Lion and Lamb Apologetics

Rethinking Ezekiel's Invasion By Gog

J. Paul Tanner*

Buried in the depths of the OT is an apocalyptic account of a fierce battle involving an assault upon Israel by the nations of the world headed by Gog of the land of Magog. The details are recorded in Ezekiel 38–39. How are we to interpret the account? And when should we expect the war to take place? That an eschatological fulfillment of Ezekiel 38–39 should be anticipated is not unreasonable, since there has been no historical battle since Ezekiel's day that would fulfill the details of this passage.

The timing of the battle is not the only major issue. These chapters have quite often been associated with Russia, an association that, given the changing political climate in the past few years, demands a careful reevaluation.[1] Two primary reasons within the text have suggested to some that Russia will be the culprit to head the invasion against Israel: (1) Certain place names, such as Rosh and Meshech, might appear to have etymological connections with modern-day Russia (i.e. Rosh for Russia; Meshech for Moscow); and (2) the invasion of forces is said to come from the "remote parts of the north" (Ezek 38:6), which certainly makes Russia suspect, since she lies directly north of Israel.

The fulfillment of the prophesied invasion is most often regarded as taking place during the tribulation period preceding the second coming of Christ. This has been the prevailing opinion of dispensational premillennialism.[2] In this theological system so much emphasis

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* Paul Tanner is lecturer in Hebrew at Singapore Bible College, 9–15 Adam Road, Singapore 289886.

[1] The popularization of the interpretation that the invading army of Gog is actually Russia can be partly credited to *The Scofield Reference Bible*, which stated rather dogmatically: "That the primary reference is to the northern (European) powers, headed up by Russia, all agree" (rev. ed.; ed. C. I. Scofield [New York: Oxford University, 1917] 883 n. 1). Cf. A. C. Gaebelein, *The Prophet Ezekiel: An Analytical Exposition* (New York: Our Hope, 1918) 259. H. Lindsey gave further impetus to this view in *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970) 59 ff.

[2] Although most dispensationalists have located the invasion of Gog in the tribulation per-iod, there is no consensus of opinion as to when in the tribulation it will occur. J. F. Walvoord (*The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook* [Wheaton: SP Publications, 1990] 190) and C. H. Dyer ("Ezekiel," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament* [ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck; Wheaton: Victor, 1985] 1300) suggest that the invasion occurs in the first half of the tribulation. D. Pentecost located the invasion at the middle of the tribulation, equating Gog's invasion with that of the "king of the north" in Dan 11:40–41, closely connected with the antichrist breaking his covenant with Israel (*Things to Come* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958] 350-355; cf. "Where Do the Events of Ezekiel 38–39 Fit into the Prophetic Picture?", BSac 114 [1957] 334-346). C. L. Feinberg (*The Prophecy of Ezekiel* [Chicago: Moody, 1969] 218) and H. A. Ironside (*Expository Notes on Ezekiel the Prophet* [New York: Loizeaux, 1949] 265) located the invasion at

has been placed upon an eschatological tribulation period that it was almost assumed that Ezekiel 38–39 belonged there. I would like to make the confession, as an advocate of this system myself, that this conclusion has come about as the result of a somewhat backwards methodology. Rather than starting with the tribulation (in which many a fierce battle will transpire) and assuming that the battle of Gog belongs there, I would suggest that a more proper approach would be from the opposite direction—that is, the development of OT themes that progressively emerged subsequent to Israel's exodus from Egypt. What I have in mind is the progressive unfolding of God's restoration plan for Israel, first described in Deuteronomy and subsequently elaborated by the prophets of the OT. I hope to demonstrate that by approaching Ezekiel from this perspective a different time frame altogether will emerge. Furthermore, I will contend that the details of the text probably do not support the identification of Gog with Russia.

I. A Reexamination Of The Russia Connection

The battle described in Ezekiel 38–39 involves numerous nations, but the chief antagonist appears to be Gog. This is apparent not only from the fact that Gog is mentioned first in the list but also that the invading force is subsequently referred to summarily as Gog (e.g. 38:14, 16, 18). According to 38:2, Gog is said to be from the land of Magog. Is this a cryptic reference to Russia? To answer the question, we must examine the associated place names and the geographical reference "from the remote parts of the north."

1. "Rosh" as a place name. The remainder of 38:2 is beset with translational difficulties. The NASB adds that Gog is the "prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal." The NIV, on the other hand, translates the same phrase as the "chief prince of Meshech and Tubal" (cf. also RSV). Hence the question arises as to whether "Rosh" is a place name or a descriptive

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the end of the tribulation. Feinberg notes: "The armies of chapters 38–39 would appear to be included in the universal confederacies seen in Zechariah 12 and 14" (*Prophecy* 219). Earlier, D. L. Cooper suggested that the invasion was actually before the tribulation (*When Gog's Armies Meet the Almighty* [Los Angeles: Biblical Research Society, 1940] 80-81), and A. C. Gaebelein (Ezekiel 252–255) suggested that it was at the beginning of the millennium. C. C. Ryrie showed an openness to the invasion having multiple fulfillments, both during the tribulation and at the end of the millennium (*The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard* [Chicago: Moody, 1978] 1285), as did *The Scofield Reference Bible* (883 n. 1). More recently, H. W. Hoehner has proposed the novel view that chap. 38 refers to events in the middle of the tribulation, whereas chap. 39 refers to events at the end of the tribulation ("The Progression of Events in Ezekiel 38–39," *Integrity of Heart, Skillfulness of Hands: Biblical and Leadership Studies in Honor of Donald K. Campbell* [ed. C. H. Dyer and R. B. Zuck; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994.]).

adjective modifying "prince."[3] The question is quite relevant, because if "Rosh" is not a place name then the etymological connection with Russia is eliminated.[4]

The primary difficulty with the reading of "Rosh" is that we do not know of any place so named in Biblical antiquity.[5] To what would Ezekiel have referred if he meant Rosh?[6] Probably not modern-day Russia, for Edwin Yamauchi has pointed out that "the name *Rus* was first brought into the region of Kiev by the Vikings in the Middle Ages."[7] Herbert J. Ellison elaborates, connecting the name with the exploits of the early Scandinavian Vikings known as the Varangians:

