

Ezekiel Chapters 38 to 39 – John Karmelich

1. Well we now come to two of the strangest chapters in Ezekiel. Considering that Ezekiel has seen visions of bizarre angelic creatures, spent chapters describing Israel's destruction and the fall of nations around Israel, it should scare you when I say that "these two" are the strange chapters. ☺
 - a) These two chapters are about a specific battle against Israel where God miraculously intervenes on Israel's behalf. If that doesn't sound too strange to you, keep reading.
2. Let me tell you why fans of bible prophecy love Chapters 38 and 39.
 - a) The last two chapters (36 and 37) predict a day when Israel is back in their land and the Spirit of God will be upon them and the Messiah rules over them.
 - b) The next nine chapters (Chapters 40-48) describe what life is like during the millennial reign of the Messiah. This is the next and last section of Ezekiel.
 - c) Therefore, Chapters 38 and 39, "whatever they are about" should occur sometime around the events "between" when Israel is united again as a country and when the Messiah (Jesus) rules the world from Israel.
 - d) Whatever happens in these chapters, should be right before or "right around" the time of the return of Jesus. Therefore, since Israel is a country again, these two chapters are a popular topic among those that like bible prophecy (i.e., bible prediction).
 - e) There is an old joke among bible prophecy fans is that they are "shocked" to discover that Ezekiel actually contains other chapters besides Chapters 38 and 39.
3. OK, suppose you don't like bible prophecy. Let's suppose you only want to study the bible in relation to what God has planned for our life today.
 - a) The one thing I do see in this lesson is the topic of "protection". That is my key word and one word title for this lesson. While many details in these two chapters are debatable about the "how and when", what is happening is that God is protecting His people.
 - b) Remember that the last chapter was on the topic of God reuniting His people back in His land. We have seen much of Chapters 36 and 37 come true over the last 50 years, as for the first time in 2,000 years, there is a large percentage of Israelites back in the land of Israel and for the first time in over 2,500 years, Israel is an independent nation again.
 - i) The important aspect of the last lesson is that God is fulfilling His literal promises to Israel that He would gather His people back in the land again. Further, God promised He would put His spirit upon that nation so that all His people would know God and nobody would have to inquire about who God is.
 - ii) If the last lesson is about God fulfilling His promise, then the next issue (this lesson) is about God protecting His people once they are all gathered in one place.
 - iii) The idea is once God gathers His people (that includes you and me), we can count on His protection for all of eternity. If we can count on God keeping His promise to Israel, how much more can we count on God keeping His promises to us.
 - iv) The final issue, which starts the next lesson and final section, is about what we do once God is ruling over us after God has separated believers from nonbelievers.
4. This lesson focuses on some great attack on Israel at or around the time of their re-gathering.
 - a) Through the centuries and through the millenniums, there have been lots of theories about what these two chapters are about and what do they mean. The problem is any and all possible historical events don't tie to the events as described in these two chapters.
 - b) In order for whatever is happening in these two chapters to come to pass, the key conditions are that Israel must be back in the land and the Israelites (collectively) must look to God as their sole support for protection. Around this time, some great attack comes against Israel and in essence God and Israel wins. If one studies the history of Israel, there is no battle that fits the scenario of these chapters.

5. Let me give you the two most popular interpretations of these chapters. Both of these views are commonly held by Evangelical Christians who take their bible literally.
 - a) One theory is that these chapters are giving another description of what Revelation students call the "Battle of Armageddon". Near the end of the book of Revelation, there is some great battle against Israel as most of the world does not want to live under the rule of Jesus in Israel. A great battle takes place to stop Jesus from ruling the world. A big army loses badly and there are lots of dead bodies scattered over a single valley.
 - i) This view is that these two chapters in Ezekiel are describing the same battle.
 - b) The second theory is that Ezekiel is describing a separate battle that takes place prior to the start of the "end time" period. It is as if Israel is now sitting comfortably in the land with God ruling over them, and then a great battle takes place for the control of Israel.
 - i) The biggest difference between the two scenarios is when this great battle occurs.
 - ii) No matter which interpretation one believes, it is future to us and God wins.
 - c) In preparation for this lesson, I have read about ten different commentaries and study bibles on this issue. I "used to" hold one of these two views very strongly. Now I am not so sure. For those of us who take their bible literally, both views have some strong points and weak points. One can hold either view and make a good case. In this lesson I'll discuss both views and I will let you draw your own conclusion about when this happens.
6. I want you to think about these two chapters of Ezekiel another way.
 - a) If you look at Ezekiel's predictions from Chapter 1 through Chapter 35, they have all come true exactly as Ezekiel has predicted. To be a prophet of God means to be 100% accurate with all of one's predictions. (See Deuteronomy 18:15-21.)
 - b) We are now in the section of Ezekiel that deals with predictions that are future to us. Since Ezekiel gives us "history written in advance" and these chapters have not happened yet, we are not sure of exactly how every detail will play out in the future.
 - c) If we can trust the predictions of Ezekiel through most of the book to be true and the historical evidence points to the fact that Ezekiel was right exactly as he said so, then we should trust in the fact that these future predictions would come true also.
 - d) Let's pretend somebody else wrote Ezekiel long after the events of Ezekiel's time. That is another possibility of explaining its accuracy so far. We know for sure that Ezekiel was written at least several centuries before Christ as the book was translated into Greek roughly the second century before Christ came.
 - i) My point is Ezekiel predicted of a day when Israel would be gathered in the land again as an independent country. That happened in 1948 and supports the fact that Ezekiel's prophecies have come true long after the book was written.
 - ii) Given Ezekiel's accuracy to date, it is logical that the rest of the book will also happen exactly as predicted. The reason there is debate over these chapters (38 and 39) is that these events have not happened yet, so we don't know exactly how "future history" fits in with the details given in these chapters.
 - e) This leads me back to my title of this lesson, which is "protection". If we can trust in God protecting the Israelites from some great (future) attack where the Israelites are greatly outnumbered, then we can trust in God protecting us from our own enemies.
 - i) Does this mean Christians will never struggle with issues or never lose a battle? No. It means that in the end, Christians win. We get to spend eternity with God.
 - ii) It means that if God is going to gather Christians to spend eternity with Him, then we have to trust that God will also protect us for eternity as well. That is the underlying message of these two chapters.
 - f) OK, as usual, I've written way too much introduction and have yet to touch a verse. ☺ What do you say we actually get into Chapter 38.

