

When God Ambushes Gog:

A Premillennial-Dispensational Argument for Setting the Gog-Magog Invasion

After the Full Regathering and Restoration of Israel in the First Quarter of the Millennium

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CONTENTS

Preconditions to Gog’s Invasion of Israel.....	2
Regathered and Restored	3
Ezek. 38 in the light of an overview of Ezekiel	4
Ezek. 38 in the Context of Ten Other Regather-Restore Passages in Ezekiel.....	8
In the Latter Days.....	12
Objection: Wars are Not Possible in the Millennium	15
Based on Isaiah 2:4 / Micah 4:3-4.....	15
Based on the Covenant of Peace in Ezek. 34:25-31 & 37:26-28	19
The Saved Would Not Support Gog’s Invasion.....	25
Messiah, King David, and Rulers of Gentiles Would not Allow It.....	29
Gog Would Only be Permitted to trample jerusalem during the time of the Gentiles	30
No Gogs and Magogs are allowed to attack during the Millennium.....	31
Objection: Archaic Wooden Weapons Indicate Catastrophe of Tribulation Rather Than utopian Paradise	35
Seven Months of Burning.....	38
Objection: Israel is Already Regathered and Restored	40
Ezekiel’s regatherings have not occurred yet.....	42
Israel is not secure and relaxed yet.....	44
Israel Does Not have Wealth Worth Plundering	46
Objection: Israel Repents and Believes After the Invasion	49
Objection: the Restoration Occurs After the Invasion	54
Objection: Russia Must Decrease so Antichrist May Increase	59
Conclusion	64
Bibliography	1

Ezekiel's warnings for the rebellious generation of Israelites are interwoven with fantastic news for future generations of Israelites. Despite being defiled, detestable, divorced, and dispersed, they will later be rescued, regathered, revived, remarried, and restored. Ezekiel makes it clear that Israel must be regathered and restored before Gog from Magog leads an axis of several covetous peoples to invade Israel and plunder her wealth. Ezekiel does not make it perfectly clear to which degree or percentage Israel must be regathered and restored, however. This ambiguity has allowed many interpreters to expect the invasion either before the Rapture of the Church, before the 7-year Tribulation period begins, and/or before the 3½-year Great Tribulation (Mt. 24:21) begins. Once the ambiguity is cleared away, Ezekiel clearly indicates that Gog and his allies will not invade Israel until she is fully rescued, regathered, revived, remarried, and restored. The regathering process has one phase that begins at the tail end of the Tribulation period and a second phase that coincides with the inception of the Millennial kingdom age. The restoration process begins at the beginning of the Millennium and is completed in the first few decades—or perhaps in the first two or three centuries—of the Millennium. After the restoration is mostly complete, God drags Gog and allies into an ambush and destroys them. This successful ambush should either be seen as the final step of restoration process and/or the final proof that the restoration process has been completed.

There are several formidable challenges to the early Millennial Gog invasion theory. Could Gog invade Israel when she is only 60% regathered and restored? Why does Ezekiel at first make it seem like Israel must be totally regathered and restored before Gog's invasion only to then make it seem like the restoration and Millennium can only begin after Gog's defeat? If the Millennium is populated only by servants of Messiah, how could Gog gain so many allies? If the Millennium is a period of total international peace and disarmament, how could an armed invasion occur? After the positive argument is made, attempts to answer these objections will be offered.

PRECONDITIONS TO GOG'S INVASION OF ISRAEL

Ezekiel 38 & 39 provides several details about the conditions that the people of Israel enjoy in the land of Israel before God lures Gog into his great ambush:

1. *Regathered*. The land of Israel is occupied by people who have been regathered
 - a. “gathered from many peoples upon the mountains of Israel” (38:8)
 - b. “the people who were gathered from the nations” (38:8, 12)
2. *Restored*. Israel has become very prosperous, restored
 - a. “have acquired livestock and goods” (38:12)
 - b. possess “silver and gold ... livestock and goods.” They have enviable amounts of portable wealth recognized as “plunder,” “spoil,” and “great spoil” (38:13)
 - c. positioned at the “center of the world” seemingly with peaceful trading partners near and far (38:13)
 - d. “restored from war” (38:8) (which may well refer to the Armageddon campaign)
 - e. “mountains of Israel, which had been a continual waste” (38:8)
 - f. “the waste places that are now inhabited” (38:12)
3. *Relaxed*. The inhabitants of Israel are unarmed, unafraid, and have no *visible* defenses
 - a. “Its people . . . now dwell securely, all of them” (38:8)
 - b. “against the land of unwalled villages. . . a quiet people who dwell securely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having no bars or gates. . . ’ (38:11)
 - c. “when my people Israel are dwelling securely” (38:14)
 - d. who are guarded by the LORD’s anger, jealousy, and blazing wrath (38:18-19)
4. *Rearmost*. The timing will be during the last dispensation of human history revealed to Ezekiel
 - a. “after many days . . . in the latter years” (38:8)
 - b. “in the latter days” (38:16)
 - c. the *last time* the LORD needs to prove himself to Israel & the nations (39:7, 8, 22)

REGATHERED AND RESTORED

The fact that Israel will be in a state of considerable prosperity and relaxed security before Gog and allies invade is our best clue for pinpointing the invasion on the prophetic timeline. Ron Rhodes starts his chapter on Gog's invasion of Israel saying, "Before I address this invasion in detail, I want to emphasize that a precondition for this end-times invasion is that Israel must be living in security and rest."¹ He is correct there but incorrect where he asserts that there are only two possible options for placing that state of peacefulness on the prophetic timeline. The first option Rhodes offers is that Israel is already sufficiently prosperous and secure; it is peaceful enough in the present time for Gog to invade today, soon, or before the Tribulation begins. The second option, which he prefers, is that Israel will be more secure in the first half of the Tribulation under the protection of the Antichrist.

A third option, which Rhodes does not mention, but which I recommend, is that Israel will only be truly regathered, prosperous, and secure under the protection of the God of Jacob in the Millennial kingdom age. The regathering, restoration, and relaxation will not be a matter of degrees or percentages but will be total. Ezekiel wrote of the state in binary—either Israel is completely regathered and restored or they are not. He seems to know nothing of partial regathering, partial prosperity, and partial security. Gog will plan to invade only after Israel is fully regathered, fully prosperous, and fully secure. The burden of the proof lies on interpreters who try to take a more liberal view that allows for partial fulfillment. God will draw Gog into his trap not in the first decade of that age but sometime in the first 10-300 years of that age.

¹ Ron Rhodes, *The End Times in Chronological Order* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2012), 73.

Since it is a dispensation characterized by international peace, and not of nations invading nations, some do not even consider the Millennial kingdom age to be an option worth considering at all. But since the invasion is prompted by and totally thwarted by the LORD himself, the failed invasion is more of vindication of his peace covenant than a violation thereof. To make the case for this, we will first look at Ezek. 38 in the light of the overarching flow of the book, look next at Ezek. 38 in the light of ten other passages in Ezekiel that describe the cluster of regather-restore events, and finally consider what “the latter days/years” is likely to mean. If a disciple were reading the book of Ezekiel for the first time, with no preconceptions and no bias, trying to do pure biblical theology with a strict focus on Ezekiel, without superimposing upon it attempts to do systematic theology from all the prophetic books of the Bible, he or she would naturally get the impression that Israel is in the totally regathered and restored state before Gog and allies invade.

EZEK. 38 IN THE LIGHT OF AN OVERVIEW OF EZEKIEL

We should interpret the regathering and restoration described in Ezek. 38 in the light of the entire book of Ezekiel. The book of Ezekiel is not just one long, sequentially ordered record of one revelation where the events of each chapter are ordered in a simple, straightforward, linear order. While Ezekiel consists of 48 distinct chapters, divided somewhat arbitrarily by a theologian in the 13th century, A.D., it may be better to divide it into the fourteen different records of separate revelatory episodes Ezekiel received over a period of twenty-two years. Gog’s invasion is described in the end of the thirteenth unit of revelation (Ezek. 38-29). The thirteenth unit (33:21-

39:29) may be categorized as “prophecies concerning the restoration of Israel.”² While the complexity of structure makes it challenging to reduce it to a simple outline with a simple flow, or into a tidy chiasmic pattern, there still remains a very simple and recognizable pattern of bad news for the immediate future and good news for the distant future.

The bad news is dominated by key words like abomination (found 44 times in the ESV translation), detestable (8 times), defiled (30), reproach (8), disgrace (4), desolate (31), wrath (30), anger (14), destroy (23), devour (13), scatter (26), disperse (7), against (99), and suffer (13). The good news of future hope for Israel is saturated with keywords like gather (18), rescue (3), find (2), search (5), atone (6), clean/cleanse (13), bless/blessing (3), restore (4), secure (11), and rebuilt (4). The invasion of Gog is set after the gathering, rescue, cleansing, restoring, and blessing. Whereas the successful invasions from the north by Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, and Romans would be part of the bad news, the thwarted invasion of Gog from the north should be taken as part of the good news.

The analogies the LORD had Ezekiel use are also helpful for seeing the parts delineated in the light of the whole. Israel is likened to is a dirty silver ore, comprised more of dross than metal, that must be refined by intense fire to produce the pure and precious possession. Although the analog is not perfect in its logic here, it could be argued that Gog will not be tempted to steal the God’s silver until after it has been refined, polished, and its bling is impossible to miss. The invasion happens in a time where Israel is wealthier than all of the other nations. A second analogy

² Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel’s Bible Commentary: The Book of Ezekiel – Volume 1: Exposition from a Messianic Jewish Perspective* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2024), 11, 22. Chapters 4-24 are about the fall of Judah in the near term, chapters 25-32 are prophecies concerning the gentile nations in the distant future, and 40-48 contains prophecies about Israel in the Messianic Kingdom with a New Temple.

is sheep that are scattered and lost which must be rescued, healed, fed, guided, and protected by the shepherd. Gog will not be tempted to raid the LORD's flock until they are well pastured, fat, and looking like easy targets. A third and most important analogy that runs through the book of Ezekiel is Israel as the LORD's wife.

In the time of Isaiah, Israel was separated from their husband but not yet divorced. By the time Jeremiah and Ezekiel wrote, Israel had broken the *conditional* marriage covenant so egregiously and incorrigibly (16:59) that they were divorced and headed towards destruction and dispersal.³ But the LORD will continue to honor the *unconditional* land covenant that he made with her in Moab. The blessings and curses associated with the Mosaic/Sinaitic covenant (Deut. 28) and the separate Land Covenant (Deut. 29-30) provide the background for what the LORD is saying through Ezekiel. Many Israelites would be scattered to many nations of the world, just as he had warned (Deut. 28:64; 30:1). Ezekiel echoed this judgment several times. Ezekiel's warnings use the word "scatter" twenty-six times and "disperse" seven times. While the diaspora of Jews throughout the world would happen partially through the actions of the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Greeks, it would happen mostly from the actions of the Romans against Israel between 66-136 A.D.

Although their conditional marriage covenant had become null and void, the LORD would continue to honor a separate, additional, unconditional covenant he had also made with Israel—the so-called Land covenant (Ezek. 16:60; Deut. 29-30). He had promised them that after they were scattered to the nations, if they repented sincerely, he would have mercy on them, gather them from the nations, bring them into the land of Israel, give them new hearts, give them the

³ Fruchtenbaum, *Ezekiel*, 270-279. Also Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2004), 569-585.

ability to obey, restore their fortunes, make them more numerous and prosperous than before, make them prosperous in all they do, make them and their cattle and their vegetation abundantly fruitful, ensure that they keep their land, and curse their enemies (Deut. 30:1-10). All of the yet unfulfilled prophecies in Ezekiel should be seen in this light. Ezek. 16 has an unmistakable echo with Deut. 30. He will “restore their fortunes” (Ezek. 16:53), return them to their former state (16:55), atone for them (16:63), and “establish for you an everlasting covenant” (16:60; c.f., Jer. 30-31). He will remarry Israel in a newer, better, lasting, unconditional covenant.

According to the Land Covenant, God will give them the land he promised the patriarchs. That necessarily entails some significant degree of regathering and restoration. The surprise is that the LORD cleans the woman, fixes her wayward heart, and offers her a new, eternal (i.e., unconditional and unbreakable) marriage covenant. The blessings he lavishes upon her are not commensurate with the terms of the old, broken covenant; they are exponentially greater. The restoration is not simply back to the levels of territory, wealth, and peace seen in the old days of Solomon; it is far greater than that. They are blessed beyond what we can imagine. And that is the Israel Gog will be tempted to invade.

Another pattern that flows through the warp and woof of Ezekiel is the relationship of God to the other nations. Israel had been chronically unfaithful with the gods of several other nations. As a punishment, God, as offended husband, would hand her over to the immediate nations to abuse her. The chief punishments would come from Assyria from the North and then Babylon from the North. Some of these nations would be punished later in turn. A few would be restored. Everything is reversed. The agents of wrath become objects of wrath. The object of wrath becomes the object of blessing. Part of Israel’s restoration would be the destruction or pacification of all the nations that had abused her through the millennia. After her restoration, somewhere in the first

decades or centuries of the 1,000-year Millennial Kingdom era, the nations outside of that first, adjacent, concentric circle of abusive nations, who had not taken a turn in abusing Israel in the past, and had not learned the hard way not to try to take advantage of the LORD's wife, will be lured into a trap not just by their own covetousness but by the LORD's purpose to teach both Israel and the nations that he is their protector and husband.

