⁴⁴ See Ezekiel 39:22, 27-29.

⁴⁵ See Ezekiel 39:21.

⁴⁶ C. F. Keil appears to contradict this understanding when he states that “the prophecies of the first, third, and fourth parts [of the book] are throughout arranged in chronological order,” while the prophecies of the second “are disposed according to their actual subject matter” (Keil, “Ezekiel,” op. cit., p. 8). However, he is referring to the time at which Ezekiel was given—and delivered—his revelations (ibid). The prophecies themselves—that is, the times of their fulfillments—are not chronologically-arranged.

⁴⁷ Keil sees the book presented in two divisions with the first division presenting “announcements of judgment upon Israel and the heathen nations” in chapters 1-22 and the second division showing forth “announcements of salvation for Israel” in chapters 23-48 (ibid, p. 7).

which he receives the recorded revelations from God.⁴⁸ However, Ezekiel's prophecies are not necessarily chronologically-ordered.

For example, in "the last great division of Ezekiel's prophecy,"⁴⁹ chapters 35 and 36 portray God's judgment upon Edom⁵⁰ and God's blessing and salvation of Israel. The judgment upon Edom is recognized as occurring at the end of the tribulation period,⁵¹ while premillennialists are in agreement with chapter 36 being fulfilled in the MK.⁵²

While chapter 36 ends with Israel experiencing God's blessing in the MK, chapter 37 begins with southern Israel (Judah) in captivity in Babylon in the sixth century B.C.⁵³ However, chapter 37 proceeds through the rest of Israel's history on into the future kingdom in its fulfillment. So, when many teach that the event(s) of chapters 38 and 39 will occur prior to the coming kingdom, they are admitting that chapters 36-39 of Ezekiel are not chronologically-ordered. Hence, to view the invasion of chapter 39 as occurring prior to the invasion of chapter 38 does not violate the ordering of the book of Ezekiel, particularly the chapters immediately preceding them.

The Summary

⁴⁸ This seems to be what is meant by Dyer when he states that "a definite chronological movement is evident within the book" (Dyer, 1226).

⁴⁹ This description of Ezekiel 35-48 has been coined by Charles Feinberg (Feinberg, 218).

⁵⁰ Dyer sees Edom here as representing all of Israel's "bitter foes" (Dyer, 1295).

⁵¹ Dyer sees this judgment portrayed in Mt 25:31-46 (Dyer, 1295).

⁵² Feinberg's discussion of chapter 36 is a classic premillennial explanation, seeing the final fulfillment in the kingdom (Feinberg, 205-211).

⁵³ Dyer is representative of the premillennial understanding here (Dyer, 1298).

Therefore, these clues tell us that the battle of Ezek 39 will occur prior to the MK. In fact, more specifically, the invasion of chapter 39 will take place immediately before the return of Christ, while the scenario presented in Ezek 38 will transpire at the end of the coming kingdom, as described in Rev 20:7-10.