> Winning Livonia and Estonia for Sweden by 700 A.D., the Varangians moved then to the east and southeast, travelling the full length of the Russian plain to establish a center of power by the mid-eighth century in the territory along the Sea of Azov between the lower Don and the Kuban rivers. The Scandinavians conquered a people known as the Rukh-As, or Rus', adopting the name of the people themselves and naming their state the Russian Kaganate. Several centuries earlier a group of East Slavs (the Antes), ruled by the Rukh-As clans of the Alanic tribe of Sarmatians, had taken the name of their conquerors that was ultimately to be applied to all the East Slavs. Thus the Varangians and East Slavs, whose destinies were later closely linked in the founding of the Kievan State, were both known as Rus', hence Russians.[8]

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[3] Feinberg (*Prophecy* 220) takes it as a place name, though he rejects the connection with Russia on the basis of etymology (he does, however, include Russia among the armies that invade [ibid. 224]). Citing *Iliad* 13.5–6, he mentions that the Greeks very early included under this name all the nations of the north.

[4] Regarding the etymological connection see R. H. Alexander, "A Fresh Look at Ezekiel 38 and 39," *JETS* 17 (Summer 1974); J. Ruthven, "Ezekiel's Rosh and Russia: A Connection?", *BSac* 125 (1968) 324-333; C. Armerding, "Russia and the King of the North," *BSac* 120 (1963) 50-55.

[5] The LXX MSS θ and Σ transliterated the Hebrew *rō'šˇ* as *Ρως* (a place name), though the MSS Δ A Syr Vg Tg took it to mean "head, chief." L. C. Allen observes: "The only known ancient geographical name that would resemble the alleged Rō'šˇ is Rā'sī (or Arā'sī) of neo-Assyrian records, a district on the border of Babylonia and Elam. .., which had nothing in common with Meshech and Tubal (Astour, *JBL* 95 [1976] 567 note 4)" (*Ezekiel 20- 48* [WBC 29; Dallas: Word, 1990] 199). From Sargon's eighth campaign (ca. 714 BC) we know of a letter reporting that he led the Assyrian armies into modern Iraqi Kurdistan to come to the aid of allies of the Assyrian realm who were threatened by Rusas I, king of Urartu and bitter enemy of Assyria.

[6] The mention of Rosh in Isa 66:19 (see NASB) rests on a textual problem, in which the NASB has relied upon the LXX. The NIV translation "Lydians (famous as archers") is more in keeping with the MT *mōšēkê qešet*.

[7] E. Yamauchi, "Russian Attacks?", *BA* (Spring 1983) 96. Cf. B. Dmytryshyn, *A History of Russia* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977). The Byzantines did use the term οἱ Ῥῶς for the *ἔθνος Σκυθικόν* living in the northern Taurus.

[8] H. J. Ellison, *History of Russia* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964) 12.

Thus the name "Russia" has a rather late association with the modern-day state and would certainly not have been the intention of Ezekiel writing in the sixth century BC.

The more plausible explanation is that the text should be translated "the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal" (so NIV).[9] The Hebrew text has *gôg nĕśî' rō'š mešĕk wĕtubāl* (38:3). Assuming that rō'š is a noun form, we must admit that the grammatical construction is difficult.[10] But the noun form is used in 2 Kgs 25:18 in a somewhat similar construction for the chief priest: *kōhēn hārō'š*. In 1 Chr 27:5 the position of the article is reversed, the result being *hakkōhēn rō'š*.

2. Magog, Meshech and Tubal. Very little is known of Gog except that he is "of the land of Magog" and is "the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal."[11] Comparing the genealogies of Genesis 10, we readily see that several of these place names are connected with Noah's son Japheth. In fact Gomer, Magog, Tubal and Meshech were sons of Japheth along with Madai, Javan and Tiras.[12] According to 10:5, their settlements were "the coastlands of the nations" in contrast to the African and Semitic cultures. In summary, the sons of Japheth settled in the regions bordering on the northern Mediterranean (cf. Ezek 27:12–15). Any

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[9] Aquila, the Targum, and Jerome viewed rō'š adjectively ("chief prince").

[10] See GKC 130f n. 4; 135n. According to R. Alexander, "syntactically, *rō'š mešĕk* is a construct state—'chief of Meshech.' Since *nᵉśî' rō'š* are appositionally related, and since *rō'š* is in a construct relationship with Meshech and Tubal, the term 'prince' should also be in a construct relationship with the place names Meshech and Tubal (cf. 39:1)" ("Ezekiel," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* [ed. F. E. Gaebelein; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986] 6.930). For the more unlikely view that *rō'š* is a proper noun see J. D. Price, "Rosh: An Ancient Land Known to Ezekiel," *Grace Theological Journal* 6 (1985) 67-89.

[11] Suggestions have been made as to the identity of Gog, but they have not been met with universal acceptance. Some would equate Gog with the famous Gyges (Γύγης, d. 644) king of Lydia (western Turkey). Assyrian texts refer to Gyges as *Gugu*, a linguistic cognate of Gog. Obviously, however, the one known as Gyges to the Greeks never fulfilled the invasion depicted in Ezekiel 38–39. At best, a past name might be used to depict a future event. Cf. M. Cogan and H. Tadmor, "Gyges and Assurbanipal," *Or* 46 (1977) 65-85. Other suggested connections include the place-name Gagaya, mentioned in the Amarna letters of Egypt as a land of barbarians, and a god known as Gaga, referred to in the Ras Shamra writings (see *Enuma elish* 3:2). J. B. Taylor, on the other hand, takes it symbolically as "the personified head of the forces of evil which are intent on destroying the people of God" (*Ezekiel* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1969] 244). According to Josephus *Ant.* 1.6.1 s123 and Jerome, Magog was a general designation for the numerous Scythian tribes that inhabited the mountainous region around the Black and Caspian seas. C. F. Keil went so far as to suggest that Gog was a name Ezekiel "arbitrarily formed from the name of the country, *Magog*" (*Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprint 1975] 9.159). Although the name Gog appears elsewhere in the MT only in 1 Chr 5:4, the LXX translators found the name in other places. For discussion of this and the relationship of the terms Gog and Magog see W. Zimmerli, *A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters 25–48* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 301.

