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EZEKIEL 38 AND 39: GOG AND MAGOG INVASION

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## Introduction

Eschatology is a field of enormous controversy and the Gog and Magog prophecies found in Ezekiel 38 and 39 are no exception. Prophecies interweaving with Ezekiel 38 and 39, are deeply ingrained: Isaiah; Daniel; Joel; Zechariah; and Revelation are just a few of mention. Rightly identifying the: participants; time periods; physical locations; and proposed interpretations are imperative when attempting to accurately interpret and discern the problematic prophecy of Ezekiel 38 and 39. Alexander comments, “The major interpretive difficulties in these two chapters are the identity of characters and places, as well as the time when these events occur.”<sup>1</sup>

The interpretations concerning the invasion of Gog and Magog mentioned in Ezekiel 38 and 39 are abundant. For the purpose of this paper, concentration on dispensationalism and the views of some of the great scholars will be the focal point. Proponents of each view are many and each has its strengths and weaknesses; consider the diverse beliefs of some key figures: D.L. Cooper, before the tribulation; John Walvoord, beginning of the tribulation; Dwight Pentecost, mid-tribulation placement; Charles Feinberg, end of the tribulation; A. C. Gaebelein, beginning of millennium; and, C.C. Ryrie, multiple fulfillments.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the scope of this paper is not to provide a definitive answer regarding Ezekiel’s Gog and Magog invasion prophecy; it is to support an end of tribulation position, keeping in mind that this particular passage is one in which great Godly and scholarly persons have debated upon for many years. In regards to

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph H. Alexander. “Ezekiel.” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 6:929.

<sup>2</sup> Paul J. Tanner. 1996. *Rethinking Ezekiel’s Invasion by Gog*. *Journal of the Evangelical Society*. JETS 39-1 (March 1996), footnote #2.

interpretation and grammatical structuring Feinberg suggests that Ezekiel should be interpreted as “literal” because “there is not a syllable at the beginning of this chapter to alert us to explain the passage in any other than a literal method.”<sup>3</sup> Structural formatting of these chapters can be delineated several ways, Feinberg suggest utilizing “four main divisions” which are identified by “four commands to the prophet: 38:2, 14 and 39:1, 17.”<sup>4</sup> Lastly, when considering the meaning of Ezekiel 38 and 39; contextualization, especially of the latter chapters is crucial. Feinberg contextualizes the latter chapters as: “Chapter 34 emphasized the rulers; chapter 35, the enemies; chapter 36, the nation converted; chapter 37, the nation resurrected; chapters 38-39, the land; and chapters 40-48, the sanctuary.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Participants Identified**

As aforementioned the identities of those involved will ultimately factor into one’s overall interpretations. Rhodes introduces an amazing observation; in Ezekiel’s day, the mention of particular players may have had little credence, and amazingly the accuracy of the participants in light of current day events should only substantiate our confidence in its prophetical characteristics. Therefore, Rhodes mentions two relevant points: (1) we are nearing the end times; and, (2) the unmistakable accuracy of the prophetical aspects of the Bible.<sup>6</sup> Rhodes explicates, “Ezekiel wrote his book some 2,600 years ago (in Old Testament times), Islam did

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<sup>3</sup> Charles L. Feinberg. *The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of the Lord* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 219.

<sup>4</sup> Charles L. Feinberg. *The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of the Lord*. 219.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 218.

<sup>6</sup> Ron Rhodes. *The Popular Dictionary of Bible Prophecy*. (Eugene: Harvest House, 2010), 213.

not come into being until the seventh century A.D. This means that at the time Ezekiel wrote his book, the conditions for unification of these nations did not exist.”<sup>7</sup>

Before we individually identify many of the nations mentioned in Ezekiel 38 and 39, it should be reaffirmed that a majority of these names appear in the table of the nations account found in Genesis 10. The table of nations is a listing of Noah’s descendants; and, highlights the expansion of nations through Noah’s three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. Interestingly, the placement of this chapter (Gen. 10) falls after the post Noahic Flood commandment to replenish the earth (Gen. 9); and, before the dispersion of humanity at the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11). The first section of Genesis 10 deals with the seven sons of Japheth (10:2-5); the second section deals with the four branches of Ham’s descendants (10:6-20); the third section deals with the sons of Shem (10:21-31).<sup>8</sup>