7. Verse 1: The word of the LORD came to me: ² "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; prophesy against him ³ and say: `This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.
- a) Chapter 38 opens with a new vision by Ezekiel. He is told by God to set his face against Gog in the land of "Magog". It also says that Gog is the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. Further, God says that He is against Gog, whoever Gog is.
 - b) For millenniums, people have wondered just who is Gog and why is God against Him.
 - c) As I stated in the introduction, there are lots of theories about who is Gog and where is the land of Magog. One can look at historical examples that "sort of fit" this prediction, but the problem with those theories is there has never historically been any great battle against Israel where a great army loses as badly as described in these two chapters. Therefore, it must be talking about some future event.
 - d) Since Israel has become a country again, bible prophecy fans have been fascinated with Gog. Bible scholars wonder and debate over who Gog is and where he comes from. To explain this, we are going to have to spend some time understanding what God means by the "land of Magog" and when God says Gog is the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, we have to do our best to understand what those terms mean.
 - e) To understand this, first we have to understand something about history. One problem with "history" is that we rename things. A modern example is the place in Florida where the space ships are launched. It was originally known as Cape Canaveral. For years, it was renamed "Cape Kennedy" and fairly recently, it was officially renamed Cape Canaveral again. My point is history commonly renames the same place different things.
 - i) Another example is the city of Istanbul. It was originally called Byzantium, then renamed Constantinople (330 AD) and renamed Istanbul in 1930.
 - ii) My point is we are going to be dealing with ancient names in this chapter. God works with "original names" of nations is we rename things through the centuries.
 - f) With that said, let's start with explaining what Gog means.
 - i) It is a title of a leader or his actual name. The truth is we don't know for sure.
 - ii) If there will be literally someone named (or has the title) Gog that comes in the future, I would not be surprised. It would not be the first time in the bible that a name is written in the book prior to a person being born. Isaiah gave predictions of a Persian king named Cyrus centuries before he was born and listed him by name. (See Isaiah 44:28, 45:1 and 45:13.)
 - iii) Here is what you need to remember for this lesson: Gog is the leader of a very large army that attacks Israel. If you don't want to worry about who Gog actually is, just know he is the leader of the opposition that attacks God's people.
 - g) Next, we come to the question of who or what is "Magog".
 - i) This is important because this Gog character is the leader of Magog.
 - ii) Way back in Genesis Chapter 10, there was a list of nations. It was the genealogy of the sons of Noah. Magog was a grandson of Noah. There are a lot of theories on where the people of Magog settled, but most likely they are the "Scythians". The Scythians are an ancient nation eventually became the Russians. Mostly likely they originally settled around the Baltic Sea, but eventually migrated northward.
 - iii) Here's the good news, you don't have to do a lot of homework to figure out where Magog comes from. We will discover in this lesson that Magog means "people of the far north". If one looks to the far north directly above Israel, one sees Russia.
 - h) Finally we get the names Meshech and Tubal. Going back to the "Table of Nations" in Genesis Chapter 10, we discover these two were brothers of Magog. That helps, right? ☺
 - i) Again, one can read lots of theories on who were these two people. Whoever they are, the point is they come from the "far" north and northeast of Israel.