[12] The names Gog and Magog are found in Jewish extra-Biblical literature in association with the territories of Japheth (e.g. *Jub*. 8:26; 9:7–8; *Sib. Or*. 3:319–322, 512–513).

identification of Me-shech with Moscow and Tubal with Tobolsk is quite unfounded. [13] Yamauchi states: "Since the late nineteenth century, Assyrian texts have been available which locate Meshech (*Mushku*) and Tubal (*Tabal*) in central and eastern Anatolia respectively."[14] These would be located in what is today modern Turkey. For Ezekiel, Meshech and Tubal were not Russian cities but ancient ethnic groups that carried on trade with Tyre (27:13). According to Yamauchi, the Mushki of central Anatolia eventually merged with the Phrygians from the west.[15]

3. Gomer and Beth Togarmah. According to Ezek 38:6, Gog will be joined by Gomer and Beth Togarmah. As pointed out above, Gomer was also a descendant of Japheth along with Magog, Meshech and Tubal. Genesis 10:3 specifies that Togarmah was one of the descendants of Gomer. Togarmah is to be equated with Armenia.[16] Yamauchi has identified Biblical Gomer with the people of antiquity known as the Cimmerians (Akkadian *Gimmiraya*, Greek *Kimmerioi*).[17] At one point their power shifted to the kingdom of Urartu (Biblical Ararat), and according to Herodotus they eventually were driven over the Caucasus by the Scythians.[18]

While some of the descendants of the Cimmerians can be said to have migrated into the steppes of lower Russia, that in itself is not a suficient basis to say that Russia is the primary designee of Ezekiel 38–39. Historically the area of modern-day Turkey and northern Iraq and Iran best corresponds to the geographical names designated by Ezekiel. According to Ezek 38:5, the invading force will also be made up of armies from Iran (Persia) and North Africa (Ethiopia and Put).

4. An invasion from the north. Besides the alleged etymological connections between the place names of Ezekiel 38 and modern-day Russia, one other piece of evidence is said to confirm that the invasion is spearheaded by Russia. The text clarifies that Gog comes from "the remote parts of the north" (38:6, 15), and in 39:2 the NASB specifies "the remotest parts of the north." An examination of the Hebrew text, however, will reveal that these three phrases are essentially the same (there is no need for the differentiation of the adjectives "remote" and "remotest").[19] The NIV consistently translates the phrase in all three verses as the "far north." A translation such as that of the NASB might indeed imply

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[13] See E. Yamauchi, "Meshech, Tubal, and Company," *JETS* 19 (1976) 239-247.
[14] E. Yamauchi, "The Scythians: Invading Hordes from the Russian Steppes," *BA* (Spring 1983) 96; cf. A. T. Olmstead, *History of Assyria* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1951).
[15] Yamauchi, "Scythians" 96.
[16] J. F. McCurdy, "Gog and Magog," *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*. Cf. also Alexander, "Ezekiel" 877.
[17] Yamauchi, "Scythians" 96.
[18] Herodotus 4.11-13. On the Scythians see Yamauchi, "Scythians" 90–99.
[19] Ezekiel 38:6 has *yarkĕtê ṣāpôn*; 38:15 and 39:2 have *miyarkĕtê ṣāpôn*.

that Russia in the remotest parts of the north (from Israel) is intended. But we need to examine the terms *ṣāpôn* and *yarkĕtê*.

Although the term "north" (*ṣāpôn*) is a common word in the Hebrew Bible, it is found most frequently in the book of Ezekiel. It is used there (1) as a general direction (e.g. a storm wind from the north, 1:4), (2) as a reference to the north side of the temple or of the city of Jerusalem (e.g. the north gate), (3) once in reference to an attack from Babylon (26:7), (4) once apparently in reference to the area of Phoenician city-states (32:30), and (5) three times in Ezekiel 38–39 in reference to Gog and Beth Togarmah (38:6, 15; 39:2). In each of the latter three references, *ṣāpôn* is used in combination with *yarkâ*.[20]

Although I have demonstrated elsewhere that the term "north," when used in reference to invading armies from outside Israel, often means countries of the ancient Near East (primarily Babylonia and Assyria), I shall examine in this article the particular combination of *ṣāpôn* and *yarkâ*.[21] The word *yarkâ* is defined as "flank, side, extreme parts, or recesses."[22] It is used in Gen 49:13 to refer to the more distant side of the border of a territory. At least eight times it is used of a particular side of the tabernacle/temple structure (i.e., the more distant side in respect to the east entrance). Quite frequently it is used to describe the innermost part of a territory or place.[23] Of more particular relevance to this study are the instances where it is used in respect to a direction, especially in combination with *ṣāpôn*. For instance, it appears in Ps 48:2(3) in regard to Jerusalem. The Hebrew *har-ṣiyyôn yarkĕtê ṣāpôn* is somewhat troublesome, translated by the NASB "is Mount Zion in the far north" and by the NIV "like the utmost heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion." I would suggest that the psalmist is not referring to Mount Zion as being to the far north or using *ṣāpôn* as a place name (i.e., Zaphon).[24] Rather, he is commenting on Zion's

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[20] The following combinations of *ṣāpôn* and *yarkâ* occur in Ezekiel 38–39: *yarkĕtê ṣāpôn* (38:6, in reference to Beth Togarmah); *mimmĕqômkā miyyarkĕtê ṣāpôn* (38:15, in reference to Gog); *miyyarkĕtê ṣāpôn* (39:2, in reference to Gog).

[21] See J. P. Tanner, "Daniel's 'King of the North': Do We Owe Russia An Apology?", *JETS* 35/3 (1992) 323.

[22] BDB 438.

[23] At least ten times *yarkâ* is used to describe the innermost part of something. In Judg 19:1, 18 it is used of the innermost part of the hill country of Ephraim (cf. 2 Kgs 19:23; Isa 37:24). Elsewhere it describes the innermost part of a cave (1 Sam 24:3), a house (Ps 128:3; Amos 6:10), Sheol (Isa 14:15; Ezek 32:23), and a ship (Jonah 1:5).

