

# Matthew

## Bible Study

### Gog/Magog War Matthew 24:9—28

One war that has the interest of most dispensational fundamentalists is the one found in Ezekiel 38—39. There is much disagreement on when the war will happen, how long it will take and who will partake in this war. People place this war in at least five time periods from pre-Rapture to post Millennium. A few see this war as an event in the past. The vast majority of people place this war either before or just after the Rapture, early in the Tribulation, at the middle of the Tribulation or at the end of the Tribulation. Some see it happening at the end of the Millennial Kingdom when Satan is released from the pit. Some people see two separate wars within the Ezekiel account. With so many divergent views of these events it's obvious that there is a good possibility for error when interpreting the meaning of scriptural passages.

Most people understand this war involves invaders swooping down from the north catching Israel by surprise then being decimated completely by God as He intervenes to save Israel. Most see Russia and surrounding Muslim nations playing a major part in this war.

#### Major events of Ezekiel 38—39

- Gog is from the land of Magog and will come out of the north to attack Israel (38:1, 14, 15; 39:2).
- God will cause Gog to come out against Israel while Israel is living in peace. (38:4, 8, 11, 14; 39:2).
- This war was prophesied that Gog would come against Israel (38:17).
- God will demonstrate His wrath and fury (38:18).
- God will send a great earthquake and all the world will shake at His presence (38:19, 20).
- They will kill their own people and experience pestilence and bloodshed (38:22).
- God's judgment includes torrential rain, hailstones, fire and brimstone (38:22).
- God will magnify Himself and make Himself known to the world (38:23; 39:7, 21, 22).
- They will fall on the mountains of Israel and birds and beasts will consume their flesh (39:4, 5, 17—20).
- It will take seven years for Israel to clean up and burn the weapons of war (39:9, 10).
- It will take seven months to bury all the bodies (39:12—16).
- This will mark the time when God stops hiding His face from Israel (39:23—25, 29).
- Israel will now be regathered and restored (39:25—29).
- God will pour out His spirit on the house of Israel (39:29).

#### Is Russia involved?

Most people believe that Russia is the driving force behind this attack on Israel. This is because of the nation called Rosh in Ezekiel 38:2. This Hebrew word can be interpreted as a proper noun or an adjective and different Bible versions reflect this. The King James, New International, Revised Standard and English Standard versions all understand this word is an adjective and thus treat it as a descriptor meaning head or chief. Other versions including the New American Standard, Amplified, Darby and World English Bible versions all treat this word as a proper noun and see Rosh as referring to a nation. It appears that most translations interpret this word to mean the chief ruler and not a nation called Rosh.

If the assumption is made that Rosh means country, it will need to be established that it is in reference to Russia. It appears that the Rosh people were spread out over a large area including modern day Turkey and parts of Russia. They even appear to have moved so far as India and China. With the Rosh people spread out so far it seems to be a stretch to say that Rosh refers to Russia. It more likely is a reference to Turkey. Many Bible scholars agree with this assessment including Charles Ryrie and Dr. Merrill F. Unger.

Many also make a connection to Russia from Ezekiel 38:15 that states the invaders will be coming from the far north. If you draw a line from Israel northward you will go through Turkey, the Black Sea, Crimea, Ukraine and then Russia. It seems quite plausible that the reference to the far north would be Russia. However, Ezekiel 38:6 also speaks of the uttermost parts of the north to being a people who reside in Turkey. The far north does not therefore need to mean Russia.

### **Commencement of the war**

Most people seem to believe that this war will begin shortly before or shortly after the Rapture. They are watching current events carefully and can see almost any event as a sign of the end times. When Russia invaded Crimea recently the fundamentalist sign-seekers went crazy since Crimea being directly north of Israel must certainly be a sign that the Rapture is quickly approaching. They have become very skillful at interpreting all current-day events in light of prophetic fulfillment. It's unfortunate that all this effort is going to waste since no prophecy concerning Israel is being fulfilled in this current Age of Grace. Once the Rapture occurs God will once again turn to Israel in light of her prophetic program as laid out in the Old Testament, the Gospels, the Hebrew epistles and Revelation.

I believe one of the biggest problems in putting this war before the Tribulation is that Israel must be in a perceived state of security. This would point to a time of peace that will happen shortly after the antichrist comes on the scene and signs a treaty with the many (Daniel 9:27). They will receive the antichrist as their Messiah after he gives them peace from their enemies and restores their sacrificial system after their temple is rebuilt. I believe the Gog/Magog invasion will break the seven-year peace treaty at the middle of the Tribulation.

### **Duration of the war**

Most people believe this will be a very quick war lasting mere days or even minutes. Once the countries come out against Israel to utterly destroy her, God strikes them dead. Bodies will litter the landscape for miles. It will take seven months to bury all the dead and purify the land. Birds and beast will help in the cleanup by eating the flesh helping to abate disease and stench from rotting corpses. The idea of a quick war comes from a casual reading of Ezekiel 38—39.

These chapters can also be read with the idea that these events cover several years. Prophetic writings often compress hundreds or even thousands of years into one or two sentences. For instance, Malachi 3:1 contains the promise of John the Baptist followed immediately by the Second Coming. We know now that over 2,000 years stand between the two events. Revelation 12:1—6 span over 6,000 years while Zechariah 9:9—10 spans the time from Christ's incarnation to His coronation. I believe Ezekiel 38—39 span a much greater time period than we would naturally understand by a quick reading spanning at least the last 3.5 years of the Tribulation. There are some who see this span of time but explain it by a war in the middle of the Tribulation followed by a war at the end of the Millennial Kingdom after Satan is released from the abyss.

### **Conclusion of the war**

The end of the war ends with God's fury and wrath demonstrated with an earthquake so great that all creatures and men on earth will feel it. Mountains will be thrown down, there will be pestilence, torrential rains, hailstones, fire and brimstone (Ezekiel 38:17—23). These things will also happen with the sixth trumpet (Revelation 9:18), which I believe will happen at the end of the Tribulation (see Matthew lesson 91). These things also match up with seal number 6 which I believe relates to the Second Coming of Christ (Revelation 6:12—17). Ezekiel 39:7 makes it clear that Christ is now the Holy One IN Israel and no longer the Holy One OF Israel. The phrase using "in" is only found once in the Bible while the phrase using "of" is found 31 times.

Other clues that this war concludes at the end of the Tribulation are found in Ezekiel 39:21—29. Here we find out that Israel will know God from that day onward. Israel will be restored and will live in complete security because God will bring them into the land and protect them (Isaiah 43:5—6; Jeremiah 29:14). God will no longer hide His face from Israel as He did during the Tribulation (Deuteronomy 33:18) and His Spirit will be poured out on the house of Israel (Ezekiel 36:27; 37:14; Isaiah 44:3). All these things place the end of the war after the Tribulation at the Second Coming as Israel is brought into the Kingdom.

This is a very brief overview of the God/Magog war. For a much thorough evaluation please refer to the book *Mideast Beast* by Joel Richardson.

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