EZEK. 38 IN THE CONTEXT OF TEN OTHER REGATHER-RESTORE PASSAGES IN EZEKIEL

The state of Israel at the time when Gog decides to invade is described somewhat vaguely in Ezek. 38:8-14. If we confine ourselves to this small, vague description, we may have the sense that Israel has been regathered, restored, and blessed, but could be left to debate the degree of regatheredness and blessing they enjoy before Gog invades. If the regathering is complete, the Gog invasion must logically be placed after the Millennial kingdom begins. If the regathering is substantial, but not complete, at the time of Gog's invasion, we should set the invasion prior to the Millennium and to be expected either before or during the Tribulation period. Expanding the scope of investigation shows that the regathered-restored conditions described vaguely in 38:8-14 correspond to similar descriptions of the same regather-restore event in 11:17-21; 16:54-63; 20:33-42; 22:15-22; 24:13; 28:24-26; 34:10-31; 36:6-38; 37:1-28; and 39:25-29. These ten overlapping descriptions, nine of which precede chapter 38, may serve as clearer passages to make sense of the less clear passage. Taken together, the eleven regather-restore passages may be combined and summarized as follows: Regarding the regathering phase, it is not the Jews who gather themselves to Israel saying, "Israel sounds pleasant now. Let us purchase flights and check it out." Rather it is the LORD who does the seeking, searching, rescuing, and gathering. All Jews from all

nations who are brought not by ordinary, banal means but by acts of supernatural might (“with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm”).

Before they are gathered into the land of Israel, however, they are gathered into the “wilderness of the peoples” for judgment (20:33-38; c.f., 22:15-22, 24:13, 34:16-22). He purges their rebels, transgressors, and their evil leaders (the “fat sheep”).⁴ The last of the LORD’s wrath is poured out on them and satisfied. They have been dispersed and scattered to the nations and peoples. Arnold Fruchtenbaum persuasively places this regathering in time to the end of the Tribulation and Bozrah as the area.⁵ Less precisely, John Walvoord seems close in setting the “purging separation of the saved from the unsaved at the beginning of the Millennial kingdom and the regathering and planting of Israel in their ancient land.”⁶ While not identical, the two educated guesses are, for our purposes here, practically the same. Either way, the regathering that Ezekiel wrote about and Gog’s invasion of that regathered Israel should not be expected to happen until after the Tribulation has concluded and the Millennium has begun. This regathering to the wilderness of the peoples has not occurred yet.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum agrees in one way and disagrees in another. He agrees that, “It should be noted that it is a regathering out of wrath and a gathering for wrath.” But he thinks the wrath has already happened. He seems to believe the wrath specified was the Holocaust of 1941-1945, where over ten million Jews (over 60% of the world’s population of Jews) were murdered.⁷

⁴ C. H. Dyer “Ezekiel,” in J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures, Vol. 1*. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1295.

⁵ Fruchtenbaum, *Ezekiel*, 341-347. He integrates the mountains of Mt. 24:1-5, Rev. 12:6-14’s wilderness, Isa. 33:16’s stronghold of rocks, and Mic. 2:12 with Ezek. 20 to make this identification.

⁶ John F. Walvoord, *Every Prophecy of the Bible* (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1999), 169.

⁷ Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah*, 100.

It is a matter of debate whether this horrific regathering by the minions of Hitler's Reich fulfilled this totally, partially, or not at all. The Jews of the world have not yet been regathered by the LORD into the wilderness (which seems to be outside of Israel) for the final outpouring of wrath and judgment.

Through this final phase of judgment, wrath, and purification, the LORD then removes their uncleanness and iniquities, makes atonement for them, sprinkles them with clean water, cleanses them, saves them from backslidings, and improves them by giving them one heart/spirit that is inclined to follow the LORD. The righteous, repentant remnant of Jews are then regathered from the wilderness into the promised land. The LORD does not remarry his unfaithful ex-wife until she has been made clean and he has some guarantee that she will not stray like last time. The point of the Gog-led invasion is to prove to Israel and the nations that the LORD is with Israel, that they are his prized possession, and that they are in fact safe under his care.

After their purification, the gathering of Israel into Israel proceeds. The emphasis on the land as promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob suggests strongly that all of the land promised, from Egypt to the Euphrates, and not just the old borders under Solomon, is restored before Gog invades. Not only are all the Jews gathered from all nations, but it seems likely that Abraham and the righteous remnants of Abraham's children who passed on before will be given their resurrection bodies and they will join the generation that survived the Tribulation and entered the kingdom (Ezek. 37:12; c.f., Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2).

The regathering results in the LORD being their heavenly king and their shepherd with David as their earthly king. The LORD accepts them and accepts their worship and offerings (20:41-42), suggesting strongly that the Millennial Temple is in operation, the shekinah glory has returned

to the temple, and fire from heaven consumes the sacrifices. They become a holy, priestly nation to the rest of the world's nations. Despite Israel's breaking of their conditional marriage covenant with the LORD, he remembers and honors the unconditional covenant he made with them long ago to give them the land as their possession in perpetuity. He remarries Israel ("they shall be my people, and I will be their God") with a new and "everlasting covenant." He dwells with them as a husband with his wife, and as a shepherd dwells with his sheep. As the transcendent and infinite God cannot fit in the created heavens and earth, it is likely that his shekinah glory returns to the temple as part of the dwelling. The Holy Spirit will be dwelling in their hearts/spirits as part of the New Covenant.

He restores the fortunes of Israel. He restores them to their former state. Cities become inhabited. Even the wastelands become inhabitable and productive. He establishes the type of peace where none of their neighbors will be able to harm them or prey upon them (28:24-26; 34:22-31; 36:12-15), where the neighboring nations (which may well include the nations allied with Gog and Magog) are judged (28:26), where they dwell securely in perpetuity. They have nothing to fear from the other nations. "And I will not let you hear anymore the reproach of the nations, and you shall no longer bear the disgrace of the peoples and no longer cause your nation to stumble" (36:12-15). They will no longer be trampled on by the Gentiles. The Gentiles will be subservient to Israel and the God of Israel.

The peace established also is with nature. They no longer have to fear predators and parasites of the animal world. Vineyards will be planted and prosper. The LORD will "provide for them renowned plantations so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the reproach of the nations." (34:22-31). They will likely export food to other lands and prosper so much that they become the envy of Gog and some nations. Rain will fall

regularly and be a blessing such that “trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase . . . And I will provide for them renowned plantations so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land. . .” (34:25-31). God “will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant, that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations” (36:29). The wastelands that had a reputation for being desolate will “become like the garden of Eden” (36:35). He “will cause [Israel] to be inhabited as in your former times and will do more good to you than ever before” (36:11). The blessings they had under the reigns of David and Solomon will be not just restored but surpassed. The people of Israel multiply in numbers so greatly that even what were ruined cities and wastelands become cities filled with flocks of people.

This is the expanded glimpse Ezekiel gives of the Israel that Gog and the greedy nations will invade to plunder. This is the “the land that is restored . . . whose people were gathered . . . the quiet people who dwell securely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having no bars or gates. . . who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell at the center of the earth.” (38:7-13). Taken all together, the regathering of the world’s Jews to Israel is absolutely total in scope (39:28) and the restoration reaches an unprecedented level of magnitude. This is the people and land that Gog will invade.

IN THE LATTER DAYS

The second clue we have to the timing of Gog’s invasion is that it occurs “after many days . . . in the latter years” (38:8) and “in the latter days” (38:16). Ezekiel was not the first to use the phrase “the latter days.” Deut. 4:30 suggests that “the latter days” start after the Israelites, in the condition of Tribulation, “return to the LORD your God and obey his voice.” If so, the latter days begin not so much during the Tribulation, but at the tail end of the Tribulation and its intersection

with the beginning of the Millennium. Or, alternatively, it could be said that the latter days nearly begin in the last half of the Tribulation but really begin after the remnant of Israel repents and calls upon the name of the LORD. Joel foretold that the LORD will pour out his Spirit on all flesh in “the last days” (Joel 2:28), a phrase which echoes what the LORD said through Jeremiah and Ezekiel about giving the Israelites a new heart, a new spirit, even his own Spirit, as part of the New Covenant and Millennial kingdom age.

Jeremiah 23:20 and 30:24 both suggest that the “latter days” will be a time when Israel understands the intentions of God’s mind after his fierce anger has been fully poured out and his judgments executed. Jer. 48:47 tells of the restoration of Moab in the latter days. Jer. 49:39 foretells of the breaking, scattering, consumption, and restoration of Elam in the latter days. Assuming Elam is identical to the Persia that joins Gog in the invasion (Ezek. 38:5) the destruction and dispersal of Elam/Persia could happen in the first quarter of the Millennium, for example, and the restoration of Elam/Persia could occur in the second quarter of the Millennium. Arnold Fruchtenbaum comments that the judgment of Elam has not occurred yet and that their restoration (along with the restoration of Egypt, Moab, and Ammon) will occur during the Millennium.⁸

Assuming Ezekiel uses the phrase “in the latter days” (Ezek. 38:16) in the same way as Isaiah (Isa. 2:2; 9:1) and Micah (Mic. 4:1-5), we may add additional details to the picture Ezekiel was building on. This will be the era when the nations will go to Jerusalem to learn of the LORD, to receive judgment from the LORD as the judge between nations, and, seemingly as a result of his judgments between nations, the peoples of the earth stop training for war, stop invading one another, decommission their weapons and invest in agriculture instead (Isa. 2:2-4; Mic. 4:1-5). The

⁸ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel’s Bible Commentary: Jeremiah and Lamentations* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2023), 638-639.

animals that historically held predator roles and those that held the roles of prey will have harmony with one another (Isa. 11:6-9). The land will be blessed with regular rainfall, soil will be fertile, seeds will grow, livestock will have ample food, oxen and donkeys will be used for working the land (seemingly rather than mechanized tractors and combines), what was desert wasteland will have streams, the light of the moon will be as bright as the sun is now, the sun will shine seven times brighter than it does today, the LORD will heal the brokenness of his people, and will sift the nations with the sieve of destruction (Isa. 30:18-33). Humans will not die prematurely and will enjoy longer lives, like trees, enjoying the work of their hands, the fruit of their vineyards (Isa. 65:17-25), and the fruit of their fig trees (Mic. 4:4). Israel will receive a double blessing in their land (relative to the gentile nations in their lands), Israel will have Gentiles as their servants, and Israel will receive the wealth of the nations (Isa. 61:4-9). Ezekiel's glimpses of the regather-restore event harmonize perfectly with the glimpses given by Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, and others. Setting the Gog-led invasion of Israel into the Millennium gives the best option for explaining why Israel is so prosperous, peaceful, and enviable while her not-so-immediate neighbors attempt to plunder her.

OBJECTION: WARS ARE NOT POSSIBLE IN THE MILLENNIUM

There are several formidable variants of this objection.

BASED ON ISAIAH 2:4 / MICAH 4:3-4

Based on Isa. 2:4 and Mic. 4:3-4, the logic of this objection may be expressed as follows:

- 1) In the Millennial age, swords and weapons of war will not exist, standing armies who train for war will not exist, and it is not possible for any nation to raise the sword against any other nation. War is not a possibility.
- 2) The invasion of Israel by Gog and allies with lethal weapons, including swords, is an act of war, a raising of the sword, which cannot possibly happen in the Millennial age.
- 3) Therefore, the invasion of Israel by Gog cannot possibly happen at any time during the Millennium.

Andy Woods and John Walvoord agree that the beginning of the Millennium would make good sense based on the fact that Israel is truly at rest then. But they, along with Charles Dyer, dismiss this option because the Millennial kingdom will be a time of “universal peace and rest,” “no war,” no weapons, and no warriors. An armed invasion cannot be reconciled logically with that fact.⁹

Mark Hitchcock agrees:

The Bible mentions only two times in Israel’s future when she will be at peace. The first is a brief 3½-year period of peace during the first half of the seven-year Tribulation that will begin when the Antichrist makes a covenant or peace treaty with Israel (Daniel 9:27). The second time of peace for Israel will be when the Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus, returns to earth from heaven to destroy Israel’s enemies and inaugurate His 1000-year kingdom of peace and joy centered in Israel. Isaiah 2:4 explicitly states this will be a time of peace: “He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war.” Putting all these clues together, the only time that fits the scenario described in Ezekiel 38 is the first half of the tribulation period, after the church has been raptured to heaven, when Israel is living under the peace and protection of her covenant with Antichrist (see Daniel 9:27).¹⁰

⁹ Andy Woods, *The Middle East Meltdown: The Coming Islamic Invasion of Israel* (Taos, NM: Dispensational Publishing House, Inc., 2016), 22; John Walvoord, *The Nations in Prophecy*, 1967, cited in Woods; Charles Dyer, *Ezekiel*, p. 1,300, cited in Woods.