[24] NIV "like the utmost heights of Zaphon" reflects an understanding of *ṣāpôn* as a reference to a mountain associated with the Canaanite pantheon. According to J. E. Hartley: "In Ugaritic literature the term *ṣapānu* refers to a specific location, Mt. Casius (Jebel el-Aqra), about 40 km. (25 mi.) NNE of Râs Shamrah. It also refers to the cosmic mountain where Baal reigns" ("Zaphon," ISBE). R. B. Chisholm, Jr., adds: "Zaphon, located north of Israel, was the sacred mountain of the Canaanites from which their high god El supposedly ruled" ("A Theology of the Psalms," *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament* [ed. R. B. Zuck; Chicago: Moody, 1991] 264). The problem I have with this interpretation of Ps 48:2 is the

elevation—that is, Mount Zion on the north of the City of David is the highest in elevation (in near reference). This is supported by the earlier part of the verse, which spoke about the city of God as being "beautiful in elevation" (*nôp yĕpēh*). [25]

The phrase *yarkĕtê ṣāpôn* is also found in Isa 14:13. In this taunt song the king of Babylon's pride is condemned for declaring: "I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north" (compare NIV "on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain"). The words refer to the highest or most exalted place (some would see here a reference to the Canaanite sacred mountain of Zaphon). This is evident from the contrast indicated by the judicial pronouncement of the following verse in which the king will be sentenced to the lowest position: "You will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit." In the case of Ps 48:2 (as well as Isa 14:13) *yarkĕtê ṣāpôn* does not refer to a northernmost extremity and certainly nothing so remotely north as Russia.

Finally, the other occurrences of *ṣāpôn* and *yarkâ* in combination occur in Jeremiah (a prophet closely related to Ezekiel) in reference to Babylon. Jeremiah presents Babylon as a northern enemy (cf. 1:13–15) threatening Judah's security. In 6:22 Babylon is referred to as a "people coming from the north land" (*mēʾereṣ ṣāpôn*), even "from the remote parts of the earth" (*miyyarkĕtê-ʾāreṣ*). In 25:32 Jeremiah writes of Babylon that "a great storm is being stirred up from the remotest parts of the earth" (*miyyarkĕtê-ʾāreṣ*). In two other places Jeremiah combines the notion of "north" with *miyyarkĕtê-ʾāreṣ*. Both occur in an eschatological context as well. The first (31:8) looks at Israel's future regathering, apparently from Babylon. The second (50:41) looks at an army that comes against Babylon as a judgment from Yahweh. The agents of judgment (though not altogether clear in the context) include the Medes (51:11, 28) and the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni and Ashkenaz (51:27). The latter would refer geographically to what is today northwestern Iran and eastern Turkey.

5. Evaluation of the Russia connection. The connection of the Gog passage of Ezekiel 38–39 with Russia rests on two primary arguments: the etymological relationship of the place names, and the reference to the "remote parts of the earth." As demonstrated above, the use of the place names to make an argument for Russia is extremely weak. "Rosh" is better translated "chief," and the other names are clearly identified with people groups of the Middle East. The phrase in Ezekiel translated "remote parts of the north" does not have to mean something so restricted as Russia to the far north of Israel. A careful study of *yarkĕte ṣāpôn* reveals that it either means a place of high elevation or that it refers to

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incongruence it suggests in what is supposed to be a "song of Zion." Should we expect an exaltation of Zion to liken its beauty to the sacred mountain of Canaanite mythology?

[25] The word *nôp* is a hapax, but *nāpâ* means "height." The latter is translated "loftiness" by the NIV and "elevation" by the NASB.

countries of the Middle East in closer proximity to Israel. "North" refers not so much to the precise geographical direction from Israel, but rather to the direction of advance and attack upon Israel (armies came against Israel from the north). This is how Jeremiah viewed Babylonia, though Babylonia was technically to the east. Consequently, there is no firm basis on which to interpret Gog as Russia.

II. The Contextual Placement Of Chapters 38-39 In Ezekiel

A primary maxim for the interpretation of any passage is to interpret it in context. This truth of course applies to Ezekiel 38–39. The overall structure of the book is reflected in the following chart.

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">JUDGMENT AGAINST THE NATION OF ISRAEL</td><td rowspan="2">JUDGMENT AGAINST GENTILE NATIONS</td><td colspan="2">BLESSINGS ANTICIPATED FOR ISRAEL IN THE FUTURE</td></tr>
<tr><td>Future restoration of Israel
Chaps. 33–39</td><td>New temple and renewed worship
Chaps. 40–48</td></tr>
<tr><td>Chaps. 1–24</td><td>Chaps. 25–32</td><td colspan="2">Chaps. 33–48</td></tr>
</table>

33:21:
Report received that Jerusalem has fallen (January 585 BC)

40:1–2:
New vision given (573 BC)

The book opens with a scene in which Ezekiel receives visions of God (1:1). The initial vision is meant to impress Ezekiel with the glory of the Lord (1:28; 3:23). This is crucial to the book's argument that God is jealous of his glory, and he is not going to allow Judah to go on dishonoring his name. As a result of Judah's disobedience, God is going to move his glory from the temple (11:23) and bring severe discipline upon his covenant people in the form of an invasion by Babylonia. By the end of the first major movement (see 24:2) the king of Babylonia has laid siege to Jerusalem. The action is temporarily suspended, however, by chaps. 25–32 to allow a pronouncement of judgment against Israel's Gentile neighbors. As the camera turns its focus back to Israel in chap. 33, it is apparent that Jerusalem and the temple have been destroyed, and a report of the destruction is given (33:21).

With the city and temple destroyed, Israel's hopes and aspirations are seemingly dashed to the ground. Consequently the remainder of the book (chaps. 33–48) is meant to reveal that all is not lost. God still has a plan and future for Israel. He will regather his people

and restore them (chaps. 33–39), and he will eventually raise up a new temple to replace the one destroyed by the Babylonians (chaps. 40–48).[26] In this new temple God will reinstate his glory in the midst of the people (43:2–5). As a result of this judgment (destruction of Jerusalem followed by exile) and the restoration of the nation, God will bring honor to his name so that his glory is exalted.

Crucial to our interpretation of the Gog invasion (chaps. 38–39) is the recognition that this is presented at the climax to Israel's future restoration. The relationship with chaps. 36–37 is particularly important.[27] In Ezekiel 36 (cf. vv. 22–29) the nation is regathered and cleansed in preparation for being given a new heart and reinstated as God's people. Using the graphic imagery of a valley of dry bones, Ezekiel 37 elaborates this restoration of the nation, and the promise is fulfilled of being ruled by a Davidic king (37:21–24).