8. Verse 4: I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army--your horses, your horsemen fully armed, and a great horde with large and small shields, all of them brandishing their swords.
 - a) In the first three verses the major players of this chapter are identified. In Verse 4 we discover that God Himself draws Magog into this battle. It is almost as if "Gog and Magog" don't really care about Israel and somehow, they are forced to attack Israel.
 - b) In this battle, the nations of Verses 1-3 along with their horses and a large horde (i.e., a large army) comes to attack Israel (coming up) having shields and swords.
 - c) A classical debate among bible scholars is whether or not Ezekiel is describing modern military equipment or is Ezekiel literally describing soldiers on horses.
 - i) If Ezekiel is describing modern war equipment, Ezekiel is doing his best to describe things he could not comprehend given when he actually lived. The large and small shields could be literal, or could be modern warfare equipment.
 - ii) There are those who argue this is literal. There are passage ways leading to Israel that are best led by horses as tanks don't do that well on some of these terrains.
9. Verse 5: Persia, Cush and Put will be with them, all with shields and helmets, ⁶ also Gomer with all its troops, and Beth Togarmah from the far north with all its troops-the many nations with you.
 - a) If this chapter is not confusing enough already, now we have four more nations listed.
 - b) The easiest one to identify is Persia. That's modern day Iran. To this day, Iranians are known as the Persians and their language is "Persian".
 - c) The names Cush and Put also go back to the "Table of Nations" in Genesis 10. They were first cousins of Magog and descendants of Noah's son Ham.
 - i) Cush and Put most likely settled in North Africa. Cush is traditionally associated with Ethiopia, but it may be broader in spectrum. Put is associated with Libya.
 - ii) Gomer is associated with the Germanic people, from which we get the first French, Spanish and Celtic settlers.
 - d) The point is these people who come against Israel are based on ancient national tribes from "all directions". Remember the reason that God describes this attack based on the original nations is that we change the names of things through the centuries.
 - e) The final name listed is "Beth Togarmah". This name meaning, "house of Togarmah." In Ezekiel's time it was a city in what is now Turkey. Therefore, some scholars argue that part of, or the entire nation of Turkey will be involved in this attack.
 - f) Again, there are lots of theories as to who are these nations and why they attack Israel. It may be these nations (besides Magog) are Muslim and want Israel destroyed.
 - g) What "does fit" this scenario today is that all these places use Russian technology for their weapons. That leads back to the comment in Verse 3 that God "puts hooks in their jaws" referring to Magog. If Magog is Russia, the idea is God is drawing Magog (Russia) into the battle even though Magog is not crazy about the idea. In other words, the theory is these other nations don't like Israel. These other nations "drag" Russia into this battle because they are dependant upon Russian technology.
 - i) When Ezekiel wrote this, the Scythians were a distant nation and have never threatened Israel. One has to remember that Russia was not a world power until the 20th Century. There are bible scholars who argued that "this was Russia" as far back as the 18th Century long before Russia was a significant power.
 - ii) Am I saying I am positive this is how the scenario plays out? No. I am saying that if this were to happen today, this is how it best fits these nations.
 - iii) I do believe Ezekiel is correctly describing some distant future event against Israel. The "how and why" is not stated, which is why there is so much speculation.
 - h) Now that I have described who are the "players" in this attack against Israel, I can pick up the pace and start to describe the battle itself, which is Verse 7. Speaking of which...

10. Verse 7: "Get ready; be prepared, you and all the hordes gathered about you, and take command of them."⁸ After many days you will be called to arms. In future years you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. They had been brought out from the nations, and now all of them live in safety.⁹ You and all your troops and the many nations with you will go up, advancing like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land.
- a) Now we get into the section where this army actually attacks Israel.
 - b) To understand this passage, remember whom this chapter is addressed to: It is Gog. When one reads verses 1 through 3, one realizes this whole chapter is addressed to Gog, who is the leader of "Magog". Again, most historians tie Magog to Russia.
 - c) Notice in Verse 8 it says that "after many days". The point is this attack happens a long time after Ezekiel is describing it. The rest of the verse helps us to identify the "when".
 - i) The next phrase says you will be called to arms. In other words, Gog as the leader of Magog will be drawn into this battle.
 - d) The rest of the Verse 8 says "You (Gog) will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate."
 - i) The idea here is that Gog will attack Israel. This is a land that was desolate for a long time and is now thriving again. This land has also "recovered from war". This text could be describing Israel right after the 70-year captivity, but no historical event fits this battle scenario.
 - ii) More likely, it is describing modern Israel. The modern Nation of Israel has pretty much been at war since its conception. When the text says they have "recovered from war", it is saying the attack comes after a period of peace.
 - iii) Those who argue that Ezekiel is describing the "Battle of Armageddon" use this text as support. One of the things that happens during the "end time" period is the Antichrist makes some sort of peace treaty with Israel. This is based on Daniel 9:27, which I'll explain later in this lesson. My point is Ezekiel is describing a battle that occurs after a time of peace.
 - e) Verse 9 says that before they attack they "advance like a storm". Some say this is a large army on the mountains of the border of Israel and some describe it as an aerial attack.
 - f) If you are confused, here are the key points: This group of nations described in this chapter is about to attack Israel. It happens when Israel is back in the land and it happens when Israel is relatively at peace. Because nothing in history fits this scenario, most bible scholars speculate it is a future event.
 - i) Let me pause to ask the "why should I care" question? Other than knowing the future, how does it affect my life today? Why should I care about this stuff?
 - ii) First, it happens around the time when Jesus comes back. Jesus taught us we should watch for the signs of His return. (See Matthew 24:3 as an example.) Even if the rapture happens prior to this event, we can watch the events leading up to it.
 - iii) Next, think of all of this in terms of protection. If it is describing the Israelites united under God's protection (God wins this battle) then understand that those "under God" are going to win in the end. Keep that in mind when one's world is falling apart and there does not appear to be any solution in sight!
11. Verse 10: "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On that day thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil scheme."¹¹ You will say, "I will invade a land of unwalled villages; I will attack a peaceful and unsuspecting people--all of them living without walls and without gates and bars."¹² I will plunder and loot and turn my hand against the resettled ruins and the people gathered from the nations, rich in livestock and goods, living at the center of the land."
- a) The main point here is Gog develops this plan to attack an unsuspecting Israel.

