

**IS THERE A  
RUSSIAN CONNECTION?**

**An Exposition of Ezekiel 37-39**

*by*

*James F. Matheny  
and  
Marjorie B. Matheny*

**Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the Authorized Version (King James Version).**

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# CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Preface</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Chapter 2 Background of the Book of Ezekiel</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Chapter 3 Arguments Against a Post-Millennial Fulfillment</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Chapter 4 Bad News From Jerusalem</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Chapter 5 Regathering of Israel</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Chapter 6 Gog and Magog</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Time line for Future Events</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Chapter 7 Rosh is not Russia</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Chapter 8 God's Final Defeat of Satan</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Epilogue</b>	<b>69</b>

## **PREFACE**

There has been much speculation in recent years concerning a possible Russian invasion of the Middle East. The oil embargo of 1973 coupled with the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in 1979, the continued activity of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the civil war in Lebanon, the rising tide of Moslem fundamentalism and the war between Khomeini's Iran and Iraq have all shaken the stability of the entire Middle Eastern area.

These events have focused attention on a possible realignment of the major political powers of that region. The secular and religious media through articles, books, and television coverage have heightened an awareness on the part of the general public that perhaps the affairs of mankind are once more being shaped by events occurring in the ancient lands of the Bible. There is reason for concern, but the concern should lie not in the possibility that Russia may invade Israel but that so much misinformation is being circulated on the subject.

For years Russia has been trying to establish a power base in the Middle East similar to the one they have in Cuba, but without success. A Soviet attempt in 1958 to establish a base in Egypt looked promising. Russia sent engineers, military advisors, and technicians by the thousands and, at the request of the Egyptian government, materials to construct the large Aswan Dam on the Nile River. The Soviets undertook this expensive project in order to ingratiate themselves to the Egyptian government of Gamal Abdel Nasser. However, after the dam was completed in 1967 and the Russian activities became a threat to the subsequent Egyptian government of Anwar Sadat, he ordered the Russians out. Sadat opened negotiations with the Western nations and eventually made a peace treaty with Israel. The Camp David Accords (the treaty engineered by President Jimmy Carter at the presidential retreat in the hill country of Maryland) temporarily frustrated Russian ambitions in the Middle East.

Russia continues to supply arms and training to Syria, Libya, Iraq, and Middle Eastern terrorist groups for political, economic and territorial leverage in the area, but at this point in history, Russia has not been successful in establishing a base of operations there. While such a base would surely be their desire, the Russians have many reasons not to put an invading army at risk in Israel. First, Russia is no military match for Israel, since in percentage terms Israel's military is the best in the world, tested in combat. Second, their intelligence service keeps Israel the best informed nation on the globe. Third, Israel is willing to fight. More than any people in the world the Jews desire peace, but they also know that if the Holy Land is lost to them now, there will be no second chance. With their backs to the wall, with no choice but to fight, fight they will. The Soviet Union knows that Israel probably has the atomic bomb and that if the nation's security is seriously threatened and no alternative presents itself, Israel will most certainly use that awesome weapon in self-defense. Russia would not risk its own cities in an atomic retaliation. A fourth reason why the Soviets would not invade Israel is their recent frustration in Afghanistan, from whence they are now attempting to disengage their forces. Unable to conquer the Afghan rebels who have very few sophisticated weapons, the Soviets have little incentive to attack such a formidable, well-equipped foe as Israel. Russia, like the United States, is a paper tiger. Further, their tenuous economy must influence any Soviet decision to invade the Middle East. With communal farms that are widely known to be a very weak link in their economic system, the Russians have found it necessary to import large quantities of grain over the years. A nation that cannot feed its own people is not ready for a large-scale war. Finally, while Russia's oil reserves are aging, there is no more incentive for them to invade the Middle East to acquire the oil reserves there than there is for any of the Western nations, the Third World countries, or for that matter, Japan—especially if they have to fight Israel and the Western powers to get it. They are

still the world's foremost exporter of oil, and do not need oil from Arab lands so much as they need oil technology from the West. If at some point in time the nations of the world decide to give them the Middle East (as the Western powers gave them Eastern Europe after World War II), the Soviets will no doubt accept (their policy of world dominion being as it has always been); but those who see the Russians invading the Middle East in quest for oil based on Ezekiel 38-39 are seriously mistaken. A more likely scenario in the future (perhaps as early as the 1990's) would be a joint effort on the part of both Russia and the Western powers, perhaps including Japan, to move in concert to protect their interests in the oil of the Persian Gulf area against the united power of an Arab Bloc led by Iran, but such a move would be totally apart from the passage in Ezekiel.

With that said, does the Bible still teach in Ezekiel 38 and 39 a Russian invasion of Israel? Many claim that it does. Some even believe that a Russian attack on Israel will be the preliminary battle in the Armageddon campaign. Our purpose in this study is to provide solid biblical evidence that Ezekiel 38 and 39 do not predict a Russian invasion of Israel and that the truth of the passage in Ezekiel demands no connection with the present nation of Russia whatsoever.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

When the Bible is not interpreted correctly, when any part of it is distorted by personal opinion or by failure to examine the text, spiritual darkness and intellectual ignorance are inescapable results. Therefore, interpreters of the Word of God must be accurate. They must expose the mind of God, not impose on the Bible their personal opinions.

Expositors must question and examine all writings and teachings, no matter how popular, to determine if they are true to the Scriptures. Further, they must reject any statement that is not compatible with the overall teachings of the Word of God. To interpret Scripture accurately, scholars must follow correct hermeneutical guidelines without which anyone is prone to flights of fantasy—and especially when dealing with the prophetic passages of the Bible. A brief discussion of those guidelines follows.

1. Know what the Bible says. Such advice may seem unnecessary, but a question that I vividly remember hearing during one teacher's lectures at our Seminary was, "Don't you ever read your Bibles?" We seem inclined to study only what others say about the Bible instead of reading the texts for ourselves. Personal study of the Scriptures is necessary if we are to know what the Bible actually says. Such a study may involve an examination of the Hebrew or Greek words of the text with the aid of a good concordance or lexicon.

2. Understand what the Bible means by what it says. Each passage must be in agreement with all other Scripture on a particular subject. The Bible does *not* offer contradictory teachings on the same subject.

3. Since each verse is a part of the biblical whole, each passage must be viewed in its context as a part of that whole. The Sacred Text is the mind of God and must be

handled accordingly. What was the specific purpose God had in mind when He gave a particular portion to the writers of Scripture? The answer to this is a grave responsibility resting on every student of the Scriptures and the very reason the Bible is not for private (one's own exclusive) interpretation, for no man can claim he has cornered the market on truth.

II Peter 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

21 For the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

The contextual principle (determining the meaning of a particular text within the context of its use) guards the Bible from those who would take a few words or verses out of context for some personal advantage—using the Bible and thereby mis-using it. While some have become more qualified than others to interpret the Bible, and while there are those who would do violence to the text, the Word of God still encourages every one to study for himself. In addition, each believer has the same enabling power of the indwelling Holy Spirit to guide and to teach, and no one has been given a monopoly by God.

4. Recognize the culture gap between biblical times and the 20th century. Both the translator and the interpreter must seek to bridge this gap. A real effort must be made to understand the social, political, moral, religious and economic mores which informed the day-to-day existence of the people of those times. Since these mores obviously color the languages, we must understand them if we hope to interpret more accurately.

5. Recognize the diversity in the languages of the Bible. Addressing this issue is one of the most important tasks of the Bible interpreter, who must understand the structural differences between these languages. Translating from the Greek or Hebrew into English is not just a matter of



finding a word that seems to fit. The puzzling task is to find the word or words that most clearly convey the thought God originally intended in a particular context.

6. Be prepared to cross racial lines and to acknowledge the vast difference in the way the descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth think. Since Semites wrote most of the Bible, Gentiles must learn to think like Semites when interpreting the Old Testament. The New Testament is particularly difficult because so much of it was written by Semites (e.g., Peter, John, and Paul) in the Greek language. Thus one must consider how a Hebrew would think in Greek. One can readily see the difficulty in translating such a linguistic mixture into English.

7. Be prepared to study the geography of Bible lands if you wish to understand the Bible. References to towns, places, rivers, mountains, seas, and special landmarks all reveal information necessary for proper interpretation. One should also remember that the topography of these lands has changed over the years. For example, the present city of Jerusalem has undergone so many changes that it is virtually impossible to locate today a site that is spoken of in the Bible. As Owen says of Jerusalem:

The place is literally a “city builded upon her own heap,” for beneath the level on which the people tread are the ruins of other previous Jerusalems—Crusader, Arabic, Byzantine, Roman, Greek, and Hebrew—each superimposed on the other.<sup>1</sup>

8. Place biblical references in their correct historical contexts. Since every event occurred at some particular place and time, each event must be considered in its proper historical setting and in its proper chronological order. The result of scrambling events to fit a preconceived interpretation is error. At the same time, one must also realize that the writings of the Bible are not always presented in chronological order. Their sequence may have been changed to serve the purpose of God. Again, the context will define the parameters of the text. In the final analysis, Scripture is its own best interpreter.

In keeping with the above rules of interpretation, we propose to show that Ezekiel 37-39 reveal Satan's uprising at the end of the Son of David's reign over Israel, although the present popular views place these events at varying times before the Millennium. Equally, we propose Revelation 20:1-9 as a companion passage to Ezekiel 37-39, although most proponents of the pre-Millennial view of Ezekiel 38-39 try to nullify this connection. The chronology in both passages indicates that Christ will rule *before* the appearance of Gog and Magog.

And finally, always following these accepted rules of interpretation, we will reexamine the pertinent passages to show that Gog and Magog do not refer to the leader and the land of Russia, nor to a Russian invasion of Israel. We will instead argue that Gog is Satan and Magog his system to deceive the world. This temptation by Satan, which will occur at the end of the 1000 year reign of Christ on the earth, will be God's final test for mankind before He brings forth a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1). The burden of proof now rests with the authors.

## Chapter 2

# Background of the Book of Ezekiel

In 606 B.C., the Southern Kingdom of Israel (Judah) and the city of Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon because of Judah's rebellion against God. II Chronicles 36:14-21 summarizes the nation's spiritual condition which brought about God's discipline:

II Chronicles 36:14 Moreover, all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the nations, and polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem.

15 And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up early and sending, because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place.

16 But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy.

17 Therefore, he brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of the sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him who stooped for age; he gave all into his hand.

20 And those who had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon, where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia.

21 To fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths; for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years.

During the first deportation to Babylon (606 B.C.), the king of Judah, (Jehoiakim), his mother, his servants, his princes, and his officers were all carried off along with the ablest of the military—about 10,000 captives total. The prophet Daniel was among those taken to Babylon during the first assault on Jerusalem. In 597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar again attacked Jerusalem and deported the remainder of the country's leaders (about 7000 of them), along with 1000 of the craftsmen and smiths. Taken with this second group, Ezekiel received God's revelation when the "hand of the Lord was there upon him" (Ezekiel 1:36) confirming his divine appointment as the prophet-priest to those of the captivity.

The book of Ezekiel was written while the author was in captivity in Babylon. Ezekiel says he was "among the captives by the river of Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God" (Ezekiel 1:1).

### *The Composition of the Book of Ezekiel*

The Hebrew word translated in the Old Testament "vision" actually means revelation. The book of Ezekiel is a collection of revelations, or prophetic visions, each of which is characteristically set apart by an introductory sentence that provides the date and sometimes the setting of the revelation. Each introductory sentence begins with the phrase, "Now it came to pass" (literally, "And it was"), followed by the year, the month, and the day when Ezekiel received the prophecy or revelation. Only once is the phrase

omitted; that exception is in Chapter 29:1 speaking of the vision of the 10th year.