That a clear relationship exists between chaps. 36–37 and chaps. 38–39 is apparent from the "regathering motif" that extends into chaps. 38 and 39 (cf. 38:8, 12; 39:27–28). Thus chaps. 38–39 must be evaluated in terms of God's restoration plan for Israel.

III. The Restoration Of Israel

In the preceding section the observation was made that a regathering motif pervades chaps. 36–39. What is this regathering? When does it take place? A study of this motif in Scripture will bear out that this is one aspect of a much broader theme of Israel's restoration. The foundation of God's plan of restoration for Israel is given in Deuteronomy 30 (cf. Deut 4:25–31). After they have experienced the curses (Deuteronomy 28–29) and the severe discipline of being exiled from the land of promise,

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[26] One should carefully observe the chronological notes in relation to these sections. There is a note at 33:21 ("in the twelfth year of our exile") standing at the head of chaps. 33–39 and another at 40:1 ("in the twenty-fifth year of our exile") at the head of chaps. 40–48. If the events within the unit of chaps. 33–39 are in chronological order, then chaps. 38–39 are subsequent to the regathering and the effecting of the new covenant with Israel (cf. 37:24–26). We need not expect chaps. 40–48 to chronologically follow chaps. 38–39 since these chapters are part of a separate vision. Compare these observations with Hoehner's thesis that Ezekiel 37 is a "restoration of Israel in unbelief" ("Progression" 91), an unlikely suggestion in light of the reference to messianic kingship (37:24–25) and the effecting of the new covenant (37:23, 26).

[27] For the critical view that Ezekiel 38–39 is an intrusion into the book by a later redactor that interrupts the sequence and chronological scheme see R. Ahroni, "The Gog Prophecy and the Book of Ezekiel," *HAR 1* (1977) 1-27. Despite his own conclusion, Ahroni presents some excellent arguments (primarily based on literary and lexical affinities) for the unity of authorship of Ezekiel 38–39 with the rest of the book (pp. 5-8). In fact he does not counter these arguments himself. Instead he adopts his conclusion that chaps. 38–39 are an intrusion into the book because he cannot reconcile how the Gog invasion can take place after the restoration. He concludes: "The resumption of hostilities as well as the need for the reassertion of God's superiority after the restoration, which is the overriding concern in the Gog prophecy, has therefore no logical place in Ezekiel's scheme for the future, is clearly in disharmony with his intention and spirit, and is alien to the whole picture of the restoration as depicted in the Hebrew Bible" (pp. 10-11).

they can be restored. This restoration includes conditions that Israel must meet and a number of blessings that God will bestow on them in response. Some of the more significant aspects from Deuteronomy 30 are listed below.

1. Conditions Israel must fulfill. (1) They must return to the Lord (v. 2). (2) They must give heed to his voice with all their heart and soul (v. 2).

2. Promises and blessings God will bestow in response. (1) The Lord will restore their fortunes (v. 3). (2) He will have compassion on them (v. 3). (3) He will gather them again from all the peoples where he had scattered them (v. 3). (4) He will bring them into the land (v. 5). (5) They shall possess the land (v. 5). (6) He will prosper them (v. 5). (7) He will multiply them (v. 5). (8) He will circumcise their hearts so that they will love him (v. 6).

Based on the terminology from this foundational restoration passage in Deuteronomy 30, we can now use the data to identify other passages in the OT in which these terms and concepts merge together again. The verb *qbṣ* ("gather") is characteristically a part of these key restoration passages.[28] This motif of Israel's restoration resurfaces in the prophets, particularly Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who are connected with Judah's exile to Babylonia. That is quite understandable: Just as the prophets had been used by God to announce Judah's exile because of idolatry and disobedience, so they are used to announce that the nation still has a hope of being restored to favor with God. The key restoration passages containing *qbṣ* include Mic 2:12–13; 4:1–8; Isa 11:10–16; Jer 23:1–8; 29:10–14; 31:1–34; 32:37–44; Ezek 11:16–20; 20:33–44; 28:25–26; 34:11–31; 36:22–38; 37:11–28; 39:25–29.[29]

By studying all these passages it is possible to identify even more characteristic terms of Israel's restoration than I have listed above. Furthermore, I have observed that they are distinctly eschatological, by which I mean that the nation's restoration coincides with the coming of Messiah to be king over the people and bring them into the new covenant. To provide one example, I would point to the Lord's words in Ezek 37:11–28 in general and vv. 21–24 in particular: "Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will *gather them* from every side and *bring them into their own land*; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; … And they will be my people, and I will be their God. And my servant David will be king over them [probably a reference to the Davidic

[28] The verb *qbṣ* occurs in the qal, niphal, piel and pual stems. When *qbṣ* is used in reference to an eschatological regathering of Israel, however, it is always in the piel/pual stems. Of its 52 occurrences, 23 are in reference to an eschatological regathering, concentrated mostly in Jeremiah (5x) and Ezekiel (9x).
[29] Other restoration passages that omit the term *qbṣ* are Hos 2:14; Jer 3:14–18. In addition, Isa 43:5–7; 44:1–5 may possibly be included.

descendant who will sit on the throne of David in fulfillment of the Davidic covenant of 2 Samuel 7], and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in my ordinances, and keep my statutes, and observe them" (italics mine). Verse 26 adds: "And I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them." This covenant is undoubtedly the new covenant of Jeremiah 31, which is confirmed by the reference to the nation's obedience (cf. Jer 31:33–34) and the affirmation that they will be his people and he will be their God (cf. 31:33).

This observation that Israel's restoration is closely linked with the Messiah's presence as king and the effecting of the new covenant has significant implications for Ezekiel 38–39. In fact the concluding paragraph to the Gog passage (39:25–29) overflows with restoration terminology: "Now I shall *restore the fortunes* of Jacob, and *have mercy* on the whole house of Israel; and I shall be jealous for my holy name. And they shall forget their disgrace and all their treachery which they have perpetrated against me, when they *live securely* on their own land with no one to make them afraid. When I *bring them back from the peoples* and *gather them from the lands* of their enemies, then I shall be sanctified through them in the sight of the many nations. Then *they will know that I am the Lord* their God because I *made them go into exile* among the nations, and then *gathered them again* to their own land; and I will leave none of them there any longer. And I will not hide my face from them any longer, for I shall have *poured out my Spirit* on the house of Israel" (italics mine).

