

The Rise of Russia Part 3

A study of the Ezekiel 38-39 conflict

Text: Ezekiel 39:1-22

Introduction:

1. Review: The ancient names and the geographic location of Gog's army clearly point to Russia as being the main aggressor in this end times conflict against Israel.
2. Review: We believe this invasion takes place in the first half of the tribulation period when Israel feels she is safe due to the peace treaty she has signed with Antichrist (Dan. 9:27). This battle is just one facet of God's judgment upon the nations during the tribulation period when His wrath is poured out upon the ungodly (Rev. 3:10).
3. Ezekiel 39 presents a continuation of the prophecy concerning this end times battle. It particularly focuses on the defeat of Gog and his allies by the hand of Almighty God. Concerning chapter 39, Stevely writes, "Chapter 39 takes up the theme of the previous chapter and gives more detail of how God will deal with the invading force." Sorenson adds, "Chapter 39 sets for the full degree of the destruction of Gog after its attack against Israel during the tribulation in verses 1-22. The chapter concludes with a vision of the restoration of Israel in the Millennium in verses 23-29."
4. Outline for Ezekiel 39
 - The Annihilation in this Battle (Vs. 1-8)
 - The Aftermath of this Battle (Vs. 9-20)
 - The Aim of this Battle (Vs. 21-22)

I. THE ANNIHILATION IN THIS BATTLE (VS. 1-8)

A. The Judgment upon Gog's Army (Vs. 1-5)

1. The Judgment Declared (Vs. 1-3)
 - a. God's position towards the invading army (Vs. 1).
 - i. Through Ezekiel, God addresses Gog again, declaring that he is 'against' him and his invading force. God makes it very clear which side of this battle He is on!
 - ii. "Son of man, set thy face **against** Gog" (38:2).
 - iii. "prophecy **against** him" (38:2).
 - iv. "Behold, I am **against** thee, O Gog" (Vs. 38:3).
 - v. "prophecy **against** Gog" (39:1)
 - vi. "Behold, I am **against** thee, O Gog" (39:2)

- vii. Note: While this prophecy has to do with a future conflict against Israel, as believers we should be against Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Understanding Ezekiel 38 & 39 and where the rise of Russia is leading should help inform our opinion on this current conflict. Putin and communism are not heroes despite the claims of some ignorant conspiracy theorists. Study the history of Communist Russia and its persecution of Bible believing Christians even to this day! Study the history of totalitarian, dictator run regimes and you will never be able to proclaim Putin a hero. The fact that Ukraine is known for its corruption as a European country does not excuse the bombing of its hospitals and the slaughter of its people.
 - b. God's purpose for the invading army (Vs. 2).
 - i. Notice that God is sovereignly and completely in control of this situation. Notice the use of the personal pronoun 'I' repeatedly from Vs. 2 to 8 (at least 10 times).
 - ii. God would draw the army down and then turn it back, leaving only a sixth of the army left alive.
2. The Judgment Detailed (Vs. 3-5)
- God declares:
- a. The defeat of Gog's weaponry (Vs. 3). God says he will smite the bow out of their left hand and the arrows out of their right hand; a graphic picture of the neutralization of Gog's weaponry. Warriors from the north were known in ancient times for their skills as bowmen (e.g., the Scythians).
 - b. The defeat of Gog's soldiery (Vs. 4-5).
 - i. The description of it (Vs. 4-5a). They would 'fall' upon the mountains (Vs. 4) and in the open field (Vs. 5a). God would "give" them to the birds and beasts to be devoured. This is further documented in Vs. 17-20.
 - ii. The guarantee of it (Vs. 5b; Vs. 8). God's Word is the guarantee that this will take place. When God says something will happen, it is as good as history! "Verse 8 illustrates the absolute power of God as He declares, "Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord God." His Word is unalterable and the judgment is spoken of as though it had already taken place." (Stevely)
 - c. Ezekiel 38:19-22 documents how God will defeat Gog's army.

B. The Judgment upon Gog's Country (Vs. 6-8)

- 1. The method (Vs. 6a).
 - a. Fire will fall on Magog, the homeland of the invading army (Russia).