Commentators offer several different interpretations of the dates given at the beginning of each "vision." For example, some begin counting from the time of Josiah's reforms and believe that the 30th year in Ezekiel 1:1 refers to 593 B.C. Frankly, we can find no connection between the reign of Josiah and the opening verses of Ezekiel. One commentator notes that some of the older expositors assumed that Ezekiel 1:1 means the 30th year of the era of Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar's father; others suggest that it refers to the years of Ezekiel's life. But if the latter were the case, then Chapter 8, verse 1, which occurs in the "6th year" would make Ezekiel rather young to be writing the words of God. Such reasoning on the part of some commentators is beyond this author's comprehension.

We can discover the correct interpretation if we simply take the Bible for what it says, as the following corrected translations reveal:

Ezekiel 1:1      It was in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was *in captivity* by the river Chebar. . .

Ezekiel 33:21    And it was in the twelfth year *of our captivity.*"

Although no specific statements appear at the beginning of each vision to indicate that the year refers to the captivity, other phrases clearly confirm such a reference. For example, in 8:1 Ezekiel mentions "my house," whose location is recorded in Ezekiel 1:3, 3:15, 3:23-24 as "in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar." The chart below lists these various visions in the order that they appear in the text.

Ezekiel	1:1	30th year	4th month	5th day of the month
	8:1	6th year	6th month	5th day of the month
	20:1	7th year	5th month	10th day of the month
	24:1	9th year	10th month	10th day of the month
	26:1	11th year		1st day of the month

29:1	10th year	10th month	12th day of the month
29:17	27th year	1st month	1st day of the month
30:20	11th year	1st month	7th day of the month
31:1	11th year	3rd month	1st day of the month
32:1	12th year	12th month	1st day of the month
32:17	12th year		15th day of the month
33:21	12th year	10th month	5th day of the month
40:1	25th year	1st month	10th day of the month

Our chart readily indicates two important details about the book of Ezekiel. First, the collection of revelations do not appear chronologically in the order that God gave them to Ezekiel. For example, the first vision that Ezekiel describes occurred during the 30th year of the captivity (1:1), while the second vision occurred in the 6th year (8:1). The seventh vision, given during the 27th year, is inserted between the first two visions of the 11th year, before those of the 12th or even the 25th year of the captivity. Second, each revelation is a complete unit within itself; that is, while lending meaning to the entire book, *each revelation constitutes God's complete revelatory purpose for that particular time*. The date and the setting of each individual section pointedly sets it apart from other sections of the book of Ezekiel as independent and complete in itself. God has never been and is not now in the business of deliberately mystifying His people as to the truth of His Word; quite the contrary. He has gone to great lengths to precisely proclaim His perfect will for all mankind, including the perfect revelation of His Word—the Lord Jesus Christ. But we must shut ourselves up to the only source of divine truth, the Scriptures themselves, to interpret that truth. The visions in Ezekiel have quite carefully been given boundaries by God Himself that we may see and understand His purpose. As we shall note in the following chapter, the independence of each revelatory section is of major importance when establishing the chronology concerning the appearance of Gog and Magog.

## Chapter 3

# Arguments against a Post-Millennial Fulfillment

Since the major thrust of this book is to present evidence supporting a post-millennial time frame for the battle of Ezekiel 38 and 39, we would do well to consider the objections which specifically militate against this position. The following represent eight major arguments presented in the literature written on the subject of Gog and Magog to date to refute the position that Gog appears on the scene *after* the Messiah's 1000 year reign.

1. The armies of Ezekiel 38 and 39 *appear* to be included in the universal confederacies of Zechariah 12 and 14 (nations gathered for the final world conflict known as Armageddon).

Most commentators readily acknowledge that the army gathered for Armageddon will come from all the nations of the world, and that Zechariah addresses that time frame just prior to the second coming of Christ. Those, however, who would equate the attack of Ezekiel 38 and 39 with the battle of Armageddon of Zechariah use this argument quite apart from the other discrepancies in the two texts, the more obvious of which will be addressed later in this book. Although both battles involve great numbers of peoples, one crucial difference must be stressed here relative to this argument. In contrast to Zechariah's general "all the nations" (which is certainly consistent with the final world conflict of Armageddon), Ezekiel refers specifically to those nations involved. Of Japheth's seven sons (See Genesis 10:2-5), Ezekiel mentions five as actively involved in the invasion—Gomer (also his son, Togarmah), Magog, Madai, Tubal, and Meshech. Although Tiras and Javan are not directly involved, Tarshish, Javan's son, appears

in the role of (at least) an interested observer (Ezekiel 38:13). Additionally, Ham's sons, Cush and Phut, are also numbered among the invading hordes. Canaan is not mentioned at all in the Ezekiel passage since by the end of the Tribulation the Canaanites will finally have been destroyed (Zechariah 14:21), fulfilling God's original instructions to Israel in Deuteronomy 7:1-2. Mizraim (Egypt) will also have been judged but restored by the end of the Tribulation (Isaiah 19:21-25).

In summary, it appears that many of the descendants of Japheth and some of the descendants of Ham will be involved in the rebellion of Ezekiel 38 and 39. This constitutes participation by a vast majority of mankind and certainly conforms to Revelation 20:8 which calls for Gog's invading force to be drawn from the "four quarters of the earth." In contrast (and the reasons are beyond the scope of this book), it is most significant that in the Ezekiel passage only Elam (Persia) of the descendants of Shem is present as a member of this attacking force against God's people. This is not true of the battle of Armageddon.

2. The feast of the birds and beasts in Ezekiel 39:17-20 *appears* to be the same scene as that of Revelation 19, the great supper of God which occurs after the battle of Armageddon at the end of the Tribulation period.

This argument again equates the defeat of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 39:17-20 with the battle of Armageddon of Revelation 19—a common current interpretation. While the scenes *are* similar, the "feast of the birds and the beasts" recorded in the above-named passages occur in time periods which are 1000 years apart. The fact that Revelation 20:9, speaking of Gog and Magog's rebellion at the end of the Millennium, does not record this carnage but simply states that "fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them" does not deny that such a feast will occur after the defeat of Gog and Magog. As we have stated previously, Revelation 20:9 merely mentions the rebellion, while Ezekiel 38 and 39 provide the details of the war



with Satan and the destruction of the deceived nations after the millennial reign of Christ.

We know that God designed flesh-eating fowls and animals to keep the earth free of rotting flesh, for the Bible records numerous accounts of the birds and beasts called to eat the flesh of men and animals at various points in history (Deuteronomy 28:26; I Samuel 17:44,46; I Kings 14:11; Jeremiah 16:4; 19:7; etc). While a bird feast is recorded in both Revelation 19 and Ezekiel 39, no compelling textual reason proves that these two passages record the same event. Proponents of this view are as quick to espouse the similarity of the bird feasts in both Ezekiel and Revelation as they are to deny any connection between the Gog and Magog of Ezekiel with the Gog and Magog of Revelation. Since there are numerous other calls for the birds and beasts to eat the flesh of men in the Old Testament and only the two references to Gog and Magog in the whole Bible, more significance should be attached to the latter than the former.

3. The armies of Ezekiel 38 and 39 are composed of the king of the north and the king of the south of Daniel 11:40.

This assumption lacks proper scriptural foundation since Ezekiel 38 and 39 refer neither to a king of the north nor to a king of the south. This interpretation of the armies of Gog and Magog is arbitrarily taken out of thin air and placed in the period of the Tribulation. According to the traditional interpretation of Daniel 11, the king of the north and the king of the south are taken to be Syria and Egypt, first during the Intertestamental period (verses 1-35) and then the Tribulation period from verse 36 on to the end of the Chapter. But the king from the "north parts" that is mentioned in Ezekiel cannot refer both to Syria of the Intertestamental period and to Russia of the 20th century. One cannot interpret Scripture in two different ways simply to satisfy the expediency of the moment.

4. Since Ezekiel 37 deals with the restoration of Israel to her land and Chapter 40 speaks of the Millennial Age, the movements of Gog and Magog must transpire between the beginning of the restoration of Israel to the land and the Millennial Age.

As we have already pointed out, the book of Ezekiel is not compiled in chronological order. Each section of Ezekiel (See Table 1 in Chapter 2) deals with a separate revelation and is introduced by an announcement of the time when that particular revelation was given. For example, the vision comprising Chapters 40-48 mentioned in the above argument occurred during the *25th* year of the captivity (Ezekiel 40:1), while that of Chapters 33-39 (also mentioned above) were received during the *12th* year of captivity (Ezekiel 33:21). Two observations relative to this argument may be noted: first, that the events of Chapter 37—namely, the restoration to the land and the Millennial Age under the Son of David, along with the events of Chapters 38 and 39, which we would argue occur at the end of the millennial period—appear in the revelation given to Ezekiel in the 12th year of the captivity and are chronological within that vision; and second, that Ezekiel received the revelation contained in Chapters 40-48 thirteen years afterward for a totally new purpose—to detail the allotment of the land in the Kingdom, to state the specific dimensions of the Millennial Temple, and to describe the changes in topography in the Kingdom Age.

It may also be noted that the invasion of Gog occurs while the children of Israel are dwelling “safely” in the land (Ezekiel 38:8,11,14,etc.) and that it is “after many days. . . in the latter years” (Ezekiel 38:8), phrases which indicate that while this invasion does not occur at the beginning of the Millennium as some have suggested, it can be identified with the Messianic Age by the phrase “latter years”, a phrase consistently identified in the Old Testament with that period when Israel will find national fulfillment under her Messiah.

5. The destruction of the invader is a sign which opens the eyes of Israel to the Lord (Ezekiel 39:22).

While the expression, “they shall know that I am the Lord their God” is common to prophets throughout the Bible (Isaiah 52:6; Jeremiah 16:21; Ezekiel 6:4; 11:12; etc), the use of the phrase in Ezekiel 39:22 refers to the final time that “they shall know”, for it says “from that day and forever.” Such a time could only be at the end of the Millennium, when God demonstrates His keeping power in the face of the last great attempt at Israel’s destruction by means of Gog and his system, Magog.

6. While Revelation emphasizes both, Ezekiel does not specifically mention the instrumentality of Satan, nor his being bound for a thousand years.

To refute this argument, let us point out while no gospel writer specifically mentions Satan’s presence at the crucifixion of Christ, we can certainly assume that he was there. But Ezekiel’s statement that Gog will come when the people of Israel have been dwelling safely in the land (Ezekiel 38:14) indicates Satan’s absence, for as long as Satan is free, walking about as a roaring lion, the people of God will not be “dwelling safely.” The presence of Israel’s Messiah in Chapter 37 indicates that this is the Messianic peace long promised to the nation. As mentioned previously, Chapters 38 and 39 follow chronologically after the millennial rest and peace of Chapter 37 within the same vision. We will also show later in this volume that, while the name “Satan” does not appear in the text of Ezekiel 38 and 39, the name Gog is synonymous with Satan; both names refer to the adversary of God and His people, a connection that the meaning of the word Gog in both the Hebrew and Greek will explain. For now, we would merely mention that the word that God uses in Ezekiel 38 and 39 to describe Gog’s point of origin, “north quarters” and “north parts” (Ezekiel 38:6,15; 39:2), coincides exactly with the word that Isaiah uses (Isaiah 14:13) to describe Satan’s aspiration to sit “in the *sides* of the

north” (the seat of divine authority). Ezekiel 38 and 39 describe in detail the last great rebellion of Satan after he is loosed from the pit (Revelation 20:7-9) and his final attempt to usurp the position and authority of God.