Along with the fulfillment we notice that Israel will know that God is the Lord and will have received the outpouring of his Spirit. Based on a comparative study of all the restoration passages, the time of this fulfillment is certainly after the second coming of Christ and the fulfillment of the new covenant with Israel.[30] Furthermore the references to "live securely" (*bĕsîbtām ... lābeṭaḥ*) and "gather them from the lands" (*qibbaṣtî ʾōtām mēʾarṣôt*) in this concluding paragraph are fundamental clues to dating the Gog invasion in Ezekiel 38–39. It is said to be after Israel's regathering: "After many days you will be summoned; in the latter years you will come into the land that is restored from the sword, whose inhabitants have been gathered from many nations (*mĕqubbeṣet mēʿammîm rabbîm*) to the mountains of Israel" (38:8).[31] Furthermore, three times in chap. 38 the invasion is said to be while Israel is "living securely," a description of messianic security after Israel's

[30] The temporal statements in 38:8, 16 should be observed. Alexander correctly observes: "The phrase *bᵉʾaḥărît hayyāmîm* ('in days to come,' v. 16) tends to fix this invasion at the end times, for this phrase was normally used in reference to Israel's final restoration to the messianic kingdom and Messiah's reign (cf. Gen 49:1; Isa 2:2; Jer 23:20; 30:24; Hos 3:5; Mic 4:1)" ("Ezekiel" 932).

[31] A reference to the regathering of Israel is made again in Ezek 38:12, although *ʿsp* is used rather than *qbṣ* (the terms are synonyms).

restoration.[32] It would be most unnatural not to connect these references to Israel's "regathering" and "living securely" to the same terms found in the concluding paragraph of 39:25–29.[33] Since the latter is a strong restoration passage, this becomes a compelling argument for the position that the invasion of Gog is after the second coming when Israel as a nation has been brought under the new covenant and has experienced the outpouring of God's Spirit (cf. Jer 31:31–34). When Jesus returns, he will regather Israel in order to cleanse her and give her a "circumcised heart" (Ezek 36:24–28), after which the nation will dwell securely in the land under Messiah's righteous rule.

The problem in taking this approach—namely, the theme of Israel's restoration—to locate the invasion of Gog chronologically is that it drives us to the conclusion that the battle takes place after the second coming of Christ. For those who are satisfied that the battle has been fulfilled historically or who prefer to spiritualize the meaning, such a suggestion may not even be taken seriously. To make the issue more pointed, how can such a conclusion be reconciled with what we are taught elsewhere about the reign of peace in the millennium? Isaiah 2:4, for instance, declares: "And they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword

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[32] Alexander ("Ezekiel" 932) concurs that this phrase looks to the messianic period of Messiah's protection: "This is seen in the context of these night messages (cf. 34:25–29) as well as in other prophetic oracles concerning the end times and the Davidic, messianic kingdom (28:26; cf. Jer 23:6; 33:16; Zech 14:11)." In Hoehner's analysis of Ezekiel 38–39, chap. 38 supposedly refers to events in the middle of the tribulation and chap. 39 to events at the end of the tribulation ("Progression"). In order to sustain his argument he is forced to contend that *bṭḥ* in 38:8, 11, 14 is a "false security" rather than a true security (i.e. a messianic security after restoration). But there are at least three reasons from the near context why *bṭḥ* in Ezekiel 38 should be understood as a true security: (1) It commonly means this in the passages of Israel's restoration and has been specifically used this way in the previous context of Ezek 34:25, 27–28, (2) the previous chapter (Ezekiel 37) concluded with the idea of Israel being regathered, cleansed, restored and the Messiah ruling over her (cf. 37:24), and (3) *bṭḥ* is clearly used in the context of Ezekiel 38–39 itself to speak of the millennial state of peace and security that will exist when Israel is restored (see 39:25–29).

[33] Feinberg, however, views Ezek 39:25–29 as a subsequent event to 38:1–39:24. He states: "Verses 25–29 teach that the complete return of Israel will occur after the defeat of Gog and his confederates" (*Prophecy* 231). This suggestion fails to observe the continuity of terminology in these chapters, particularly the motifs of regathering and security. Critical scholars, on the other hand, question the notion of 39:25–29 even being an authentic section of the Gog prophecy. Ahroni, for instance, states: "It is apparent that the original Gog Apocalypse ended with 39:24, and it is widely recognized that the passage of 39:25–29, which ends this Prophecy, is a postscript, added to the original composition as a literary artifice to form a link between ch. 37 and ch. 40 of the Book of Ezekiel" ("Gog" 24). This accusation, however, has been adequately answered by D. I. Block ("Gog and the Pouring Out of the Spirit," *VT 37/3* [1987] 257-270). Block demonstrates that vv. 21–29 form a two-part epilogue to the Gog prophecy containing parallel chiastic units, each of which culminates with a reference to Yahweh's hiding his face. The three occurrences of modified forms of the recognition formula (vv. 22, 23, 28) serve to highlight the central thesis of the message that God will use the invasion of Gog to glorify himself by defending his people whom he has restored to covenant relationship and on whom he has poured out his Spirit.

against nation, and never again will they learn war." I would suggest that this seeming interpretive tension has spurred many a premillennialist to locate the battle of Gog and Magog in the tribulation so as to avoid the conflict that naturally arises by having it after the second coming. Rather than resolving the tension, however, I feel that this tendency to link the passage with the tribulation only results in a greater interpretive quagmire.

IV. Revelation 20 Reconsidered

Many a student of prophecy has lamented that the NT seems to say little if anything about a battle of the magnitude described in Ezekiel 38–39. Knowing that the tribulation with its battle of Armageddon is fraught with warfare, it seems easy enough to relegate the invasion by Gog to this same period. But though we may search in vain for any elaboration about such a battle, it is not true that the NT is totally silent about an invasion by Gog. In fact Rev 20:7–9 clearly makes reference to this: "And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them."

The passage has not gone unnoticed, especially with its clear reference to Gog and Magog. Should Ezekiel 38–39 be equated with this battle? Most premillennialists have been reluctant to think so, and admittedly there are some problems that need to be resolved.[34] Before dealing with them, however, let me make the point that having a battle after the onset of the millennium is not absurd, despite such statements as Isa 2:4. [35] It is obvious from Rev 20:7–9 that there will be another war after the second coming, whether or not this is one and the same with Ezekiel's vision of Gog.

