

## **Toward the Fulfillment of the Gog and Magog Prophecy of Ezekiel 38–39**

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After the tragic fall of Jerusalem in 587/586 B.C., the exilic prophet Ezekiel presents in his book a unique prophecy concerning Gog from the land of Magog (Ezek 38–39)<sup>1</sup> that has stirred a bewildering number of different interpretations. His enigmatic prediction is certainly one of the most challenging texts of Scripture. Alexander in his article aptly writes: “The plethora of interpretations for this passage caution the student concerning dogmatism in his conclusion.”<sup>2</sup> The New Scofield Bible as well

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<sup>1</sup> The prophecy about Gog and Magog is mentioned only once in the Old Testament—Ezek 38–39; and this terminology is also directly employed once in the New Testament, namely, in Rev 20:8–9.

Numbers 24:7, according to the Samaritan Pentateuch and LXX, reads “from Gog” instead of “from Agag.” The same wording is in Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus. However, this does not mean that we can identify the Gog of Ezek 38–39 with Agag, because King Agag is in the book of Numbers chronologically situated to the time of Moses, hence he did not live sometime after the Babylonian exile. Chronologically, therefore, this identification does not fit into the time framework of the prophecy and needs to be ruled out. See also Amos 7:1 in the LXX for another occurrence of Gog (projected as the king of the locusts attacking Israel); a late LXX-manuscript 93 to Esth 3:1 and 9:24 names Haman, the enemy of Israel in the book of Esther, a “Gogite.” According to Codex Vaticanus, a name “Gog” is put instead of “Og” in Deut 3:1,13; 4:47.

The term Gog occurs in 1 Chr 5:4 as a proper name. The word Magog appears as a proper name in Gen 10:2 and 1 Chr 1:5 (besides Ezek 39:6, where it designates a people).

<sup>2</sup> Ralph H. Alexander: “A Fresh Look at Ezekiel 38 and 39,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 17/3 (1974): 157. For an insightful analysis of Hal Lindsey’s book *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), see T. Boersma, *Is the Bible a Jigsaw Puzzle . . . An Evaluation of Hal Lindsey’s Writings* (St. Catharines:

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as Hal Lindsey, for example, claim that Gog refers to Russia.<sup>3</sup> In this article, I do not discuss in depth the different popular or scholarly propositions about the identity of Gog or their opinions on the fulfillment/application of this prophecy,<sup>4</sup> but explore primarily a biblical historical-eschatological interpretation: namely, how Ezek 38–39 is deciphered in its immediate context<sup>5</sup> and by later biblical writers, especially

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Paideia, 1978), especially the eighth chapter, entitled “Ezekiel’s Prophecy about Gog” (106–125). Boersma raises some pertinent questions about Lindsey’s hermeneutics and exegesis of the Bible.

In our study we do not deal with the possibility that the biblical text of Gog and Magog has its origin in the Babylonian didactic poem known as the Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin. See M. C. Astour, “Ezekiel’s Prophecy of Gog and the Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95/4 (1976): 567–579. For a critique of Astour, see Tremper Longman, *Fictional Akkadian Autobiography: A Generic and Comparative Study* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1991), 125–126.

Neither do we deal with the literary or textual problems of Ezek 38–39, which are usually well-explained in commentaries.

<sup>3</sup> The New Scofield Bible ([New York: Oxford UP, 1967], 881) comments on Ezek 38:2: “The reference is to the powers in the north of Europe, headed by Russia.” Hal Lindsey states: “Russia is Gog” (48). However, *rosh* does not designate a country; it is rather a title.

<sup>4</sup> For a review of various theories about the identification of Gog and Magog, see a pertinent study of Sverre Bøe, *Gog and Magog: Ezekiel 38–39 as Pre-text for Revelation 19, 17–21 and 20, 7–10* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 14–16, 88–99. See also Alexander, 161–163; Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 432–436; J. Boehmer, “Wer ist Gog und Magog? Ein Beitrag zur Auslegung des Buches Ezechiel,” *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 40 (1897), 347–355; Boersma, 116–125; Ronald E. Clemens, *Ezekiel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 170–172; Simon Cohen, “Gog,” in *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, 1941), 5:10; A. J. Greig, “Gog and Magog,” *Ministry*, February 1978, 14–15; R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament: With a Comprehensive Review of Old Testament Studies and a Special Supplement on the Apocrypha* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 842–843; Margaret S. Odell, *Ezekiel*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 470; B. Otzen, “Gog; Magog,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 2:421–422; H. H. Rowley, *Relevance of Apocalyptic* (London, 1963), 35–37; D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic: 200 BC–AD 100* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 191–193; *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1955), 4:704–707; Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Foes from the Northern Frontier* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982); Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 25–48* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 299–302.

