

## **Review**

When we left off in Ezekiel 37, the Lord had promised Ezekiel that the Jews will one day be restored to the land, being brought back to life, as illustrated in the vision of the valley of dry bones. The people of Israel would no longer be split into Judah and Israel, but would be one nation. In the day of their restoration, Jesus Christ, the root of David, will rule as king over them. God Himself will dwell with them on the earth, and Israel will be the nation above all others.

All of this future prophecy sounds quite exciting for the people of Israel. However, there are some nations whose future will not be so positive or peaceful. That is the subject which chapter 38 brings before us...

### **38:1-6 Who Are They?**

There are a number of places in this passage that practically cry out to be identified. Normally, when we are seeking to track down people groups in history, we turn to the "table of nations." This is found in both Genesis 10 and 1Chronicles 1. By using the genealogies listed in these chapters, we are often able to trace the history of various people groups of the world.

However, this is not always as easy or simple as it sounds. Because of things like migrations, wars, and intermarrying of people groups, very often the details and simplicity are lost in history.

Fortunately, we are able to trace some of these places that are listed. Saving you all of the bookwork, I'll abbreviate:

- Magog is Russia, along with other northern regions formerly part of the USSR - the Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, etc.
- Persia is Iran, and some of eastern Iraq.
- Cush and Put encompass Black Africa and North Africa.
- Gomer is the Slavic countries, including Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, etc.
- Beth-torgarmah is the area of Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan

Since Gog is of the land of Magog, then it stands to reason that Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal are cities or provinces of Magog. There have been many who suggest that Rosh is Russia, Meshech is Moscow, and

Tubal is Tobolsk. However, I have not been able to verify those claims through any outside sources.

### **God Against Gog**

The Lord, speaking to Gog through Ezekiel, says, "I am against you, and these are my plans for you."

Gog will be leading not only Russia, former Soviet republics, as well as Iran, Egypt and the other African nations, the Slavs, Turks, and Armenians. He will be leading them to war.

### **The Hooks In Their Jaws**

God says,

**Ezek. 38:4 "I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out..."**

It sounds like they will not initially be interested in this war, but they will be forced into it by God Himself. He will basically be dragging them into it.

Now, I don't know what form that will take. The hooks in their jaws might be any number of things - a desire to expand their empire, a political alliance that forces them into a situation, a greed for oil or other natural resources... We do see in verse 11 that part of the invaders' desire has to do with spoil and plunder.

But whatever the hooks are, God will use them to draw Gog and his allies into this battle.

### **38:7 Be A Guard For Them**

The phrase "be a guard" is the Hebrew word "mish-MAWR." It refers to a place of confinement, like a prison. It sounds to me like Gog's allies will be stuck in this with him. As if they're obligated to go along with the invasion. But the question is, where are they headed? Who will they be invading?

### **38:8 To The Mountains Of Israel**

Now God says clearly where Gog will be leading this invasion force -

it will be against the Jews living in the land of Israel after they are gathered from many nations.

### **Gathered From Many Nations**

Remember, there are three instances when the Jews were or will be regathered from the nations:

- 1) Returning from the Babylonian Captivity;
- 2) Returning from the diaspora after World War II; and
- 3) The future regathering from the nations at the end of the Great Tribulation.

This army from the north will be coming after one of these regatherings.

### **A Continual Waste**

How can we figure out which regathering will be followed by this attack? Another clue we have is that the land will have been a "continual waste." This word "waste" (khor-BAW) speaks of a place being desolate and ruined - a complete desert.

This eliminates the possibility of it referring to the regathering after the tribulation. As we see from the book of Revelation, that seven-year period will see Jerusalem inhabited, with a functioning temple. Even after the earthquakes and judgments which will cripple the city during that seven-year period, the destruction could not be spoken of as "continual waste."

### **After Many Days**

There are only two times of which I'm aware that Israel was a "continual waste." The first time was during the 70 years of the Babylonian captivity. And the second time was after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD by the Roman Empire. For a lot of the last 2,000 years, the former land of Israel became a desert wasteland. It wasn't until the Jews re-inhabited the land in the mid-1900's that the land began to be restored to its former condition.

Now, the Lord said that this was going to happen "after many

days, in the latter years." But the Babylonian Captivity would end soon enough, and certainly would not qualify as being in the last days. Plus, there is also the fact that we have not seen this attack happen yet in history.

And so it would seem that this prophetic event is still in our future. But I don't believe it is in the too distant future, for more reasons that we will see shortly...

### **38:9-12 Unwalled Security**

When these nations set out to attack Israel, the force will be massive. And they will be headed towards "unwalled villages," those who are at rest, living securely.

"Living securely" literally means "sitting in confidence." But these words have been translated elsewhere in the Scriptures as "unsuspecting," "careless," and "complacent."

Why would the Israelis think that they were dwelling in security? Well, we see today that no cities are encompassed by walls anymore. Their protection is not from bars and gates, but from weapons. And in 1968 - just 20 years after Israel became a nation again, the CIA concluded that Israel had begun to produce nuclear weapons. Today, they are believed to be sixth in the list of nuclear powers, with about 200 warheads. Their nuclear deterrent allows them to believe that they are quite safe from invasion.

