

EZEKIEL 38-39

Message 1

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Reading:

INTRO: There is a most incredible prophecy about a war that has never happened, and will, without doubt, happen in the future. It is found in Ezekiel 38-39. It is a prophecy about a northern coalition of countries that comes against Israel in the latter days. It is agreed that Russia is the head of this coalition of countries. From now on I will simply call this the Ezekiel war. Let me add that I will cover much more than the Ezekiel war because I had to study much more in order to see where it fits in the scheme of prophecy.

I will be more in teaching mode than preaching and I won't make a conclusion to this message. We will go until our time is up and then begin right there in the next message. You may have to use both sides of your outline sheet.

Before I say anything further let me just say how insignificant I feel in dealing with this subject in comparison to men like David Hocking or J. Dwight Pentecost and a good number of others. Some of these men have such a wide understanding of OT prophecy that I feel very insignificant in dealing with a subject like this. However, over the years I have desired to study this more in depth than I have in the past but when I looked at it and saw how big it is, I got tired before I got very far. Also, if I have opportunity to study further in the future, it is possible that my views will change as I gather more information. Nothing is set in cement other than that this war will happen in the future.

Then some time ago I was told about a message by Hunt on these chapters. Although I did not find what he said helpful, it caught my interest. It was in a time I had some time to give to this subject and the interest was there and so I began once more.

To me, it is beyond question that the premillennial return of Christ is the correct view. One's system of Bible interpretation determines for the most part what one's view of eschatology or end time teaching will be. I believe in the literal interpretation of Scripture unless figures of speech are

involved. That means you have to be able to show that something is a figure of speech before you seek some other interpretation than the literal.

Let me give you an example from the book of Revelation. Unless one is a literalist, this book makes no sense. That is because the non-literalist has no rules on how to interpret the book. So turn to Revelation 12 for an example of a figure of speech. We'll read verses 1-3:

1 Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.

2 Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.

4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

Is it possible that a woman could be clothed with the sun? No. Could a woman have the moon under her feet? No. Could she have twelve literal stars on her head? No. We would understand then that this is not to be taken literally. Then in verse 3 we have a great fiery red dragon. Was this a literal fiery red dragon? No. How do I know that? Look at verse 9:

9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

It tells us later that this red dragon speaks of Satan. This is apocalyptic language and speaks figuratively of something other than its literal meaning. Where ever such language is used one must seek Scripture for an answer as to what is symbolized.

So we go now to Revelation 20. We begin in verse 1:

1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Note first that we have an interpretation of what the red dragon of our previous passage symbolized. It is the devil! So the word "Devil" and "Satan" now are names for the head of all evil spirits, and this is literal. In the next number of verses the number 1,000 occurs 6 times. Is that literal or figurative? Is 1,000 years possible? Yes. And unless there is a reason to not take it literally, or we are told what those thousand years represent, one should take it literally.

Now let me show you the views of when the battle of Ezekiel 38-39 happens. **(Overhead # 1: "Views of when 38-39 is fulfilled).**

Slide 1: Before the rapture

Today many prophecy students are keeping a sharp eye on Russia. She is presently seeking to overtake the Ukraine and many think if they take the Ukraine then some of the other smaller countries will be next. But what is most interesting to prophecy students is that Russia and Israel, who have been quite friendly with each other for some years are now beginning to disagree. Russia has vested interest in Syria and Israel is constantly bombing war materials there. Iran has been sending war material to Syria and Israel keeps bombing it and now finally Russia is demanding a halt to the bombing. We are here talking about countries involved in the prophecy before us. Those who hold to the view that Russia invades Israel before the tribulation think that this means that the Ezekiel war may soon happen. I personally do not think it will happen before the tribulation, but I must admit I do not know that.

Others say this war...

Slide 2: It happens after the rapture but before the tribulation.

Slide 3: It happens before the middle of the tribulation.

Slide 4: It happens at Aramageddon.

Slide 5: It happens at the end of the millennium.

How many of you are familiar with Joel Rosenberg? He believes that this war will happen before the tribulation and you can read his books and you will be amazed at how much has happened almost like he described it in his books. I listened to two message by David Hocking, another man who is like a giant in biblical prophecy. He also thinks this war happens before the tribulation. Many hold this view. I happen to hold to the view that this will happen at the end of the tribulation. Maybe some day I will see enough evidence to change my mind.