<sup>5</sup> For the discussion about the authorship of Ezek 38–39 and how this literary unit integrates many features and themes that characterize Ezekiel’s material, see especially Paul M. Joyce, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2007), 7–16, 213.

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in the book of Revelation. This study does not seek to be the last word on the topic, but rather to enhance discussion on its christological-ecclesiological-apocalyptic fulfillment.

#### The Literary Structure

The literary structure of the book of Ezekiel is well-developed and quite symmetrical, which helps to put into proper perspective the prophecy regarding Gog and his allies against Israel. The whole document with its 48 chapters can be divided into seven parts:<sup>6</sup>

- I. God judges Israel: the glory of the Lord departs from the defiled temple (1–11).
- II. God’s judgment against Israel explained (12–23).
- III. God’s impending judgment: Siege of Jerusalem and prediction of the destruction of the temple (24).
- IV. God judges foreign nations (25–32).<sup>7</sup>
- V. God’s actual judgment: Fall of Jerusalem reported (33).
- VI. God comforts, gives hope, and promises restoration of Israel (34–39).
- VII. God’s vision for the restored community—the new temple and city: the glory of the Lord returns to the temple (40–48).

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Compare with Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 426–427; G. A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), 407–408; Zimmerli, 302–304; and John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary*, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1969), 14–20.

<sup>6</sup> See especially, Richard M. Davidson, “The Chiastic Literary Structure of the Book of Ezekiel,” in *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea*, ed. David Merling (Berrien Springs: The Institute of Archaeology/Siegfried Horn Archaeological Museum, 1997), 71–93. For different structures, see Alexander, 158; Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), vii–x; idem, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, vii–ix; Clemens, v–vii; Iain M. Duguid, *Ezekiel*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 40–41; H. Van Dyke Parunak, “Structural Studies in Ezekiel” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1978); idem, “The Literary Architecture of Ezekiel’s *mar’ôt ‘elohim*,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980): 61–74; Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Message of Ezekiel: A New Heart and a New Spirit*, The Bible Speaks Today, ed. J. A. Motyer, John R. W. Stott, and Derek Tidball (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 7–8, 39–42.

<sup>7</sup> At the very center of the literary structure are two panels reflecting the spiritual warfare: (1) God’s judgment upon the anointed guardian cherub (Ezek 28:11–19); and (2) God’s vindication of His holiness and restoration of the people of Israel (Ezek 28:20–26). The last sentence of the entire book provides a fitting title for Ezekiel’s message: “The Lord is there” (Ezek 48:35).

Ezekiel's active prophetic ministry, dated from 593 until at least 571,<sup>8</sup> fell into two major periods and is divided by the shocking event with the most devastating consequences—the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. The first 33 chapters fall within the years 593/592 to 587/586 B.C., during which the prophet's message, directed to Jerusalem, consists of warnings, judgments, and symbolic actions designed to bring Judah to repentance and back to her faith in God. The second period consists of the last 15 chapters and encompasses the years following the fall of Jerusalem (587/586), ending in 571/570 B.C. In the course of these years, Ezekiel is a pastor and a messenger of comfort and hope to the exiles.<sup>9</sup> Immediately before the prophecy concerning Gog and Magog, there is a series of prophecies regarding the restoration of Israel (chs. 34–37), and directly after it there is a vision about the rebuilding of the new temple and the city (chs. 40–48). In between these two parts, there is a picture of God's intervention in favor of His people when enemies attack (Ezek 38–39).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See especially Ezek 1:1–3; 29:17; and 40:1. In the fifth year of the Babylonian captivity, he was called to the prophetic office and served in this capacity for some 22 years. He was the son of Buzi, a priest of the family of Zadok (Ezek 1:3), and so like Zechariah (Zech 1:1; Neh 12:12, 16) and Jeremiah (Jer 1:1), combined both the offices of prophet and priest. The fact that Ezekiel was included among “all the princes, and all the mighty men of valor” (2 Kgs 24:14) who were taken away with Jehoiakin in 597 B.C. (Ezek 1:1–3), suggests that he could have been a member of Jerusalem's aristocracy. He was at that time most probably 25 years old (Ezek 1:2). Ezekiel was married, but his wife died about nine years after the captivity began (24:1, 16).