But they are not the only ones with weapons. Notice in verse seven that it is the Russians who are equipping the other nations for this battle. It is truly amazing to think that Ezekiel, writing more than 2,500 years ago, could know that Russia would become so strapped for cash that they would begin selling:

- nuclear technology to China and Iran,
- missile technology to North Korea,
- armored personnel carriers to the Palestinian Authority,
- anti-aircraft missiles to Syria,
- and that in 2004 alone Russian arms exports (at least the ones we're aware of) totaled \$5.6 billion.

Russia and her allies could certainly be convinced to attack Israel, especially with God drawing them in.

### **38:13 Protests From Some**

When the invasion is undertaken, there are some who will simply watch, and maybe will protest. Sheba, Dedan, Tarshish, and its villages, or literally, "young lions," as the King James translates.

Sheba and Dedan are modern-day Saudi Arabia. But Tarshish is mostly a mystery. There is a very good possibility that Tarshish refers to the area of the British Isles. If that is true, then its young lions would probably be nations like Australia and the United States.

Could verse 13 refer to the USA making protests at the United Nations? It's always possible...

### **38:14-39:8 Weapons And Soldiers**

Some commentators protest the interpretation of these chapters as being modern. They point out that the weapons are swords, bows, and arrows, and that the transportation used is horses.

Interestingly, two months after the 9/11 attacks, the USA didn't question the fact that the Afghan Rebels we were aiding were all on horses. Military experts say that in country like that, horses are better than a four-wheel drive. In mountainous terrain, the only better vehicle is a helicopter.

But before you begin to think that this sounds like an excuse, it is important to point out that linguistically, the word used for "horse" here (soos) literally means "leaper." It is used in Jeremiah 8:7 to describe a bird of some sort.

The word for "riders" (REH-keb) literally means "drivers that are carried," as in a chariot. By literal definition, this could certainly be helicopter or fighter pilots who are being carried in cockpits.

The "arrows" (khayts) are sharp, piercing missiles, and the "bows" (KEH-sheth) are launchers - from a root meaning "severe, fierce, harsh."

And of course the term "sword" is used in Scripture to describe all sorts of destroying weapons, and sometimes entire armies.

We would certainly be justified in translating this as God saying, "when your army comes riding or flying all your various forms of transportation, I'm going to wipe you out - I'm going to knock your missiles and launchers right out of your hands."

This will be accomplished through an earthquake, raining down fire and brimstone, and the army turning against one another. Even those in the lands who stayed home in safety will have fire sent down upon them. There will be no doubt that this was a supernatural occurrence.

### **39:9-16 Weapons And Bodies After The War**

Once God supernaturally intervenes and destroys this army in the land of Israel, then the Jews will be dealing with the aftermath.

The armies weapons will be burned. Interestingly, there will be so many of them that there will be no need to collect firewood from the forests for seven years!

There will also be so many bodies that burying them will take seven months, and there will still be bodies found after that.

There have been numerous claims that the weapons described here are nuclear, which provide Israel their power for seven years, and that it is because of radiation that professionals have to bury the bodies, making sure that travelers mark the spot but leave the body alone. Although it sounds intriguing, I don't see the passage insinuating that.

### **39:17-20 A Feast For The Birds And Beasts**

One of the reasons I don't think these bodies are radiated is that God invites the birds and beasts to come eat their flesh. God uses this figure of speech on more than one occasion to feed His creatures with those who were judged by Him (Psalm 79, Rev. 19, etc.).

Notice also that verse 20 clearly states that the horses were edible, which should cause us to lean more towards the literal interpretation of them, rather than reading planes and helicopters into the text.

### **39:21-29 Israel Will Know**

Everyone in the world will have seen this judgment take place, but

the people of Israel will have a turning point - they will know that the Lord is God. They will realize that their time of exile was well-deserved, and God will pour out His Spirit on them.

With all of this now in our understanding, I just have to wonder about the timing. After all, if this is going to happen between the regathering of the nation of Israel in 1948 and the Great Tribulation, then it could happen any time!

But I also have to wonder why the United States doesn't intervene when Russia attacks. Could it be because once the rapture takes place, the United States has no vested interest in strongly allying herself with Israel? I have often said - based on my understanding of the prophetic significance of the seven feasts - that I believe the rapture will take place two years before the beginning of the tribulation period (Lev. 23:24-28). Could that be the time frame of this invasion? Could that attack against Israel be just what the antichrist uses to initiate his covenant of peace (Dan. 9:27; Rev. 6:2)?

Or we just might watch these events unfold before our own eyes. Truly, we are concerned today about Russia's President Vladimir Putin, who is consolidating power and crushing dissent after 14 years of democracy has left Russia financially weak and internally troubled. We are concerned about Magog's relationship with Persia, and other nations who support terrorism and the total destruction of Israel. Yes, we just may see these things happen after all...