1. Parallels between Ezekiel 38-39 and Rev 20:7-9. There are several statements in these passages that suggest these battles are one and the same. (1) The most obvious parallel is

[34] Others who have connected the Ezekiel 38–39 passage with Rev 20:7 ff. include H. L. Ellison (*Ezekiel: The Man and His Message* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956] 132) and A. B. Davidson (*The Book of Ezekiel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1892] 301). Alexander ("Ezekiel" 937) takes the novel position that Ezekiel 38–39 is fulfilled in both Rev 19:17–21 and 20:7–10. In doing so he attempts to establish a transition period between the conclusion of the tribulation and the millennium (Revelation 19 is a subsequent battle to Armageddon), trying to account for the allusion of the great feast (Ezek 39:17–20) in Rev 19:17–21. But the motif of Yahweh's slaughter is a broader theme (cf. Isa 34:5–8; Zeph 1:7; Jer 46:10; 50:26–27) that may not demand a connection of Ezek 39:17–20 with Rev 19:17–21.

[35] The best resolution of the problem is to say that Isa 2:4 gives us the general tenor of the millennium: War will cease. There will be one exception, however, and that is the final battle specifically recorded in Rev 20:7–9 (this is true whether or not one equates this with Ezekiel 38–39). War ceases because Satan is bound. His release after the thousand years leads to one last conflict.

that both passages refer to Gog and Magog. Revelation is obviously making reference to Ezekiel 38–39 in some way. If Revelation 20 is not the fulfillment, then we would have to say that Ezekiel 38–39 is prophetic of an eschatological battle (such as in the tribulation) and typical of an even more distant eschatological battle. (2) Both passages emphasize a huge number of soldiers in the conflict. Ezekiel 38:4 refers to "a great company," 38:6 to "all its troops—many peoples with you," and 38:15–16 to "a mighty army … like a cloud to cover the land." In Rev 20:8 we are told that "the number of them is like the sand of the seashore." (3) In both passages the battle is located in Israel. Ezekiel 38:8 specifies that Gog and his allies will "come into the land that is restored from the sword" (subsequently confirmed as Israel in 38:18). In Rev 20:9 reference to "the beloved city" (undoubtedly Jerusalem) would indicate that the battle focuses on Israel. (4) Finally, in both accounts the battle is supernaturally concluded by God with fire.[36] Ezekiel 39:6 states: "And I shall send fire upon Magog and those who inhabit the coastlands in safety; and they shall know that I am the Lord" (cf. 38:19, 22). In Rev 20:9 we are told that "fire came down from heaven and devoured them."

2. Consideration of objections. There are reasons, however, why premillennial interpreters have opted not to equate these two passages. The primary problem with linking the Ezekiel 38–39 passage with Revelation 20 (i.e. at the end of the millennium) is the time references found in Ezekiel 39. In 39:9, for instance, we are told that after the battle the inhabitants of Israel will make fires with the weapons for seven years. Furthermore, they will spend seven months in burying the dead (39:12). If this battle occurs at the end of the millennium and the eternal state immediately follows, how do we account for seven years of burning the weapons?

In response, I would like to point out that we do not know how much time remains after this battle before the new creation.[37] The Bible does not say that there will be a thousand years from the beginning of Christ's millennial rule until the eternal state. A closer look at Revelation 20 reveals that there are a thousand years from the beginning of Christ's millennial rule until the release of Satan. It does not tell how much time transpires between Satan's release and the eternal state. Following the thousand years, several things must take place before the eternal state: (1) Satan will be released for "a short time" (Rev 20:3), (2) Satan will have time to deceive the nations and move them to attack Israel, (3) Satan, the beast and the false prophet will be thrown into the lake of fire (20:10), and (4) all the unrighteous dead will be brought before the great white throne, judged by God and thrown into the lake of fire. A serious consideration of these factors would suggest

[36] The supernatural destruction of Gog described in Ezek 38:17–23 involves several elements of nature (e.g. earthquakes, disease, hailstones) but particularly highlights fire and brimstone (cf. 38:19, 22; 39:6).
[37] Walvoord claims: "The war in Revelation 20 is followed immediately by the destruction of the earth and the creation of the new heaven and new earth" (*Prophecy Knowledge* 191).

that it is not unreasonable that a period of several years will transpire during this time. In all honesty we do not know how much time there may be, but there is nothing in the text that would preclude a period of seven years in which the weapons of war could be burned. Another question, then, would be: Why should effort be made to burn the weapons if the eternal state follows shortly afterward? Perhaps, since this is the last act of war before the new creation, this is done in celebration that Satan (the perpetrator of all wars) is forever removed and war will never again plague humanity.

Some of the minor objections to linking Ezekiel 38–39 with Revelation 20 are adequately answered by Ralph Alexander.[38] For example, one criticism of this view is that Gog represents a northern coalition in Ezekiel, whereas the invading army of Revelation 20 comes from the four corners of the earth. A closer look at Ezek 38:5–6, however, shows that Gog brings with him nations from every point of the compass, not just from the north. Another criticism is that Rev 20:9 states that the invading army encompasses "the beloved city" (i.e., Jerusalem), whereas Ezekiel makes no reference to an attack on Jerusalem. But this is not necessarily a contradiction. Ezekiel's reference to Gog invading the "mountains of Israel" (38:8) could certainly include Jerusalem. The account in Rev 20:7–9 is only a cursory summarization of this battle, not a detailed description. Therefore, we must be careful about arguments from silence. [39]

A more notable objection to viewing Ezekiel 38–39 after the millennium concerns the effect that the battle will have upon Israel in her relationship to God. Charles H. Dyer states:

> The effect on the people is different. In Ezekiel the battle is the catalyst God will use to draw Israel to Himself (cf. Ezek. 39:7, 22–29) and to end her captivity. But the battle in Revelation 20 will occur after Israel has been faithful to her God and has enjoyed His blessings for 1, 000 years.[40]

In my opinion, this objection is more incongruent with a tribulational view than with a view that places the battle after the millennium. Dyer goes on to affirm that the battle is most likely placed in the first three and one-half years of the seven-year period of the tribulation.[41] But how can that be reconciled with Ezek 39:22: "And the house of Israel will know that I am the Lord their God from that day onward"? Other passages suggest that Israel's recognition of Jesus as Messiah and her national conversion happen toward

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[38] Alexander, "Ezekiel" 940.