It is noteworthy that the book is written from a chronological perspective, and accurate dating is an interesting feature of this book. Each major section in Ezekiel is initiated by a chronological notice (1:1, 2; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:1; 29:1, 17; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1, 17; 33:21, 22; 40:1).

<sup>9</sup> Even in the Babylonian captivity, divine justice was mixed with mercy. God came to His people as a teacher to impress upon them the folly of disobedience and the desirability of cooperating with Him. He did not want to be for them a stern judge to condemn them. The bitter experiences of their captivity were not so much retributive as they were remedial and pedagogical in nature (see Dan 9:4–19).

<sup>10</sup> Contextual studies are crucial for the understanding of Ezek 38–39. The sixth part of the whole book (chs. 34–39) can be subdivided into five units with its culmination in chs. 38 and 39: (1) reproof of the shepherds of Israel (34:1–31); (2) prophecy against Edom because of her support of the Babylonians in their attack upon Judah (35:1–15); (3) the restoration of the people of Israel (36:1–38); (4) the vision of the dry bones (37:1–28); (5) prophecies against Gog and Magog (38:1–39:29).

Ezekiel 33:21 begins one section which chs. 38 and 39 close. This section contains a series of six messages delivered by Ezekiel after the reception of the news that Jerusalem

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The statement, “This is what the Sovereign Lord says,”<sup>11</sup> appears seven times in Ezekiel 38–39 (38:3,10,14,17; 39:1,17,25), thus dividing these two chapters into seven parts. After the introduction (Ezek 38:1–2), come the following sections: (1) presentation of Gog and his allies (38:3–9); (2) Gog’s pride and plot (38:10–13); (3) Gog coming against Israel (38:14–16); (4) destruction of Gog’s forces by God’s judgment (38:17–23); (5) destruction and burial of Gog and his allies (39:1–16); (6a) Gog’s confederation at Yahweh’s sacrificial feast (39:17–22); (6b) Israel in exile for their sins (39:23–24); (7) restoration of the fortunes of Israel after captivity (39:25–29).<sup>12</sup> Thus, the prophecy ends with the event which is to happen first—the exodus from Babylonian captivity, because this prophecy will be fulfilled only when Israel returns to their land and their yoke of captivity ends.

#### Spoken About in the Past

Ezekiel 38:17 is the key verse of the prophecy: “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘Are you [Gog] not the one I spoke of in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel? At that time they prophesied for years that I would bring you against them.’” This statement affirms that God through his prophets spoke about Gog in former days.<sup>13</sup> It

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had fallen. Each of the six messages commences with Ezekiel’s distinctive introductory speech formula: “Then the word of the Lord came to me saying” (33:23; 34:1; 35:1; 36:16; 37:14; 38:1).

Susan Niditch argues that the war scene of Ezek 38–39 provides the fitting prelude to Ezek 40–48 because in the Babylonian *Enuma Elish* and the Ugaritic epic of Baal and Anat, the enthronement of the deity follows the scene of victory in the battle (“Ezekiel 40–48 in a Visionary Context,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48/2 [1986]: 208–224). See also Paul E. Fitzpatrick, “The Disarmament of God: Ezekiel 38–39 in Its Mythic Context,” *Catholic Bible Quarterly*, Monograph Series 37 (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the NIV translation of the Bible is used.

<sup>12</sup> See Odell, *Ezekiel*, 465; Taylor, 242. Horace D. Hummel, *Ezekiel 21–48* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2007), 1099: “Chapters 38–39 are really a unit and their division into two chapters is artificial.”

<sup>13</sup> Daniel Block argues that this text needs to be understood in a different way. God’s question needs to be answered negatively, which means that Gog is not the one about whom God spoke through prophets in the past. Gog is a new unknown enemy about whom no one so far has prophesied. See his commentary *The Book of Ezekiel 25–48*, 453–456.