#### Ezekiel 38:2- Gog, Magog, Meshech and Tubal

The first name mentioned in Ezekiel’s list of participants of the invasion is Gog (Ezek. 38:2). There has been considerable debate as to whether the leader (Gog) of the forces in Ezekiel 38 was a person or title. Outside of our text, Ezekiel 38 and 39, there are two additional biblical references for Gog: 1 Chronicles 5:4 and Revelations 20:8. The text in 1 Chronicles 5: 4 states, “The sons of Joel; Shemaiah his son, Gog his son, Shimei his son” and is associated to Rueben, Jacob’s firstborn son.<sup>9</sup> Walvoord expands, “The genealogy of Reuben includes his four sons [Gog being one of them] and selected generations thereafter.”<sup>10</sup> Alexander identifies this Gog

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<sup>7</sup> Ron Rhodes. *The Popular Dictionary of Bible Prophecy*. 213.

<sup>8</sup> Alan P. Ross. 1981. *Studies in the Book of Genesis Part 3: The Table of Nations in Genesis 10---Its Content*. *Bibliotheca Sacra*. Bsac- 138:549 (Jan. 81), 22-28.

<sup>9</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

(found in 1 Chronicles 5:4) as “a Reubenite prince.”<sup>11</sup> Many commentators explain Gog, in both Ezekiel and Revelation, as a general term used for a leader of those who are in rebellion to God. Grech seems to allegorize Gog as “proto-apocalyptic in its forward look into the distant future.”<sup>12</sup> Though the identity of Gog is controversial, the motive of Gog is evident. Zodhiates remarks, “The Lord, at any rate, sets Himself against Gog (Ezek. 38:2). Gog will lead a coalition of nations against God's people who are then dwelling securely in the land of Israel (Ezek. 38:14-16).”<sup>13</sup> Worthy of repetitious mention, the nations identified in Ezekiel 38 are real nations and can be traced back to specific geographical locations and peoples. Though diminutive in strength it should not go un-noticed that this supports the argument for a literal interpretation of Ezekiel 38 and 39.

The second major player Ezekiel mentions is Magog (Ezek. 38:2). Alexander makes reference to the First Century Romano-Jewish Historian Titus Flavius Josephus (*Antiq.* I, 123 [vi. 1]) who identified Magog as coming from “the land of the Scythians, a mountainous region around the Black and Caspian Seas.”<sup>14</sup> Rhodes specifies Magog as, “the area of the former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and possibly even northern parts of modern Afghanistan. Significantly, the entire area is Muslim-dominated, with more than enough religious motivation to move against Israel.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> John F. Walvoord, J.F. and R.B. Zuck (ed.) *The Bible Knowledge Commentary 1 Chronicles 5:3-10*. eds. 2 vols. n.d. e-Sword, Version 9.5.1

<sup>11</sup> Ralph H. Alexander. “Ezekiel.” *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. 6:929.

<sup>12</sup> Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 29 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 210.

<sup>13</sup> Spiros Zodhiates (ed). *The Complete Word Study Dictionary, Gog*. Strong's #H1463 (Old and New Testaments). Chattanooga: AMG, 1993. e-Sword, Version 9.5.1.

<sup>14</sup> Ralph H. Alexander. “Ezekiel.” *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. 6:929.

<sup>15</sup> Ron Rhodes. *The Popular Dictionary of Bible Prophecy*. 213.

The last two names mentioned in Ezekiel 38: 2, Meshech and Tubal, are also listed in the Genesis table of nations (Genesis 10:2). Biblically, Meshech and Tubal were the sixth and fifth sons of Japheth [Gen. 10:2], Noah's third son listed in Genesis 5:32. Alexander notes: "The biblical and extrabiblical data, though sparse, would imply that Meshech and Tubal refer to geographical areas or countries in eastern modern Turkey, southwest of Russia and northwest of Iran."<sup>16</sup> Ross adds: "Tubal and Meshech are always found together in the Bible; they represent northern military states (Ezek. 27:13; 32:26; 38:2; 39:1; and Isa. 66:19). Tubal is equivalent to Tibarēni in Pontus; and Meshech is located in the Moschian mountains near Armenia."<sup>17</sup>

Ezekiel 38:5, 6- Persia, Ethiopia, Libya, Gomer and Togarmah.