- b) One thing to get out of this lesson is this attack comes when Israel does not suspect it.
 - c) The text says Gog will invade a land of "unwalled villages". While individual towns in Israel today do not have any walls, there is a big fence surrounding most of the country.
 - i) Therefore, whenever this battle takes place, I believe that fence (or wall) is eliminated. How does that happen? Let me explain:
 - ii) There are clues in the bible that when the Antichrist comes, he will strike some sort of peace treaty with Israel. Daniel 9:27 speaks of a covenant (i.e., a treaty) with Israel that lasts for "one week". That term "week" can mean a week of days (i.e., 7 days), a week of months (i.e., 7 months) or a week of years (i.e., 7 years). Most scholars argue this treaty lasts for seven years, which is a "week of years".
 - iii) At the mid-point of this week of years, the antichrist does a "double cross" and breaks the treaty. Those who see Ezekiel 38 as part of this scenario see Gog as another name for this antichrist and is the leader of this group of nations that attacks Israel after Israel has been at peace for half of this treaty period.
 - iv) If this scenario is correct, then the modern fence or wall around Israel may come down as part of the treaty agreement. That would explain how Israel is at peace prior to this attack that is lead by Gog.
 - d) The other view is this attack in Ezekiel takes place just prior to the seven year period. Their argument is neither Daniel nor John in Revelation ever mention Gog or any of these ancient nations as part of the great attack of "all nations" as described in Revelation 19.
 - i) Therefore, some see Ezekiel 38 and 39 as separate "end time" event. We'll discuss this view some more later in this lesson.
 - ii) No matter which view one holds, the point is still that this attack is a future event to us and "is" going to happen exactly as Ezekiel and the bible predicts.
 - e) This leads us back to the text. Verse 12 says that Gog's motivation is to plunder and loot the land. The text says that this land which was once "dead" is now settled again and is very prosperous. In other words, "Gog's" motivation for doing this attack has nothing to do with "Muslims versus Jews", but for his personal motivation is to gain wealth.
 - i) So what does Israel have that Gog could want? The text says in effect that the "land was rich with stuff". Whoever Gog is, he could simply want this land for the sake of power or it could be some great wealth that is associated with Israel or "will be" associated with Israel.
 - ii) A lot of bible prophecy students believe that Israel "discovers something" (e.g., a big oil discovery or some future invention) that makes them a rich target to attack.
 - iii) The other point is that Gog was "dragged" into this battle against their will. If Gog is the leader of Russia, know that Russia has enough missiles to destroy Israel. The view is Gog as the leader of Magog attacks Israel, at the request of their "clients" which is part of the Muslim world that relies on Russian technology.
12. Verse 13: Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish and all her villages will say to you, "Have you come to plunder? Have you gathered your hordes to loot, to carry off silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods and to seize much plunder?"
- a) Just when things are not confusing enough, I present to you Verse 13. ☺ In this verse we now have three more "ancient nations" named in this verse.
 - b) Here is the most important thing you need to know about these three "new" nations. They are not part of any attack on Israel. They are on the sidelines saying in effect, "You should not do that!" So why are they are on the sidelines? Good question. Maybe they benefited from trade with Israel or didn't have the military resources to stop the attack.
 - c) OK, since we are here, who are these three nations? ☺
 - i) Sheba and Dedan are listed in Genesis 10. As best as historians can tell, these people existed on the Saudi peninsula and most likely refers to the Saudis.

- ii) If you know anything about Saudi's, they are "anti-Israel", but they make their money through trade. I suspect they are or were getting rich through Israel and probably trading through some back door channel.
 - iii) The last group is "Tarshish and all her villages". The term "villages" is literally translated "lions" as stated in the King James Bible. The idea is whoever Tarshish is they have powerful "lion like" supporting states. Most people link Tarshish to either Spain or England. Whoever Tarshish is, they are on the sidelines saying in effect "Don't attack Israel". These nations don't stop the attack or maybe they don't have the means to prevent the attack.
 - d) There is an interesting theory regarding this attack on Israel. The theory is that there is some sort of nuclear exchange. The idea is essentially that those who normally would help Israel can't help them as these nations are crippled by a nuclear device.
 - i) There is a concept called an "Electromagnetic Pulse" or "EMP". When a nuclear bomb is released, it releases an EMP for a good distance. The idea is a nuclear strike can make modern technology useless. It would be as if anything electronic (from cars to computers to satellite system) would go dead. It would be as if we instantly had to live in the 18th Century again.
 - ii) If Tarshish and their allies are on the sidelines it maybe because their technology is now useless. I'm not saying this is going to happen, but it is one possible scenario.
13. Verse 14: "Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog: `This is what the Sovereign LORD says: In that day, when my people Israel are living in safety, will you not take notice of it? ¹⁵ You will come from your place in the far north, you and many nations with you, all of them riding on horses, a great horde, a mighty army. ¹⁶ You will advance against my people Israel like a cloud that covers the land. In days to come, O Gog, I will bring you against my land, so that the nations may know me when I show myself holy through you before their eyes.
- a) Meanwhile, God is still preaching against Gog. The point of these three verses is that Gog still has his eyes on Israel as a prize to be won. The verses are saying that Gog will lead this attack of many nations.
 - b) Notice in Verse 15 it says that Gog will come from his place "in the far north". Even if you don't know who "Gog and Magog" are, the text says they come from the far north. If one looks to the far north of Israel, one sees Russia.
 - c) This army will attack Israel with a mighty army and a cavalry. One reason I mentioned the nuclear bomb and "Electromagnetic Pulse" theory is that "if" Israel and that region had no electricity due to a nuclear strike that would mean that tanks and modern weapons may not work as well. It is a possibility that a future attack may "have to be" on horseback if modern weapons were made useless due to a nuclear exchange.
 - d) Now that I've gotten everybody scared out of their minds, let me give you other ideas. ☺ It could be that Ezekiel is describing weapons that He could not comprehend given the technology of his time era. Ezekiel may be describing an air attack or a tank attack and Ezekiel didn't have the "know how" to describe this, given his time frame.
 - e) Here's the good news: God wins. Verse 16 says that God will "show himself" against Gog and these nations that attack Israel. Therefore, however bad all of this sounds, the point is that God is going to win in the end. Whether or not this is describing an attack prior to the "end times" or the end times itself (the Armageddon scenario), the point is God wins.
 - i) This leads me back to my point about God protecting us. We may not know how a particular situation is going to work out. We may have to suffer for awhile, but know that in the end, God wins and those that follow God win.
 - ii) Think of it this way: The "worse" thing that can happen to a Christian is that they are going to have to suffer in this lifetime. How long is that versus eternity? Compare that to eternal suffering and only having pleasure in this lifetime!