7. In Ezekiel the bodies of the slain required seven months for disposal. In Revelation 20:9 the slain are “devoured” by fire which eliminates the necessity for disposal.

The proposed discrepancy between the two texts in the above argument does not really exist. The two texts are completely compatible when compared to other portions of Scripture dealing with similar occurrences. Thus, where the bodies are not destroyed and require seven months for disposal in the passage in Ezekiel, similarly it may be assumed that there will be bodies even after the fire comes down in Revelation. Apparently the word “devour” in Scripture does not constitute total disintegration and elimination of the body as assumed above. As a representative example, in Leviticus 10:1-5 Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord and fire came out from God and “devoured” them. However, Moses immediately commanded the sons of the uncle of Aaron to “come near, carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp. . . and they carried them in their coats out of the camp.”

In reference to the objection that fire is not a part of God’s judgment in the Ezekiel passage, we would call your attention to the following passages in the Ezekiel account:

Ezekiel 38:22 . . .and I will rain upon him and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain and great hailstones, *fire*, and brimstone.

Ezekiel 39:6 And I will send a *fire* on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the Lord.

Again, the scriptural basis is weak in the above argu-

ment. The weight of Scripture continues to be on the side of Revelation 20:7-9 being a companion passage to Ezekiel 38 and 39. The Ezekiel passage gives the details, the New Testament passage just substantiates it.

8. In Ezekiel the invasion is followed by the Millennium (Ezekiel 40-48). In Revelation the battle is followed by the New Heaven and the New Earth which surely could not be corrupted by the presence of unburied corpses for seven months.

We have already shown that the Millennium does not follow the events of Ezekiel 38 and 39—that Chapters 40-48 were given thirteen years after the vision containing Chapters 33-39. The millennial reign of the Son of David occurs in Chapter 37 and the events of Chapters 38 and 39 occur at the end of the Millennium (which is chronological within the same vision given in the 12th year of the captivity). As to the problem of cleansing the earth from the dead bodies, may we just remind Bible scholars that as a transition period occurred between the dispensation of Law and the dispensation of Grace, and as a period of transition will occur between the Tribulation and the Millennium (Daniel 12:11-12), even so a transitional period may be expected after the Millennium. It is well to note that the great white throne judgment is also a part of that period which occurs before the coming of the New Heaven and New Earth (Revelation 20:11-15; 21:1).

We believe that these major arguments against our position that the events of Ezekiel 38 and 39 occur at the end of the Millennium are inconclusive, based as they are on very weak scriptural support.

## Chapter 4

# Bad News from Jerusalem

In the vision given Ezekiel during the 12th year of the captivity (Ezekiel 32:1 through Chapter 39) which includes the passages under consideration (Chapter 37 through 39), the section from Chapter 33:23 through Chapter 36 provides a summation of Israel's sin, their dispersion among the nations, the period of their chastisement, and the promise of their eventual restoration. We will touch briefly on the content of Chapters 33,34,35, and 36 leading up to the ones in question—37,38, and 39.

In Chapter 33, the land of Israel is one of the major topics of the section from 33:23-29 which opens (Verses 21-22) with the news of Jerusalem's final destruction by Nebuchadnezzar's armies, a defeat that resulted in Israel's third and last deportation into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. On the night before this devastating news reached Ezekiel and the other captives in Babylon, the prophet received God's message justifying the judgment for Israel's sin: their removal from the land.

When Nebuchadnezzar actually carried them out of the land and into captivity, the Israelites were shocked. They asked of Ezekiel, if God has given the land of Palestine to the descendants of Abraham, why are they now in exile, forcibly removed from the Promised Land (Ezekiel 33:24)? The Lord gave Ezekiel the answer:

Ezekiel 33:25    Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood; and shall ye possess the land?

26    Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abominations, and ye defile every one his neighbor's wife: and shall ye possess the land?

29 Then shall they know that I am the Lord, when I have laid the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed.

In His covenant with Abraham, God provided for a national land in which Abraham and his seed would live. That land, Canaan, was to be an everlasting possession, the land where the nation would fulfill God's promises (Genesis 13:14-17).

The original covenant with Abraham, however, was contingent upon Abraham's obedience in leaving his homeland in Ur of the Chaldees and going to the land of promise. Indeed, Abraham received no further revelation until he obeyed this command. Only after Abraham had entered the land of Canaan did the Lord confirm the covenant. From the beginning, blessings in the land were predicated upon obedience. God confirmed His promises through the birth of Isaac and later reconfirmed those promises, first to Isaac and then to Jacob (Genesis 17:19; 28:12-13). The Palestinian Covenant (Deuteronomy 30:1-10) reaffirms Israel's title deed to the land of Canaan; and in spite of Israel's unbelief and unfaithfulness, the promised, permanent possession of the land has never been abrogated. The land is still theirs, as God promised.

After the exodus from Egyptian bondage, while His people were encamped at the base of Mt. Sinai, God warned Israel that He would eject them from the Promised Land if they ever practiced the abominations of the Canaanites. Denouncing the sins of the tribes then dwelling in Canaan, God added:

Leviticus 18:25 And the land is defiled; therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.

Instructing His own people how to conduct themselves in the land, God warned Israel of the results of disobedience:

**Leviticus 18:26** Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and mine ordinances, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you:

27 (For all these abominations have the men of the land done, who were before you, and the land is defiled):

28 That the land spew not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spewed out the nations that were before you.

In spite of God's warning, however, the people of Israel repeatedly committed the sins of the heathen nations around them. Having readily accepted God's promise to give the land to Abraham and his descendants, the Hebrew nation nevertheless rejected His call to obedience. This rebellion to God's law culminated at length in the Babylonian captivity.

Although Ezekiel knew God's answer to the nation's spiritual need, God clearly showed the prophet (Verses 30-33) that the Hebrews were not yet ready to take Him seriously:

**Ezekiel 33:31** And they come unto thee as the people come, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.

32 And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not.

The Israelites failed to listen to the Word of God as it was expressed by their prophets, including Ezekiel. Sadly, they have not yet learned to listen in spite of the bitter experiences they have endured while out of God's will and away



from the Promised Land.

Chapter 34 contrasts the false shepherds (rulers in Israel—Jeremiah 23:1-4; Isaiah 44:28, etc), with the true Shepherd who will some day rule. The false shepherds, putting their own self-aggrandisement and greed above the welfare of the people, misused Israel, ignored their need, and “scattered the flock” upon all the face of the earth. The true Shepherd, on the other hand, will gather the people of Israel, acting as a righteous judge among them and establishing an eternal covenant of peace with them. Verses 22 through to the end of Chapter 34 describe the millennial reign of the Son of David as the true Shepherd and those of redeemed Israel as the earthly flock of His pasture.

Chapter 35 condemns Edom (the land of Esau, Genesis 36:8) for his hostile spirit toward Israel. While Edom is perhaps singled out as a representative example of all of the nations which will be disciplined for their unrelenting antagonism toward God’s people and their greedy desire to possess all that Israel is destined to inherit, Edom had already earned a special place in the Old Testament record. Esau’s original choice as Jacob’s brother in Genesis 25:31-34 set the diverging paths of these descendants of Abraham—that of the flesh opposing the spirit. One (Esau) despised the promises of God, the other (Jacob), while scheming to obtain them, nevertheless placed the value of those same promises above life itself. The nation of Israel (Jacob) waxed and waned in their allegiance to the Word of God, but Edom was always resistant and that resistance manifested itself in active opposition to the chosen people. According to Feinberg, the sins of Edom expressed in Chapter 35 of Ezekiel were:

- (1) Her aid to Babylon (v. 5).
- (2) Her attempts to annex Israel’s territory to her own (v. 10).
- (3) Her vengeful joy over Judah (v. 12ff).
- (4) Her perpetual enmity (v. 5; 25:15; Amos 1:11).<sup>1</sup>

When God finally restores Israel, He will judge Edom.

Those who rejoice over the desolation of Israel will, in turn, be delivered to perpetual desolation themselves (Verses 9,15).

Chapter 36 is divided into two major messages directed toward the time of Israel's restoration. The first message (Verses 1-15), places an emphasis on the redemption of the land itself. Because of the land's desolation brought about by both the enemies of Israel and by the sins of Israel herself, God promises a future deliverance and blessing to the mountains, hills, rivers, and valleys. This promise is summarized in Verse 11 by the words, . . . "I will multiply upon you man and beast, and they shall increase and bring fruit; and I will settle you according to your old estate, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings; and ye shall know that I am the Lord."

The second half of the Chapter (Verses 16-38) outlines God's plan for the redemption of His people: Israel will be restored to the land, not because of some good thing they have done to please the Lord, but because of God's holy name which He Himself will sanctify among the nations. Having brought both His land and His people together once more, God declares through Ezekiel in verse 35 that the other nations of the world will then see and recognize that, "This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fortified, and are inhabited."

Feinberg lists 7 principal factors evident in Ezekiel 36 defining God's doctrine of redemption for Israel:

- (1) that the preeminent motive in Israel's redemption is the glory of God (v. 22,32).
- (2) that Israel will know ultimately that their God is the Lord (v. 38).
- (3) that Israel will abhor their sins (v. 31-32).
- (4) that Israel's sins will be forgiven (v. 25).
- (5) that Israel's regeneration will be effected (11:9; 18:31; 36:26-27).
- (6) that the gift of the Holy Spirit will be granted to the nation (v. 27; 37:14).

(7) and that restored Israel will be obedient to God's laws (v. 27; 11:20).<sup>2</sup>

All of these factors come together at the point in Israel's history when the travail of the Tribulation period opens the heavens to Israel's Deliverer and ushers in the millennial reign of their Messiah.

In the next Chapter we will discuss Ezekiel 37 which provides vivid details of the fulfillment of the redemption promise outlined in Chapter 36.

## Chapter 5

# Regathering of Israel

Ezekiel 37 offers one of the most picturesque descriptions in all the Bible, Verses 1-10 recording the prophet's vision of a valley filled with dry bones. Repetition of the phrase, "The hand of the Lord was upon me," and the active participation of the Spirit of the Lord in Verse 1 indicate that Ezekiel was receiving prophetic truth. The valley, filled as described with exceedingly dry bones, had been dead for a long time for they were bleached and "lo, they were very dry" (Ezekiel 37:2).

In Ezekiel 37:11-14 the prophet interprets the vision: the bones represent the whole house of Israel (37:11), both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms (called here Judah and Ephraim—Vs. 16), whose people have been scattered among the nations and have given up all hope of living as a viable national entity. This prophecy obviously looks beyond the regathering of the remnant after the Babylonian captivity to the plight of Israel as late as A.D. 70, when Jerusalem was destroyed and the people dispersed throughout the then-known world by the Roman army.

So long away from the land and out of the will of God, Israel is portrayed in Ezekiel 37 as dry bones with neither sinew nor flesh and certainly without life. The prophet's pitiful portrait describes the plight of the Jews who once received God's special grace in their own land flowing with milk and honey, but who are now scattered among the nations of the world because they rejected God as their king. The phrase "very dry" describes their spiritual life for, having rejected the Author of life, they cannot live apart from Him. Bones can be assembled to form a skeleton. Flesh and sinew may be added but the result remains a corpse. God can give them physical life as a nation, but only saving faith will ever impart to Israel that spiritual life so necessary to raise them up as God's

people again.

