

**EZEKIEL 38 AND 39**  
Part XXVII  
by Thomas Ice

As I continue defense of the pretribulational, post-rapture view of the timing of the Battle of Gog and Magog, I believe that the current situation that Israel finds herself in the middle of 2009 is very similar to that described in the Ezekiel passage, except for the statement in 38:11 that Israel will be “at rest” during the time when this invasion comes. The Hebrew participle *saqat* describes a people who are “quiet, undisturbed, and at rest.”<sup>i</sup> This term refers to quiet or rest from military conflict. This does not appear to be the current situation in Israel today. Just the opposite, the nation is in constant conflict with its enemies. Ron Rhodes, who agrees with this writer as to the timing of the invasion says, “The Hebrew word here carries the idea of being undisturbed or quieted. Israel may presently have a certain sense of security due to her strong military, but she is not at rest in the sense Ezekiel describes.”<sup>ii</sup> Since all views have problems, I currently don’t have an answer for this one, except to say that an event could happen after the rapture but before the tribulation in which Israel finds herself in just such a state.

Another argument that flows from the logic of this view would be that if this invasion took place before the tribulation and resulted in the destruction of Russia, Iran, their non-Arab Muslim cohorts it would go a long way to removing Islam as the threat that they now are. This would create a vacuum to which the Revived Roman anti-Christ would step.

Additionally, the tribulation begins with an attempt to invade Israel in which God intervenes on behalf of His people, so that God may set the stage for the events that will follow. The attempt by Gog at the beginning of the tribulation to wipe out Israel is thwarted, thus, by the end of the tribulation the Anti-Christ will have learned a lesson. One will need all the armies of the world in order to wipe out the nation of Israel because of God’s intervention and protection. However, at the second coming Christ Himself will intervene again, this time by personally returning at the second advent to protect the Jewish remnant that has converted to Christ at this point.

**MID-TRIBULATIONAL VIEW**

The second futurist view of the timing of the Gog and Magog invasion holds that it will occur somewhere in the middle of the seventieth week of Daniel commonly known as the tribulation. This is one of the most widely held views by those who see this event as still future to our day. Some who advocate this timing of the Gog and Magog invasion include: John F. Walvoord<sup>iii</sup>, Paul Benware<sup>iv</sup>, J. Dwight Pentecost<sup>v</sup>, Mark Hitchcock<sup>vi</sup>, and Hal Lindsey<sup>vii</sup>. If I did not hold that Gog’s campaign occurs some time between the rapture and the start of the tribulation, I would come down in favor of this view.

Some who hold this view believe that the Gog invasion will take place just before the mid-point of the tribulation, while others think it will occur shortly after the mid-point of the seventieth week of Daniel. Other advocates do not take a stand as to the precise time of the invasion, but just think that it will generally occur in the middle of the tribulation. Nevertheless, these views are usually grouped together as a single perspective.

**KING OF THE NORTH**

This view can become very complicated as advocates attempt to link the Ezekiel 38 and 39 prophecy with other passages like Daniel 11:40–45. Since the events of Daniel 11 clearly take place within the tribulation period and the King of the North (Dan. 11:40) is thought to be a reference to Ezekiel’s Gog, then this places the time of the invasion at the mid-point of the seven-year tribulation.<sup>viii</sup> The main problem with this view is that the King of the North is not the same as Ezekiel’s Gog.

The phrase “King of the North” is used seven times in the Old Testament, all are found in Daniel 11 (verses 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15, 40).<sup>ix</sup> Virtually all futurists believe that Daniel 11:1–35 was fulfilled in the past, primarily during the second century B.C. The king of the North and South in verses 1–35 clearly refer to the “conflict between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids (11:5-20). The Ptolemies who ruled over Egypt, were called the kings ‘of the South.’ The Seleucids, ruling over Syria, north of Israel, were called the kings ‘of the North.’”<sup>x</sup> The final use of King of the North is found in the future context of verse 40. John MacArthur says, “Here is the last great battle with the final army from the N retaliating against the attack of the final southern African power. Antichrist will not allow this without striking back and winning, defeating both as recorded in v. 41ff.”<sup>xi</sup> Thus, the King of the North is not likely the Gog led invasion of Israel from Ezekiel 38 and 39. The “king of the North” is just not the same expression as “from the remote parts of the north” (Ezek. 38:6), especially since the other six uses of “king of the North” clearly refer to Syria.