14. Verse 17: "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Are you not the one I spoke of in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel? At that time they prophesied for years that I would bring you against them.
- a) God is saying that whenever this attack happens, Gog should have been aware of the fact that "His prophets" have spoken of this event and predicted Gog would lose.
 - i) Remember this whole chapter is addressed to Gog. The point is whenever Gog attacks Israel, despite the fact it looks like an easy victory, God predicted Gog would lose and Gog should have been aware of that fact.
 - b) Here's a question: How is Gog supposed to know that Ezekiel preached about this event given the fact that it has been about 2,500 years? Is Gog a bible scholar? ☺
 - i) First know that there has been no historical event that could fit this scenario, so Ezekiel is not describing something that happened around his time era.
 - ii) What I suspect is the answer, is that Gog may be another name for the Antichrist or his boss, Satan himself. It is as if God is describing the evil spiritual force behind this attack and the fact that he or "it" should have known they would lose.
 - iii) Let's remember what Satan's goal is: To stop God's redemptive plan from happening. Satan knows his bible and he knows he will lose in the end. Therefore, one way to stop God's plan is to eliminate God's chosen people Israel. If the Israelites can't cry out to God for their savior, then Satan wins.
 - iv) This is why some scholars argue this takes place prior to the tribulation beginning, as Satan is trying to "wipe out" God's people prior to the events of Jesus returning.
 - v) In other words, one way for Satan to "win" is to wipe out God's chosen people.
 - vi) Satan can't stop the "church" because the "church" is already saved. Satan does work to prevent Christians from being a good witness for Christ, as Satan does not want the gospel message to spread. Therefore, Satan and his forces do all they can to stop or slow down the spread of the gospel message.
 - a) Satan knows there is still a salvation plan for the Israelites. If Satan can successfully wipe out the remnant of Israel, "Satan wins".
 - vii) My point of all of this is to indicate that Gog should know he cannot win this battle. So why have this battle in the first place? Satan may realize this is his last great opportunity to stop God's plan by wiping out God's "chosen people".
 - viii) Am I positive Gog is the Antichrist? No, partially because no other title of Satan is used in these two chapters. I'm saying that the spiritual forces behind this attack do have the goal of wiping out Israel.
15. Verse 18: This is what will happen in that day: When Gog attacks the land of Israel, my hot anger will be aroused, declares the Sovereign LORD. ¹⁹ In my zeal and fiery wrath I declare that at that time there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. ²⁰ The fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, every creature that moves along the ground, and all the people on the face of the earth will tremble at my presence. The mountains will be overturned, the cliffs will crumble and every wall will fall to the ground.
- a) In my lifetime I've had many people angry at me. I can't imagine what God being angry with me would be like. In Verse 18 we read of God having "hot anger" at Gog. I'm not exactly sure what "hot anger" means, but I wouldn't want to be in the same neighborhood when such anger is released. ☺
 - b) Does this mean God is capable of having emotions? Doesn't God know all things? God can have "emotions" from our perspective. In other words, we can see God's reaction to things we do in our life and we can call that God's emotions. If there are signs of God's anger, He is well aware of what He is doing and knew in advance He would do it.
 - c) Whatever this anger is, it is enough to cause this big earthquake in Verse 19.

- d) Verse 19 says that because God is angry at Gog, there would be a great earthquake in Israel. The word for earthquake is literally a "shaking".
 - i) This earthquake is centered in or around Israel. The text says the fish living in the sea, the birds in the air and every living creature will feel this shaking.
 - ii) Is this earthquake world-wide or a local phenomenon? One can argue it either way based on the phrase, "all the people on the face of the earth will tremble at my presence" in Verse 20. That can mean the whole world gets scared because of the size of this earthquake or it could mean the whole world feels it.
 - iii) The point is this quake or "shaking" is caused by God and it is a reaction to the fact that Gog is about to attack Israel. The quake is strong enough to affect mountains, crumble cliffs and cause walls to fall down. I discussed earlier about the issue of Israel having walls at the present time. The text earlier says that Gog will attack Israel when there are no walls. Maybe that is how the walls go down.
 - iv) Imagine an army of soldiers about to attack. All of a sudden there is an earthquake so bad it rumbles everything. Wouldn't you think twice about attacking?
- 16. Verse 21: I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Sovereign LORD. Every man's sword will be against his brother.²² I will execute judgment upon him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him.²³ And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.'
 - a) Before I discuss what happens to Gog and his army, notice the words "my mountains" in Verse 21. God considers the physical land of Israel to be His. It does not belong to the Israelites or anyone else. It is "His land". For the religious Jews, they believe God owns the land and the Israelites have the right to dwell there assuming they are obeying God.
 - b) Meanwhile Gog is in big trouble from the earthquake. ☺ Verse 21 says every man's sword will be against his brother. In other words, because of this earthquake, the army turns on each other instead of fighting Israel.
 - i) Verse 22 mentions a plague, bloodshed and hailstones and burning sulfur will fall on him. Are the hailstones and these other things some sort of "after-effect" of this earthquake? That is a possibility. From the effects of this quaking, it could be some sort of volcanic eruption that spews out on this army.
 - ii) I get the impression that the armies are aware that it is the "finger of God" causing this damage and again, the army turns on itself. The point is this army will know God is behind it due to the size of the ecological disaster that happens.
 - iii) Some argue the "shaking" is caused by a nuclear explosion. That is a possibility.
 - iv) Some argue that that these plagues are God's judgment in the afterlife and refer to life in hell for the army that agreed to fight for Gog.
 - c) I think the main point is that one will recognize this battle as distinguished from every other battle in the history of mankind due to the "earthquake" that occurs right before the battle starts. That is why we are sure Chapter 38 does not describe any historical event in history so far.
- 17. Chapter 39, Verse 1: "Son of man, prophesy against Gog and say: `This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.
 - a) In Chapter 39, we have another vision, but the subject is the same. God is telling Ezekiel to preach against Gog and say that God is against you.
 - b) We don't know if this vision happened right after the first one, or if there was a time gap. The point is when Ezekiel was compiled together the two visions are placed together.
 - c) The point of this opening verse is to say that God is against Gog. Based on the earthquake so far, I think Gog got the point. ☺