God asked Ezekiel if he thought the bones would revive, if the nation would ever again experience spiritual life as God's people. In answer to His own question, the Lord told His prophet,

**Ezekiel 37:5** Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live.

God will certainly fulfill His promises to Israel; He will assemble Israel and reestablish it as His nation among the nations of the world. After a shaking, the bones will come together, bone to its bone. Flesh, sinew, and skin will cover the bones; finally, breath will return to them. Not only will the bones live, but they will stand upon their own feet as an exceedingly great company of people (Ezekiel 37:7-10).

As each detail of the coming together of the bones, the sinew, the flesh, the skin, and then the breath (which caused the bones to come alive) is related, we see that the restoration will not occur all at once but will take place in stages. Although we have witnessed a token regathering in the establishment of modern Israel, this is not the final assembly spoken of by Ezekiel. Modern Israel is simply a preparation for the final restoration when Israel's new life in God will be accomplished by the return of their Messiah to whom they will turn in faith in that day. Ezekiel 37 addresses that ultimate regathering, the finality of which we emphasize to prove that Chapter 37 refers to the millennial period in Israel's history.

In Verses 22 through 25 Ezekiel describes the joining of the divided nation, the cleansing that ushers in the Kingdom, and the presence of their Messiah forever:

**Ezekiel 37:22** And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.

- 23 Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions, but I will save them out of all their dwelling places, in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.
- 24 And David, my servant, shall be king over them, and they all shall have one shepherd; they shall also walk in mine ordinances, and observe my statutes, and do them.
- 25 And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob, my servant, in which your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell in it, even they, and their children, and their children's children *forever*; and my servant, David, shall be their prince *forever*.

The presence of the Son of David as their prince “forever” removes any doubt as to the time frame of this chapter. After their rejection of God as their sovereign (I Samuel 8) and their crucifixion of the Messiah (the Gospels), only a remnant of Israel will be ready, after many millenniums, to seek cleansing and be the people of God, but that remnant will indeed learn the lessons that God intends for them to learn, and will finally be prepared for the righteous rule of God. Concerning Ezekiel 37, Feinberg notes:

Also notice the number of references to perpetuity in the remainder of the chapter: occupation of the land is *forever*; the kingship of David's Son is *forever*; the sanctuary will be in their midst *forever*; and the covenant of peace will be in force *forever*. Their dwelling in the land was repeated for emphasis (Isa. 60:21; Joel 3:20; Amos 9:15). The covenant of peace is none other than the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34. It will be an

*everlasting* covenant as well, because it will be grounded in God's grace.<sup>1</sup>

This description in Chapter 37 undoubtedly pictures the reign of Messiah over his people and immediately precedes in the vision the coming of Gog and Magog in Chapters 38 and 39. Ezekiel 37 and Revelation 20:4-6 are companion passages and speak of the same age and the same events: the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ (Israel's Messiah) on the earth and His rule for a period of 1000 years.

## Chapter 6

# Gog and Magog

A number of different theories about the chronology of Gog's attack upon Israel, recorded in Ezekiel 38 and 39, place that event (1) toward the close of the Church Age; (2) before, during, or at the end of the Tribulation; (3) after Christ's return to earth but before the inauguration of His Messianic Kingdom; and (4) at the end of Christ's Millennial reign. In this chapter, we shall continue to argue that there is but one correct interpretation, that the events of Ezekiel 38 and 39 occur after the Kingdom Age, making any present-day Russian connection impossible.

### *Identification of Gog and Magog*

The opening verses of Ezekiel 38 indicate an adversarial relationship exists between God and the two represented by the proper names, Gog and the Magog.

Ezekiel 38:2 Son of man, set thy face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him.

3 And say, Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.

Well might hostility between these parties be expected, for the etymology and meanings of both titles and their derivatives indicate that Gog is none other than Satan himself and the Magog his anti-God system.

It is, as we have stated before, our contention that the companion passage in Revelation 20:7-10 bolsters the interpretation that the activities of Gog and the Magog occur at the end of the millennial reign of Christ, and we will draw our conclusions by means of the languages. Consider the following passages:



Revelation 20:7 And when the thousand years are ended,  
Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

8 And shall go out to deceive the nations  
which are in the four quarters of the  
earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them  
together to battle; the number of whom  
is as the sand of the sea.

In this context an adversarial situation (deception) is certainly established between the nations of the millennial Kingdom and Satan. Some have argued that this passage in Revelation differs from the passage in Ezekiel because Ezekiel does not mention Satan directly by that name. We hope that you will be able to see that the names Satan and Gog refer to the same person in both passages, and that therefore Satan *is* mentioned in Ezekiel under another of his pseudonyms, Gog. In Verse 7 above Satan is the antecedent of Gog. The change in names is perfectly normal. Each name describes a facet of the enemy of God. Satan is his name in an adversarial role; Gog is descriptive of his self-exaltation at the end of the Millennium. In verse 7 the adversary is released from his prison, in verse 8 and 9 he exalts himself above God, and in verse 10 (under another appellation, “Devil”) he is destroyed—certainly the chronology of “a little season” (verse 3). This variety of names for Satan occurs throughout Scripture, differing according to his participation in each event.

#### *Meaning of Gog in the Old Testament*

The world Gog appears 11 times in the Bible: in I Chronicles 5:4 a Gog is listed as a descendant of Reuben, in Ezekiel 38 and 39 the name occurs nine times; and finally, as we note above, the name appears in Revelation 20. Tracing the Hebrew and Greek words to their root meanings will allow us to show that Gog possesses the identical characteristics of Satan. Some have suggested that Gog is a man indwelt by Satan as the beast in Revelation 13 is possessed and controlled by Satan, but we must reject this hypothesis because we find it more likely that, during

his final attempt to defeat God and God's people, Satan will conduct his campaign personally, with no attempt to camouflage his intentions. We should observe that, according to the passage immediately following the one quoted above, it is the devil, still another name for Satan and Gog, who is cast into the lake of fire after Gog's defeat.

Revelation 20:10    And the devil *that deceived them* was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Strong's Concordance explains that the Hebrew word "gag" (meaning "top") is a reduplication of the Hebrew word "ga'ah", which is translated to "rise up", to be "lifted up", to be "exalted" (as it refers to "the head" in Job 10:15 and to "triumph" in Exodus 15:1, 21).<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew word "Gog" comes from this *same root*. In its noun form "ga'ah" also means a "rising up" or a "swelling" as of the sea. It can also mean "pride" or "haughtiness", as it is used in Psalm 10:2 and 31:20, in Proverbs 14:3, and in Isaiah 13:11 and 25:11. In its masculine noun form, "ga'own", the word is translated "exaltation", "majesty", "excellence" (when it refers to nations), their "wealth," "power," or "magnificence of buildings," (when it refers, for example, to Egypt in Ezekiel 32:12, to the Chaldeans in Isaiah 13:19, to the Philistines in Zechariah 9:6, and to Assyria in Zechariah 10:11).<sup>2</sup>

Other Hebrew cognates—"ge'uwth" (a feminine noun) is translated "majesty", or "lifting up" (when it refers to a column of smoke in Isaiah 9:18), and "gevah", (translated "pride" in Job 33:17 and in Jeremiah 13:17) also means arrogance and haughtiness.<sup>3</sup>

Since arrogance, haughtiness, pride, and self-exaltation are all characteristics of Satan, the meanings behind the name Gog perfectly illustrate the five "I will's" of Satan in Isaiah 14:

Isaiah 14:13    For thou hast said in thine heart, I WILL ascend into heaven, I WILL exalt my throne

above the stars of God; I WILL sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north,

14 I WILL ascend above the heights of the clouds, I WILL be like the Most High.

“I will ascend into heaven” indicates Satan’s desire to dwell in the highest heaven, where God and the redeemed abide. “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God” shows that he aspired to possess his own throne and to rule over the angelic host. “I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north” reveals his evil purpose to usurp the seat of divine government in the earth. “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds” demonstrates Satan’s intent to secure for himself the glory which belongs to God alone. In his final declaration, “I will be like the most high”, we see Satan’s arrogant determination to be equal with God. Chafer says:

The sin here is the creature’s unwillingness to take the position in which he had been placed by the creator. In pursuing this life-purpose as imitator of God and counterfeiter of God’s undertakings, Satan, apparently with sincerity, recommended to Adam and Eve that they, too, “be as gods.”<sup>4</sup>

Gog portrays these same Satanic characteristics when he attacks the people of God to destroy them. His ability to deceive his followers, and to lead so quickly into rebellion a huge multitude from the Kingdom of Christ is evidence of his wicked, supernatural power. The rebellion will fester in his depraved and thoroughly corrupt mind as he sits in the darkness of the bottomless pit for 1000 years plotting his strategy to usurp God’s position. With no thought of repentance and submission to his creator, Satan regards freedom as simply a final opportunity to demonstrate to the world and to all the angelic host his right to challenge the sovereign God of all creation. Knowing (from the Scriptures) that his time is short, Satan defies the God of heaven and earth in open rebellion much as he did

in heaven so long ago—drawing at that time a third of the host of heaven into his traitorous defection.

### *The Meaning of The Magog in the Old Testament*

All of the major versions of the Bible (AV, ASV, RSV, and NIV) translate one phrase in Ezekiel 38:2 as “the land of Magog” (See p. 35), but a corrected translation would read, “land of *the* Magog.” This correction must be made, since the character of the Hebrew alphabet that indicates the definite article is prefixed to the word “Magog”, *not* to the word translated “land.” This faulty translation has lent support to the erroneous idea that Magog is the *land* of Russia, resulting in such incorrect interpretations as the following:

It is to be understood that Gog is the name given to the leader of this confederacy and his land is called Magog.<sup>5</sup>

Because of the poor translation of this phrase, some historians have attempted, unsuccessfully, to trace the area of “the land of Magog” back to Genesis 10:2 where a Magog is named as the second son of Japheth. Further attempts to relate the “Magogites” to the Russians through the Scythians mentioned in Colossians 3:11 have proven equally untenable, being no better authenticated than “the land of Magog.”

Magog appears as a proper name in both Genesis 10:2 and I Chronicles 1:5 (companion genealogies of Japheth) without the definite article, which distinguishes the word Magog of Japheth’s genealogies from the word used in Ezekiel 38 and 39, *the* Magog. In His first reference to Magog in Ezekiel, God is expressing His displeasure with Gog and with *the* Magog (Ezekiel 38:2); in His second reference, God is sending the fire of judgment in *the* Magog (Corrected translation-Ezekiel 39:6). Before leaving this grammatical point, may we just add that in what we contend to be the parallel passage to Ezekiel 38 in the New Testament (Revelation 20:8), the definite article also appears in the Greek referring to *the* Magog.

Magog is a compound word composed of two parts: “Me”,

a shortened form of the Hebrew preposition “men” (translated “from”, or “away from”) and the noun Gog (designating Satan); thus the combined meaning reads, “from Gog” or “from Satan.” Therefore, if Magog refers to a land and people (the Magogites) as posited by the current popular interpretation, then they are the people from Satan. Who would be so arrogant as to limit that category solely to the Russians? However, it is our conviction that it refers to Satan’s system, organized and implemented after the Millennium to deceive and control susceptible men. This system would of course employ every tactic that Satan has practiced and perfected throughout his demonic history.

Satan’s original plan, Babylon the Great (Revelation 17 and 18), was designed to influence every area of man’s life—to bring him into bondage mentally, physically, and most of all spiritually. At old Babylon, Satan instituted this system that counterfeited every aspect of God’s rule on the earth, including worship of himself in place of God. The process for accomplishing the counterfeit was, simply, to pervert the true revelation of God by the doctrines of demons (I Timothy 4:1). And when man is cut adrift from the restraints of the Word of God, only time is necessary to accomplish his corruption. Since Babylon the Great is destroyed at the end of the Tribulation, Satan will devise a similar system at the end of the Millennium in order to deceive most of mankind:

Revelation 20:8 And shall go out to *deceive* the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and (the) Magog. . .