Ezekiel 38: 5-6 list five additional players; in verse 5 there is: Persia, Ethiopia [or Cush], Libya [or Put a son of Ham (Gen. 10:6)]. Continuing in verse 6, Ezekiel lists Gomer and Togarmah. In regards to Ham's descendants, Ross states, "Ham's line has four branches: Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan. All four are probably place names for Nubia-Egypt, Upper and Lower Egypt, Libya, and Phoenicia-Palestine respectively."<sup>18</sup> Persia is identified with modern day Iran; Ethiopia [Cush] with modern day Sudan; Libya [Phut] with North Africa. Feinberg identifies Gomer (Ezek. 38:6) and Togarmah as, "The former are hordes of the Cimmerians, tribes that settled along the Danube and Rhine and later formed the Germanic people. The later are the Armenians already mentioned in 27:14."<sup>19</sup> Similarly Ross identifies the descendants of Gomer

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<sup>16</sup> Ralph H. Alexander. "Ezekiel." *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. 6:930.

<sup>17</sup> Alan P. Ross. 1981. *Studies in the Book of Genesis Part 3: The Table of Nations in Genesis 10---Its Content*. 23.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>19</sup> Charles L. Feinberg. *The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of the Lord*. 221.

as: “Cimmerians, thought to be of the same stock as the Scythians.”<sup>20</sup> Ross associates Togarmah as being “derived” from Gomer along with Ashkenaz, Riphath.” For Togarmah, Ross assigns a geographical location of the “extreme north” as noted in Ezekiel 27:14 and 38:6.<sup>21</sup>

#### Ezekiel 38:13- Sheba, Dedan and Tarshish

Lastly, In Ezekiel 38:13 the nations of Sheba, Dedan and Tarshish are mentioned. Many commentators consider these as merchant nations that enter the league somewhat reluctantly but have a special interest in the plundering and commerce of Israel. Sheba and Dedan are identified as the Arabic peoples living on the borders of Israel while Tarshish is regarded as sea faring peoples of the Tyrians and Zidonians. Ironside remarks, “Sheba and Dedan doubtless refer to Arab peoples, but Tarshish is generally identified with the lands of the far west of Europe, including part of Spain but very definitely Great Britain.”<sup>22</sup> Ross identifies Sheba as being, “identified with Upper Egypt on the Nile, with the ancient city of Meroë between Berber and Khartoum.”<sup>23</sup> In addition, Ross associates Dedan with “modern ‘Ula in northern Arabia, an important trading center from antiquity, bordering on Edom (Ezek. 25:13; 27:20).”<sup>24</sup> The purpose for painstakingly attempting to identify these nations and descendants in this paper is to reinforce the supposition that Ezekiel is dealing within the realms of literal components; thus, supporting an overall literal interpretation of the latter chapters of Ezekiel’s Book (Ezek. 34-48).

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<sup>20</sup> Alan P. Ross. 1981. *Studies in the Book of Genesis Part 3: The Table of Nations in Genesis 10---Its Content*. 23.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>22</sup> H.A Ironside. *Ezekiel the Prophet* (Neptune: Loizeaux Brothers, 1949), 268-269.

<sup>23</sup> Alan P. Ross. 1981. *Studies in the Book of Genesis Part 3: The Table of Nations in Genesis 10---Its Content*. 25.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 25.