¹⁰ Hindson, Hitchcock, LaHaye, Eds. *The Harvest Handbook™ of Bible Prophecy: A Comprehensive Survey from the World's Foremost Experts*. (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2020), 138.

This is a formidable argument with strong logical appeal. Perhaps more than any other, this objection tends to strangle all millennial Gog invasion hypotheses in their cradle. But there could be logical loopholes that they have not yet considered.

First, the Millennium is going to last 1,000 years and we may expect considerable plot development in the sovereignty-and-freedom saga to happen in 1,000 years. Isa. 2:4 and Micah 4:3-4 both indicate that Messiah will judge between nations not just before but also during this dispensation. The peace that ensues and which characterizes this kingdom age is a result of those judgments. We may imagine this judgment to be a rather formal process where ambassadors from two countries have conflict appearing at the gates of Jerusalem to plead their cases against one another and for the appointed judges, which of course Messiah is the highest judge of the supreme court, to judge between the two. But we may also expect Messiah to judge between nations like he does throughout the book of Ezekiel—he may enter into judgment with them in the arena of combat on the world stage. We should be open to both types of judgment—one set in a courtroom and one set in the octagon, so to speak. Isa. 2 and Mic. 4 may be stating a general truth about either the overall or eventual state of international affairs in the Millennium. We need not think that all tools of war are converted into tools of agriculture and all international disputes are settled on day 1 of 365,250. Perhaps there is a learning process in the first decade, century, or quarter of the Millennium. Perhaps Messiah has to make some examples of a few nations, make a few judgments, and prove some points in the early part of the period before the disarmament and peace that characterizes the vast majority of the centuries and peoples is achieved.

Second, Isa. 2:3 and Mic. 4:2 indicate that the gentile nations of the millennial kingdom can, should, and will travel to Zion to learn from Messiah. Isa. 2:4 and Micah 4:3-4 may imply that the Gentiles of various nations should also travel to Zion to have Messiah judge between them

in the courtroom. But Zech. 14:17 opens the possibility that the gentile nations may not always go to Zion when they should during this age. If Egypt does not go to Jerusalem for the Festival of Succoth, for example, the LORD judges them such that they receive no rain. This dispensation is not one of moral perfection among the gentile nations. In a similar way, perhaps the peoples of Magog, Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, Beth-togarmah, Persia, Cush, and Put stop going to Zion to receive teaching and judgment in this age. Perhaps they should be sending peaceful, unarmed ambassadors to the judges in the supreme court of Jerusalem to complain about the perceived wealth inequality between Israel and their nations. But if they instead bypass the formal judgment system, and try to seek egalitarian justice on their own, they must face judgment in the octagon with the LORD Jesus Christ as their opponent. They lose. As a result, all the other gentile nations are encouraged by their negative example to seek learning and the judging of international disputes at the feet of Messiah in Zion.

Third, while it is true that no nation will be allowed to raise the sword against another nation in this dispensation, and while it may seem obviously true that Gog and allies are raising a sword against Israel, perhaps they are not technically raising the sword. They are not successful in their attempt to raise their swords. Ezekiel seems to indicate that none of the raiders' swords end up being used against Israelites. It seems they intend to use the sword against Israel but before they can, the LORD confuses the raiders, and they end up raising their swords against one another instead. Switching sword imagery to that of bow and arrows, Ezekiel seems to indicate the LORD knocks the bows out of the raiders hands before they nock an arrow, before they can get any shots off. Perhaps then this invasion, since it was nipped in the bud, does not technically violate the peace parameters.

Fourth, if we are going to do straight, rigorous biblical theology on the book of Ezekiel alone, to try to determine what Ezekiel said and meant, we should not be quick to superimpose what Isaiah/Micah wrote upon it. We should do biblical theology before systematic theology. And we should allow biblical theology to continually correct and refine our attempts at systematic theology. If we read Ezekiel in isolation, with blinders on as to other prophetic writings, we are left with an extremely strong case for an early-Millennial era invasion. Should we really allow one verse in Isaiah, which is repeated verbatim by Micah, to preclude what would be the otherwise obvious conclusion from even being considered?

Fifth, we should let Ezekiel speak for himself first and then attempt to integrate what Isa. 2 and Mic. 4 said into it. These are not the only passages which speak to the unprecedented peace of this future era. Ezekiel's talk of the peace covenant, which we will discuss next, seems to dovetail well with them and may help us understand them better. Ezekiel wrote after Isaiah. What Ezekiel wrote about the peace of this time may help expand and refine our understanding of what Isaiah and Micah wrote about what is presumably the same peace.

A similar objection based on Ezek. 34:25-31 & 37:26-28 may be raised:

- 1) As part of the full restoration of Israel in the Millennium, the LORD will give Israel an unconditional “covenant of peace” that ensures they will no longer be prey of any nation
- 2) Gog and allies attempt to prey upon Israel
- 3) Therefore, Gog cannot possibly attempt to prey upon Israel during the Millennium.

In the covenant of peace the LORD makes with Israel, the old predator-versus-prey dynamic is removed from both nature and from international relations. Even the wolves, lambs, lions, oxen, and sheep are all miraculously made to live in peace with one another (Isa. 65:25). Something similar happens with the nations. Above all, Israel will no longer be the prey of other predatory nations. It is a challenge to attempt to reconcile this with an invasion by Gog in the Millennium.

At the risk of splitting hairs, there could be a difference between an invasion of armed robbery and an invasion of armed colonization or extermination. Since the invaders come armed to plunder their wealth, rather than to destroy, perhaps they were allowed to invade and given no resistance. There is silence on the matter of whether Israel attempted to defend themselves or surrender. The silence suggests strongly that the invaders met no resistance as they invaded. There is the possibility that the armed invaders could invade and, meeting no resistance, not spill any Israeli blood, and then leave with their portable wealth. This invasion has the potential to be of a different type than the genocidal attack on the Jews in the battle of Armageddon and the genocidal attack in Rev. 20. Although it is admittedly a stretch, perhaps the parameters of millennial peace would allow for a non-bloody invasion, where swords are not unsheathed, while making unsheathing and bloodshed a line of demarcation.

More importantly, there may be a difference between invasions that lead to bloodshed of the prey and invasions that lead to the ambushing of the predators. It is ultimately God who is against

Gog in this scenario (Ezek. 38:2-3). Gog and allies do make it across the border into Israel. They also make it to some cities in Israel (39:9). It seems like the invaders may be inside of Israel long enough for other nations to question the invaders and their motives (38:13). So we may think the invasion was successful at first. But Ezekiel gives no hint of Gog and allies doing any actual harm to any Israelites. Will any Israelite blood be spilled? After the fire falls, the Israelites are busy burying the corpses *of the invaders* (39:11-16). There is no hint of lament or burials for Israelis. An argument from silence suggests zero casualties on the Israeli side. Perhaps, in a way, this was ultimately not an instance of one predatory nation raising the sword against a prey nation. Perhaps this invasion was an exception to the rule because it was ultimately an instance of God, who is not a nation, preying upon Gog and allies.

The invaders will be armed with lethal weapons and seem prepared to use them. But there is no indication that they ever get a chance to use them. Perhaps the invaders are destroyed by God the moment they nock an arrow. We need not assume that Gog and allies fired any arrows from their bows before their bows were knocked from their hands (39:3). There is no indication that any of their arrows ever pierce an Israelite; indeed, the opposite seems to be true (39:3; c.f., Isa. 54:10, 17). God unleashes his wrath on the invading coalition in the mountains of Israel. He starts it off with a massive earthquake that makes the mountains crumble, proceeds to confuse the invaders to attack one another, sends a plague upon them, sends torrential rains to wash some way, sends large hailstones to crush them, and finishes up with a bombardment of fire from heaven. Did gentile nations raise the sword against Israel? They tried. But God did not permit it. If they were violating some of the heavier laws of the millennial era, which seems likely, they received their due justice immediately. Perhaps the law is not so much that it is simply impossible that one nation may rise

against another nation, but rather that if a nation rises against another, they will receive an immediate judgment from the LORD.

Ultimately, the LORD does not allow an attack upon Israelis to occur. The only successful attacks are made by the LORD on the would-be attackers. The husband allows the mugger to think he might be able to steal his wife's purse. But in the end, the mugger does not harm the wife at all. The muggers lose their lives and any would-be muggers remaining are inclined not to make the same mistake. We need not take the Gog-led invasion as contrary to God's covenant of peace that he gave his people.

Ezek. 38:1-7 explains that it is God who sovereignly causes Gog from Magog to invade Israel. The mystery of free will and sovereignty is at play here. The LORD decides to lure him into an ambush. While Gog-Magog may be voluntarily choosing to invade and plunder Israel, it is the LORD who is luring him into an ambush. Rather than a surprise attack that sneaks up on the LORD, the LORD seems to initiate it. The description makes it clear that God is fully in control the whole time. The shepherd is not abandoning his flock to the wolves; he is luring the wolves towards the traps he has set to suit his own purposes. The wolves, jackals, hyenas, and leopards are allowed into the sheep pen. But no sheep are harmed or plundered. The invaders are routed early in the invasion and thus the terms of the peace covenant were not necessarily violated.

Gog's explicit motive is covetousness or greed. There is no clear indication of antisemitism or genocide implied. The LORD's motive is to vindicate his name—his name that adulterous Israel profaned—among the nations (38:16; 39:7). He will show them that Israel has changed from a profane, defiled object of reproach to a refined, holy, and precious treasure again. He will show the nations that Israel has been purified and redeemed. He will teach both Israel and the nations

important lessons about who he is by his mighty actions. Perhaps we should allow the LORD to have some latitude in the way he chooses to prove to Israel and the nations that Israel is truly safe under his care.

The earth during the Millennium will be a fulfillment of our prayer for “thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Despite this, it is not to be confused with heaven and it is not technically heaven on earth. The conditions are idyllic, much like the garden in Eden once was, and God himself rules the world like never before. But not all forms of evil have been destroyed or quarantined. The sons of Adam and Eve are still having children with fallen, adamic natures. As time passes by, many of the inhabitants of the millennial kingdom will not be true believers. And the Gentiles may not be given the Holy Spirit and a new heart like the Jews are. The New Covenant is for Israel, not for the Gentiles. Nations will continue to have friction and disputes with one another (Isa. 2:4). Perhaps they do not always succeed in taking their cases to the LORD for judgment. Nations are still going to make big mistakes and suffer punishment for them (Zech. 14:16-19). Boundaries will still be tested. People who do not have their resurrection bodies in this age could still die, albeit at a hundred years (Isa. 65:20). Not everyone has been made perfect and not all conditions are perfect. Micah 4:1-3 suggests that Messiah may have to deal with “strong nations far away” (like Magog and Persia perhaps) as part of the process of making an era where weapons are not manufactured and there are no standing armies training for war.

We may reason that it makes no sense for Gog, Magog, and company to voluntarily decide to attack Israel during the Millennium. In a way, it does not make good sense. But Ezekiel makes it clear that it is the LORD himself who drags Gog and company into this trap. The language is strong. God picks the fight with Gog, sets hooks into their jaws, and drags them into the arena of combat.

But if God makes the event happen, to showcase his glory, wisdom, and might, then it does not have to make good sense to our finite minds. His ways are higher than our ways and we have no counsel to give him. It makes sense, therefore, for this invasion to not make perfect sense.

Ezekiel also set expectations that part of the restoration process was to allow Israel to dwell there securely by executing judgment on “all of their neighbors” (28:25-26). Israel’s neighbors will be judged so thoroughly that “there shall be no more a brier to prick or a thorn to hurt them among all their neighbors” (:24). This could include judging Gog’s allies. Perhaps Magog and company, being from the uttermost north, are not technically in the list of Israel’s immediate neighbors and are therefore not yet in the zone Israel is safe from. Israel may at this point be safe from their immediate neighbors, the concentric ring on the map of adjacent nations, who were already judged and defanged, but Magog and company comes from the next concentric ring of nations that still needs to be judged, pacified, tamed, and taught. Or perhaps Gog-Magog makes the mistake of invading the fully regathered, fully restored, fully secure Israel; they invade the peaceful kingdom with little or no bloodshed, begin to take possession of the plunder they seek, and then are judged. The judgment on the coalition both proves that Israel was actually secure all along, guarded by their Shepherd. God pacifies the outer ring of non-adjacent neighbor nations, and teaches all of the nations of the world that Israel’s husband is not worth provoking.

None of this has been fulfilled yet and it needs to be fulfilled before Magog invades. Unlike the past invasions of Assyrians and Babylonians, the invasion of Magog (for plunder, not destruction) arguably does not lead any significant destruction of the Israeli people, destruction of their peace-covenant blessings, enslavement, or even any reproach from other nations. Nor does it detract from the glory of God nor fully violate this peace covenant.

Perhaps instead of concluding that it is impossible for any nation to make war on Israel in the Millennium, we should think that it is impossible for any nation to *successfully* make war on Israel. Also, we should leave room for the possibility that the Messiah may still judge and even destroy nations during the Millennium. He may destroy Persia/Elam, for example, during the early part of the Millennium, for example, and then he will restore them during the Millennium.