That system will be known as the Magog and, as we shall see, it will be a system of sorcery.

The practice of divination or soothsaying, observing omens, and consulting sorcerers, charmers, mediums, wizards, or necromancers is forbidden by Scripture:

Deuteronomy 18:10 There shall not be found among you one that maketh his son or his daugh-

ter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,

- 11 Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.
- 12 For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.

Further, the book of Exodus even decreed capital punishment for those who practiced the arts of witchcraft (Exodus 22:18).

Yet in spite of God's prohibitions, the Bible records many examples of man's reliance on supernatural powers in defiance of God's Law. Moses and Aaron encountered magicians in Egypt who were able to duplicate three of Moses' miracles (Exodus 7:11-8:7). Jezebel, the wicked queen of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, was involved in sorceries (II Kings 9:22). Manasseh, the worst monarch ever to reign on the throne of Judah, "used enchantments and witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: by doing so he wrought much evil in the sight of God, to provoke him to anger" (II Chronicles 33:6). Daniel was forced to contend with magicians, astrologers, and sorcerers among the wise men of Babylon (Daniel 2:2).

Witchcraft and its companion state of rebellion are alike condemned in Scripture because both find their source in demonic activity:

I Samuel 15:23 For rebellion is as the sin of *witchcraft*, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.

Satan's exertion of this ungodly power will persuade many people of the Millennium to forsake the goodness of God and to rise up in rebellion against the Lord even after one thousand years of the most perfect earthly environment

possible—a reign of righteousness, plenty, and peace.

The abbreviated form of Magog, the Hebrew word “Mag”, traced to its root is translated “soothsayer”—and is said to be a loan word from the Assyrian “mahhu”, also meaning soothsayer.<sup>6</sup> According to Strong’s Concordance, in combination with “rab” (a Hebrew word meaning much, many or great), “mag” forms the Hebrew name Rab-mag (meaning chief Magian) who was a Babylonian official listed among Nebuchadnezzar’s princes in Jeremiah 39:3, 13.<sup>7</sup> The Magians, (Magos or Magi as they later were known) were the wise men of their day—the philosophers and professors, if you will, of all the accumulated oriental knowledge in every area. That their so-called “knowledge” included astrology as well as astronomy, demonic sorcery as well as human wisdom, there can be no doubt. The wise men of Babylon listed in Daniel 2:2 included magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and Chaldeans. Because the state religion was pagan, the Magi were of the priestly caste. Later, they were the priests of the ancient Medes and Persians and, after the rise of Zoroaster, became the priests of the Zoroastrian religion.

Satan has always used this system to confuse people and to keep them from worshipping the true God of heaven. Rather than listening to and obeying the Word of God, men think that magic will bring them closer to the powers above; that it will protect them against evil, prevent disease, solve life’s problems, and lift the dark curtain of the future. Whether we label it sorcery, witchcraft, enchantments, wizardry, necromancy, astrology, magic, or idolatry, it is a system of religion because men ascribe to it spirit forces which must be worshipped—forces moving the sun, moon, and stars, and causing wind, rain and lightning affecting life, death, harvest, fertility, illness, etc. Because it includes no personal relationship with the God of all true wisdom, it is a system of superstition growing out of fear—fear of the unknown. It is this system of sorcery (the Magog) that Satan will institute in the post-Millennial era to attract people and to deceive them into defecting from the righteous kingdom of God.

## *The Meaning of Gog in the New Testament*

As we have already noted, Gog is mentioned but once in the entire New Testament (Revelation 20:8). However, the following chart shows various other prominent names by which Satan is identified in the New Testament Scriptures:

Adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion-(I Peter 5:8)

Kategor (Accuser)-(Revelation 12:10)

Tempter-(Matthew 4:5; I Thessalonians 3:5)

Deceiver-(Revelation 12:9)

Murderer, liar, and the Father of lies-(John 8:44)

Evil One-(Matthew 13:19, I John 2:13-14)

Dragon, Old Serpent, Devil and Satan-(Revelation 20:2)

Beelzebub-(Matthew 12:24)

The Enemy-(Matthew 16:39)

Gog-(Revelation 20:8)

Likewise, many cognates of Gog appear in The New Testament and are descriptive terms drawn from the characteristics of Satan. For example, the Greek word "gogguzo" is translated "to grumble" or "to murmur", and "goggustes" means "a grumbling, grudging or murmuring." The word "goes" means "to wail" and is properly translated "wizard" (one who mutters spells or incantations). In Acts 26:26, the word "gonia" is translated "corner" when it refers to things done in secret. In II Timothy 3:13 the word is translated "seducers" when it describes the perilous times that shall come in the last days. In Greek literature the word "gonia" is used more in the sense of "to swindle or to cheat."

As is true in the Hebrew, the Greek word "Gog" is to be considered not only a proper name but as an adjective which describes the person of Satan. A person is known by his name, and certainly Satan is a Gog—a seducer, deceiver, sorcerer, juggler, swindler, cheat, one who hides in corners and does things in secret. Indeed he is aptly described as the ruler of the darkness of this world (Ephesians 6:12).



As the master deceiver, Satan reaches all nations and will exercise this power in the “man of sin” of II Thessalonians 2:10. When he is released from the bottomless pit, he will go forth to “deceive the nations.” Using the same tactics that he has used throughout the ages (lying signs and wonders), Satan (as Gog) will seduce the nations of the world and gather them together to do battle against the Kingdom and people of Christ (Revelation 20:8).

### *The Meaning of Magog in the New Testament*

In the Greek, Magos and Magog come from the same root. In Acts 8 Philip encountered one who used *sorcery*, (the word is “magos”) to bewitch the people of Samaria.

Acts 8: 9 But there was a certain man, called Simon, who previously in the same city used *sorcery*, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one,

10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

11 And to him they had regard, because that for a long time he had bewitched them with *sorceries*.

Under the spell of Simon the Sorcerer, the Samaritans attributed supernatural power with its accompanying privileges to a mere man because of the things that he could do through demonic assistance. Simon was someone to be heard, followed, obeyed. Likewise, Gog will use this same system of sorcery to deceive the world after the Millennium.

On his first missionary journey, Paul encountered Elymas the Sorcerer (again, the word is “magos”) whom he struck blind when Elymas sought to oppose God’s message on the isle of Cyprus.

Acts 13: 8 But Elymas, the *sorcerer* (for so is his name by interpretation), withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

- 9 Then Saul (who also is called Paul), filled with the Holy Spirit, set his eyes on him,
- 10 And said, O full of all deceit and all mischief, *thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?*
- 11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

In each of these passages the system of sorcery is translated from the Greek word “magos”, again strengthening our argument that Gog is really another pseudonym for Satan, and that *the* Magog is not related to the land or people descended from the second son of Japheth, but to the system of deception used by Satan to defeat the Kingdom of Christ.

#### *General use of Magos in the Greek World*

“Magos” had four basic meanings in almost every age of the Greeks:

- a. Specifically, a “member of the Persian priestly caste.” (which according to Herodotus, was one of the 6 tribes of the Medes).
- b. More generally, the possessor and user of supernatural knowledge and ability. Thus by his initiations he protects the soul of the dying against Hades. He foretells the future—Syrian source.
- c. Literally a magician—one who exercises magic, accomplishing purification and expiation by magical means.

#### Magos vs. Theos

#### Magic vs. God

The pagan thus distinguishes sharply between a divine gift which is given, and forced (demonic) magic.

d. Figuratively, a “deceiver” or “seducer.”

*The Use of Magos in Judaism*

In Rabbinic literature “magos” is a loan word which is found under various forms, usually in the sense of magician. (Where the meaning might be “blasphemer.”) “He who learns from magus is worthy of death.”<sup>8</sup>

Through the ages, the Magos has been associated with the malevolent system which Satan uses to seduce people, the very system by which he will entice those of the Millennium to turn from the Lord Jesus Christ and His righteous rule here on the earth.

Too often even Christians underestimate the power of Satan and the Cosmos Diabolicus (the name by which theologians refer to Satan’s present world system). We would do well, therefore, to remember and heed Peter’s warning:

- I Peter 5: 8 Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour;
- 9 Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.
- 10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you.

While heeding the above warning from Peter, let us close this chapter on Gog and his system (Magog) with a comparison of the Scriptures having to do with his final end. As Ezekiel 37 is a companion passage to Revelation 20:4-6 and refers to the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, so Ezekiel 38-39 and Revelation 20:7-10 are also companion passages which follow chronologically both in Ezekiel’s vision and in that of the Apostle John, predicting the ultimate demise and destiny of God’s ancient enemy, Gog or Satan. Another passage lending detail to the accounts

in Ezekiel 38:19-22, in Ezekiel 39:3-5, and in Revelation 20:9-10 portraying the final disposition of Satan is found in Ezekiel 28:17-19. Note the similarity in the details of the judgment: it will be in the land of Israel, it will be openly before all, it will be with the fire of God's wrath, and it will be final:

Ezekiel 28:17   Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty; thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness; I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.

18   Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy merchandise; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee; it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.

19   All they that know thee among the people shall be appalled at thee; thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.

## TIME LINE FOR FUTURE EVENTS

### Church Age

	Begins	Ends
Coming of Holy Spirit		Times of the Gentiles
Day of Pentecost		Rapture of the Believers

### Tribulation

#### Seven Years Duration

	Begins	Ends
Opening of the Seven		2nd Coming of Christ
Seals		Battle of Armageddon

### Millennium

	Begins	Ends
Chaining of Satan in the Pit		Loosing of Satan
Reign of Christ Eze. 37		Deception of Gog and Magog
		Final Battle, Ezekiel 38 & 39
		Satan Cast Into Lake of Fire

### Great White Throne

Judgment of the Ungodly

Casting Into the Lake of Fire

### Eternity

New Heaven - New Earth

God's Eternal Righteous Rule

## Chapter 7

# Rosh is not Russia

According to the McAlvany Intelligence Advisor (a popular newsletter of monetary, economic, geopolitical, and precious metals analysis dated September 1982), the Russians were preparing in September of 1982 to move into the Middle East with Lebanon the pivot for their plans to invade and conquer Israel, Jordan, and subsequently the Persian Gulf. This invasion, timed for mid-1983 according to McAlvany, was deferred when Israel invaded Lebanon and captured Soviet prepositioned war materiel (including chemical and biological weapons sufficient to arm a 100,000-man army). The newsletter ended:

“FINAL THOUGHT—Ezekiel 38 and 39 describe a point in time when Russia will move down into the Middle East against Israel; allied with Libya, Ethiopia, Iran (Persia), Germany, and Turkey. In the Biblical scenario, Russia is defeated by divine intervention. Perhaps the Bible has more relevance to the present period than most people would suppose.”<sup>1</sup>

This scenario, rendered obsolete by subsequent events, illustrates what happens when current events, combined with incorrect interpretations of Scripture and a little imagination, are superimposed upon a biblical passage to make it appear to say something that in fact is not at all evident from the passage alone.