- b. Fire will fall on the isles. The word ‘isles’ means “coast, region” (TWOT).¹ “The Hebrew word has a much wider significance than the English word. Its root meaning is habitable land and has the following usages: 1. Dry land, as opposed to water (Is. 42:15). 2. An island surrounded by water (Is. 23:6; Jer. 2:10; Acts 27:16; 28:7; Rev. 1:9). 3. A coastland (Is. 20:6; Gen. 10:5). 4. The farthest regions of the earth (Is. 41:5; Zeph. 2:11).”² Exactly which geographical areas are in view is hard to tell but it could well be that God’s judgment will also fall on some of Gog’s allies.
- 2. The motivation (Vs. 6b-7). God’s ultimate purpose for His own glory and renown is again highlighted. These events will impress the reality of God’s Power and Person upon:
 - a. The heathen generally.
 - b. Israel specifically.

II. THE AFTERMATH OF THIS BATTLE (VS. 9-20)

The prophecy now focuses on the events that come after God defeats Gog’s army. There are three parts to this:

A. The Burning of the Weapons (Vs. 9-10)

Three facts are outlined that emphasize the huge quantity of military hardware left behind by Gog’s defeated army:

- 1. The particulars for the burning (Vs. 9a). The list of weapons emphasizes a variety of war weapons – shields, bucklers, bows, arrows, handstaves and spears. “It is possible that a new type of material will be used for the weapons, a material that will be strong enough to be weapons grade but that will also be burnable without producing great pollution as with plastic.” (Cloud)
- 2. The period of the burning (Vs. 9b). Israel will be burning these weapons for 7 years. Seven is the number of perfection/completion in the Bible and further emphasizes the completeness of God’s victory over Gog’s army.
- 3. The provision from the burning (Vs. 10). The burning of these weapons will serve a useful purpose. It will replace firewood for those seven years!

B. The Booty from the Dead (Vs. 10b)

- 1. The tables are turned so that the would-be spoilers end up being spoiled and the would-be robbers are robbed.
- 2. Remember the evil heart motivation behind this invasion (38:10-12).

C. The Burial of the Dead (Vs. 11-16)

- 1. The Place of the Burying (Vs. 11)

¹ Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, p. 18.

² D Cloud, *Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible and Christianity*, pp. 309-310.

- a. The location of the burial ground (Vs. 11a). It appears this is in the area we now know as the Golan Heights.
 - i. It is described as “the valley...east of the sea” which is likely a reference to the Sea of Galilee. Golan is east of the Sea of Galilee and was the area of major trade routes of ancient times.
 - ii. Verse 18 speaks of this area as including Bashan which included the modern Golan area.
 - iii. The Golan heights have witnessed significant battles in history.
 - b. The title of the burial ground (Vs. 11b). The name ‘Hamongog’ literally means “the multitude of Gog”.
 - c. The stench of the burial ground (Vs. 11c). The smell of all the dead bodies will be overpowering to the point that it will “stop the noses” of those who travel through that area.
2. The Period of the Burying (Vs. 12). “Ezekiel first brought out the vastness of the forces of the enemy by showing the length of time involved and the quantity of material to be burned at the destruction of the enemy forces. Then he underscored the same truth from the angle of the time needed to accomplish the burial of all the slain.” (Feinberg) It will take 7 months to bury the bulk of the slain. Again, the number 7 is significant.
 3. The People doing the Burying (Vs. 13-15)
 - a. The people of Israel generally (Vs. 12-13). We have reference to “the house of Israel” and “all the people of the land” indicating that this work of burying the dead will require considerable effort.
 - b. The full-time buriers specifically (Vs. 14). These men continue past the 7-month period with what is left of the carnage. They will be connected with the work of the passengers (passers-by) described in the next verse.
 - c. The passing travelers additionally (Vs. 15). The “passengers” are mentioned 4 times in these verses. The word refers to those who are passers-by. This indicates that the rout of Gog’s army takes place upon a well-established travel route. As travelers pass through that area, if they come across a bone, they will sign post it so the burial team following can locate and bury it.
 4. The plaque of the Burying (Vs. 16). A nearby town will be called ‘Hamonah’ meaning ‘multitudes’. “A memorial of the disaster will be left in the name of a city which will remind of the vast multitudes who will be involved in the invasion.” (Feinberg)

D. The Banqueting upon the Dead (Vs. 17-20)

The quantity of the corpses will be so great that many will be eaten by the birds and beasts before they can be buried. “Perhaps the scavenging bird and beast accounts for the apparent wide scattering of

bones which must be sought and buried by the “men of continual employment” (Stevely).