The thwarted invasion of Gog-Magog is not a step towards allowing the final phase of the restoration event but a proof to Israel and all the nations that the restoration event was successfully completed and Israel is finally and obviously safe from all would-be predators in the Millennial age. By the time Gog-Magog invades, Israel seems to be already living in a total and full state of regathering, restoration, and security under the covenants of peace and marriage in the land. The fact that Gog-Magog is allowed to enter into Israeli territory is not evidence to the contrary. In the final analysis, the husband did not allow the would-be raider to lay a hand on his wife. The shepherd did not allow the wolves to take any of the sheep or their pasture.

THE SAVED WOULD NOT SUPPORT GOG'S INVASION

John Walvoord pointed out that no one living in the early part of the Millennium would support or join Gog's invasion:

Some have suggested the war will take place at the beginning of the Millennium. This will be a time of peace which will follow the Second Coming. But all the unsaved are executed in the judgments at the Second Coming, and believers in Christ would not support a war against Israel and Jerusalem.¹¹

Thomas Constable agrees:

[View #6 8 is] It will happen at the beginning of the Millennium. This seems highly unlikely since all who enter the Millennium will be believers who have assisted the Jews during the Tribulation (Matt. 25:31-46). Moreover, all of the weapons of war will be destroyed at the beginning of the Millennium (Mic. 4:1-4).¹²

Their more formidable argument reasons that, before the Millennium begins, all of the rebels and unrighteous on earth will be removed from the earth through a series of judgments. The judgments during the Tribulation period and the war of Armageddon will remove most of them. And there are additional judgments for the Gentiles in the 75-day interval between the end of the Tribulation and the beginning of the Millennium (e.g., Joel 3:1-13; Mt. 25:31-46). The Jews that enter the Millennial kingdom will be those who survive the Tribulation, repented unto God, and called upon the name of the LORD Jesus as their savior and messiah. Walvoord contends that Gentiles who survive the Tribulation will not be admitted into the kingdom unless they are a repentant, believing, righteous remnant as well.

Of course there will be a variety of gentile nations/peoples in the Millennium kingdom but, at the outset, they will all be repentant, believing, righteous servants of God. If an individual such

¹¹ Walvoord, *Every Prophecy in the Bible*, 191

¹² Thomas Constable, "Constable's Notes on Ezekiel," 2024 Edition, 307-308.
<https://soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>

as Gog did arise in the early part of the Millennium, and asked the men of Magog, Meshech, Tubal, Persia, Cush, Put, Gomer, Beth-togarmah, and “many other peoples” to join him in invading Israel in an armed invasion to plunder Israel, none of those people would agree to join him. They would oppose him because they oppose moral evils like greed, covetousness, theft, armed robbery, armed invasions, and unjust wars. The greedy, the covetous, the swindlers, and those who cause strife have no inheritance in God’s kingdom (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:20-21; Eph. 5:5). Moreover, the idea of invading the land promised to God’s holy people and raising sword and bow against the LORD’s anointed King in Jerusalem would be unthinkable for the servants of the LORD in Magog, Persia, Cush, etc.

Walvoord’s logic seems sound so long as his first premise remains limited to first few years of the Millennium. In the natural course of things, Gog would surely not find support for invading Israel in the first days, first decade, or first generation of the Millennium. However, the Millennium is 1,000 years long. Much can happen in 1,000 years. Gog may invade in the first ten, fifty, 100, or even the first 300 years of the Millennium.

Alternatively, since it is God himself who compels Gog and allies to plot and invade, sovereignly drawing them into his trap as if by hooks he set in their jaws (3:4), we need not limit our options to what seems like the natural, predictable, logical response of rational humans. God seems to be setting Gog and allies up for catastrophic failures in ways that are reminiscent of what he did to Pharaoh, some Canaanite kings, and the Philistines of old (Exod. 4:21; 14:4,17; Josh. 11:20; Deut. 2:30; Jud. 14:4). With hooks in their jaws, hardened hearts, futile thinking, and darkened hearts, these fools ride to their destruction and God gains the glory. The unpredictability factor could allow the invasion to happen closer to the beginning of the first quarter of the Millennium than the end of the first quarter. Invading Israel at any point in the Millennium displays

a considerable degree of foolhardy insanity. As the text hints to it, we should expect some irrational decision making here on the part of Gog and allies. We should not dismiss a Millennial-era invasion as unlikely because it is an exercise of insane futility.

Walvoord's premise that "all the unsaved are executed in the judgments at the Second Coming" may be questioned. There may be a big difference between the execution of judgments against collective people groups and the execution of all individuals in those people groups. It is possible that Joel 3 may best be taken simply as God destroying the warriors from many nations allied with Antichrist who surround Jerusalem in the end of the Tribulation and engage in attempted genocide of the Jews in the wilderness of Bozrah soon after. If so, we need not expect all the unsaved Gentiles of the world to be executed by Messiah and only the saved to be allowed to inherit the kingdom.

But if Joel 3 is combined with Matthew 25, Walvoord may be right in saying that only the Gentiles who do well during Christ's judgments during the 75-day interval between the Tribulation and the Millennium will be ushered into the Kingdom. As Arnold Fruchtenbaum recommends:

Though a great many Gentiles will be killed through the course of the Tribulation, and Gentile armies will suffer slaughter in the Campaign of Armageddon, a number will still be living. All of these [Gentiles who survived the Tribulation and Armageddon] will now be gathered together for a judgment described in [Joel 3:1-3 and Matthew 25:31-33] . . . The very place where the Campaign of Armageddon will end is the same place where the Gentiles will be judged."¹³

Regardless of whether the judgment of Joel 3 applies only to the destruction of the predators in the Tribulation-Armageddon finale or if it applies to more formal courtroom-like judgments after Armageddon, it seems fair to suppose that only righteous Jews and righteous Gentiles will be

¹³ Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah*, 364.

allowed into the kingdom. Surviving the Tribulation and Armageddon judgments is not likely to be a sufficient reason to be welcomed into the kingdom.

If we grant the premise that the first generation of Gentiles admitted to the kingdom are all true believers and servants of Christ, we should not expect them to plunder the heart of Christ's earthly kingdom. However, we should keep in mind the fact that they have not been given their resurrection bodies at this point and, as such, have not been glorified, perfected, and saved from the presence of sin in the flesh. They will be fruitful and multiply all over the land of the earth. Their offspring will have the adamic nature and freedom of the will. God has no grandchildren. The second generation, third, fourth, and fifth generations may have lower and lower percentages of believing servants. They may not even know or care about the judgments executed so many decades or centuries earlier. They can suppress the knowledge of God and be given over to darkened hearts and futile thinking. It is also important to keep in mind that in the New Covenant, only the united houses of Israel and Judah are given a new heart/spirit (even God's Holy Spirit) that is able and inclined to follow God. Gentiles in Magog, Persia, and Cush have no portion in Israel's new covenant and there is no guarantee that they are given the new heart/spirit that guarantees that they can and will follow the LORD faithfully. We need not wait for the full 1,000 years to pass before we find sinful sons of Adam giving into covetousness and greed. It could happen in as few as one, two, three, or four generations.

If Jesus Christ is the king of kings of all the nations, ruling them all with a rod and judging between them, and David is the king of Israel, with the twelve apostles ruling the twelve tribes of Israel, and the resurrected saints of the Church age ruling the gentile nations,¹⁴ how could the conspiracy to invade begin and how could the invasion make it into Israel's mountains? Why would the Christian leaders of Magog, Persia, and Cush allow it to happen? And would not David, the man of war, rally troops and defend the borders? How could Gog and allies even cross the border successfully? The stories of what the LORD did to the nations that attacked Jerusalem at the end of the Tribulation in the valley of Megiddo should still be fresh in the memories, sagas, and songs of every nation in the beginning of the Millennium. It makes no sense for people to conspire to repeat the last great mistake that the Antichrist would make. Only the stupidest of the stupid would try to attack Israel in the Millennium.

While there is ample mystery and oddity here, we need not judge it to be logically contradictory. Suffice it to say that it was God himself who wanted to pick a fight with Gog and he wanted to prove a point by it. That alone makes what seems logically senseless sensible.

¹⁴ See chapter 18 ("The Government of the Messianic Kingdom") in Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah*, 387+.

GOG WOULD ONLY BE PERMITTED TO TRAMPLE JERUSALEM DURING THE TIME OF THE GENTILES

An argument could be made along these lines:

- 1) Jesus foretold “Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Lk. 21:24)
 - a. The present age and the Tribulation period are part of the times of the Gentiles
 - b. The Millennium age is NOT part of the times of the Gentiles
- 2) When Gog and allies invade Israel, they are trampling Israel/Jerusalem
- 3) Therefore, we should expect Gog to trample Israel in either the present age or in the Tribulation period, but not during the Millennium.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum lists many of the more noteworthy trappings of Israel that Jesus spoke of. The list starts with the first Jewish-Roman War (66-70 AD) which resulted in the destruction of the second temple, the death of over one million Jews, and considerable dispersion to the nations. It also includes the second Jewish-Roman war, the Diaspora Revolt (115-117 AD), where ~200,000 Jews were killed and the third Jewish-Roman war, the Bar Kochba Revolt (132-136 AD), where ~580,000 Jews were killed. Also included is the Muslim siege of Jerusalem (636 AD), the Crusades (1095-1291), WWI (1914), WWII (1939), the war for Jewish Independence (1948), the 6-Day war (1967), the Yom Kippur War (1973), Intifada 1 (1987), Intifada 2 (2000), Second Lebanon War (2006), and the upcoming war of Russia (whom he identifies as Magog) and allies against Israel (Ezek. 38-39).¹⁵

This makes good sense on a chart but it has one glaring and profound difference. Messiah does not allow Gog and Magog to trample Israel. They try. They get close. But they are prevented. This

¹⁵ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Book of Daniel* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2023), 536-537.

difference in attitudes of the Lord, and this difference of outcomes (the would-be trampers are trampled), proves that the Gog-led invasion happens during the Millennium and not before it.

It is true that the “times of the Gentiles” ends when the Tribulation ends. The Millennial kingdom age, which begins soon after the Tribulation ends, is, by contrast, the dispensation when the Gentiles tend to serve Israel (Isa. 61:4-9). It could be called the time of the Jews.

The fourth premise is flawed and therefore the conclusion is too. Gog and allies intend to trample Israel and attempt to do so. But the Lord does not allow their plan to succeed. Whereas a successful invasion of Israel would not be consonant with the spirit and law of the Millennial age, a failed invasion, thwarted by God and/or the Messiah, could be allowable in the millennial parameters.

NO GOGS AND MAGOGS ARE ALLOWED TO ATTACK DURING THE MILLENNIUM

Contributing greatly to the peace in this dispensation, the demons who have been deceiving the nations and driving most of our wars in the current and previous dispensations are imprisoned for the duration of the millennial dispensation. Satan is not unchained and allowed to spur the new Gog and Magog (presumed here not to be confused with the Gog and Magog of Ezekiel) to attack Jerusalem one last time until the 1,000-year dispensation has fully run its course (Rev. 20:1-10). If the second Gog and Magog (of Rev. 20) are not allowed to attack Israel during the end of Millennium, why should the first Gog and Magog (of Ezek. 38-39) be allowed to attack Israel early in the Millennium? This inconsistency is difficult to reconcile.

Each of the seven dispensations in human history function like different experiments with different conditions, different advantages and disadvantages, different amounts of divine revelation, and different responsibilities. One of the advantages in the Millennium is that the

demons are kept out of the equation for the full 1,000 years. The conditions the humans enjoy are more Eden-like than today. Knowledge of the LORD abounds. But freedom of the will still exists. As with all of the other six dispensations in human history, Adamic humanity proves to be disappointing. Even without demons coaxing humans, some humans in the Millennium will choose to reject the LORD Jesus Christ, try to play God, and try to build their own kingdoms. The Gog and Magog of Ezek. 38-39 seem to be entirely human agencies who are not deceived by or spurred on by demons. There Gog seems to be a human leader, Magog, Meschech, Tubal and others also seem to be human people groups. The LORD does sovereignly and indirectly make the invasion happen. And the people choose voluntarily to invade. Those who watch the drama unfold, whether they be angels in heaven or the other gentile nations who watch Gog and allies get dragged into God's ambush, will see God's wisdom, power, and might and, as a result, freely fear, adore, worship, and praise the LORD. If Gog, Magog, and allies are destroyed in the beginning of the Millennium period, the tone is set for lasting peace throughout the rest of the Millennium.

While the Gog and Magog of Rev. 20 are repeating the same mistake and suffering the same fate as the Gog and Magog of Ezek. 38-39, there are noteworthy differences. The Rev. 20 invasion is totally led by Satan and the demons who were released to have one last chance to try to change the fate of humanity. Instead of being just a few people groups, it seems to involve all of the people groups. The scope of the invasion seems much greater than Ezekiel's invasion. With some exceptions, humanity fared well during the Millennium. But as the Millennium closed, we proved to be abundantly ripe for deception and rebellion again. Satan is not allowed to cause nations to raise swords against nations during the Millennium, but he is allowed one last shot at it

immediately after the Millennium ends. After that, the problems of moral evil and natural evil are solved and, after the judgments, we enter our eternal states.¹⁶

The purpose of each invasion is entirely different. The Ezek. 38-39 invasion is a partial answer to moral evil, setting the tone early in the Millennium for the rest of the Millennium. Israel and all the nations learn that war is futile and lasting peace results. The Rev. 20 invasion is about bringing the drama of human history and demonic history timelines and experiments to their finales, permanently quarantining moral evil. The Ezekiel invasion is fitting for the beginning of the Millennium, and the Revelation invasion is fitting for the beginning of the transition to the eternal states.