I do not agree with Block, because the purpose of Ezekiel’s prophetic imagery is to put his message into harmony with the earlier known prophecies about the invasion of God’s enemies against Israel, as indicated by the immediate context (38:17b). Ezekiel

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means that God spoke in the past about him in a general sense, because nowhere else in the Old Testament is a direct prophecy about Gog mentioned. The name Gog appears only one other time (1 Chr 5:4), but it is in a genealogy and not in a prophecy.

We need, therefore, to look for the main concepts of Ezekiel's prophecy that can also be detected in previous biblical prophecies, and thus the connections can be established among them. The most common concepts of many prophets and biblical writers are the topics of war and of enemies from the north. Ezekiel emphasizes that the enemy will come from the north (38:6,15; 39:2). "North" is the symbol of the antigodly power because God reigns from the north (see Ps 48:2; Isa 14:13; Job 37:22). Eichrodt explains that "a declaration made by Yahweh himself to Gog" provides evidence that God has long since forewarned the people of his coming. This shows that the enemy from the north, who play so large a part in Jeremiah's first prophecies but whom Jeremiah himself in ch. 19 interprets as meaning Babylon, is regarded as a force that has not as yet entered history and is to materialize for the first time in the shape of Gog. Such a transference was possible only because behind the

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puts Gog and his allies into the stream of antigodly forces the prophets were talking about in the past. His affirmative question about the former prophets, that they "prophesied for years that I [the Sovereign Lord] would bring you against them," clearly links Ezekiel's prophecy with other prophecies and attests to the connection between them. Furthermore, it is crucial to note that the two other questions asked in Ezek 38 always presuppose a positive answer (see vv. 13 and 14). Why not, then, expect the same in v. 17? In both cases (38:13,14) as well as in v. 17, the interrogative particle *ha* is used (unless the particle *ha* in Ezek 38:17 is interpreted as a definite article; however, in that case, it would mean even a stronger connection between this prophecy concerning Gog and the messages of the other prophets). See also another allusion to the same concept in Ezek 39:8b.

The following translations support this understanding of the biblical text: KJV, NIV, NKJ, RSV, NSV, etc., because this is the natural reading of the text. This view is supported by many exegetes, such as Walter Eichrodt, *Ezekiel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 525; Otzen, 422–424; M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985), 467–477; Russell, 191–193; *SDA Bible Commentary*, 4:708–709; Taylor, 243; Wright, 319; Zimmerli, 297, 312. For further discussion, see M. S. Odell, "Are You He of Whom I Spoke by My Servants the Prophets? Ezekiel 38–39 and the Problem of History in the Neobabylonian Context" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1988).

It is similar to the notion of the Antichrist. The term is used only five times in four verses in the epistles of John (1 John 2:18,22; 4:3; 2 John 7), yet the concept of Antichrist is used by biblical authors in many places in the Bible but under different names—like the "little horn," the "king of the North," "false teachers," "false Messiahs," the "man of lawlessness," "Babylon," etc.

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anonymous northern foe through whom Yahweh is to settle his final reckoning with his people is seen first one historical adversary and then another: first Assyria in the time of Isaiah (Isa 5:26 ff.; 14:31) and then Babylon in the time of Jeremiah in whom the terrors of the end seemed to be approaching. To the author of this chapter, the conditions prevailing in his times seemed capable of being explained only if he assumed that those prophecies had not as yet really been fulfilled and were still waiting their consummation.<sup>14</sup>

Berkouwer claims that “the northern powers—the north frequently having been the origin of Israel’s woes (cf. Joel 2:20)—is an image that anticipates the eclipse of the antigodly powers of the world.”<sup>15</sup> Otzen describes five principle motifs in Ezek 38–39: “The Day of Yahweh,” “War with Chaos and War with the Nations,” “The Foe from the North,” “Attack of the Nations upon Jerusalem,” and “The Sacrificial Meal.”<sup>16</sup> When he speaks about the foe from the north, he maintains that “in the OT tradition, this idea has undergone a historico-geographic twist, but it is certainly mythological-legendary in its origin: the evil powers of chaos that are hostile to God reside in the north, whence they are set loose.”<sup>17</sup> This position is upheld also by Russell, who states that “already in the Old Testament and in tradition beyond the Old Testament the north was regarded as a place of menace and mystery. This hostile army is individualized and given the name: Gog of the land of Magog (38.2).”<sup>18</sup>