Further objections to linking these two passages are found in the great differences between the invasion of Ezekiel and the battle described in Daniel. Although both will take place “at the end time” (Dan. 11:40), the biblical text says, “the king of the South will collide with him and the king of the North will storm against him” (Dan. 11:40). This is a battle involving the kings of the North and South who “will enter countries, overflow them and pass through” (11:40). This does not sound like Gog who comes into Israel and is totally destroyed upon the mountains of Israel (Ezek. 39:4). The Daniel passage says they will fight in the land of Israel land then pass through and apparently go on to other countries. In fact, Israel is listed as one of the multiple countries invaded at this time (Dan. 11:41).

#### FURTHER OBJECTIONS

Arnold Fruchtenbaum lists other reasons against this view as follows:

*Second*, it is hard to see why God would intervene at this point on Israel’s behalf and then immediately allow the events of the second half of the Tribulation to commence, doing a great amount of damage to Israel. *Third*, . . . it is wrong to identify *the king of the north* of Daniel 11:40 with *Gog* of Ezekiel 38:1–39:16. Throughout the Book of Daniel references are made to *the king of the south* and *the king of the north*. Consistently, the former is applied to Egypt, including the reference in verse 40. The latter is consistently applied to Syria, except when the exponents of this view come to verse 40; then they ascribe the reference to Russia and so identify it with Ezekiel 38 and 39. However, context and consistency would demand that the reference apply to Syria. The invasion of Daniel 11:40 is distinct from the Ezekiel 38 and 39 invasion. It is inconsistent and faulty exegesis to make *the king of the north* throughout the Book of Daniel refer to Syria and yet make 11:40 be the one exception in order to connect it with the Russian invasion and put the latter at the middle of the

Tribulation. *Fourth*, this view fails to solve the problem of the seven months and seven years. This view would require that the seven months of burying take place during the second half of the Tribulation, a time when the Jews are in flight and are not able to bury their own dead, let alone those of the Russians. . . The state of the Jews in the middle of the Tribulation will not permit seven months of burial and building a new city, too. Regarding the seven years of burning, this view would require the Jews to be burning weapons during the second half of Tribulation, when Jews are fleeing out of the Land. They would also have to continue burning them for 3½ years into the Millennium, which is inconsistent with Messiah's cleansing of the Land and the renovation which results. The problems the Jews will face during the second half of the Tribulation would cause them to try to preserve and salvage these weapons rather than to burn them.<sup>xii</sup>

In other words, the primary basis for locating the timing of this battle in the middle of the tribulation is based upon linking the Daniel passage with the one in Ezekiel. However, since that link appears unreasonable there are no significant reasons from the Ezekiel text to support a mid-tribulational time.

**(To Be Continued . . .)**

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>i</sup> Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (London: Oxford, 1907), electronic edition.

<sup>ii</sup> Ron Rhodes, *Northern Storm Rising: Russia, Iran, and the Emerging End-Times Military Coalition Against Israel* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2008), p. 173.

<sup>iii</sup> John F. Walvoord, *The Nations in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), pp. 113–15.

<sup>iv</sup> Paul N. Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, Revised and Expanded (Chicago: Moody Press, 2006), pp. 310–12.

<sup>v</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), pp. 344–55.

<sup>vi</sup> Mark Hitchcock, *Iran The Coming Crisis: Radical Islam, Oil, And The Nuclear Threat* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2006, pp. 184–86, 202.

<sup>vii</sup> Hal Lindsey with C. C. Carlson, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), pp. 153–63.

<sup>viii</sup> See Hitchcock, *Iran The Coming Crisis*, p. 202; Lindsey, *Late Great*, pp. 157–60.

<sup>ix</sup> Based upon a search conducted by the computer program *Accordance*, version 8.1.3.

<sup>x</sup> John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), vol. 1, p. 1368.

<sup>xi</sup> John MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Word Publishers, 1997), Dan. 11:40.

<sup>xii</sup> (italics original) Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, Rev. ed. (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003), pp. 118–19.