At stake here is the question of whether adamic humanity only fails in each of the seven great dispensational free-will experiments because of the influence of Satan and the demons, or whether adamic humanity is just prone to fail on our own. Assuming seven dispensations, the demons are very active in misguiding humanity in six of the seven dispensations. As a result, the conclusion that “the Devil made me do it” is a plausible option to the unfallen angels that watch and every other created being that will someday bow the knee to the LORD Jesus Christ. But the Millennial kingdom dispensation is different. It is the only dispensation during which the demons, including Lucifer, are imprisoned and kept out of humanity’s business. Humanity does seem to fare better throughout the 1,000-year period with the demons chained. The age ends and some of the demons are unchained and let loose again. Under demonic influence, armies from seemingly all nations attack Jerusalem one last time, indicating that all of the gentile peoples have flunked the test again, and then all of the demons and their human pawns are quarantined in Gehenna for eternity future.

¹⁶ See Norman L. Geisler, “God, Evil, and Dispensations,” in Donald K. Campbell, Ed., *Walvoord: A Tribute* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1982), 95-112.

If we say that humanity achieves real peace and progress during the Millennial age, while only the Israelis have the Holy Spirit dwelling inside of them, while the Gentiles do not have the Holy Spirit, where most of the inhabitants of the Israeli and Gentile nations are not resurrected and perfected, while Jesus rules the nations and we have good government for a change, we are in danger of saying that adamic humanity is capable of righteousness so long as the demons are kept at bay. A perfectly peaceful Millennium proves that it was the demons that made us do all of our evil.

But for those of us with Augustinian and Calvinistic leanings regarding the fall of mankind and the adamic nature, we should expect something like a Gog-led invasion of Israel during the Millennium. This dispensation proves that freedom of the will in adamic humanity will fail the test even when there are no demons around to blame. Before we are perfected and glorified in our resurrection bodies, which removes the presence of sin from our flesh, we are prone to the type of self-centeredness associated with covetousness, greed, and the willingness to commit armed robbery. We also may be perfectly capable of invading not just a kingdom that has more than twice the blessing that our kingdoms have, but of rebelling against the Messiah's authority on earth. If we allow for Gog's invasion during the early part of the Millennium, we have one of seven great experiments that proves that adamic humanity fails the free-will test every time. The Millennial circumstances are about as perfect as can be—near perfect environment, no hunger (at least for Israel), ample food, near perfect governments, and no pesky demons. And the unbelieving, unregenerate, non-indwelled, non-resurrected, imperfect Gentiles prove that there is something wrong with our nature on the deepest level. We need to be saved not just from demons and the kingdom of darkness but from ourselves.

OBJECTION: ARCHAIC WOODEN WEAPONS INDICATE CATASTROPHE OF TRIBULATION RATHER THAN UTOPIAN PARADISE

McCall and Barrett point out the odd fact that Gog and allies are riding horses (instead of tanks and aircraft) and carrying primitive weapons like swords, bows and arrows, clubs, spears, shields, and bucklers (rather than firearms, grenades, and mortars). They interpret this list of weapons in a woodenly literal sense and they take this oddity to be a clue to the timing of Gog's invasion. Gog will invade sometime after human civilization has suffered some kind of catastrophe that sets all of the nations back to the ninth century, A.D., from an industrial, technological, and military standpoint. Mankind has lost the industrial might needed to manufacture guns, gun powder, tanks, rockets, helicopters, and other modern weapons systems. They expect this catastrophe to occur either before or during the Tribulation. And they expect Gog to invade on horses with wooden weapons either before or during the Tribulation.¹⁷

McCall and Barrett are to be applauded for daring to interpret the weapons literally as archaic weapons. When Gog invades, it will be on horses and they will be carrying literal bows and arrows, swords, and such. They will not be carrying Kalashnikov rifles made of steel with burnable wooden stocks. They may be prescient in anticipating catastrophes that ruin our industrial and technological might. Civilization as we know it is very fragile and a variety of dangers could accomplish this ruin—an exchange of nuclear missiles and bombs, EMP attacks, nuclear winter, volcanic eruptions, asteroid/meteorite bombardments, pole shift degrading earth's protective magnetic field followed by our sun emitting a Carrington event level ejection at us, etc. The

¹⁷ Tom McCall and Ed Barrett, *The Swords of Ezekiel: A Prophetic Fulfillment* (Bloomington, IN: LifeRich Publishing, 2024), all pages. By contrast, Chuck Missler imagined that “arrows” were not literal arrows but were symbols for various types of rocket-fuel powered missiles.

eruption of the Laki volcano in Iceland in 1783, for example, helped prolong the Little Ice Age of the 16th-19th centuries and produced conditions that lead to the French Revolution.

With the implications of $E=MC^2$ in mind, Albert Einstein famously said, “I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.” When the Bible depicts armies of the future riding horses and using archaic weapons, we need not deliteralize those passages or otherwise doubt them. We face many scenarios that could easily produce these conditions. That more than one of them may happen during the time of the Tribulation period is likely. And we may see one or more of them before the Tribulation begins.

McCall and Barrett could be correct. We could experience this and worse before, during, and immediately after the Tribulation. Perhaps cataclysm can give a partial explanation of the Great Reset for the human race that reduces us from technological and industrial adulthood to infancy. And perhaps life on the Eurasian steppe and/or the Caucus region becomes considerably harsher than it already is, while a few pockets of civilization closer to the equator could continue to produce crops and prosper.

But there is a more persuasive answer for Gog and allies invading on horses with archaic weapons. The human race and planet earth are going to both suffer greatly in the Tribulation. The LORD intervenes before everything and everyone is totally destroyed. But civilization as we know it will be largely destroyed. As the Millennium begins, those that survived the Tribulation and are allowed to enter the Millennial kingdom are tasked with rebuilding. Israel will rebuild ruins destroyed by war of course, just as Ezek. 38 says. The other peoples who populate the Millennial kingdom will similarly need to rebuild, be fruitful, and multiply. While Jesus does not solve all the problems of moral evil in this dispensation, there seems to be a greater restraint on moral evil

in general and far less natural evil than in previous generations. Things will improve quickly. Civilizations will build back quickly after the Great Reset of the Tribulation-Armageddon event. Instead of repairing the old weapons factories, and creating a new arms race, we will focus our technology and industry on food production.

The Millennium will be a time of unprecedented peace on earth and good will towards men. Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 indicate that the nations will learn about the LORD in Zion, that Jesus himself will judge disputes between nations. He will even “decide for (against?) strong nations far away” (Mic. 4:3), a phrase which could encompass the destruction he brings on Magog and allies. As a result of Messiah’s judging between nations, their swords have been beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. The detestable weapons industry disappears from the planet. There are no more AKs and ARs, bullets, grenades, and such being mass produced. We may presume that any enriched uranium and plutonium that may be inside of any remaining nuclear weapons will be removed and used for beneficial purposes—such as power generation. The nations will not train for war anymore and will not go to war with one another (Isa. 2:4; Mic. 4:3). These conditions in the rebuilt world fit well with Gog and allies having only archaic weapons. It would be impossible to arm armies with Kalashnikov rifles without factories. But factories are not needed to produce bows and arrows, spears, clubs, and swords. Simple wooden bows may be made quickly with a hatchet and drawknife. Composite recurve bows befitting modern Scythians may be made of wood, sinew, horn, and hide glue in a matter of months with stone-age or bronze-age technology.

When all the nations start to rebuild, it seems like the ideals for rebuilding change. Maybe humans do not build factories, super colliders, flying cars, metropolises, and megalopolises in the Millennium. Perhaps we spread out over the earth, like we were told to in Genesis (1:28; 9:1) and adopt a less hectic, more peaceful, agrarian-pastoral lifestyle again. Perhaps we use oxen and

donkeys to plow our fields again rather than tractors and combines. Perhaps we even chose to milk our cows, sheep, and goats by hand rather than use milking machines. There will be no “rat race” in this idyllic future. In the Millennial kingdom, it seems a man still has to work to eat. But it also seems like the work of his hands will be very satisfying. And there will be high degrees of satisfaction just in sitting in the shade of the grapevines and fig trees we tend (Mic. 4:3-4; Isa.65:21-23). It seems that the ideal lifestyle for humans, whether in the garden of Eden, Canaan’s old land of milk and honey, or in the future Millennium, life is about gardening, non-industrial farming, and the care of animals for milk/cheese and possibly meat. This idyllic, irenic type of life seems to fit better with the more utopian conditions Ezekiel paints for us. These are the conditions Israel and her invaders are enjoying when God ambushes Gog.

SEVEN MONTHS OF BURNING

Ezekiel reports that the wooden weapons and shields of the Gog’s axis of evil will be burned for seven years. Thomas Ice reasons, “It seems unlikely that the seven-year burning could lapse into the thousand-year kingdom period after our LORD’s second coming.” He seems to say this because of his agreement with Randal Price’s reasoning that, “While there is no reason why the burning of weapons for firewood could not continue into the Millennial Kingdom, since during

this time other weapons will be converted to peaceful and productive uses (Isaiah 2:4), the renewal of nature and increased productivity of this age. . . could argue against this necessity.”¹⁸

Arguing that the Gog-led invasion occurs well after the Tribulation and after the beginning of the 1,000-year Millennium period eliminates the problem of finding seven years of uninterrupted space on the prophetic timeline to shoehorn the invasion into. Seven fits into 1,000 most comfortably. And so it is not a matter of lapsing from the Tribulation period into the Millennium period.

As to the oddity of the idea of people in the Millennial age not needing to burn any wooden weapons due to the increased productivity of the land, we may grant that the land will be far more productive than it is now, with no shortage of vegetation and wood that could be harvested for burning, and we may also agree that there is no great need for these people to burn them. Ezek. 38:9-10 does not have an inherent disharmony with either of the granted propositions. It simply says that those who dwell in the cities will not have any need to make trips out of town into the fields or forests. This says nothing about how much wood they do or do not need to burn. Perhaps their cities are mainly powered by thorium salt reactors, solar power, or even by the shekinah glory of God. Perhaps the city dwellers have a relatively small need to burn any wood at all and that is part of the equation of why it takes so long to burn it all. The point is not that they need the wood to burn. The point is that they would not have to leave the city to get wood to burn if and when they needed it.

¹⁸ Randall Price “Unpublished Notes on the Prophecies of Ezekiel,” (2007) p. 34. Cited in Thomas Ice, “Ezekiel 38 and 39: Part XXX.” https://www.pre-trib.org/pretribfiles/pdfs/Ice-Ezekiel38_39-Part30.pdf. Accessed Dec. 21st, 2024.

OBJECTION: ISRAEL IS ALREADY REGATHERED AND RESTORED

One common objection to the argument that Gog invades Israel after she is totally regathered in the land and totally restored to and beyond her former state of blessing is the idea that Israel has already been sufficiently regathered and blessed. Some think that Israel's return to the land after their Babylonian captivity ended, in waves led by Zerubbabel (538 B.C.), Ezra (458 B.C.), and Nehemiah, the building of the second Jerusalem temple, and the independence they gained after the Maccabean revolt (167 B.C.) may satisfy the regather-restore promises of Ezekiel. Others suggest that Ezek. 38-39 was fully fulfilled by the invasion of Israel by the Seljuk Turks on horses in 1071 A.D. and their defeat by the soldiers of Christendom in the First Crusade (1096-1099 A.D.).

Others are so impressed with Israel's increase in territory, population, security, and prosperity between 1948 and 2025 A.D., that they judge the regather-restore preconditions necessary to foment the invasion of Israel led by Gog in Ezek. 38-39 are either already satisfied or soon will be in the relatively peaceful first half of the Tribulation period. Some see the reestablishment of Israel as a nation in 1948 as a miracle and the subsequent immigration of millions of Jews to Israel as a fulfillment of the Ezek. 36-37 prophecy about dry bones being reassembled and clothed with flesh and given breath. The Ezek. 36-37 prophecy naturally segues to the Ezek. 38-39 prophecy about Gog's invasion. If Ezek. 36-37 was fulfilled between 1880 and 2000 A.D., we may expect Gog's invasion to occur any time after 2000 A.D.