The principal and strongest motifs are the concepts of the “sacrificial meal” and of the “war” because they connect with other biblical passages. For example, the idea that the slain will become a sacrificial meal is also found in Jer 46:10; Zeph 1:7–8; Isa 34:5–11; and Lam 2:21–22.<sup>19</sup>

From the larger biblical perspective, it is quite obvious that “the battle here described is but the culmination of the agelong struggle between the powers of evil and the people of God. Concerning this there is frequent mention in earlier prophecies. The earliest intimation comes from the Garden of Eden in the curse pronounced upon the serpent. God predicted constant warfare between the seed of the woman, the church, and Satan. The ultimate triumph over evil was forecast in the clause, ‘it [the

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<sup>14</sup> Eichrodt, 525.

<sup>15</sup> G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 276.

<sup>16</sup> Otzen, 423–424.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 423.

<sup>18</sup> Russell, 190. He also mentions that in the Ras Shamra tablets, the North is the mythological home of the gods.

<sup>19</sup> See Otzen, 424.

seed of the woman] shall bruise thy head' (Gen 3:15). Other references to the controversy and the eventual triumph of right are found in the Psalms and later prophetic books (see Ps 2; 110; Isa 26:20,21; etc.).<sup>20</sup>

It is apparent that one cannot isolate Ezek 38 and 39 from other Old Testament prophecies; one needs to discern the organic unity of all prophecies. Otzen correctly summarizes: "Thus Ezk. 38–39 has the character of a mosaic of well-known OT motifs."<sup>21</sup>

### **The Main Thoughts**

The leading message of Ezekiel's prophecy is transparent: in the future (38:8,16), Gog will launch from the far north (38:6,15; 39:2) his antagonistic campaign<sup>22</sup> with his allies (38:2–8) against Israel<sup>23</sup> after the Jews have returned from the Assyrian-Babylonian captivity (38:8,12; 39:23,25,27,28) and are living securely in their land (38:8,14; 39:26). Then the divine judgment (38:18–22; 39:2–6,17–20) will destroy Gog and his confederacy upon the mountains of Israel (39:4,15); thus Israel (39:7,22,28) and all nations will know that Yahweh is God (38:16,23; 39:6b,7,13b,21,28) and His holiness will be vindicated (38:16b,23; 39:7,27).

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<sup>20</sup> *SDA Bible Commentary*, 4:708. For interpretation of Gen 3:15, see Afolarin Olu-tunde Ojewole, "The Seed in Genesis 3:15: An Exegetical and Intertextual Study" (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 2002).

<sup>21</sup> Otzen, 424.

<sup>22</sup> What is first mentioned as Yahweh's action (38:4-16; 39:2) turns into a description of Gog's own evil devise (38:10). He deliberately planned to destroy Israel (Ezek 38:10–12), and his pride led to his own destruction (see the stress on "I" in Ezek 38:11–12). Gog's pride and destruction closely reflects Lucifer's pride and fall as described in Isa 14:12–15 (compare with Ezek 28:17–19).

Similar language is used in the book of Exodus in regard to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart (Exod 3:19–20). Nine times this hardening is ascribed to God (Exod 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:4,8; compare with Rom 9:17–18), and another nine times Pharaoh is said to have hardened his own heart (Exod 7:13,14,22; 8:15,19,32; 9:7,34,35). In the actual account of the ten plagues (Exod 7–12) against the Egyptian gods (Exod 12:12), when the predictions are put aside, Pharaoh alone is the agent who hardened his heart in each of the first five plagues! Not until the sixth plague did God harden Pharaoh's heart (9:12), which means that his heart turned to "a mud" after his own deliberate and stubborn refusal to listen and obey God. His attitude of life was wrong. Once he made a final decision against God, God's dealings with him hardened his heart even more (like sunshine hardens clay). In this way the prediction was fulfilled that God would harden Pharaoh's heart (Exod 4:21; 7:3).

<sup>23</sup> Gog and his allies attack a land (Ezek 38:8,11,16), the mountains of Israel (38:8; 39:2), my people Israel (38:16), and the land of Israel (38:18).