Let me give you the some of what Hocking said. He said that the US intelligence department including the central intelligence agency, the CIA, the FBI and military intelligence department have all had Joel Rosenberg speak to them and present this whole view and then they tell him afterward that this is what they believe will happen as well. Hocking talked to Joel about this. And Joel had been shocked that not one person in the intelligence field was surprised at all at what he said. What surprised the intelligence people was how Joel had that kind of information. They asked him where he got it. He said he got it from the Bible. They then had him come back and teach Ezekiel 38-39 to them. Joel has been a political consultant. He can personally name all the big names like the Clintons etc. He personally knows Benjamin Netanjahu. He was a campaign advisor and all kinds of things in the US and he said all his efforts failed. And one of his children said, "Why don't you write a book about the Bible? Scare the people to death!" That is what he did, and now he has huge opportunities to talk with world leaders. And Joel Rosenberg holds the view that Ezekiel war will take place before the tribulation.

Now let me tell you what surprises me about Ezekiel 38-39. It was prophesied some 2,600 years ago and it is so relevant today that the US intelligence has the same view of Russia and surrounding countries as these two chapters. That this is even a possibility after 2,600 years is phenomenal in itself. The US intelligence does not believe in the rapture, of course, but they believe that Russia and these countries are set to invade Israel.

So here is our big question: Are the battles of Ezekiel 38-39 and Armageddon the same battles, or do they happen at a different time? Now, besides dealing with this big question, I trust once more we will be challenged to consider the future and what the Bible has to say about it. David Hocking, at the end of the study of these two chapters, said he thinks this battle will happen before the tribulation. He also said he could not be sure. But in the end he asked this: "Now is it possible that these chapters could be fulfilled this week? Is there any reason why it couldn't happen that way?" And then he said that there are plenty of reasons to believe it will happen that way.

I will give the reasons why I disagree with that. You will judge for yourself but realize this; that you are listening to someone who knows very little compared to the men I have mentioned. One of the things that plays into one's view is that Christ's coming is presented in the NT as being imminent and I'll say more about that in another message.

Now let me give you a brief overview of the book of Ezekiel. I take this from Charles Ryrie's outline which seems good to me.

(Overhead # 2)

1. EZEKIEL'S CALL AND COMMISSIONING (1:1-3:27)
2. PROPHECIES AGAINST JUDAH AND JERUSALEM (4:1-24:27)

Here we see that the bulk of his prophecies were against God's people and he describes some of the horrendous sins they had fallen into.

3. PROPHECIES AGAINST FOREIGN NATIONS (25:1-32:32)
4. PROPHECIES OF ISRAEL'S RESTORATION (33:1-39:29)

In this section from 33:1-39:29 we see prophecies that were not fulfilled for 2,600 years. And then in 1948 we have a very important date. Look at 34:7-13:

7 *'Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:*

8 *"as I live," says the Lord GOD, "surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food for every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, nor did My*

shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock" –

9 *'therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the LORD!*

10 *'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them."*

11 *'For thus says the Lord GOD: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out.*

12 *"As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day.*

13 *"And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country.*

14 *"I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.*

15 *"I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down," says the Lord GOD.*

16 *"I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment."*

We have seen this in the process of being fulfilled since 1948. Now look at 36:7-12:

7 *'Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "I have raised My hand in an oath that surely the nations that are around you shall bear their own shame.*

8 *"But you, O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they are about to come.*

9 *"For indeed I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown.*

10 *"I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities shall be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt.*

11 *"I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bear young; I will make you inhabited as in former times, and do better for you than at your beginnings. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.*

12 *"Yes, I will cause men to walk on you, My people Israel; they shall take possession of you, and you shall be their inheritance; no more shall you bereave them of children."*

In the later 1800's Mark Twain went to Israel. For almost 2,000 years Israel had been a largely abandoned land. When he had been there he described it as a god-forsaken land. If he could wake up today and see this land he would not believe that this is the same land. Not long after Israel had once again become a nation, the Arab population begged other countries not to allow Israel to let in any more people. They said the land cannot produce enough to sustain more people.

In 1948 there were just over 800,000 people in Israel. Just recently Israel exceeded 9.5 million people. Not only are they producing enough for their country, they are exporting! Just the other day we bought grapefruit in Costco that came from Israel.