### Time Period Identified

Though some have tried to associate the Ezekiel invasion with current day threats existing during Ezekiel's time, most notably the Assyrian and Babylonian threats; the chronological and contextual format of the Book of Ezekiel does not logically allow for such a conjuncture. The time period for Ezekiel's Gog and Magog invasion will be eschatological; as aforementioned the placement of this battle varies dependant on ones tribulational and millennial interpretations. The one predominating concrete belief amongst most dispensational premillennialist scholars is that Ezekiel's reference is eschatological and futuristic in nature. Looking at the chronological sequence of the Book of Ezekiel, the invasion would be placed between Israel's restoration to their land (Ezek. 37) and the millennial reign of Christ (Ezek. 40-48). Pentecost supports a similar chronology: "Chapter thirty-seven deals with the restoration of the nation Israel to her land . . . chapter forty carries us to the millennial age. Thus the movements of Gog and Magog are seen, from the context, to transpire between the time of the beginning of the restoration of Israel to the land and the millennial age."<sup>25</sup> Likewise, Feinberg reinforces with this comment, "The invasion will take place after Israel has been restored to their land, a fact set forth prominently in these chapters (Ezek. 38:17; 39:8)."<sup>26</sup>

The second thing worthy of detailed examination are the Hebrew phrases "in that day" (Ezek. 38: 14) and "in the latter days" (Ezek. 38:16). In verse 16, Zodhiates defines "Latter" (*ah<sup>a</sup>riyt*) as a "feminine noun meaning the end, last time, latter time."<sup>27</sup> Strong supports a futuristic definition for (latter *akh-ar-eeth'*) and defines it as: "the *last* or *end*, hence the *future*; also

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<sup>25</sup> Dwight L. Pentecost. *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964), 345-346.

<sup>26</sup> Charles L. Feinberg. *The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of the Lord*. 219.

<sup>27</sup> Spiros Zodhiates (ed). *The Complete Word Study Dictionary, Gog*. Strong's #H319.

*posterity*: - (last, latter) end (time), hinder (utter) -most, length, posterity, remnant, residue, reward.”<sup>28</sup> Feinberg makes two formidable points regarding the term “latter”: (1) when Ezekiel wrote this prophecy he had no immediate lifetime fulfillment in mind; (2) when the term was used by Old Testament writers, “it has reference to Messianic times, that is, the era in which Israel’s national history will find its fulfillment and climax.”<sup>29</sup>

### **Physical Location Identified**

When considering the invasion of Gog and Magog, the location plays a significant part of interpretation; thus, influencing where the invasion is placed on ones eschatological timetable. Feinberg contextualizes the geographical location of Ezekiel’s invasion with other eschatological oriented biblical prophecies: “Ezekiel was explicit as to the place of the encounter taking place near the city of Jerusalem on the mountains of Israel. This was the testimony of Joel (Chap. 3) and Zechariah (chap. 14).”<sup>30</sup> We find that the destruction is not limited to the mountains of Jerusalem (Ezek. 39: 17-20) because the carnage and destruction will extend well beyond the boundaries of the mountains of Jerusalem (39: 9-12). Alexander remarks: “In addition God would bring a fiery judgment on the territory of Magog and her allies who felt secure in their coastlands and/or islands” (39: 6). The geographical location for the enormous burial site of this devastation is referred to in Ezekiel 39:11 as the “valley of the passengers” though the passengers will call it the “valley of Hamongog.” Ironside believes it is quite probable this “valley of

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<sup>28</sup> James Strong. *Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*. “Latter”H319. Taken from Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance by James Strong, S.T.D., LL.D., 1890. e-Sword, Version 9.5.1.

<sup>29</sup> Charles L. Feinberg. *The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of the Lord*. 221-222.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 229.

Hamon-gog” will be the same as the “valley of Mageddo or Jezreel,” though there will be “different nations that are to be destroyed by fire from heaven at the end time.”<sup>31</sup>

### **Proposed Interpretations**

As aforementioned in the introduction of this paper the interpretation amongst dispensationalist is multifarious. Some dispensationalist hold the position that Ezekiel’s Gog and Magog invasion could occur any time during the church age, though most embrace the latter part. For instance, Alexander explains: “Some advocate that the invasion and demise of Gog occurred about 169 B.C. in the war between armies of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maceabans when Jerusalem was pillaged and the temple defiled.”<sup>32</sup> Yet, a great number of conservative dispensationalists place Ezekiel’s invasion somewhere within Daniel’s seventieth week: beginning; middle; or end. Weirsbe is one who places the invasion at the beginning of Daniel’s seventieth week. Weirsbe comments, “It seems probable that this will be during the first half of the Tribulation period, when Israel will be protected from her enemies by her covenant with the head of the Roman Empire (Dan. 9:26-27).”<sup>33</sup> Another, very well represented position for Ezekiel’s invasion is at the end of Jesus’ 1,000 year millennial reign.