1. The summons to the banquet (Vs. 17)
 - a. It is called by God “my sacrifice” twice (also verse 19) and “my table” (Vs. 20) again highlighting that this judgment has come directly from the hand of God.
 - b. Both the beasts of the field and the birds of the air are called to this feast.
 - c. Note: The picture is similar to that of Revelation 19:17-18 which describes the great battle at the end of the tribulation period at Christ’s second advent. It is important to recognize that these are two separate battles.
 - d. Sorenson explains, “Some have rather supposed this to be one battle of the greater theater of the Battle of Armageddon. There certainly are parallels and similarities between that which is described there and that of Revelation 19:17. However, there are clear distinctions as well. For example, the leader of the armies of the Battle of Armageddon is the antichrist. There seems to be no hint of him in Ezekiel 38-39. Moreover, the prophecies of Daniel make clear that the antichrist will arise out of the west and not from Russia and the east. Additionally, the invasion of Israel described in Ezekiel 38-39 is comprised of Russia and about six allies (See 38:1-6). The Battle of Armageddon will involve all nations. See Zechariah 14:2 and Revelation 16:14-16. Though the Russian invasion is described upon the mountains of Israel, the Battle of Armageddon is described as taking place adjacent to Megiddo which is a broad valley ranging eastward and then southward into Jordan and Saudi Arabia. No hint of such is mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39. The conclusion therefore is that though there are similarities between this invasion and the Battle of Armageddon, they are separate and distinct.”³
2. The specifics of the banquet (Vs. 18-20)

The birds and beasts would feast upon:

 - a. Human flesh
 - i. “the flesh of the mighty” (Vs. 18)
 - ii. “the blood of the princes of the earth” (Vs. 18)
 - iii. “mighty men” (Vs. 20)
 - iv. “all men of war” (Vs. 20)
 - b. Animal flesh
 - i. “of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan” (Vs. 18)

³ D Sorenson, *Understanding the Bible*, p. 735.

- ii. "horses and chariots" (Vs. 20)

III. THE AIM OF THIS BATTLE (VS. 21-22)

We are reminded again of the Divine purposes that God is working towards in this whole situation:

A. The Exaltation of God (Vs. 21)

This theme is repeated throughout both chapter 38 and 39 and reveals the ultimate purpose of God through this whole battle is His own glory. This is God's Divine right.

1. Ezekiel 38:16 "And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and **I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes.**"
2. Ezekiel 38:23 "Thus will I **magnify myself, and sanctify myself**; and I will be **known** in the eyes of many nations, and **they shall know that I am the LORD.**"
3. Ezekiel 39:7 "So will **I make my holy name known** in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not *let them* pollute my holy name any more: and **the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.**"
4. Ezekiel 39:13 "Yea, all the people of the land shall bury *them*; and it shall be to them **a renown the day that I shall be glorified**, saith the Lord GOD."
5. Ezekiel 39:21-22 "And **I will set my glory among the heathen**, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. So the house of Israel shall know that I *am* the LORD their God from that day and forward."
6. "Throughout Ezekiel, as in the rest of the Bible, the major theme is the purpose of God to bring glory to His name. To this end God wrought His plan of salvation at Calvary at infinite cost. It is good spiritual exercise to examine whether His purpose is being fulfilled in our lives." (Feinberg).
7. Note: If God is so concerned for His own glory, don't you think we should be passionately concerned that He be glorified in our lives?

B. The Conversion of Israel (Vs. 22)

1. Evidently, God's deliverance of Israel from the Russian invasion will be a catalyst which helps turn Israel back to God.
2. See Rom. 11:25-26.

Conclusion: Are you saved? How important is God's glory in your life? The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.