For some time, a number of Bible teachers have been heralding publically the imminent invasion of Israel by Russia, basing this prediction on an implicit chronological assignment of Ezekiel 38 and 39. Depending upon which teacher you may read or hear, this invasion is to take place shortly before or after the beginning of the Tribulation, or at Mid-Tribulation, or near the end of the Tribu-

lation (prior to the second coming of Christ) or at the beginning of the millennial reign of Christ. Interpreting the Word of God according to media headlines subjects the Scriptures to the world's ridicule and discredits otherwise sincere Bible teaching. Our goal here will be to suggest, from a textual perspective, that the invasion of Ezekiel 38-39 has no relationship to the present nation of Soviet Russia and will occur (at least) 1000 years in the future.

### *Rosh Identified As Russia*

The misunderstanding placing Russia in Ezekiel 38 and 39 began when early Bible scholars, whose identity cannot always be verified—read either the Septuagint, (Greek translation of the Old Testament, compiled in Alexandria, Egypt ca. 200-300 B.C. by 70 Jewish scholars) or, more recently, the American Standard Version (1901 Edition) of the English Bible (the Revised Standard Version and the New International Version were not in print when this teaching first became popular) of Ezekiel 38:2,3, and concluded that the Hebrew word “rosh” (ros in the Greek) found there referred to Russia because the words have similar sounds and the invasion comes from the north. Without examining the logic of or the scriptural proof for this interpretation, other Bible scholars accepted it as valid without proper investigation. As the interpretation became increasingly popular among fundamentalists, the traditions of men “rendered the Word of God of no effect” (Mark 7:13).

It becomes apparent as one reads the commentaries that the authors are prone to quote each other to prove a point. Because this often happens without proper investigation, in the end, with slight variations, most commentaries say basically the same thing. If the original writer is correct, all is well, but if he errs in his interpretation, the error is passed on to the unsuspecting student. We believe that this has happened in the interpretation of Ezekiel 38 and 39.

### *Scholars Accepting "Rosh" as Russia*

It is only fair to note at this point that many well-known scholars, Dr. Scofield, Dr. Pentecost, and Dr. Walvood among them, have accepted the usage of the word "rosh" in Ezekiel 38 and 39 to mean Russia. Others who hold this view are William Kelly, (Notes on Ezekiel), Harry Rimmer (The Coming War and the Rise of Russia), and The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, which states that

Gesenius in his Hebrew Lexicon regarded it ("rosh") as being the Russians, who are mentioned in Byzantine writers of the 10th century under the name of Rhos.<sup>2</sup>

As will be noted later, the Rhos mentioned by Byzantine writers were probably the Varangian-Swedes who invaded the area called Russia today and established extensive trade routes with the Byzantine Empire around the 9th and 10th centuries A.D.

The reasoning of many who see Russia involved in the Ezekiel passage is perhaps best summed up in a paragraph by Pentecost:

From the prophecy in Ezekiel it is learned that there will be a great confederacy, known as the northern confederacy under the leadership of one who arises in the land of Magog—Russia. Allied with Russia will be Iran (Persia), certain Arab states (Put and Ethiopia), Germany, and some Asiatic peoples known as Togarmah, which may include an extensive list is seen from Ezekiel 38:6, "and many people with thee." This prophecy anticipates an extensive alliance of powers along with Russia that will resist Israel and the Roman Empire in the last days.<sup>3</sup>

A. C. Gaebelein concurred:

Careful research has established the fact that. . .Rosh is Russia. The prince of Rosh means, therefore, the prince or king of the Russian Empire."<sup>4</sup>

Too many Bible students assume that because this writer



uses the words “careful research” his conclusions do indeed reflect proper scholarship, must be correct, and therefore do not merit further investigation. Unfortunately, the “careful research” mentioned above often consists primarily of reading authors who are prone to copy one another rather than personally examining the textual evidence for the issue. Another writer, Ruthven, argues that

. . .other indications, such as geographical location, ethnography, and the general descriptions of the culture, provide us with some confidence that there is a direct connection between the *Rosh* of Ezekiel and the tribal Rus from which modern Russia derives its name. Indeed this is the suggestion of one Russian historian, who states: “The first reference to the . . .Russ, the ancestors of the Russian rulers is found in Ezekiel XXXVIII 2f.”<sup>6</sup>

Ruthven’s statement listing geographical location, ethnography, and culture summarizes the major arguments for the position that “rosh” is Russia; namely, that the invasion comes from north of Israel, that Russia occupies the old land of Magog, and that they are the Scythians or “barbarians” of the New Testament times. These arguments are quite apart from linguistical and contextual considerations.

We have addressed the weakness of each of these points in this study. By contrast, we continue to emphasize the weight of chronology, context, syntax, and parallel passages when interpreting this passage. From a biblical perspective, no connection between Russia and the word “rosh” is evident in Ezekiel 38 and 39.

#### *Scholars Not Accepting “rosh” as Russia*

Explaining the meaning of Gog, a footnote to Ezekiel 38:2 in the Scofield Reference Bible states, “that the primary reference is to the northern (European) powers, headed up by Russia, all agree” but, although we profoundly respect the work of Dr. Scofield, we must observe that all do not agree on this definition of Gog. Unger offered these

thoughts on the subject:

Some make Gog “prince of Rosh” and identify it with Russia but this identification is tenuous, although the general area was that now occupied by Russia.<sup>6</sup> (The last part of Unger’s quote is also tenuous.)

Feinberg’s discourse of the issue is more positive:

There have been many writers who connect the name Rosh with Russia, but this is not generally accepted today.<sup>7</sup>

Like Feinberg, Ralph Alexander strongly denies the validity of this popular association of the word “rosh” with Russia:

Some understand ‘rosh’ to mean modern Russia but this identity has no basis. Those holding such a view normally appeal to etymology based on similar sounds (to the hearing) between the two terms, but such etymological procedure is not linguistically sound at all. The term Russia is a late eleventh century A.D. term.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, even Ruthven, whose opinion on the subject waivered and who ultimately concluded that there *is* a connection between “rosh” and Russia, admitted that,

At the present state of our knowledge, however, it is safe and correct to say with Vernadski (Russian Historian) that the origin of the word ‘Ros’ or ‘Rus’ is *not* definitely established.<sup>9</sup>

Having presented both those who believe that “rosh” refers to Russia and those who do not, let us now examine the text to settle the question.

### *The Meaning of the Word Rosh*

The Hebrew word “rosh” is very common in the Old Testament, appearing in its root forms and derivatives over 750 times. The Hebrew Lexicon defines “rosh” as 1) head (of a human being); 2) head (chief man, such as chief priest); 3) head (front, as of a leader’s place or of time, as the beginning of night watch); 4) head (division

of army, company, band); 5) head (sum, in its sum, i.e. in full); 6) chief (choicest, best of spices); 7) top (as a mountain, hill, tower, stronghold).<sup>10</sup> Normally it is translated by one of the above meanings, as in its Chaldean equivalent, the “*head of gold*” of Daniel 2:38. The translators of the Septuagint made an unfortunate error when they simply transliterated this Hebrew word into the Greek as a proper name “Ros” four times in the Old Testament (Genesis 46:21; Ezekiel 38:2-3; 39:1) instead of translating it as the adjective “chief” or “head.” Had this error not occurred, the current problem might have been avoided. Transliteration simply means to bring the letters of one alphabet “across” or “over” into another alphabet as they stand rather than to translate the meaning of the word into the other language. Transliteration vs. translation is determined by the context, although the overwhelming practice is translation. Of the four occurrences in the Septuagint where the context might conceivably call for transliteration rather than translation, Genesis 46:21 is the one place in doubt. There the context is listing proper names for the sons of Benjamin. However, in a subsequent listing for the sons of Benjamin in Numbers 26:38, the name is omitted. If the rendering for the proper name Rosh is correct in Genesis 46:21, the son probably died without issue prior to the listing in Numbers 26:38 much as Er and Onan of Judah.

When a word is translated 750 times in the Old Testament as “chief”, “head”, “foremost”, “top”, etc. and transliterated only four times, (in certain versions), as a proper noun “Rosh” or “Ros” (Greek) and one of those four times is in the genealogy of one of the tribes of Israel, the overwhelming odds are in favor of the word being the adjective in the other three instances as well.

Davis’ Dictionary of the Bible describes the two places where the Hebrew word “rosh” is used as a proper name in Scripture in the following way:

1. A son of Benjamin, who went down to Egypt with Jacob and his sons (Genesis 46:21). He did not give

rise to a tribal family (Numbers 26:38), because probably like Er and Onan of Judah, he died without issue.

2. A northern people mentioned with Meshech and Tubal (Ezekiel 38:2,3; 39:1, both R.V. text). Gesenius believes Rosh to be the Russians, though they are *nowhere else mentioned* by this or any similar name for centuries afterwards. The text of the A.V. and the margin of the R.V. render Rosh "chief prince" in which case *Rosh as a proper name disappears*.<sup>11</sup> (emphasis mine)

In the King James (AV), the New International (NIV), and the Revised Standard (RSV) versions of the Bible, the Hebrew word "rosh" is properly translated "chief." All three versions of Ezekiel 38:2-3 and 39:1 read "chief prince of Meshech and Tubal." Only in the American Standard (ASV) version is the Hebrew word transliterated as a proper name "Rosh" reading "prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal"; however, that the word is *translated* in the margin of this version casts doubt on the validity of its usage as a proper name.

#### *Factual Etymology*

A more accurate etymology of the word 'Russia' may well be found in Pares' history of Russia:

The name Rus probably comes from the word Rothsmen or seafarers, a corrupted form of which (Ruotsi) was used by the Finns to describe the Varangers who came to Russia. It was used long before the coming of Rurik. It now came to mean the upper class of the Kiev realm, which was a mixture of Scandinavian elements.<sup>12</sup>

This identification accords with Warren B. Walsh's history, *Russia and the Soviet Union*, which also designates the Varangian-Swedes as the source of the term Rus. Walsh quotes the most ancient written legend of Russia, called The Primary Chronicle (c. 860-862 A.D.) as the earliest written source for the name Rus:

The tributaries of the Varangians drove them back beyond the sea and, refusing them further tribute, set out to govern themselves. There was no law among them, but tribe rose against tribe. Discord thus ensued amongst them, and they began to war against one another. They said to themselves: 'Let us seek a prince who may rule over us, and judge us according to the law.' They accordingly went overseas to the Varangian Russes: these particular Varangians were known as Russes, just as some are called Swedes, and others Normans, Angles, and Goths, for they were thus named. . . On account of these Varangians, the district of Novgorod became known as the land of Rus. The present inhabitants of Novgorod are descended from the Varangian race, but aforetime they were Slavs.<sup>13</sup>

There is reason, therefore, to believe that the present name Russia originated in the northern European countries.

Writing in the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, T. G. Pinches noted that the identification of Rosh is not without its difficulties. He states:

In all probability Friedrich Delitzsch's identification of Rosh with the mat Rasi, "land of Rash" of the Assyrian inscriptions, is the best.<sup>14</sup>

Although Pinches preferred the ASV transliteration of the word as a proper name, he did not believe that Rosh was Russia. We wish to stress that there is no agreement, even among those who transliterate the word as a proper name, about where the people that this term refers to settled, if indeed they did exist. The above data suggests that it is hermeneutically more accurate to translate the Hebrew "rosh" as an adjective, "chief", (modifying "prince") than as a proper name.

#### *The Meaning of the Word Prince*

Only two Hebrew words ("nagid and naw-saw") are translated "prince" in the Old Testament, but while we cannot draw dogmatic conclusions from such limited information,

it would seem that the word "nagid" refers to legitimate rulers or chiefs and indicates a ruler or prince worthy of the position. This word is used of David, the anointed king of Israel (I Samuel 13:14, 25:30), Hezekiah, ruler of Judah (II Kings 20:5), an unnamed prince or ruler (Ezekiel 28:2, Daniel 9:25,26), and the high priest of the temple (Jeremiah 20:1). The word is translated to mean rulers in other capacities (I Chronicles 27:16, 9:20, 12:28) and in many other places, as well, each time designating a legitimate leader, chief, or ruler.