It is understandable that some judge Israel to already be regathered. As of 2024, approximately 7.2 million of the 15.7 million Jews (46%) have voluntarily relocated from the

nations to the land of Israel. Also as of the end of 2024, Israel seems to be reclaiming parts of Gaza, the so-called West Bank, and parts of Syria and Lebanon. If this same ascendent trajectory continues at the current pace, it is not hard to imagine Israel being 75% regathered to a land that covers perhaps 75% of the land promised to the patriarchs in the second quarter of the 21st century. It is no longer difficult to imagine modern Israel daring to remove the Dome of the Rock from the temple mount, construct the third Jerusalem temple there, and start up a priestly liturgical service.¹⁹

It is also understandable that some judge Israel to be already restored—or mostly restored. Modern Israel has become relatively prosperous. They are exporting natural gas and fresh water to Jordan. They have done a remarkable job of irrigating wasteland and turning it into productive farmland. They export fruit and vegetables. For most practical purposes, it seems like modern Israel is already regathered and restored. Modern Israel seems relatively safe from the attacks of their immediate neighbors. They seem to have a peaceful relationship with the Sunnis and even support proxy wars of the Sunnis against the Shi'as. After taking Mount Hermon from Syria in 2024, Israel can now finally refuel their attack aircraft in long-range attacks on Iran. Israel has become dominant in the region. And although they are in constant danger of hypersonic missile strikes of Russian missiles launched from Iran and Yemen, they are so far able to prevent and absorb these attacks relatively well. Their cities are not surrounded by tall, thick protective walls of stone as they were in days of old. Gog and allies could invade today, tomorrow, or any time between now and the middle of a Tribulation time that could begin soon. If we can allow for the Ezek. 38 precondition to the Gog invasion of an already regathered and already restored state to

¹⁹ So argued Dr. Randall Price convincingly in his talk “Rebuilding the Temple as an End-Time Sign” at the Pre-Trib Study Group’s 33rd meeting in December 2024. https://www.pre-trib.org/images/2024_Conference/2024-Pre-Trib-Price-Rebuilding_Temple_as_an_End-Time_Sign-Slides.pdf

be a nearly complete state produced by a gradual, incremental, providential process that moves slowly for decades and then completes suddenly in the last days of the latter years—after Gog invades—then we may expect Gog to invade today, soon, before the Tribulation begins, or at least before the mid-point of the Tribulation.

EZEKIEL'S REGATHERINGS HAVE NOT OCCURRED YET

This approach seems to require a liberal and non-literal interpretation of the all eleven of Ezekiel's restore-regather passages. Ezekiel does not seem to indicate a gradual approach to the restoration. The regathering Ezekiel speaks of does have two phases, but both are presented as happening in relatively quick succession and neither has occurred yet. It is important to realize, as Arnold Fruchtenbaum points out, that there are two separate regatherings of Israel predicted in the Bible and the two should not be conflated:

Ezekiel . . . predicted two significant moments when the Jewish people would return to their homeland on a global scale. Initially there would be a return to the land in unbelief for judgment . . . the Tribulation (e.g., Ezek. 20:33-38; 22:17-22; Zeph. 2:1-2). Then there would be a second worldwide regathering in faith to prepare for blessings, specifically those of the Messianic Kingdom (e.g., Isa. 11:11-12). . . the regathering in unbelief was initiated by the Holocaust and has therefore already been fulfilled in part from today's perspective. The regathering in faith, on the other hand, remains a future event.²⁰

More precisely, the first phase of regathering of *all* of the world's Jews is, per Ezekiel, to “the wilderness” for judgment and refining. How all of the world's Jews are transported to the wilderness, we cannot speculate. But it seems to involve miraculous and mighty activity from the LORD. This regathering to the wilderness presumably happens quickly, not gradually over decades, and happens towards the end of the Tribulation after the Antichrist's armies surround Jerusalem and pursue the fleeing remnant towards Bozra/Petra. The first phase of regathering is not a

²⁰ Fruchtenbaum, *Ezekiel*, 341.

regathering to Israel. The second phase of regathering applies not to all of the Jews of the world but to the Jews who repented unto their estranged God and called upon Yeshua as their Messiah. The believing, righteous remnant will then be gathered into the promised land. The regathering process Ezekiel speaks of has not even begun as of the first quarter of the 21st century.

After the LORD has regathered, remarried, restored, and greatly blessed Israel can we expect Gog-Magog and company to invade. But, for the present era, Israel remains the LORD's ex-wife and remains an object of his wrath. He will continue to keep her alive amidst her enemies but guarantees her no peace or blessing yet. He has been and will continue to be "a sanctuary to them for a while in the countries where they have gone" (11:16).

In the prophecy of dry bones being reassembled, clothed with flesh, and being given breath/life, none of that has happened yet. The valley of dry bones is still dry and unassembled. At best the dry bones are partially assembled as of today. In so far as the impartation of breath/spirit to the lifeless corpses may be associated with spiritual regeneration, or with the impartation of the new heart/spirit, even God's own Holy Spirit, this has not happened yet. Currently less than 2% of Israel's population are professing Christians who believe Jesus is the Messiah, Savior, and LORD. And most of those professing Christians are Arab rather than Jewish. We should expect the dry bones to be assembled, clothed, and given life after the remnant of purified Israel repents and believes. We should expect the Israel of God to receive new spiritual life around the time their LORD enters into the New Covenant with them and gives them a newer, better spirit.

We should be open to the possibility that the inhabitants of modern Israel may be scattered to the nations again before they are regathered supernaturally to the wilderness for judgment. The degree of regathering that Israel has experienced so far may be a foretaste of their future

regathering but also may not be an actual fulfillment, much less a complete fulfillment, of any prediction in Ezekiel.

ISRAEL IS NOT SECURE AND RELAXED YET

Modern Israel is not safe and secure today. Their cities may not be protected by thick, tall stone walls, but their cities are protected from rockets, mortar shells, and artillery by their Iron Dome system, the successor to the protective wall. In 2024, Israel was relying on THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense System) from the USA to intercept missiles from Yemen. Several sections of Israel employ barricades, walls, gates, checkpoints, buffer zones, and armed security forces. If Mary and Joseph were to make their famous trek from Nazareth to Bethlehem today, they would have to pass through seven checkpoints. Israelis are not feeling very safe and will not be letting their guard down any time soon. It seems impossible to think that the Ezek. 38 preconditions of relaxed security have been adequately fulfilled today. It is a challenge to imagine Israel relaxing their security so quickly in the first 3.5 years of the Tribulation period as well.

In the not-too-distant future, the Antichrist will broker an effective peace agreement for Israel. They may then relax their guard, dismantle their walls and gates, and live unafraid. This reasoning leads some to set Gog's invasion at the mid-point of the Tribulation. The Tribulation begins when the peace treaty is signed. While it seems reasonable to think that Israel will enjoy more peace and prosperity during the first half of the Tribulation than they enjoy now, there are still problems with this theory. The window of opportunity for Gog to invade after the Antichrist's peace treaty is signed is a mere 3.5 years. Even if Israelis do feel safer under Antichrist's protection, they would not feel so secure as to start leaving all their doors unlocked, remove all their gates and walls, dismantle their Iron Dome system, fill their underground bunkers, disarm, and forget all of their terror in such a short window of time. Feeling unafraid and rebuilding

previously destroyed cities with no walls and gates would require a more thorough situation of pacification and a few decades to happen. The generation shell-shocked by war and terror would struggle to heal from their PTSD, without supernatural healing, and it would likely be the following generation that grows up in a care-free world that would be tempted to rebuild without walls, gates, and defensive systems. Thus, the timing of the Gog-led invasion fits better with the early part of the Millennium period than the early part of the Tribulation period.

Second, if Israel is under the Antichrist's protection and treaty, we should expect Antichrist and his ten horns to attack Gog and Gog's allies as they invade Israel. But there is no opposition mentioned. Also, if Antichrist watched Gog and allies get torched and pulverized as they attacked Israel in the first half of the Tribulation, the level of insanity needed for Antichrist to try to destroy Jerusalem and the Jews during the second half of the Tribulation is difficult to accept. The memory would be too fresh and powerful. But if we switch the sequence such that Antichrist and his armies are torched at the end of the Tribulation, and then we wait 10-300 years for a proper regathering and restoration of Israel, the invasion of Gog becomes more sensible.

Third, Ezekiel makes it clear that the Israelis feel safe and protected and fearless in the time of Gog's invasion because they are under the LORD's covenant of peace. He is their shepherd, they are his beloved flock of sheep, and this shepherd will protect them from wolves, hyenas, and leopards with his rod and his staff. They are his beloved wife and their husband will put any would-be robbers and rapists to death before they have a chance to lay a finger on her. Israel feels safe not because they have a false sense of security but because they are truly safe. When Gog does invade, it is clearly the LORD who routs them. It is not the Antichrist or the Satan who is attempting to take God's place. Unlike the Gog-Magog attack predicted in Rev. 20:8, which occurs after the Millennium concludes, and which is reminiscent of the futile invasion of Gog-Magog predicted in

Ezek. 38-39, Satan is not part of the Gog invasion in Ezek. 38-39. Satan prompts the Rev. 20 invasion and the evil intent to destroy propels it. God prompts the Ezek. 38 invasion. It seems like God is the one who puts the futile idea into Gog's mind. Greed and overconfidence drive the invasion from there. When Ezekiel's Gog invades, it will not be the funding and military support of the U.S.A. or the U.N. that Israel is relying on. Nor will it be the word of the Antichrist. Ezekiel makes it clear that they are guarded by the LORD's anger, jealousy, and blazing wrath (38:18-19). We find that type and level of protection of Israel in the Millennium. The degree of security Israel will have after they are totally restored is exponentially higher than they have today.

ISRAEL DOES NOT HAVE WEALTH WORTH PLUNDERING

Gog and allies clearly invade Israel to plunder their great wealth. What source of wealth would motivate multiple nations to invade and raid Israel? Ostensibly, the wealth they seek will be "silver and gold... livestock and goods." But many interpret this in a not-so-literal way to mean nothing more than portable wealth—like barrels of oil. It may include silver, gold, cattle, sheep, but, in their view, may mean the modern equivalents of those things so prized in ancient times. There has been a lot of speculation about what this attractive wealth will be. There is a mystery here because today there is not much worth invading for. Israel's current wealth is mainly in technology (software, cybersecurity, biotechnology, defense industry electronics), gem processing, agriculture (citrus fruits, vegetables, olives, grapes, almonds, dates, avocados), tourism, and pharmaceuticals. They are one of the world's top ten weapons manufacturers. Israel does not appear to have any significant oil deposits. Perhaps as Israel expands in this century, they will conquer a few minor oil fields in Syria and southern Iraq. Today those who want to invade Israel want to do so not to steal her wealth but to push the Jews into the sea. Their land has strategic value but it does not seem to have a wealth of natural resources.

Some have speculated that Israel is sitting on yet undiscovered riches of underground resources (gold, oil, etc.).²¹ These may be discovered later and make Israel the envy of Gog and Magog. Following Hal Lindsey, some expect the great mineral wealth of the Dead Sea to be in high demand someday. Salt may someday be worth its weight in gold again. But for now the Dead Sea area is just a wasteland. Unable to find anything more tempting, Chuck Missler implied that Gog will invade Israel to steal her fruit and vegetables.²² All of these are, for now, unconvincing. They are feasible, yet speculative and even improbable.

Taking Ezek. 38 very literally, McCall and Barrett see the wealth to be actual silver, gold, and livestock. To explain why Gog and allies would want to steal livestock, they expect a catastrophe that changes the earth's climate which makes the northern latitudes of the Eurasian steppe that Magog and Gomer and all live in dangerously low on protein and Israel's location a pocket of prime grazing territory for cattle and sheep.²³ McCall and Barrett are to be commended for taking the spoils literally. Gog and allies will in fact come to tote away Israel's portable wealth and the chief examples will be silver, gold, cattle, and sheep. These were once and will again be the main forms of wealth in the Millennium. Q2 of the 21st century will continue the trend where the G20 nations mostly use an inflationary fiat currency system that is not backed by gold or silver. In the Millennial kingdom, and not before then, it seems likely that the nations will return to a healthy monetary system based on gold and silver, and humanity will realize that cattle and sheep are among the greatest blessings God ever bequeathed to us.

²¹ Thomas McCall and Ed Barrett, *The Swords of Ezekiel: A Prophetic Fulfillment* (Bloomington, IN: LifeRich Publishing, 2024), 35-36.

²² Chuck Missler, *The Magog Invasion* (Palos Verdes, CA: Western Front, 1995), 156.

²³ McCall and Barrett, *The Swords of Ezekiel*, 39-43.

McCall and Barrett may be right in expecting profound levels of climatic dynamism between now and the end of the Tribulation. In a time of great earthquakes and great wars, of magnetic pole shifts inside the earth, solar maximum cycles, and other dangerous happenings throughout our solar system, we may expect some peoples to invade other peoples out of hunger. But Ezekiel mentions greed and covetousness, not hunger. Gog and his many allies have plenty of horses to transport troops. Instead of shoe-horning the Gog invasion into the Tribulation, it lends itself far better to an early Millennium model. Magog, Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, Bethogarma, Persia, and Put have many men and horses. They want to go to Israel to take their wealth and go back to their homes. They are not trying to move into a new homeland. In the Millennium, the curse on nature has been reversed and we should expect, for example, the peoples on the western and central Eurasian steppes to have ample grass for their horses and livestock. If they have large herds of horses, there is no reason they cannot also have large herds of cattle and sheep. If they are starving for protein and have no cattle, they can eat the horse flesh. But they do not have as much silver and gold.