The intention of this paper will concentrate primarily upon what this writer believes are the two predominating interpretations: (1) at the end of the tribulation; and, (2) at the end of the millennium. The information presented will be in support of an end of tribulation viewpoint, though it should be noted that each position has its own difficulties of explanation. The method

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<sup>31</sup> H.A. Ironside. *Ezekiel the Prophet*. 273.

<sup>32</sup> Ralph H. Alexander. 1974. *A Fresh Look at Ezekiel 38 and 39*. *Journal of the Evangelical Society*. JETS 17:3 (Summer 1974), 162.

<sup>33</sup> Warren Wiersbe. *Weirsbe’s Expository Outlines on the Old Testament; Ezekiel 37-48*; n.d. e-Sword, Version 9.5.1.

of substantiation used for this position will encompass: similarities, differentiations, comparisons, contextualization, etymological, historical, and other hermeneutical tools. The texts of examination will include: Ezekiel 38, 39 (Gog and Magog invasion); Revelation 16 (Armageddon); and, Revelation 20 (the millennial period). It should be noted, many scholars consider Revelation 16 (Armageddon) to occur at the end of the tribulation period. This seems to coincide best with Ezekiel 38, 39; but, does present its own set of difficulties.

#### Ezekiel 38 and 39: Gog and Magog Invasion and Revelation 16: Armageddon

With the placement of Ezekiel's Gog and Magog invasion, in this writer's mind, at the end of the tribulation period it becomes necessary to acknowledge some difficulties seen through apparent differentiations between these two texts. First, notice that Ezekiel's Gog and Magog mentions "definite allies" (Ezek. 38:2, 5, 6, 13) while Armageddon's states "all nations are engaged" (Rev. 16:14).<sup>34</sup> Another point worthy of mention is the source of rebellion; in Revelation 16:13 there are unclean spirits coming out of the mouths of the dragon, beast and false prophet; contrastingly, the source in Ezekiel 38 and 39 invasion stems from greed. Although one could argue that Satan is still the source of both rebellions. Thirdly, Pentecost notes that "Gog comes from the north (Ezek. 38:6, 15; 39:2), while at Armageddon the armies come from the whole earth."<sup>35</sup> This problem doesn't seem too severe since the north is often used in other prophetic books as a general designation of the invading armies.

When comparing the two texts (Ezek. 38, 39 and Rev. 16) the different contextualization principles present more considerable problems. First, the prophetic statement found in Revelation 16 concludes a vision that belongs to the judgment series of the seven last plagues"

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<sup>34</sup> Dwight L. Pentecost. *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964), 344-345.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 345.

which is not mentioned in the Book of Ezekiel.<sup>36</sup> Larondelle outlines Revelation 12-20 as follows:

From this literary context it appears that the Armageddon war is motivated by demonic spirits who come forth from three apocalyptic bodies, described symbolically as the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. The rise of this satanic trinity was presented earlier in the Apocalypse in chapters 12–13 and its activity and destiny are developed further in chaps. 17–20. This structural interrelation-ship within Revelation 12–20 indicates already that Armageddon in chap. 16 must be related to and interpreted by the total structure of chaps. 12–20.<sup>37</sup>

Larondelle adds, “It deserves special stress that “Armageddon” must be interpreted as an integral part of the larger unit of the seven last plagues (Revelation 16) . . . The Armageddon war of 16:13–16 is structurally and thematically related to the subsequent chapters 17–19 by way of further clarification and elaboration.”<sup>38</sup> So, it is apparent that the placement of the invasion of Gog and Magog of Ezekiel 38 and 39 will require some difficult explanations to reconcile it with Revelation 16 (Armageddon). Though these contextualizing problems do present formidable obstacles in meshing the two accounts as one in the same; when weighed with the supporting similarities the meshing does seem logically plausible.