Now go to chapter 37. We begin in verse 1:

1 *The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones.*

2 *Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry.*

3 *And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know."*

4 *Again He said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!*

5 *'Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: "Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live.*

6 *"I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the LORD."'"*

7 *So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone.*

8 *Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them.*

Some of these prophecies were not fulfilled for 2,600 years! Today they either have been or are in the process of fulfillment. Look now at verse 9:

9 *Also He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live."'"*

This prophecy still awaits fulfillment. It happens at the end of the tribulation. And here is what I am saying. Since 1948 we have been seeing huge prophecies being fulfilled. But when we come to Ezekiel 38 through the rest of the book, these prophecies have never been fulfilled yet. What we learn is that they must still be fulfilled.

We will be looking at chapters 38-39. Today these chapters have been in the sights of many prophecy teachers. These chapters will be fulfilled somewhere between now and the end of the tribulation. Of late many think they will take place before the tribulation, and among those are Joel Rosenberg and other great names. I take the view that they will be fulfilled at the end of the tribulation and we will look at the reasons for the various views of their fulfillment.

5. PROPHECIES RE: ISRAEL IN THE MILL. KINGDOM (40:1-48:35)

When we come to chapters 40-48, this section deals with the temple that will be set up in the millennium. This is a temple that is different from any other. There have been two temples in Israel so far. The first temple was built by

Solomon about 1,000 years before Christ. Four hundred years later it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.

When the Jews returned from the Babylonian exile, the temple was rebuilt. When the Jews who had seen the first temple beheld this rebuilt temple, they wept. It was nothing in comparison to Solomon's temple. But King Herod beautified this temple until there was a saying like this: Whoever has not seen this temple has not seen anything beautiful.

This temple stood when Jesus was on earth. But you remember that He told His disciples that the day would come when there would not be one stone left upon another of this temple. Forty years after Jesus ascended, in 70 AD, Titus, a Roman general came and this temple was destroyed entirely.

There has never been another temple. Either before, or when the tribulation begins, the temple will be rebuilt again in Jerusalem. Today preparations have been underway for a good number of years to rebuild this temple. If the Jews would try that today, we would have World War III. But we believe that not too long from now this temple will be rebuilt. I believe that the rapture of the Church will take place before that happens.

But this third temple will not outlast seven years. And when Christ returns to earth one of the things that will happen soon after, will be the building of the temple described in Ezekiel 40-48. And it is at the description of that temple that the book of Ezekiel closes.

This outline gives an overview of the book of Ezekiel. Chapters 1-3 gives us Ezekiel's call to ministry. Chapters 4-24 deal with rebellious Israel and the prophecies against her. Chapters 25-32 tell us how God is going to deal with many of Israel's enemies. Chapters 33-39 deal with the restoration of Israel. Much of this has already happened and much is still to come. Chapters 40-48 deal with restored Israel in the millennium.

So with that rather long introduction, we want to begin on the text of Ezekiel 38-39. Remember, chapter 37 prophesied the regathering of Israel, and remember that this has happened already, although we can say it is still ongoing. Again and again I read of Jews making Aliya to Israel.

I. THE TEXT OF EZEKIEL 38-39

Before we begin on chapters 38-39 let me give you a little heads up. If you are relatively new to prophecy and in these studies it should happen that you think I am a very knowledgeable prophecy student, let me say this, I feel like an ant in comparison to men like Joel Rosenberg or David Hocking or J. Dwight Pentecost, and I am sure others as well if I knew them. I am not trying to be humble. Those are the facts. But I still have my own opinion. And when you read men like Joel Rosenberg and others you can weigh what I say against what they say. I enjoy reading them and studying them. I differ with them on the timing of the battle described in these two chapters but I gladly admit I might be wrong.

A. The Battle of Ezekiel 38-39 (Ezek. 38:1-39:8)

Intro: As we begin reading 38:1-16 take note that twice God says to Gog, "I will." In the same passage seven times He says of Gog, "You will", showing what Gog will do. It occurs in 6:8 twice; then once in 9, 10, 11, 15. So we are told what Gog will do. We are just going to read through and I will comment briefly as we go. I understand Gog to be the leader of Russia and the northern confederacy of nations that goes against Israel.