18. Verse 2: I will turn you around and drag you along. I will bring you from the far north and send you against the mountains of Israel. ³ Then I will strike your bow from your left hand and make your arrows drop from your right hand.
- a) Verse 2 mentions again that Gog will be brought from the "far north". Even if you don't believe the theories that Gog is Russia, the one point we do know is that Gog is from the "far north" of Israel. One gets the impression it is God that draws Gog in this battle.
 - i) It is almost as if Gog is not interested in fighting Israel but is drawn in. This gets back to the theory that it is some Muslim nations such as Iran and others that are interested in destroying Israel and Gog is drawn in as their leader. Remember that most of the weaponry of Iran and these other nations come from Russia.
 - b) The text also mentions bows and arrows. Again, there is a likelihood that Ezekiel did not have the ability to describe modern weapons. A "rocket launcher" might best be translated as a "bow" in Ezekiel's vocabulary and rockets might be "arrows".
 - i) There is also the literal possibility of old fashioned "bow and arrow" warfare if nuclear bombs and the lack of electricity due to the "electromagnetic pulse" factor that can make a lot of modern weapons useless.
19. Verse 4: On the mountains of Israel you will fall, you and all your troops and the nations with you. I will give you as food to all kinds of carrion birds and to the wild animals. ⁵ You will fall in the open field, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. ⁶ I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in safety in the coastlands, and they will know that I am the LORD.
- a) Here is a good summary of what happens to the troops that attack Israel.
 - i) Verse 4 says these troops will fall on the mountains of Israel and their bodies will be food for birds and wild animals.
 - ii) Verse 6 adds "insult to injury" by saying not only will the troops surrounding Israel will fall, but that the land of Magog itself will have fire.
 - iii) So what does Verse 6 mean? Does it mean that the "shaking" of Israel have some sort of effect on the land of "Magog" itself, or is it a separate fire? I've read a number of theories on this ranging from Israel launching their own nuclear strike on Russia to the idea that most of the earth feels the earthquake and somehow that causes land upheaval in wherever "Magog" is based.
 - b) There are times like this where I have to remind myself that the question is not "how" but "why". If God wanted to cause a big army to instantly die, He could make it happen. If God wanted to cause some sort of major fire in the land of Magog itself, it will happen.
 - i) If there is one thing I understand by now, is that if "God is God", we shouldn't worry so much about the "how" issue, but the "why issue".
 - ii) Remember a line that God told Abraham in Genesis. God said, "I will bless those that bless you and curse those that curse you." (Genesis 12:3, paraphrased.)
 - a) What we are reading here in Ezekiel is an example of that principal. Bible scholars argue over the "how" issue and who are the players in this battle, but the bible is real clear on the "why" issue. They "why" answer is that God promised to protect "His People" in Genesis 12:3.
 - iii) Next, remember that a purpose of all of this is for the Israelites to know that God is behind it. It is one thing for a natural earthquake to occur. It is another for a major upheaval right when Israel is being attacked. God is making it as obvious as possible that He is behind this Himself and it is not some sort of coincidence.
 - iv) Finally, it is a reminder to us of God's protection. Christians grasp the idea that we are "His" and God protects us. It is one thing to think that, it is another to see it visually demonstrated so the world knows it. These two chapters are a reminder of the ultimate fates of those who are "His" and those who are "Not His".