#### Ezekiel 38 and 39: Gog and Magog Invasion and Revelation 20: Millennial Reign

While the divergences between Ezekiel 38 and 39 (Ezekiel’s Gog and Magog invasion) and Revelation 16 (Armageddon) are unsettled; the differences between Ezekiel 38/39 and Revelation 20 (end of millennial reign of Christ) appear to be more deleterious. First, the resulting carnage from the Gog and Magog invasion (Ezek. 38 and 39) will be tremendous, whereas those destroyed in Revelation 20 will be totally annihilated. We read in Revelation 20:

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<sup>36</sup> Hans K. Larondelle. 1985. *The Biblical Concept of Armageddon*. *Journal of the Evangelical Society*. *JETS* 28:1 (March 1985), 21.

<sup>37</sup> Hans K. Larondelle. 1985. *The Biblical Concept of Armageddon*. 21-22.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 22-23.

9, “And they went up on the breadth [four corners], 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.” According to Thayer the Greek word for devour (κατεσθίω, katesthiō) means “to consume by eating, to eat up, devour.”<sup>39</sup> Secondly, Walvoord describes the after effects of the battle in Ezekiel 39 as follows: “The number of corpses will be so great that the way of travelers will be blocked. “The way of travelers” could again be translated “Abarim.” The valley will be clogged with the bodies of soldiers. The name of the valley will be changed to the Valley of Hamon Gog, meaning “the Valley of the hordes of Gog. [Ezek. 39:11].”<sup>40</sup> Pentecost concurs, “In Ezekiel the bodies of the slain require the labor of seven months to dispose of the dead (39:12). In Revelation 20:9 the slain are said to be “devoured” by fire, so that no disposal is necessary.”<sup>41</sup> Feinberg provides three elements found in Ezekiel’s invasion that appear to be missing in the Revelation 20 account regarding the vastness of Gog’s overthrow: “(1) the wood for fuel (vv. 9-10); (2) the long period for burials (vv. 11-16); and (3) the sacrificial feast of the carcasses (vv. 17-20).”<sup>42</sup> With the absence of mention regarding these three elements, it suggests that the two texts are describing different events.

Another difficulty in placing Ezekiel 38 and 39 at the end of the millennium reign (Rev 20) is that Ezekiel’s omitted mention regarding: Satan’s influence; his 1,000 year binding; and, the eventual loosing found in the Revelation 20 invasion of Gog and Magog. Moreover, Pentecost points out, “the context in Ezekiel shows the Ezekiel 38, 39 Gog and Magog invasion is before

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<sup>39</sup> Joseph H. Thayer and Gerhard Kittel (ed). Thayer’s Greek Dictionary. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Revelation 20:9*. n.d. e-Sword, Version 9.5.1.

<sup>40</sup> John F. Walvoord and R.B. Zuck. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary; Ezekiel 39:9-11*. eds. 2 vols.

<sup>41</sup> Dwight J. Pentecost. 1957. *Where Do the Events of Ezekiel 38 and 39 Fit into the Prophetic Picture*. *Bibliotheca Sacra. Bsac-* v.114, #456 (Oct. 57), 341.

<sup>42</sup> Charles L. Feinberg. *The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of the Lord*. 228.

the institution of the millennium” while the Revelation 20 battle is after the millennium has been in existence for a thousand years.”<sup>43</sup> Additionally, Ezekiel’s account of the Gog and Magog invasion contextually is followed by the millennium (Ezek. 40–48); whereas, the account found in Revelation 20 is “followed by the new heaven and the new earth.”<sup>44</sup>

Another difficulty when considering Ezekiel 38, 39 and Revelation 20 as the same account is that it presents the interpreter with some simplistic questions of sensibility. Walvoord and Zuck pose two of these questions: (1) “Why bury the dead for seven months after the battle (Ezek. 39:12-13) when the next prophetic event is the resurrection of the unsaved dead (Rev. 20:11-13); (2) Why would the people remain on earth after the battle to burn the weapons of war for seven years (Ezek. 39:9-10) instead of entering immediately into eternity (Rev. 21:1-4).”<sup>45</sup> The following differentiations, chronology inconsistencies and irregularities, cast warranted questionability regarding unification between Ezekiel’s battle in 38, 39 and the one described in Revelation 20:1-15.