1. Gog's invasion of Israel (38:1-17)

a. God's instruction to Ezekiel (1-3a)

In verses 1-3a we have God's instruction to Ezekiel. It says:

1 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,

3a "and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD:

b. God's message to Gog (3b-6)

In 3b-6 we have God's message to Gog. It is this:

3b *"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.*

Here we have what we call the northern coalition, of which Gog, the leader of Russia is the head. When we read prophecies such as this book or Revelation, we must understand that these nations are the nations that existed at that time. And also, we must understand that the prophets describe what they see with words they have. If they saw modern armaments, they would describe them with terminology they have.

Now I won't take time to deal with the different views of who it is thought that all of these nations speak of. There is general agreement that Gog and Magog describes Russia and her leader. The other nations are the nations that will come with Gog. So Russia heads up this confederation of nations, but as you see there are other nations with them.

But note that God says, "I will turn you around." It seems as if he is heading off some other direction and then God says, "I will turn you around." Then He says, "I will put hooks in your jaws." I believe God draws Gog's attention to something he cannot resist and we'll try to find out what that may be in later messages.

Here is a map of the nations Ezekiel mentions here:

(Overhead # 3)

c. What Gog should do (7)

In verse 7 God now instructs Gog to be ready for what will happen in the last days. Over the years Russia has been preparing herself for this future day though she doesn't know it. There is a legitimate question as to who was worse, Joseph Stalin or Adolf Hitler. Nobody knows who of these two killed more of his own people. One writer said Stalin killed more in the Ukraine than Hitler killed. Russia and the mindset in this country is shaping this land for what is coming.

Verse 7 says:

7 "Prepare yourself and be ready, you and all your companies that are gathered about you; and be a guard for them.

Today, by the actions of Russia and these other nations listed here, they are preparing themselves for the time described in these chapters. I may be wrong, but I personally do not see Russia ready for this to happen today.

d. What will happen in the latter years (8-9)

In verses 8-9 we are now told what will happen in the latter years. These are the years in which we are today. It says:

*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."*

Notice first that this will happen after many days. This was prophesied some 2,600 years ago.

It says Russia and these nations will be visited. Something will happen in this land. There will be some visitation. Something will come to them. And when they have this visitation, they will come into the land of those who have been brought back from the sword. That is the regathering of Israel. They faced extermination by Hitler. Six million died. He who does not know about the holocaust is not well educated, biblically speaking.

Not only are they brought back from the sword, they are gathered from many peoples. Over and over the OT prophets said Israel would be regathered. We have seen this in Ezekiel 37 and it is still happening today.

Then it says these mountains had long been desolate. That is what Mark Twain saw and described, but it is no longer true. It is anything but desolate today. And then it says something most unusual from today's perspective. It says, "All of them dwelling in safety." Now I want to ask you a difficult question: How many of you see Israel as dwelling in safety today? There are those who think they are because of their incredible army and others who think they are not.

So we are told that these nations will gather in Israel against Israel.

e. Why that will happen (10-12)

Now the passage will answer the question as to why Gog goes to Israel. We go to verses 10-12:

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 unwalled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates'*

And here is the reason Gog goes to Israel:

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.

On that day when they receive a visitation, thoughts will enter Gog's mind. Gog is the human leader. So far we have three major points here. First, this will happen when Israel is at peace and they dwell in safety. I personally do not think that is true today. Second, the land of Israel that was a waste place for so many years is inhabited by a people that has been regathered out of the nations. This is true today. You talk about a land of waste places. The Jews bought malaria infested swamps from the Arabs. They cleaned them up and today and for many years they have produced huge crops.

And then third, these nations come to take booty. They have come for economic gain. This country that had next to nothing is producing to such an extent that they have acquired livestock and goods. Shortly after Israel became a nation, the Arabs screamed to the nations: "Do not allow more people to come to this country. It can't produce enough for them all." But today they have millions more people and they are exporting out of an agricultural area much smaller than our MD. When Gog comes Israel is wealthy. And these nations have come to take, in the words of the KJV, a spoil. Years ago I heard it said they had come to take, not a spoil, but oil. But they had no oil. And now recently, they have found oil as well. Soon they may be exporting to Europe because of the sanctions against Russia who was exporting there. When Gog comes they are prosperous on every hand.

But note again that it says that Israel dwells in safety. They dwell without walls, not having bars or gates. This is a very important point

and raises this question: do they dwell in
safety now, or is this sometime in the future?