

EZEKIEL 38, 39

FUTURE EVENTS PERTAINING TO ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS

By Arlen L. Chitwood

“After many years thou shalt be visited [Gentile powers previously referenced in vv. 2-6]: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them.

Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee...

And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, having neither bars nor gates,

To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land” (Ezek. 38:8, 9, 11, 12).

Ezekiel chapters thirty-eight and thirty-nine are invariably (with few exceptions) looked upon by Bible students as revealing an invasion of the present existing nation of Israel by Gentile powers (usually seen as powers headed by Russia, including Middle East and North African nations). And this invasion is seen occurring at a time immediately before or sometime during the Tribulation (most see the invasion occurring during the Tribulation).

But, in the light of *the clear wording of the text itself* (both chapters) and the context (chapters on both sides of the text), *the common interpretation can*

only be seen as something quite flawed.

As will be shown, these two chapters have to do with Gentile powers coming against a restored Jewish nation, *a nation restored following Christ’s return at the end of the Tribulation, following Man’s Day, during the Lord’s Day.* And, for a multiplicity of reasons, the restored Jewish nation referenced in these chapters **CANNOT possibly have any type connection, after any fashion, with the nation presently in the land.**

And the preceding can be clearly shown, in an unquestionable manner, from the text and the context of these two chapters in Ezekiel.

(Note that the heavens are closed relative to God’s dealings with Israel today. God has, so to speak, stopped the clock marking off time in Daniel’s Seventy-Week prophecy while He deals with *the one new man* “in Christ.” *Only after God has completed His present dealings with this new man will the heavens once again open relative to His dealings with Israel, with time once again being counted in Daniel’s prophecy.*

Thus, for this reason alone [and there are many others] *the present existing nation of Israel in the Middle East CANNOT be a work of God, even in part, relative to the prophesied restoration of the Jewish people to the land [alone rendering it impossible for this nation to fit into Ezekiel’s prophecy (ref. the author’s pamphlet, “70 Years, 490 Years”).*

The present restoration of some 6,000,000 Jews to the land can only be a *Zionistic work of man, wherein the Jewish people have taken matters into their own hands and have sought to effect an emancipation of the nation apart from either repentance or the nation’s Messiah.*)

The Context

1) Preceding Ezekiel 38, 39

The several chapters immediately preceding and leading into Ezek. 38, 39 deal, to an extent, with the entire history of Israel (34:11-31; 36:16-38; 37:1-28).

But, though the preceding references succinctly cover the complete history, or parts of this history, *the emphasis throughout is ALWAYS on the outcome of this history — Israel’s future salvation, restoration, and cleansing — which can occur ONLY following Messiah’s return, following the Tribulation.*

And the place which all of the Gentile nations will occupy in this complete history is seen as well.

Then, note that nothing in chapter thirty-five was listed among the preceding chapter references regarding Israel. Material in this chapter has to do with the destruction of Gentile world power at the same time matters are brought to a conclusion regarding the future history of Israel, as detailed in the other three chapters (chs. 34, 36, 37).

“Mount Seir” is referenced beginning chapter thirty-five, which was *the home of the Edomites* (cf. vv. 1, 15; cf. Deut. 2:5). And, comparing Scripture with Scripture, note in Isa. 34:1ff that “Edom” is used in a parallel text to represent *all of the Gentile nations* (vv. 1-8), which come under God’s judgment “in the day of the Lord’s vengeance,” because of “the controversy of Zion [‘the cause of Zion’].”

“Zion” is a synonym for *Jerusalem*, or is used referring to *the Jewish people* (Ps. 76:2; 126:1; Isa. 1:26, 27). Thus, as clearly seen elsewhere in Scripture, God’s future judgment of the Gentiles at this time will center around *their attitude toward and treatment of the Jewish people*, something clearly seen in the chapters under discussion in Ezekiel (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; Ezek. 35:34, 35; 38:3, 18; Matt. 25:31-46).

2) Following Ezekiel 38, 39

The nine chapters following Ezek. 38, 39 (chs. 40-48), concluding the Book of Ezekiel, have to do with Israel in the future Messianic Era, following God’s dealings with Israel and the nations as seen in the previous chapters.

These chapters have to do with millennial conditions — with the Temple, the priesthood, offerings, worship, and a tribal division of the land.

Thus, the chapters which precede simply provide information concerning Israel and the nations, leading into the Messianic Era. And, as is evident from reading chapters thirty-four through thirty-seven, this information has to do mainly with Israel and the nations immediately following the Tribulation and Messiah’s return — with events which will evidently occur during the seventy-five-day period seen at the end of the Book of Daniel (12:11-13).

The Text

Since events seen in the four chapters preceding chapters thirty-eight and thirty-nine (chs. 34-37) have to do mainly with events occurring following Christ's return, leading into the Messianic Era (chs. 40-48), why should the two chapters now under discussion (chs. 38, 39) be looked upon as dealing with something different?