The Hebrew word "naw-saw" comes from a root that means one lifted up, to lead astray, i.e. to delude, or (morally) to seduce, beguile, deceive, and make insurrection. "Naw-saw" is used of the leader of the Ishmaelites, descendants of Ishmael, the son of Hagar (Sarah's handmaid, who begat a son by Abraham but whose descendants always contested the rights of Israel; Genesis 17:20), and of the leader of the Hivites, who were Canaanites (Genesis 34:2). This same Hebrew word appears in Ezekiel 38:2 to designate Gog as "chief *prince* of Meshech and Tubal."

In light of such evidence, we may reasonably conclude that Gog is an illegitimate leader, a "prince" who comes on the world scene as a usurper, one with counterfeit credentials, who seduces the people of the world to rebel against Christ's Kingdom.

### *Meshech and Tubal as Russian Cities*

Some Bible scholars have tried to connect the biblical names of Meshech and Tubal with the contemporary Russian cities of Moscow and Tobolsk on the basis of similar sounds just as in the case of Rosh and Russia:

Gesenius also identified "Meshech" as Moscow, the capital of modern Russia in Europe. "Tubal" he identified as Tobolsk, the earliest province of Asiatic Russia to be colonized, and also, the name of the city wherein Peter the Great built the old fortress after the pattern of the Kremlin at Moscow. Moscow bespeaks Russia in Europe, and Tobolsk bespeaks Russia in Asia.<sup>15</sup>

Biblical evidence, however, suggests that the descendants of Meshech and Tubal settled some place near the Middle East, somewhere within the area encompassed in the biblical record, for we know that they were merchants in the markets of Tyre (Ezekiel 27:13). According to The New Bible Commentary,

Meshech and Tubal were probably east of Asia minor and are usually identified with Phrygia and Cappadocia; their equation with Moscow and Tolbolsk, and Rosh with Russia, is unsupportable.<sup>16</sup>

While Tubal and Meshech are usually mentioned together in the Bible, Rosh is only associated with them in the problem passage of Ezekiel 38:2-3, 39:1 and then only in the ASV, where the translation is questioned in the marginal readings. As we noted before and wish to emphasize again, the proper name Rosh is not used at all in the AV, NIV, or RSV. We can think of no time when a word in the Bible can be interpreted to refer to a western country or city simply because the words have similar sounds; thus we should look at the way Meshech and Tubal are used in Scripture and arrive at their true significance.

### *The Meaning of Meshech and Tubal*

As we have already observed, Meshech and Tubal always appear together in Scripture, usually in that order. In Genesis 10:2, I Chronicles 1:5, and Ezekiel 27:13, they appear in reverse order with Tubal mentioned first; in four other references in Ezekiel Meshech is mentioned first in the most common order. It is probable that where Tubal is mentioned first the words are proper names which refer to the descendants of Japheth as in Genesis 10:2, I Chronicles 1:5, and Ezekiel 27:13 and that where Meshech is mentioned first the words should be translated, not as proper nouns but according to their literal meanings. Such an approach is supported by Isaiah 66:19, where the Hebrew word for Meshech is translated "draw" and the word for Tubal appears as a proper noun. In our problem passages in Ezekiel 38:2-3 and 39:1, the words Meshech and

Tubal could very properly be translated rather than transliterated, as well. The root meaning of "Meshech" is "to lead or drag off," "to draw", or "lift out or drag" as in Psalms 10:9 ("He doth catch the poor, when he *draweth* him into his net"), where the word Meshech is used as a verb.<sup>17</sup> In Ezekiel 32:20 Meshech is again used as a verb to indicate those who have been "drawn" to the sword. The word "Tubal" comes from a prime root ("nabel"), which means generally "to wilt," to "fall away", to "fail or faint," or (morally) to be "wicked", to "disgrace or dishonor." According to the Lexicon by Brown, Driver and Briggs, as a noun the word Tubal would be translated "a fool" (impious and presumptuous), a person who is at once irreligious and churlish, denying (Psalm 14:1) and insulting (Psalm 74:22) God.<sup>18</sup> When referring to Israel, this word describes a people who do not appreciate God's benefits.

Deuteronomy 32:6 Do ye thus requite the Lord, O *foolish* people and unwise? Is it not he thy father who hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee, and established thee?

As an adjective, the word Tubal means senseless, foolish, and refers especially to one with no perception of ethical and religious claims; an ignoble, disgraceful person, senseless—especially of religious and moral values.<sup>19</sup> Combining the meanings of Meshech and Tubal, therefore, we could translate the passages under our consideration as the "chief prince of those drawn away and foolish," a translation that incorporates all of the other cognate meanings mentioned above which so accurately describe a people who forsake the living God to follow after the master deceiver.

All of the evidence presented here suggests that it would be better hermeneutics to accept the fact that Rosh never existed as a people, and simply to recognize Gog as the illegitimate chief prince of Meshech (those drawn away) and Tubal (the foolish)—the leader of a foolish people who, drawn away from God, reject the righteous rule of Jesus Christ to follow the devil.



## Chapter 8

# God's Final Defeat of Satan

The main concern of Ezekiel 38:2-3 is God's opposition to Gog and his system, the Magog. The rest of Chapters 38 and 39 simply provide the details of the destruction of Gog.

All too often Bible students approach this confrontation between God and Gog from a modern point of view. But if we consider the details about the Tribulation period that are presented in the book of Revelation, we must realize that the world then will be dramatically different from the way it is at present.

### *History of the Continental Drift*

We know that when God created the world, the earth's geography was not the same as it is now, but was composed of one land mass surrounded by water:

Genesis 1:9 And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto *one place*, and let dry land appear: and it was so.

During the days of Peleg, a descendant of Noah through Shem whose name means "to split" or "to divide" with areas of water between, the single land mass divided, the continents drifted apart, and the earth's geography developed into the continental distribution we know today:

Genesis 10:25 And unto Eber was born two sons: the name of one was Peleg; for in his days was the earth divided (split). . .

This division took place after the events at the Tower of Babel: having already been scattered to different parts of the land by the confusion of tongues, the earth's inhabitants drifted with the broken land mass until the continents and islands came to rest in their present locations.

During the Tribulation, the earth will be shaken by

God's destroying forces, of which man has little conception. We experience a small sample of the devastation that can result from earthquakes, wars, fires, and storms—but we cannot imagine the effects of such destruction wholesale and world-wide. With the opening of the sixth seal of Revelation 6, many of the land masses of earth will begin their move back to the original places they occupied before the days of Peleg, as God begins to purge not only mankind, but His entire creation, returning it to its original pure state of which He could say that it was all “very good” (Genesis 1:31).

Revelation 6:12 And I beheld, when he had opened the sixth seal and, lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood;

13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and *every mountain and island were moved out of their places.*

Under the seventh bowl of wrath the purge of God's creation continues:

Revelation 16:18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so might an earthquake, and so great.

19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

20 *And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.*

21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

God's restoration of the earth's original geography will shake the national powers of the world from their foundations, except for the Middle Eastern and closely associated nations that are always involved in the biblical texts; those nations will remain in place while the rest of the world is in chaos. The beast, or Antichrist, will rise from the Middle East to fill the vacuum created by the dissolution of international stability to rule first the Iron Kingdom, and from there the world. (To identify the beast (Antichrist) see the authors' coming book *Gold, Silver, Brass, Iron, Re-thinking the Kingdoms of Daniel 2*.)

By the time the Lord comes with the armies of heaven (Revelation 19:14) and defeats the beast at Armageddon, the earth will be completely restored to its form in the days of Adam and Eve, before sin entered God's creation. The subsequent millennial reign of Christ will be one of righteousness and peace, when a perfect environment will prevail on earth, with perfect conditions for man, animal, and nature. The Prince of Peace Himself will dwell on the earth at that time, Israel serving Him as priests of the Most High.

As Alexander explains:

Ezekiel 38 and 39 view the *entire* nation of Israel (after the restoration) dwelling securely in Messianic security, at peace (cf. 38:8, 11, 14; 39:26). The phrase "dwell safely" is clearly delineated in the book of Ezekiel as a description of Messianic security after Israel's restoration. This is specifically observed in the context of these night messages (cf. 34:25-29; 28:26) as well as in other

prophetic contexts concerned with the Messianic end times (cf. Zec 14:11; Jer 23:6; 32:37; 33:16). Israel has entered into the peace covenant described in 34:25-29, living without walls, bars, or doors (38:7).<sup>1</sup>

Obviously, the conditions of safety and peace set forth in Ezekiel 37, 38 and 39 will take place only during this Messianic Kingdom Age. After that, Satan will be loosed:

Revelation 20:7 And when the thousand years are ended, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.

If, as it is our contention, the battle between God and the forces of Gog occurs after Satan is released, we must not be thinking in terms of national entities as we know them today. The entire topography of the earth's surface will have been rearranged for over 1000 years.

Satan's release, of course, signals the beginning of the end for him and for all those who desert the Lord Jesus Christ to follow him. Through deceit and sorcery Gog will gather most of the world together, leading his followers against the beloved city and saints of God. According to Revelation 20:9,

they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city; and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

The word translated "breadth" above comes from a Greek term which means "to spread out flat" or "width", again suggesting one land mass with the "beloved city", Jerusalem, as the center of the earth in that day. While this verse in Revelation 20 gives but an abbreviated account of the battle that takes place between Gog and God, Ezekiel 38 and 39 give the details.

#### *Examining Ezekiel 38 and 39*

Having established that the invasion will occur at the end of Christ's millennial reign, let us now examine other details in Ezekiel 38 and 39 which support this position.

God's purpose in these two chapters was to record His

sovereignly determined end for Gog and his system. The chapters can be divided into four sections (38:2-13, 14-23; 39:1-16; 17-29), each beginning with a direct address to the prophet (“Son of man”), and progressively revealing divine details of Gog’s defeat and God’s vindication. We will examine the sections in sequence.

*Ezekiel 38:1-13*

In verses 2 and 3 of Ezekiel 38 God makes His position plain. He is against Gog and the Magog and all they represent. But we should not expect atomic bombs, tanks, airplanes equipped with rockets, air-to-air or ground-to-air missiles at this final battle with Gog. Such weaponry will not have existed for over 1000 years. Instead, Gog’s forces will have to rely upon primitive devices. According to the prophet,

Ezekiel 38:4 And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses, and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armor, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords:

5 Persia, Cush and Put with them; all of them with shield and helmet.

6 Gomer and all its hordes; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all its hordes; and many people with thee.

In Verse 4 God declares that He will turn Gog back by putting “hooks into the jaws” of his entire company. This expression appears two other times in the Old Testament; both times the hooks are placed in the jaws of serpents: first, the leviathan (Job 41:1-2) when God challenges Job’s power to subdue Satan, and second, the serpent (dragon) that dwells in the Nile river and is equated with the Pharaoh’s power in Egypt (Ezekiel 29:3-4). In each of these accounts, the serpents are understood to represent Satan.