Though the placement of Ezekiel 38 and 39 Gog Magog invasion has difficulties unifying with Revelation 16 (Armageddon); it also has some fundamentally sound proofs supporting an end of tribulation placement. Ironside refers to Zechariah 14:1-4 and notes: “we are told of the gathering of all nations against Jerusalem, an event which clearly takes place just prior to the manifestation of Christ as King, when His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives.”<sup>46</sup> Many are quick to point out the shared use of the term “Gog and Magog” in Ezekiel 38 and Revelation

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<sup>43</sup> Dwight J. Pentecost. 1957. *Where Do the Events of Ezekiel 38 and 39 Fit into the Prophetic Picture*. 341.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 341.

<sup>45</sup> John F. Walvoord and R.B. Zuck. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary; Ezekiel 38:1-6*. eds. 2 vols.

<sup>46</sup> H.A. Ironside. *Ezekiel the Prophet*. 265.

20 as a proof of cohesion. This is considered by most scholars to be a very weak argument because of the generality of the terms as leaders, heads or princes. Ironside states: “Gog is said to mean “extension” and Magog “expansion.” The two terms might well indicate the ruler of a vast territory.”<sup>47</sup> In Ezekiel 39: 25-29, “the complete return of Israel will occur after the defeat of Gog and his confederates” is in view.<sup>48</sup> Though this could be applied to either the end of the tribulation or the end of millennium time periods, the end of the tribulation seems more contextually probable. Note the restoration in view is complete and all encompassing. Another consideration often overlooked is Ezekiel’s mention of a millennial temple in chapters 40-43. Ezekiel is a sequential book and as aforementioned the millennial temple follows the invasion of Gog and Magog in chapters 38 and 39; thus, suggesting the invasion takes place at the end of the tribulation and prior to the millennial. Some have tried to eliminate this point by suggesting the temple is not literal. Schmitt and Laney suggest: “If we consider Ezekiel as a whole, we note that there are many other prophecies that have been fulfilled in a literal way. The destruction of Tyre was literally fulfilled (Ezek. 26-27). The reestablishment of the nation was literally fulfilled (Ezek. 37:1-13). The measurements and detailed description of Ezekiel’s Temple suggest that the Temple is literal.”<sup>49</sup> Though both viewpoints have considerable difficulties and similarities; the end of tribulation placement seems most probable to this writer based upon the presented information.

## Conclusion

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 266.

<sup>48</sup> Charles L. Feinberg. *The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of the Lord*. 231.

<sup>49</sup> John W. Schmitt and Carl Laney. *Messiah’s Coming Temple: Ezekiel’s Prophetic Vision of the Future Temple* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997), 183.

The invasion question described in Ezekiel 38 and 39 is one that unfortunately is not answered within the contents of this paper or within the thinking suppositions of its writer. Human history will continue to unfold before mankind in accordance to the divine decrees of an Almighty God, who has set aside Israel, and the church, to fulfill His sovereign plans. The goal of this writer has been to present the issues and suppositions of some of the most brilliant men; and, to make a definitive case for his own belief regarding an end of tribulation placement for Ezekiel's 38 and 39 Gog and Magog invasion prophecy.

The papers scope included an evaluation on: the participants; time periods; physical location; and lastly, the proposed interpretations. In support of reaching an end of tribulation placement, this paper has analyzed: similarities, differences, comparisons, contextual issues, etymological studies; historical aspects, literary devices and, many other interpretative hermeneutical tools. Admittedly, the answer, regarding Ezekiel 38 and 39, is far from resolved and the certainties are the things that should be embraced when dealing with eschatological subjects such as the one put before us. We know that God has chosen a people for Himself; whether Israel or the church is in mind will certainly be pertinent with His dealings. Secondly, we know that God has made provision through His Son Jesus Christ, for the propitiation of sins, redemption of mankind and future glorification of His chosen people (Jew and Gentile). Thirdly, on His word, Jesus will return, when and how, yet remains to be accomplished through the history of time. While interpreting things of difficulty, such as eschatological issues, the simpler things of this life and God's commands should be embraced. Preach the gospel saving message to the lost and desolate, love the Lord your God with all your heart, love humanity with unconditional love; and, strive to do the Father's will within the days of His allotted mercy and grace.

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