After all, numerous places in these two chapters call attention to events paralleling those seen in the previous four chapters. These two chapters simply form an expansion of that dealt with in chapter thirty-five and alluded to different places in the other three chapters (chs. 34, 36, 37).

That revealed in these two chapters is simply a detailed description of the destruction of Gentile world power following Christ's return and following the completion of His dealings with the nation of Israel (following their national conversion, restoration to the land, and cleansing).

In short, that seen in these two chapters has to do with the same thing seen so many places in Scripture — a final summing up of matters regarding Gentile world power, preceding the Messianic Era, in what is commonly called "The Battle of Armageddon" (Rev. 14:14-20; 16:16; 19:17-21).

1) Prevalence and Place in Scripture

This destruction of Gentile world power at the end of Man's Day is seen over and over in Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets (e.g., Gen. 11:1ff; 14:1ff; 19:1ff; Ps. 2:1ff; 83:1ff; Jer. 30:1ff; Dan. 2:37-45; Joel 2:1ff; 3:1ff; Zech. 14:1ff). This is the destruction seen in Isa. 34:1ff, leading into the Messianic Era seen in the following chapter (35:1-10). As well, this is the same destruction seen in the parallel passage in Ezek. 35:1ff, leading into the Messianic Era (chs. 40-48).

And this destruction, dealt with throughout Scripture, can clearly be seen, both textually and contextually, as *the same destruction depicted in Ezek. 38, 39, leading into the Messianic Era (chs. 40-48)*.

And there could be no possible problem see-

ing *all nations represented by only certain powers mentioned in Ezek. 38:2-6*. Note, for example, in Isa. 34:1ff and Ezek. 35:1ff, that *all nations are represented by one nation, Edom*; and in Ps. 83:1ff, *all nations are represented by ten named nations*.

Then note Joel 2:20 where reference is made to God destroying the "northern army" (an evident reference to Ezek. 38, 39, where the main, lead power comes from the north), seen contextually in Joel as *a reference to the destruction of all nations (2:1ff; 3:1ff)*.

And this destruction in Joel, as in Ezekiel, occurs following Man's Day, following Christ's return (3:16), in the Lord's Day (3:14 [which begins at the end of Man's Day, with the Tribulation comprising the last seven years of Man's Day]).

2) As Seen in These Two Chapters

And, with the preceding in mind, note the same thing seen in Ezek. 38, 39.

Gentile world power, as seen in these two chapters, will come against Israel at a time after the Tribulation, after the nation's Messiah has returned, after Israel's national conversion, after the Jewish people have been removed from the nations and restored to their land, and after the nation is at rest in the land, with the Lord present among His people. *THEN, and ONLY THEN, can that seen in these two chapters occur.*

Note in Ezek. 38:20 that *Messiah Himself will be present* ("...shall shake at my presence"), and in Ezek. 39:8, this will occur in the future Lord's Day, which, again, doesn't begin until the end of Man's Day and Messiah's return (cf. Ezek. 34:12, showing that the two times are the same).

And since all of the things detailed in the preceding, clearly seen in Ezek. 38, 39, can occur *ONLY FOLLOWING MESSIAH'S RETURN*, this alone would preclude any possible fulfillment of the prophecy until a time following the Tribulation.

Further, according to Ezek. 38:11, 12, these Gentile powers will come into the land against Israel at a time when the nation dwells safely, "having neither bars nor gates." And Israel cannot possibly be seen occupying such a position at

any time between now and the middle of the Tribulation, when the present existing nation will be uprooted and driven back out among the nations.

Nor will the nation possess the wealth seen in these verses prior to the end of the Tribulation, when they return back to the land possessing the wealth of the Gentiles (cf. Gen. 31:1-3; Isa. 60:5, 11), with the Gentile armies coming into the land not only as an all-out attempt to, once and for all, destroy the nation of Israel ("They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance" [Ps. 83:4]) but to recover the wealth which will then be in Israel's possession (cf. Rev. 18:15-21).

The overthrow of these Gentile armies in Ezek. 39:17-20 is the same as that seen in Isa. 63:1-4; Rev. 14:14-20; 19:17-21. This overthrow occurs at the hands of Israel's Messiah, and those overthrown are left in the open fields for the carrion birds of the air and the wild animals of the earth.

And the end result of the whole of the matter has to do with both the house of Israel and the Gentile nations recognizing and acknowledging the true identity of the One in Israel's midst (cf. Ezek. 36:33-36; 37:25-28; 38:21-23; 39:27-29).

Nothing like any of the preceding can possibly occur *until Man's Day has run its course — until Israel's Messiah has returned back to the earth, and a number of ensuing events have occurred.*

The destruction of Gentile world power, as seen in Ezek. 35, 38, 39, occurs not only in conjunction with all the things seen relative to Israel in Ezek. 34-39, but following God's dealings with His people relative to the nation's conversion, restoration, and cleansing.

Then, the Messianic Era... (chs. 40-48).

(For supplementary, foundational material on all of the preceding, refer to the author's book, "Israel — What Does the Future Hold?")

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