[39] This logic applies to such objections that Ezekiel makes no specific mention of "the instrumentality of Satan, nor of his being bound for a thousand years prior to this invasion" (Pentecost, *Things* 349-350).

[40] Dyer, "Ezekiel" 1300.

[41] Ibid.

the end of the tribulation (e.g., Zech 12:10; 13:8–9). In my opinion, Ezek 39:22 rules out an invasion of Gog in the first half of the tribulation. Furthermore 39:25 cannot be said to be true at this time: "Therefore thus says the Lord God, 'Now I shall restore the fortunes of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I shall be jealous for my holy name.'"[42] This is a reference to the fulfillment of the new covenant with Israel, which does not take place until the return of Christ.[43] There is yet another reason why the invasion of Gog is unlikely to be in the first half of the tribulation—namely, the divine purpose that the outcome will have on the Gentile nations. This is reflected for instance in Ezek 39:7: "And my holy name I shall make known in the midst of my people Israel; and I shall not let my holy name be profaned any more. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel" (cf. 38:16, 23; 39:21). How can this be said to be fulfilled in light of what we know about the remainder of the tribulation?

Hence it is most unlikely that this invasion takes place in the first half of the tribulation. I will even go a step further and argue that the invasion does not occur in the latter half of the tribulation either. Ezekiel 39:25 would preclude this, and so would the references to Israel "living securely" in the land (38:8, 11, 14).[44] Furthermore Israel is described in 38:8 as "the land that is restored from the sword" (cf. 38:11). This hardly makes for an accurate portrayal of Israel in the second half of the tribulation.

V. Conclusion

Ezekiel 38–39 describes a fierce invasion against the land of Israel led by Gog of the land of Magog. A common premillennial interpretation is that this invasion is led by Russia and her allies during the tribulation preceding the second coming of Christ. This is quite doubtful in light of the descriptions given in these chapters. Israel is said to have been restored from the sword and "living securely in the land." She has also been regathered from the nations. A study of God's plan of restoration for Israel, with its foundation in

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[42] Taylor concludes: "*I will restore the fortunes of Jacob* (RSV; not as in AV, RV) is a frequent phrase, almost a technical term, for the restoration of blessing upon a person or nation (*cf.* 16:53; 29:14; Jb. 42:10; Pss. 14:7; 85:1; 126:1; Am. 9:14, *etc.*)" (*Ezekiel* 249).

[43] The terminology of this verse is linked to the new covenant, for Jeremiah uses these expressions in the context of his announcement of the new covenant in chap. 31. In Ezek 39:25 God stipulates: "I shall restore the fortunes of Jacob" and "have mercy on the whole house of Israel." Similarly Jer 30:3 states: "I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel and Judah." He quickly follows this with an announcement of bringing them back to the land (which happens at the end of the tribulation). Later in Jer 30:18 we read: "I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob and have compassion on his dwelling places." These same expressions are found in Deut 30:3 as part of God's restoration plan for Israel at the time he gives the people a "circumcised heart."

[44] Israel will be severely persecuted during the latter half of the tribulation (cf. e.g. Dan 9:27; Matt 24:15–22).

Deuteronomy 30, helps to identify a corpus of restoration terminology associated with the effecting of the new covenant with Israel (cf. Ezek 39:25–29). In particular, the "regathering" of the people and the "pouring out" of God's Spirit are key aspects to Christ's return at the conclusion of the tribulation in preparation for the millennium. Therefore, this invasion is not during the tribulation period but sometime after the second coming of Christ.

Furthermore, the primary antagonist is most likely not Russia. The name "Rosh" (NASB) is best understood as the descriptive adjective "chief." The other proper names are linked with people groups in the territories above Israel. The stipulation that this invasion originates from the "remote parts of the north" does not demand any place so remotely north as Russia.

The thrust of my paper has been to argue the thesis that the OT has a significant corpus of material describing God's plan of restoration for Israel with distinctive terminology and that Ezekiel 38–39 is strongly cast in this terminology. An analysis of this material leads to the conclusion that Ezekiel 38–39 finds its fulfillment after the restoration of Israel and the second coming of Christ. This would not demand the conclusion that Rev 20:7–9 is the proper fulfillment, but since the details of the passage suggest a time after Israel's regathering when God has restored them through the new covenant the most plausible time of fulfillment is at the end of the millennium when Satan has been released and allowed to deceive the nations one final time to strike Israel.[45] The battle of Gog in Rev 20:8 ought to be more seriously considered as the proper fulfillment of Ezekiel 38–39. Objections to this view are not so determinative as to militate against it. Since Rev 20:7–9 is only a brief summary of this significant event, we should not expect detailed correlation of these passages.

Since there is a significant battle at the end of the millennium that John refers to as that of Gog and Magog, why should this not be the same as that in Ezekiel 38–39? One thing they share in common is that the attack is directed at Israel. This provides a fitting inclusio to Biblical history. In Gen 15:18–21 God binds himself by covenant to make a nation of Israel and give them this special land. When Satan is released at the end of the millennium, he makes one last desperate effort to defeat Israel, the apple of God's eye. If he can break God's promise to Israel, he will have defeated God's purposes and thereby won the final victory.

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[45] Keil (*Commentary* 180) concluded that the invasion of Ezekiel 38–39 was to be connected with that in Rev 20:7–9, though he spiritualizes the 1000-year period to essentially coincide with most of Church history (p. 414). For Keil, Gog of Magog represents the "last hostile phrase of world-power that will wage war on earth against the kingdom of God" (p. 433).

But the Word of God assures us this will never happen. God allows this final attempt to eternally demonstrate his own character (cf. Ezek 39:7, 21–24). Ezekiel's account makes us conscious of who God is — "the God who does not abandon Israel to her own devices because he is jealous for the holiness of his name, who remains true to his people because he remains true to his name."[46] God's promises to Israel are unshakable.[47]

[46] Zimmerli, *Commentary* 324.

[47] Tanner, J. P. (1996). "Rethinking Ezekiel's Invasion by Gog." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, *39*(1), 28–45.