20. Verse 7: "I will make known my holy name among my people Israel. I will no longer let my holy name be profaned, and the nations will know that I the LORD am the Holy One in Israel. ⁸ It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign LORD. This is the day I have spoken of.
- a) These two verses state the purpose of these events: It is to make God's Name known.
 - i) Notice that God is doing this not just for Israel's sake, but for the world's sake. It is so the world may know that "God is God".
 - b) One thing that popped in my head as I was studying these verses is the "Exodus".
 - i) Remember in Exodus God made a "big visual display" not only to the Israelites but to the Egyptians that He is God. In other words, God made a big demonstration when the Israelite nation was "born", and God is going to make even a bigger demonstration when that nation becomes "born again" and all live for Him.
 - ii) What I grasp out of that concept is to be "born again" is a big deal. It is about us acknowledging God is in charge and we are not. This is about God visually demonstrating that the saved are separated from the unsaved for eternity.
 - c) Verse 8 makes the statement that "It is coming and it will surely take place." It is like God walking around town with a "billboard sign" around His neck saying in effect, "Yes it is a long time coming, but it will happen. Count on it!" Let's face it, it has been about 2,500 hundred years since Ezekiel wrote this, and it hasn't happened yet. Yet we have read most of Ezekiel by now and every other prediction he has written has come true. Now Ezekiel is getting into very long term predictions, but Ezekiel is saying it will happen.
21. Verse 9: "Then those who live in the towns of Israel will go out and use the weapons for fuel and burn them up--the small and large shields, the bows and arrows, the war clubs and spears. For seven years they will use them for fuel. ¹⁰ They will not need to gather wood from the fields or cut it from the forests, because they will use the weapons for fuel. And they will plunder those who plundered them and loot those who looted them, declares the Sovereign LORD.
- a) If this chapter is not strange enough already, I present Verses 9 and 10. ☺ These verses are saying that the weapons used to fight Israel will be used for fuel. The verses are saying the Israelites will not have to cut down any trees for firewood or fuel as the weapons itself will provide the fuel.
 - b) For 2,500 years, bible scholars have wondered what this means. Even if one thinks of traditional "shields, bows and arrows", they are not much of a fuel source. Shields in Ezekiel's time were made of metal. There is lots of speculation on this point. There are theories that these burnable weapons includes nuclear fuel which is then used by the Israelites. There are theories that a lot of modern Russian guns and equipment use a lot of wood instead of metal or plastic and that wood is the fuel that is used by the Israelites.
 - i) Again, we have to remind ourselves that the key is not the "how" question but the "why" question. If God can make the world, God can somehow cause the weapons used against His people to be burned for fuel.
 - ii) The "why issue" is a reminder not only that God will win, but the situations around this battle will be so unique that the only explanation is "God Himself".
 - c) There is another controversial theory tied to these verses. Verse 9 says the Israelites will have enough "firewood" or fuel to last seven years. Back when I started this lesson I said there is a classical debate over whether Ezekiel is describing a separate battle that happens prior to the "seven year end time" scenario or is it "Armageddon" itself. Those who argue this is a separate battle point to the "seven years" of fuel prediction. They will say that the fuel is what supplies Israel through the seven years of the tribulation.
 - i) What we "do know" is that this is a sign that when this battle does occur, we will know it is the battle Ezekiel described, if for no other reason then we will recognize the fact that Israel can live (i.e., have fuel for survival) for seven years off of the weapons. Nothing in history has ever matched this seven year prediction.

22. Verse 11: "On that day I will give Gog a burial place in Israel, in the valley of those who travel east toward the Sea. It will block the way of travelers, because Gog and all his hordes will be buried there. So it will be called the Valley of Hamon Gog.
- a) Whenever you read of a war or battle in the bible, somebody wins, somebody loses and then the text moves on from there. In Ezekiel Chapter 39, we have something unique. It is the only time in the bible, where the clean up operation is described.
 - b) God says that there will be some valley dedicated to bury the bones of "Gog and Magog" that died in this battle. The text says the valley will be east toward the Sea. Scholars debate whether this refers to the Mediterranean Sea or the Dead Sea. My personal view is that it refers to the Mediterranean Sea as "East of the Dead Sea" is not Israel.
 - c) The point of these verses is that this valley of "dead bones" will block the way of travelers.
 - d) To me it is another visual sign so we know how to recognize this battle when it happens.
23. Verse 12: "For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land.¹³ All the people of the land will bury them, and the day I am glorified will be a memorable day for them, declares the Sovereign LORD.
- a) Another sign to recognize this battle is that for seven months all of Israel will be busy burying the bones from this battle. If you recall from Verse 4, it mentioned that animals will eat at the dead bodies of this army. After that, Israel will be busy burying the bones.
 - b) In the laws of Moses, it teaches that Israel is responsible to bury any dead bodies found in the land. (See Deuteronomy 21:1-3). If an Israelite accidentally touches a dead body, he or she is ceremonially unclean for seven days. (See Numbers 19:11). The point here is all of Israel will be busy cleansing the land so they can avoid being ceremonially unclean.
 - c) The related idea is the land belongs to God and the Israelites have to "clean it up". The time frame needed is seven months. That teaches it was a lot of bodies. Some think the time frame is symbolic, but I would rather play it safe and take it literally.
24. Verse 14: "Men will be regularly employed to cleanse the land. Some will go throughout the land and, in addition to them, others will bury those that remain on the ground. At the end of the seven months they will begin their search.¹⁵ As they go through the land and one of them sees a human bone, he will set up a marker beside it until the gravediggers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon Gog.¹⁶ (Also a town called Hamonah will be there.) And so they will cleanse the land.'
- a) Here we have more verses about the clean up operation. After the seven months of "all of Israel" working to bury the bones, then Israel has a specific group of people to go search for any missing bones and then go bury those bones. Some people argue that because of "radiation danger" that specialists are hired, but I don't buy that argument because for seven months all of Israel was busy burying the bones.
 - b) What I believe this means is after seven months, all of Israel goes back to their lives and then there is a group of specialists who finish the clean up operation.
 - c) There is going to be a specific valley where the bodies will be buried and that valley will be named after Gog. Verse 16 says a town will be there called "Hamonah". I suspect the main business of the town is for the professional buriers.
 - d) To me, the secret to studying this section is not to focus on the "how", but the "why". God gave us these signs to recognize when the battle occurs and to recognize the clean up. It is to show those living at that time that they will know it is of God. It is also a reminder to us that God is in charge, God will win in the end, and God will do this in such a dramatic fashion that the only logical explanation is that it is God himself is behind this.
 - e) Like I said earlier, just as the nation of Israel was born with a bunch of dramatic signs (i.e., the Exodus), so there will be a bunch of dramatic signs at the "end times" when God puts His spirit over Israel. In a sense, the "beginning Exodus" was not good enough as the Israelites still turned from God. This "ending Exodus" (for the lack of a better name) will be combined with God's spirit over them so that the Israelites remember this event and use it as a permanent sign to turn to God.