Israel will become the wealthiest nation on the earth during the Millennium. It is then that the LORD will give them the double-blessings befitting the first-born son. After they are purified, repent, and are regathered, the LORD will give them all of the land he promised to Abraham—from some river in Egypt to the Euphrates River in modern Iraq. Israel will occupy what is now Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and part of Iraq—which may be why those nations are not mentioned in either the list of invaders or in the list of neighbors who question the invasion (39:13). Their cattle and sheep will multiply faster in the Millennium than they did in the days when Jacob worked for Laban. The grass will grow greener, more nutritious, and faster. All of the work the Israelites do will be blessed. In that era, Zion becomes the true center of the world in every respect—religious,

political, geographical, economic, tourism, etc. And it is in this period that the wealth of the nations will flow to Israel (Isa. 45:14; 60:5; 60:11; 61:6; Micah 4:13; Zech. 14:14). Prior to the Millennium, it makes little sense to steal from a land that has few natural resources. During the Tribulation period, Babylon would be the place to pillage. After the Millennium, however, Israel will be the world's epicenter of wealth. Placing Gog's invasion in the first quarter of the Millennium fulfills the preconditions better than the other placement options.

OBJECTION: ISRAEL REPENTS AND BELIEVES AFTER THE INVASION

Mark Hitchcock argued against an early Millennial Gog-invasion saying,

... the main obstacle is that it is after this invasion that Israel returns to the LORD according to Ezek 38:23; 39:6-7, 25-29. Adopting this view would place the repentance of Israel at the end of the 75-day transition period between Christ's second advent and the official beginning of the Millennium.²⁴

But we need not equate the moments where Israel comes to know something with greater certainty about God with her returning to God. Ezek. 38:23; 39:6-7, 25-29 all show Israel and the Gentile nations come to know that the God of Israel is the LORD after he defeats Gog and the allies, and/or after the LORD restores Israel. Although uncertain, perhaps Hitchcock equates the moment where Israel comes to know that their God is the LORD with the moment that they return to the LORD. If so, I would disagree with this and argue that Israel returned to their LORD at the end of the Tribulation, in the desperation of the campaign of Armageddon, in the wilderness of Bozrah, before the 75-day transition period begins, and before the Millennium begins. Israel repents/returns at that point and then the LORD Jesus returns to earth in the Second Coming to destroy the armies

²⁴ Mark Hitchcock, "The Battle of Gog and Magog," p.18, Pre-Trib Research Center <https://www.pre-trib.org/pretribfiles/pdfs/Hitchcock-TheBattleofGogandMag.pdf>

and allies of Antichrist. To place that in Ezekiel's events, the return of Israel to the LORD happens after he gathers all of the Israelites to the wilderness for judgment and refining, and before he gathers the repentant, believing, cleansed remnant to the land of Israel.

Israel comes to a profound and experiential knowledge of their God by the way he uses his might to supernaturally regather them from the nations, purge their rebels and fat shepherds, save them from extinction at the end of the Tribulation and war of Armageddon, regather them to their promised land, and blesses them abundantly in the land. They return to him before they acquire all of this knowledge. The cleansed ex-wife enters into her new everlasting marriage covenant with her husband and knows him in a unique way as the Millennium begins. She does not return to him more than once. But there is a process spread over time where Israel and the nations learn who the God of Israel is through a sequence of mighty, miraculous interventions. That last intervention Ezekiel mentions is the way Israel's husband lures her would-be muggers and rapists into an ambush and destroys them before they can harm her. After Gog and allies are destroyed, the point has been proven dramatically and the lessons have been learned the hard way.

This final intervention of the husband on behalf of his wife does not cause her to return to him. It causes Israel to know with certainty that their God is with them, cherishes them, and protects them. The LORD rescued them from the Antichrist's armies at the end of the Tribulation when they repented and returned to him. That was without the benefit of the new marriage covenant relationship and without the benefit of his new covenant of peace. After he gave them these two unconditional, irrevocable covenants, they had a theoretical knowledge of their security in the abstract. They believed it enough to rebuild their cities without defensive walls and gates. But it was not until the LORD trashes her assailants with shock and awe that she knows with a new level

of certainty—an empirically proven, indisputable, visible, memorable, actual display of his protection under the new covenants.

Second, it would not make good sense for God to intervene in the invasion by Gog *before* Israel returned/repented unto him. This may best be explained by contrasting God's deliverance from the genocidal armies of the Antichrist with two possible scenarios of God's deliverance from the greedy armies of Gog. We can all agree that it makes good sense for God to destroy the armies of Antichrist at the end of the Tribulation period immediately *after* Israel finally repents to him. At this time, perhaps as many as 2/3rds of the world's Jews have been killed by the Tribulation, the Antichrist's armies surrounded Jerusalem, the Jews fled into the wilderness to escape, they are harassed and pinned in by these armies that want to annihilate and genocide them. In their darkest hour, they call upon the name of the LORD, turning to him for deliverance, and he delivers them in spectacular fashion. He has been waiting a few thousand years for Israel to turn back to him. They finally do and he does not disappoint them. Even though they are his ex-wife, whom he sent away, he was waiting for that moment. He had been turning the heat up degree by degree to melt her impurities away. She returned to him and then he delivers her and begins the process of restoring her to her land, showering her with blessings, and living with her again as her husband and shepherd.

With that sensible intervention in mind, let us consider all of the pre-Tribulation, mid-Tribulation, pre-Armageddon, and pre-repentance scenarios of Gog invading Israel. If Gog invades Israel any time before the Antichrist's armies invade her (here presumed to be at the tail end of the Tribulation period), and, more importantly, any time before she returns to God, we should *not* expect God to intervene. Prior to her return to her God and her Messiah, Israel is still an object of his wrath and still undergoing her time of refining by fire, the time of Jacob's trouble. Gog is out

to merely to plunder her, not to annihilate, destroy, and genocide her. If Gog were trying to destroy Israel, it would make sense for God to destroy Gog (Ezek. 11:16). He is not going to let his ex-wife be murdered. But he would certainly let her be abused. In the logical flow and spirit of Deuteronomy, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah, God would likely encourage and use this type of invasion and occupation of the land as another form of discipline for the rebellious, adulterous, stiff-necked, unrepentant, stone-hearted nation. The trampling of Jerusalem during the times of the Gentiles is normal, expected, and ultimately good punishment that should help nudge Israel closer to repenting. It would be counter-productive for God to annihilate Gog before she repents.

Now consider the post-Tribulational, post-repentance, post-Armageddon scenario for Gog to invade Israel. If Gog and his armies invade Israel sometime in the first quarter of the Millennium, at least a few years or decades will have passed since Israel repented and called upon the name of the LORD. There is no reason for the LORD to allow her to be trampled on by the Gentiles anymore. This is no longer the times of the Gentiles. This is the dispensation where Israel is at the center of the world, the wealth of nations flows to her, and Gentiles serve her. At this point there is no need for any invaders from the north, south, east, and west to punish her anymore. That purpose was already satisfied years earlier. The fact that Gog wishes to invade merely to plunder her spoils, and God stops Gog from doing it, suggests strongly that the event is not in the times of the Gentiles but in the Millennial age

Third, the pericope of Ezek. 39:25-29, above which some Bible translations label “The LORD will Restore Israel” as its section heading, is a confusing twist in the narrative. It does make it seem like the restoration of Israel goes into high gear *after* God defeats Gog. However, since Ezekiel had been describing the restoration in ten pericopes prior to this final pericope about restoration, and since Israel was already described as either fully or mostly restored in Ezek. 38,

this Ezek. 39 pericope should be taken as an epilogue. It is the concluding paragraph of the thirteenth revelation to Ezekiel and it summarizes how things will be for Israel in the future now that the restoration is fully complete. It is not that the restoration begins after Gog is defeated. The defeat of Gog is the last step in the restoration process.

I regret not being unable to analyze the Hebrew text to see why 39:25-29 reads like it is in the future tense and seems unfulfilled after the defeat of Gog. In all of the English translations, it definitely reads as if the restoration is future. However, there are clues in the text that indicate what reads like a future tense makes more sense as a past tense. Ezek. 39:28 says “they will know” (future tense) “because I sent them into exile among the nations [past tense] and then gathered them [past tense] into their own land. I will not [future tense] leave any of them in exile any longer.” But it also seems abundantly clear that they have all already been gathered into their own land as of Ezek. 38:8, 12—before Gog invades. It makes better sense to see 39:25-29 as an epilogue and conclusion that says, in essence, the restoration was already fulfilled and the effects of it will set the stage for the rest of the Millennial age, than to say that Israel has to be regathered to their land before the Gog invasion and then conclude that they need to be regathered to their land a second time after the Gog invasion.

OBJECTION: THE RESTORATION OCCURS AFTER THE INVASION

Paying close attention to the sequence of events in Ezek. 38-39, John Walvoord argues that the regathering and restoration of Israel happens not before Gog's invasion but after it:

After the description of [Gog's] war in Ezekiel 38:1-39:24, a further prophecy is made concerning Israel's regathering to her land as a phase of her restoration. Accordingly, the conflict with [Gog] is seen in this end-time situation. . . . Ezekiel went on to describe how God would restore Israel: '. . . I will now bring Jacob back from captivity and will have compassion on all of the people of Israel. . . . When I have brought them back from the nations and have gathered them from the countries of their enemies. . . . I will gather them to their own land. . . . I will pour my Spirit on the house of Israel. . . .' (39:25-29)²⁵

Walvoord's reasoning seems to flow as follows:

- 1) The description of the Gog-Magog invasion is found in Ezek. 38:1-39:24
- 2) The promise to complete the final phase of the regathering and restoration of Israel is found after that, in Ezek. 39:25-29
- 3) Therefore, the Gog-Magog invasion event happens before the final phase of regathering and restoration of Israel

This argument could make some sense if we allow the degree of regathering and restoredness before Gog's invasion to be partial and incomplete. Perhaps, for example, Gog sees Israel 75% regathered and 75% blessed before he gives into the temptation to invade. They may not have the zenith of their blessings yet but they have enough to coax him to come for "great spoils." But perhaps the LORD waits for Gog and his Axis of evil nations to invade and be destroyed before he accelerates and finishes the process of bringing all of the Jews back to the land and giving them their full blessing.

²⁵ John F. Walvoord, *Major Bible Prophecies* (New York, NY: Harper Paperbacks, 1991), 388-389, 399-400. Walvoord supplies "Russia" instead of Gog here but I replaced Russia with Gog since Russia is a highly speculative and uncertain guess. Gog is the uninterpreted referent and I did not wish to give the Russian Gog theory any additional awareness or credence.

The first problem with this is that the microscopic focus on chapters 38-39 ignores the other nine passages between chapters 11 and 37 that describe the regather-restore event. The fact that there are eleven passages in Ezekiel that touch on this cluster of events spread over many years and multiple episodes of revelation suggests that we should not be too rigid in our attempts to sequence the events in a linear, chronological sequence. It seems more natural and normal to create a composite of all eleven passages, allow that composite to inform our singular picture of the regathering-restoring event, see it as completed before Ezek. 38, and take the ending of Ezek. 39 as a concluding summary. If we were to be rigid in our attempt to sequence the events as if what appears in the text first happens first in time and that which happens in the text last happens last in time, the scope should not be confined to Ezek. 38-39 but to the entire thirteenth episode of revelation in which it falls. The thirteenth revelation to Ezekiel, which starts in Ezek. 33:21 and ends with 39:29, contains several passages about the regathering-restoration. The rigid sequential-chronological approach applied here would make it seem like the LORD fully completed the regathering-restoration process before the Gogian invasion and then did it all over again after Gog was defeated. It seems better to take Ezek. 39:25-29 as a concluding summary of the entire thirteenth revelation. The destruction of Gog and allies would then serve as the final step of restoring and blessing Israel.

A second problem is that nothing in Ezekiel seems to suggest that the regather-restore event is stretched out over time incrementally. We do not have any clues as to how long it takes to regather, remarry, and restore Israel. Perhaps it takes a few months or a few years. There seems to be a multi-phase approach in the regathering. The Jews are gathered to the wilderness first for judgment and then are gathered into the land of Israel. There is a hint of a pause in the vision of the dry bones being assembled back into skeletons and clothed with flesh. After the bodies are assembled, it is

pointed out that there is still no breath or life in them (37:7-10). Although highly speculative, it could be that there is one phase where Israel is physically regathered to the land and then some time may pass before they are regenerated. No other indications to a multi-phased approach seem obvious in the text. It seems better to see Israel as fully regathered and restored both before and after Gog invades.