Because of the phrase “of the north quarters,” Verse 6 has been used erroneously as evidence that Russia will be involved in the invasion. As we have noted earlier, proponents of this theory argue that since Russia is north of Israel and since the word “rosh” sounds like the word Russia, this passage must refer to that nation. We readily grant that Gog’s rebellion must originate in the “north quarters” or “north parts”, since we read as much in Chapter 38, Verses 6 and 15, and in Chapter 39, Verse 2. The Hebrew word for “quarters” and “parts” is the same in each reference and merely records from which direction of the single land mass the attack comes. Satan will find susceptible wills in that day among the descendants of Japheth and Ham with some collaboration from a small part of Shem (Elam). Without being deliberately flippant, may we ask, “So what else is new?” These warlike tribes have always shown less interest in spiritual concerns than the descendants of Shem, or of Japheth’s fourth son, Javan. The responsibility for propagating the Word of God during the Church Age was passed from Shem to the descendants of Japheth, primarily through Javan, and from them to the other nations of the world (See *Come Thou Reign Over Us* for more on this subject). Nevertheless, Satan’s final rebellion will involve great hordes of the earth’s inhabitants in that day—even Javan will be represented, for Verse 6, speaking of God’s judgment, includes “those who dwell carelessly in the isles.” The word “isles” (“coastlands” or “borders”, as it is sometimes translated) designates the isles of the Gentiles of Genesis 10:5 and refers particularly to the islands of the Mediterranean Basin, usually identified with the descendants of Javan.

To establish the time of the invasion, Ezekiel uses the term “after many days” in Verse 8, a phrase which is often used in the Old Testament to designate the end times (cf. Hosea 3:4; Daniel 8:26; Jeremiah 32:14). The prophet goes on to explain that the events he describes will occur in the “latter years” of the restoration described in this verse,

Thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many peoples. . .but is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely, all of them” (V. 8b).

Only during the Millennium do these secure conditions prevail for Israel. Verse 9 describes the size of Gog’s army which will cover the ground like a cloud—“all Thy hordes, and many peoples with thee”, and Verses 10 through 12 reveal the evil designs of Gog against an Israel which seems to be a helpless prey—at rest, dwelling safely without walls, bars, or gates.

In Verse 12, the phrase “dwelling in the midst of the land” describes Jerusalem’s position among the nations of that day. While in Ezekiel 5:5, the word for “midst” designates Jerusalem as the “center” of the nations, in this reference, the word “midst” means the “summit” of the land. With the restoration of the land mass back to its original configuration by the beginning of the Millennium, Jerusalem, as the capital of the world and city of the great Prince during the Millennium will be raised to become the literal “summit” of the nations—Mount Zion. Zechariah also addressed this future elevation of the city when describing the earthly reign of the great King.

**Zechariah 14:9** And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.

10 All the land shall be turned like the Arabah (plain) from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; and it (Jerusalem) shall be lifted up, and inhabited in its place, from Benjamin’s gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananel unto the king’s winepresses.

16 And it shall come to pass that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from

year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

Verse 13 closes the first section by noting the eagerness of some merchant nations to collaborate with Gog in order to share in the spoil of the coming battle.

As a result of what God has noted in the first section, ✓ Verses 14-23 (the second section) deliver God's sentence of judgment against Gog for his attack against the people of Israel. Again, the time is defined as, "In that day when my people of Israel dwell safely" (Verse 14). In the "latter days" (Verse 16) God will destroy the forces of Gog and make himself known among the nations, "and they shall know that I am the Lord" (Verse 23).

In Chapter 39, Ezekiel continues the prophecy against Gog. Verses 1-16 (the third section) show that Gog's army is destroyed on the mountains of Israel. Since only a sixth part of Gog's army is left after God's judgment is complete, it seems that five/sixths of those people of the world who defect and join the forces of Gog are destroyed. Such a catastrophic event certainly demands more Scripture than a one-liner in Revelation 20. Thus the vivid account in Ezekiel fills in the details.

In Verse 3 we learn that Gog's army will be stripped of its weapons of war and destroyed on the mountains of Israel. Gog's system, "Magog", comes under the judgment of fire along with those who remain passively in their home land, choosing not to participate actively with Gog in his attack on Israel but nevertheless rebellious against the rule of Christ (Verse 6). After crushing the rebellion with His judgment, God will establish His holy name before both Israel and the nations (Verse 7).

Verses 9 through 20 provide the details of the cleansing process for the land. Flesh-eating birds and beasts will devour the carcasses and the people of Israel will bury all evidence of the pollution. Those who have not been a part of the rebellion among the nations will share in the glory of the Holy One of Israel throughout all eternity (Verse 20).



In Verses 25-29 God assures Israel that never again will He have to judge them for their sins, since after this final threat of the last days of the Millennium, Israel will be only too glad to be faithful to the one true God.

Ezekiel 39:28 Then they shall know that I am the Lord, their God, who caused them to be led into captivity among the nations; but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there.

29 Neither will I hide my face any more from them; for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God.

The finality of these verses demonstrates clearly that these events must take place in the very last days. By this time God will have gathered all the people of Israel into their land, defeated their enemies, poured out His Spirit upon them, and promised never again to hide His face from them. They will have been established and purified forever as God's earthly people, and prepared for the eternal Kingdom promised to David.

II Samuel 7:16 And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee; thy throne shall be established forever.

# *Epilogue*

Do Ezekiel 38 and 39 implicate the present nation of Soviet Russia as the source of Gog and Magog? Our answer is an unequivocal NO. We trust that this summary of biblical evidence will restore the lofty prophecies of Ezekiel 37-39 to the scriptural context they deserve. It is inconceivable that an event so threatening to the existence of God's earthly Kingdom as Gog's attack in Revelation 20:8-9 should not have corroborating scriptural proof in the Old Testament. That is precisely the purpose of the above-mentioned passage in Ezekiel.

Too often, Bible scholars and laymen alike are inclined to interpret the Bible against a contemporary background. The oil embargo several years ago prompted many books supporting the claim that Russia was on the verge of invading the Middle East in order to control the world's oil supply. Now that the oil crisis is temporarily under control, the hue and cry has abated. Apparently, Russia has ridden out the embargo better than the Western allies have. During the days of the Roman Empire, interpreters were convinced that one of the Caesars was the Antichrist. In Byzantine days, the attacks of the barbarians from the north on Constantinople prompted the same identification of those tribes with Ezekiel 38 and 39. From the 12th century through the Reformation when the Roman Church was persecuting the Free Church, the Pope was accused of being the beast of Revelation. We still find remnants of that today. During World War II, many Bible scholars proclaimed Mussolini as the ruler of a "revived" Roman Empire, confidently expecting him to become the final world dictator. Hitler, it goes without saying, came in for his share of speculative headlines for his persecution of the Jews. Men have always been prone to interpret the Bible according to the events of their own day and time.

Since it is acceptable in the West to condemn the Russians for their ideology and their communism, some have suggested that this form of government will be adopted

by the beast of the Tribulation, thereby bolstering the interpretation that Russia fulfills the role of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38 and 39. In truth, however, the capitalistic system is more inclined to hold the economic reins, and thus capitalism would probably appeal more to the Antichrist. We suggest that neither system is acceptable as long as it is controlled by unregenerate men. Only under the central authority of the King of Righteousness will *any* government operate apart from greed and inequity. The form of government is certainly not a valid hermeneutical principle in interpreting the passage in Ezekiel.

Let us then recapitulate some of the major arguments for a post-Millennial fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecies about Gog and Magog:

1. Linguistically, it is inaccurate to connect "rosh" with Russia, since many scholars agree that Russia is a term growing out of the early centuries of the Church Age, perhaps as late as the ninth or tenth century A.D. Furthermore, many scholars now believe that those who originally proposed that "rosh" refers to Russia did so on the basis of phonetics rather than linguistic evidence. The overwhelming evidence from Scripture is that the Hebrew word "rosh" should be translated rather than transliterated. Likewise, the phonetic similarity of Meshech and Tubal to two Russian cities does not imply any real relationship.

2. While Russia is geographically north of Israel, there is no reason to connect the invasion by Gog with present-day Russia on that basis. The descendants of Japheth have always been and will always be located primarily north, northwest, and northeast of Israel.

3. The choice of words translated "prince" identifies Gog as an illegitimate ruler. If he were the legitimate head of the descendants of Meshech and Tubal, the language would reflect that relationship.

4. The absence of the Hebrew symbol for a definite article before the word "land" and the presence of the sign of the definite article before the word "Magog" in Chapter 38 Verse 2 destroy the theory that Magog repre-

sents the land and people of Russia. Correctly translated, the phrase should read “land of the Magog”—a land dominated by a system of demonic sorcery. The definite article also occurs in the companion passage, Revelation 20:8.

5. Chapters 37-39 are in the section of the book that was revealed to Ezekiel during the 12th year of his captivity and in that section the invasion of Gog occurs chronologically after the millennial reign of the Messiah. Thus Revelation 20:1-10 is a parallel passage to Ezekiel 37-39. Further, Revelation 20:8-10 corroborates an extremely important event in the Old Testament prophecies about God’s earthly people.

We wish to conclude with one final note of caution: in the Church Age, Christians are exhorted to look for one and only one event—the blessed hope of the imminency of the return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. That doctrine has a purifying purpose in the church of Jesus Christ, for if we confidently believe in His “coming at any time” (and that is the meaning of imminency) we are more likely to keep ourselves ready for that moment—not by watching for the establishment of a Common Market, a revival of the Roman Empire, a Russian invasion of Israel, a rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, and so on. These are red herrings designed to distract the Church from its position of watchfulness and readiness. Instead of preparing to meet our God, we have become like children—playing games of “One for the money, two for the show, three to make ready, and four to go!”

Our purpose in this book was two-fold. First, we wanted to correct the prevalent false interpretation of this famous passage in Ezekiel—we hope we have accomplished that.

Second, we hope to inspire students to abandon the headlines of secular history and return to the Bible for their interpretation. This second goal is surely the more difficult, because it requires a change in the study habits of some Bible scholars. Still, it is about time, no, it is very, very late for those who profess the Bible as their final authority to prove as much in their handling of the

eternal Word of God. While much of the Christian world is awaiting a Russian invasion of Israel, Satan is busily conforming men, governments, and religions to his standards, the level of which will usher in the Tribulation. Russia is merely a straw man, set up by Satan to confuse the world in the last days, to draw attention away from his real activity.

## NOTES

### Chapter 1

1. Owen, page 169

### Chapter 2

1. None

### Chapter 3

1. None

### Chapter 4

1. Feinberg, page 201
2. Feinberg, page 205

### Chapter 5

1. Feinberg, page 216

### Chapter 6

1. Strongs, page 25
2. Brown, Driver and Briggs, page 144
3. Brown, Driver and Briggs, page 145
4. Chafer, Vol. II, page 49
5. Kittel, page 356-358
6. Brown, Driver and Briggs, page 550
7. Strongs, page 106
8. Kittel, Vol. IV, page 356-358

### Chapter 7

1. McAlvany, page 1
2. ISBE, page 2624
3. Pentecost, page 331
4. Gaebelein, page 257-258
5. Ruthven, Bib Sac, Oct, 1968, page 332-333
6. Unger, page 378
7. Feinberg, page 220
8. Alexander, page 122
9. Ruthven, page 333
10. Brown, Driver and Briggs, page 910
11. Davis, page 661
12. Pares, page 28
13. Walsh, page 20
14. ISBE, page 2624

15. Bauman, page 23-25
16. Davidson, page 663
17. Brown, Driver and Briggs, page 604
18. Brown, Driver and Briggs, page 614
19. Brown, Driver and Briggs, page 614

#### Chapter 8

1. Alexander, page 118

#### Epilogue

1. Alexander, page 127-128

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*“The end of the age is coming soon. Therefore  
be earnest, thoughtful men of prayer.”*  
(I Peter 4:7 – Paraphrase)