25. Verse 17: "Son of man, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Call out to every kind of bird and all the wild animals: 'Assemble and come together from all around to the sacrifice I am preparing for you, the great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel. There you will eat flesh and drink blood.'¹⁸ You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth as if they were rams and lambs, goats and bulls--all of them fattened animals from Bashan.¹⁹ At the sacrifice I am preparing for you, you will eat fat till you are gluttoned and drink blood till you are drunk.²⁰ At my table you will eat your fill of horses and riders, mighty men and soldiers of every kind,' declares the Sovereign LORD.
- a) In Verses 17-20, we read of the animals that eat of the dead bodies on the mountains of Israel. (These verses are a reminder that not all of Chapter 39 is in "time order".)
 - b) What is interesting is that these verses compare well with Revelation Chapter 19, Verses 17 and 18 where it again describes birds and wild animals eating of the dead bodies after some great battle. That is why some scholars see Ezekiel 39 as being another description of the "Battle of Armageddon" which is a focus of Revelation Chapter 19. Scholars who argue these are two separate battles say that both battles are describing the "aftermath".
 - i) Before I started this study on Ezekiel, I used to take the side that this was a special battle prior to the seven-year "end time" scenario. Now I can see it argued either way. For what it is worth, some of my favorite scholars are pretty split on the issue. To give you some names, Hal Lindsey, Chuck Missler and others see this as a separate battle. David Hocking and John MacArthur see Ezekiel 39 as another view of Armageddon.
 - ii) If good bible scholars are split here, I should not be dogmatic in my opinion. ☺
 - c) Here in Verses 17-20, God is being "dramatic" and describing a great feast for birds and wild animals to eat up carcasses. The NIV version of the bible (used here) says these birds and animals eats men "as if they were rams, lambs, goats and bulls". The text literally says that the birds will eat these animals. With that said, I think the NIV got it right.
26. Verse 21: "I will display my glory among the nations, and all the nations will see the punishment I inflict and the hand I lay upon them."²² From that day forward the house of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God.²³ And the nations will know that the people of Israel went into exile for their sin, because they were unfaithful to me. So I hid my face from them and handed them over to their enemies, and they all fell by the sword.²⁴ I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their offenses, and I hid my face from them.
- a) From here to the end of the chapter, we are getting a "summary of the whole event". It is God saying the nations of the world will know the God of Israel is God of the world. The text is also saying that the Israelites will know they went into exile for their sins.
 - b) God is saying that the time era when Israel will be "His people" again will be a dramatic statement just like when the Exodus occurred it was a "dramatic statement". The difference between the drama of the Exodus and the drama of "this event" is the results will be different. With the "Exodus", the Israelites still had to deal with sin. In this final wrap up "final event", God's spirit will be upon them and they will turn from their sin.
 - c) Let me add the last five verses and I'll sum this up:
27. Verse 25: "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will now bring Jacob back from captivity and will have compassion on all the people of Israel, and I will be zealous for my holy name."²⁶ They will forget their shame and all the unfaithfulness they showed toward me when they lived in safety in their land with no one to make them afraid.²⁷ When I have brought them back from the nations and have gathered them from the countries of their enemies, I will show myself holy through them in the sight of many nations.²⁸ Then they will know that I am the LORD their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind.²⁹ I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD."

- a) These verses summarize much of the last two chapters. The key idea is that whenever this occurs, the Israelites will collectively recognize their sin of turning from God. The Israelites will now collectively and permanently turn to God as His Spirit is within them.
- b) When the original "Exodus" occurred in Egypt, there was a bunch of incredible signs (e.g., the plagues, the parting of the Red Sea), but those signs were not enough to get the Israelites to completely turn their hearts to God.
- c) When this "second great Exodus-like event" happens, it will be enough to get the Israelites to turn to God in that God will put His Spirit upon them and they will all know God.
- d) Here is how all of this applies to us:
 - i) When we were physically born, it is a "dramatic event" and a reminder of the glorious event of when new life takes place. Yet, despite the miracle of human life, it is not enough for us to completely turn our hearts to God. It takes another dramatic event where the Spirit of God has to come upon us and be "born again" in order to live for eternity.
 - ii) The first "Exodus" was not enough for Israel to completely turn to God. The second "Exodus" (Again, for the lack of a better term) does get the Israelites to completely (that is the whole nation) turn to God as He puts His Spirit on them.
 - iii) The lesson is we "can't do it" without God, no matter how hard we try. That is an underlying lesson of the history of the Israelites. Their failure to collectively turn to God generation after generation is the proof that we need God "within in" in order to live for eternity for Him.
 - iv) These two chapters give the signs and details for us to recognize when the Israelites collectively turn to God to fulfill His promises to that nation. While scholars debate over the "how and when", there are enough signs given in this chapter so that we can recognize it when it does happen.
 - v) This lesson is about God's protection, but it is also about God "doing it all" to draw us to Himself as we can't do it on our own. With that said, I'm running way long and its time to wrap it up.

28. Let's pray: Father, thank You for calling us into Salvation. Thank You for the dramatic work You have done in our lives and continue to do in our lives as we live for Your glory. I am not sure how You will work out all the details of these two chapters, but I walk by faith that You will. Help us to be part of Your plan and to live to glorify You. We ask this in Jesus name we pray, Amen.