In a similar vein, some who pay close attention to the sequence of events in the book of Ezekiel, have argued that the Gog invasion must precede the beginning of the Millennium Ezek. 40-48 (which describe the Millennial Temple that is built at the beginning of the Millennium) occurs after Ezek. 38-39 (which describes the Gog's invasion and defeat).²⁶ The logic of this argument flows as follows:

- 1) The events in Ezekiel's revelation were given in sequential order in the text that corresponds with the chronological sequence the events will happen
- 2) Ezekiel 40-48 is a revelation of life in the Millennial Age with the Millennial Temple
- 3) Therefore, the events of Ezek. 38-39 cannot happen after the Millennial Age begins

The book of Ezekiel spans twenty-two years and contains fourteen separate episodes of revelation from God to Ezekiel. The Gog-Magog chapters (38-39) are in the thirteenth episode or unit of revelation, which spans Ezek. 33-39. The fourteenth and final revelatory unit is Ezek. 40-48. There was a 6 or 7-year gap between the last two revelations. The 14th revelation expands upon the temple/sanctuary that was likely implied in the earlier chapters of Ezekiel. The 14th revelation builds upon the previous thirteen revelations but is in some sense independent of them. It makes better sense in their light, but they all have timelines or sequences that may be independent of one

²⁶ I have forgotten where this objection originated.

another. There is no authoritative reason to insist that Ezek. 36-39 dovetails or segues into Ezek. 40-48.

There is an obvious difference between the first thirteen revelations and the fourteenth. The first thirteen fit together well as a cohesive whole and the last seems like an important postscript. Given the difference between 1-13 (i.e., chapters 1-39) and 14 (i.e., chapters 40-48), and given the fact that the 14th came perhaps seven years after the other 13, it is entirely possible that we should see Ezek. 1-39 as a complete unit and Ezek. 40-38 as a second volume. Ezekiel may have been two separate books in the past. Josephus offers that Ezekiel “left behind him in writing two books concerning these events.”²⁷ If so, the most likely division of the two volumes of Ezekiel, would be between chapters 1-39 and chapters 40-48. John Taylor offers:

These chapters [Ezek. 38-39] can be isolated from their context in much the same way as can the prophecies against the nations in chapters 25-32. They appear to interrupt the sequence of chapters 33-37 and 40-48, . . . How does an apocalyptic oracle of this order fit into such a pattern? That the difficulty was felt at an early stage in the transmission of the text of Ezekiel is witnessed to by the fact that the Scheide papyri place 38-39 immediately after 36. Their present position between 37 and 40 is due to the editorial work of the compiler . . . who assembled the material substantially in the form that has been handed down to us in the MT and Versions. The basic framework of this was chronological . . . and all of the undated oracles had to be fitted in where they could best be inserted. The exegete is therefore constantly having to ask himself why a certain chapter is put in its immediate context. It may be that, as 40-48 clearly hang together and are dated late (‘in the twenty-fifth year of our exile’, 40:1), this compels the editor to place them at the end of the whole book, and that this chronological consideration has outweighed the logical one; for one might well argue that a final overthrow of the powers of darkness should come after the dawning of the new age and not before it. The issue is an important one for those who endeavor to fit the picture of the Millennium into the biblical pattern of the last things. A further difficulty is raised if we assume that the book of Ezekiel is in reality two books, as was apparently held by Josephus in the first century AD. The most probable interpretation of this statement is that chapters 40-48 were regarded by Josephus as a separate appendix, which may have enjoyed an independent circulation in his day, and that chapters 1-39 were the main part of Ezekiel’s prophecy. Understood in this way, the oracles against Gog were a suitable conclusion to chapters 1-39. We incline to the view that the chapters 38 and 39

²⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*. Book X CHAPTER 1. <https://www.josephus.org/taofj10.zip>

are a separate composition, written in a different literary genre, which were added to 1-37 as a kind of postscript, and that 40-48 were a later appendix which build on to the concluding chapter of the original work, 1-37.²⁸

Regardless of whether Ezekiel was circulated as two volumes in the past or not, we should treat see Ezek. 1-39 as a complete unit, with its own finale (God's successful ambush of Gog) and concluding summary (39:25-29). We should also remember that Ezek. 40-38 came 6-7 years later as a wholly separate revelation and use it not for sequencing 38-39 but for elaborating on the temple that would obviously (obvious to a priest like Ezekiel) have been part of the restoration discussed between chapters 11 and 39.

²⁸ John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1969), 242.

In the attempt to make sense of the warp and woof of all of the end time events, John Walvoord believed that the power of Russia (which he unhesitatingly identifies as Magog), Iran, and their many antisemitic allies needs to be broken in the middle of the Tribulation period to prepare the chessboard for the invasion of Jerusalem by the Antichrist and his ten-nation confederacy at the end of the Tribulation.²⁹ Everything makes more sense if Russia (as Gog-Magog) is destroyed during the Tribulation rather than in the Millennium.

The first problem with this theory is that, while it could prove true that Antichrist cannot take power until Russia is out of the way, there may be a dozen or more scenarios which enable the little horn to take control of the ten horns. We need not limit the LORD's sovereign orchestration of the rise and fall of human kingdoms to naturalistic scenarios that fit with the way we expect geopolitics to play out in our century. The little horn will arguably take over the ten horns regardless of whether Russia is dominant, weak, or long destroyed.

Second, the theory that made so much sense to him in his 1950s-1990s pro-American, pro-Israel, Anti-Soviet, Anti-Communist perspective has lost much of its persuasive force since the breakup of the Soviet Union and the downgrading of Russia from an undisputed superpower to a formidable power. There is a danger of clinging to a theory about current events that seems so obviously cohesive and true at the time and superimposing it on a text like Ezek. 38-39 rather than

²⁹ Walvoord, *Major Bible Prophecies*, 400. Also see John F. Walvoord, *Armageddon, Oil, and the Middle East Crisis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974, 1990), 28.

performing cautious and rigorous exegesis on the text and letting it test the cherished theory. While Russia is still a possible candidate for future Magog, the case against it grows decade by decade.

There is ample room to doubt that Russia must be the Magog Ezekiel speaks of. Connecting Magog to the Scythians (per Josephus), the Scythians to the Pontic Steppes (per Herodotus), and connecting the Scythians to modern Russia involves multiple unwarranted leaps of unverifiable speculation. Magog, Tubal, Meschech, Gomer, and Beth-togarmah all fit more naturally in Asia Minor and Transcaucasia than north of the Dead Sea. Cultural, linguistic, and genetic studies prove that the eastern Slavs (Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians) are not descendants of the Pontic Scythians. Both groups descend from the same main haplogroup, but they belong to different subclaves. Linguistically and genetically, the Scythians and Sarmatians were mostly in the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European (Japheth?) tree while the Slavs were mostly in the Balto-Slavic branch. While the opinions of Josephus and Herodotus should be taken seriously by historians, it should be remembered that their educated guesses were quite fallible.

Geographically, it is Ukraine and not Russia that occupies most of the ground that the Pontic Scythians possessed, and Ukraine is presently at war with Russia. They are not simply, contrary to Vladimir Putin, just a vassal state of Russia. The hegemony enjoyed by Russia over the old Soviet Union of Walvoord's era that covered much of the former range of the ancient Scythians across the Eurasian steppe is hardly remembered today. There is little or no connection between Scythians and Russians and the connection between Magog and Scythia is a matter of blind faith in Josephus's fallible opinion anyway. The educated guesses by Gesenius that connect Ezekiel's Rosh to Russia seem highly speculative at best and unlikely at worst.

As of 2025, perhaps a better guess about who Magog, Tubal, and Meshech are would be the nation of Turkey and the nations of Turkestan (i.e., Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan). The Turkik peoples did take the Eurasian steppe from the Scythians, Saka, and Sarmatians with horses, bows, and arrows. They are not Indo-Iranian like the Scythians and Sarmatians were. But they did become the new Scythians in the past and could conceivably become the new Scythians or Magogians in the future. As the peoples of Turkestan recover from the population devastation they suffered under Soviet-Russian rule, they may well on their way to becoming a formidable Eurasian power that competes with Russia and China. Over 1.5 million Kazakh people died cruel and premature deaths from the process of Sovietization between 1921-1933 A.D. But, according to 2021 statistics, the women of Turkestan are having 3-4 children each while the women of Russia and China are bearing 1-2 children.³⁰ Russia and China may suffer natural population collapses and a confederation of Turkey (which would like to rebuild the Ottoman Empire and lead the world's Muslims again) and Turkestan (the Turkik relatives of the Ottoman Turks) may rise and become a great power in Eurasia. Modern Turkey occupies most of the land where conservative map makers would place the ancient Magog, Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, and Beth-togarmah. At the end of Q1 of the 21st century, Russia has had to focus so much on the Ukrainian proxy war that they are in decline. Russia is being cut off from the European energy market and new gas pipelines are being run through Turkey, which joined NATO out of fear of Russia, and Caucasia, which is no longer under Russian control. In Q2, we may well see Russia decrease and Turkey-Turkestan ascend.

³⁰ Katharina Bucholz, "The State of Global Fertility: Fertility rate by country in 2021 (births per woman)." Feb. 28, 2024. <https://www.statista.com/chart/16058/total-fertility-rate>.

Third, Walvoord may be shortsighted in dismissing Russia as non-Roman and anti-Roman. Roman included both Latin and Hellenistic halves of the Greco-Roman Empire. Arguably more European in heritage than Asian, Russia has a considerable inheritance from the Byzantine-Roman Empire. Russia attempted, after the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453, to become the Third Rome. The Russian title of Tzar/Czar was, of course, their version of the Roman title of Caesar. The Greek half of the Roman Empire was always more important than the Latin half. The majority of trade, wealth, and risk occurred there. That is why Emperor Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome (Latin) to Constantinople (Greek). The weaker Latin half of the Roman Empire fell to the invasion of the Germanic barbarian tribes in 476 A.D. while the stronger Greek half of the Empire absorbed (and was ultimately strengthened by) the invasion of Slavic barbarians. The Byzantine Roman Empire endured another 1,000 years and arguably has a greater claim to the Roman Empire than the Latin half. Under the auspices of the Byzantine Greco-Roman Empire, all of the Slavic peoples, including Russians and Ukrainians, became Romanized and Christianized.

It could be argued that the seventy years of Marxist-Leninism that Russia was subjected to between 1917 and 1986 AD eliminated the last traces of their Romanism. The Bolsheviks assassinated the entire Romanov (i.e., Roman) noble family. The Czar was ostensibly replaced by “the People.” The Russian empire was subjected to dechristianization and deromanization. Marxism was a futile, misguided, counterproductive, secular-humanistic attempt to create a counterfeit of the Millennial kingdom. It failed miserably. It was also arguably imposed upon the Russians by international revolutionaries in the time immediately after Russia was devastated by WWI. Many of the leading Bolsheviks and early Communists were atheist Jews who hated Russia’s Roman inheritance. The 1918 revolution was not a natural, grassroots uprising of the

proletariat class against the bourgeoisie class like Marx imagined. And it did not succeed in erasing all of Russia's Roman heritage. Russia certainly kept the Roman imperialism as they attempted to spread Marxist-Leninism all over the world, for example. So rather than being an obstacle to Antichrist's "Mediterranean Confederacy,"³¹ a phrase that seems to betray a pro-Latin bias and an anti-Slavic blind spot, Russia would be a fine candidate for one of the ten Roman kingdoms that surrenders to Antichrist. If so, eliminating Russia from the grand chessboard in the Gog invasion set before the mid-point of the Tribulation is unnecessary for the rise of Antichrist to world dominance. Russia may be one of Antichrist's most powerful horns.

Fourth, if Gog and Magog invade Israel in the first quarter of the Millennium, the chance that Magog will prove to be the Russians decreases. Russia may decline in the second quarter of the 21st century without any of the dynamism of the end times events. They could be one of the ten horns that Antichrist commands and could be destroyed in the battle of Armageddon. If not, they could wither and collapse in the last half of the Tribulation. And who can guess how they may fare in the judgments between the Tribulation and Millennium? We should not assume that they must be antisemitic during the Tribulation era because they tend to be antisemitic today. Regardless, there is a very strong possibility that Russia will have little or no dominance over Eurasia or Caucasia in the Millennial Kingdom. Perhaps other peoples who fare better in the judgments will inherit the land of Magog, wherever it is, and prove to be the new Magog. Or perhaps something in their Russian Orthodox Christian heritage, or from the future work of 144,000 Jewish evangelists during the Tribulation, will be a catalyst that helps the Russians fare well in the

³¹ Walvoord, *Armageddon, Oil, and the Middle East Crisis*, 28.

judgments. Perhaps then they could prove to be Magog or Rosh after all. Biblical theology should inform our systematic theology.

CONCLUSION

Gog invades Israel after she is already fully regathered to her land and fully restored with blessings that would be the envy of the other nations. The wealth of the nations is going to Zion and Gog becomes tempted to get some of that wealth back for himself. The peace that Israel enjoys is not a peace provided by the funding and backing of the U.S.A. Nor is it the short and shaky peace provided by Antichrist and his peace treaty. The peace and security they enjoy, which gives them the assurance to rebuild without walls or gates, is provided by the LORD himself. The fact that the invasion is unsuccessful does not violate but rather vindicates the LORD's peace covenant. The ten passages in Ezekiel about regathering-and-restoring suggest strongly that the regathered, remarried, and restored state Israel is in when Gog invades is full, complete, and total. The admittedly confusing epilogue at the end of Ezek. 39 makes it sound like the restoration is still future, but there are good reasons to believe that the restoration was completed before this time and the state achieved by it continues into the future for the remaining 700-900 years of the Millennium. God will drag Gog into his ambush in the "latter days/years," a time that consistently seems to refer to the Millennial rather than the Tribulation period.

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