### The Time of the Prophecy's Fulfillment

The prophecy about Gog's invasion against God's people is to be fulfilled in the future (as seen from the perspective of the prophet Ezekiel) after Israel returns from the Babylonian captivity (Ezek 39:23,25,27). "Gog and Magog" are future enemies, and they will attack only after Israel is living securely in their land when they are at peace with their neighbors and under no visible threat (Ezek 38:11–12).

Ezekiel uses three time expressions—*miyyāmīm rabbīm*, "after many days" (38:8); *b<sup>o</sup>ach<sup>r</sup>īt hashshānīm*, "in the latter years" (38:8); and *b<sup>o</sup>ach<sup>r</sup>īt hayyāmīm*, "in the latter days"/"in days to come" (38:16)—which give a general future time framework to this prophecy. Boersma<sup>24</sup> and Willis<sup>25</sup> discuss in their respective studies the expression "in the latter days," and they come to the same conclusion: the phrase "in the latter days" (used thirteen times in the Hebrew portion of the Old Testament)<sup>26</sup> basically means "in the after(wards) of the days," "in the following time," "in the future," "in days to come," "in those future days," "in the latter days," and is without any specific time reference to the time of the end (for example, after the Messiah comes or at the end of the world's history). In other words, these expressions have no *specific* time reference per se. It is important to note that the biblical concept of time is always closely tied or even identified with its content, and its meaning depends on the application of the context.<sup>27</sup> The same position is also held

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<sup>24</sup> Boersma, 32–43.

<sup>25</sup> See John T. Willis, "The Expression *b<sup>o</sup>ach<sup>r</sup>īt hayyāmīm* in the Old Testament," *Restoration Quarterly* 22/1–2 (1979): 54–71.

<sup>26</sup> Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 4:40; 31:29; Isa 2:2; Jer 23:20; 30:24; 48:47; 49:39; Ezek 38:16; Dan 10:14; Hos 3:5; Mic 4:1. It is also used once in the Aramaic portion of the book of Daniel, namely in 2:28 as *b<sup>o</sup>ach<sup>r</sup>īt yomayyā*.

<sup>27</sup> For further study, see H. Douglas Buckwalter, "Time," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. by Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 774–775; James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* (Naperville: A. R. Allenson, 1962); Ernst Jenni, "Time," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 4:646: "The abstraction 'time' belongs among the accomplishments of Greek culture. If, however, time (as a dimension) is not abstracted from the abundance of individual events, then, naturally, the events and their time constitute, to a large extent, a unit in OT thinking. It has been observed again and again how closely the Hebrew conception of time is bound up with its content, or even identified with it." See also a chapter about the Hebrew concept of time in Jacques B. Doukhan, *Hebrew for Theologians: A Textbook for the Study of Biblical Hebrew in Relation to Hebrew Thinking* (Lanham: UP of America, 1993), 200–207. A more cautious approach to the issue of time is presented by C. N. Pinnock, "Time," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids:

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by Seebass; however, he argues that six of these passages should be interpreted differently due to the literary context: as a technical term with eschatological content.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, the three temporal phrases mentioned above do not refer directly or automatically to the end time. In Ezek 38–39 there is no specific indicator which would necessitate putting this prophecy into the apocalyptic end-time scenario just prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ, even though it is not excluded.<sup>29</sup> Instead, the plausible position is that Ezekiel’s prophecy refers first to the events that should occur sometime after the return from the Babylonian exile.<sup>30</sup> Additional time framework is given in phrases like “when they live in safety” (38:8,14; 39:26), “attack on peaceful and unsuspecting people” (Ezek 38:11),<sup>31</sup> but even these expressions are very broad in meaning. Historically speaking, the Gog prophecy could be fulfilled only in the future after the return of Israel from the Assyrian-Babylonian captivity, which occurred in 537/536 B.C. (see 2 Chr 36:22–23; Ezra 1–3,7).

However, the ultimate fulfillment of safety for Israel can only be eschatological because it will only be under God’s real rulership in His kingdom that the people of God will live in security for ever and under no threat from their enemies (Ezek 37:24–28; compare with Isa 32:18).<sup>32</sup> Craigie rightly comments on Gog’s battle: “Be that as it may, he [Ezekiel] nevertheless has a vision of a distant world in which in spite of evil

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Eerdmans, 1988), 4:852–853. For the latest discussion, see William Lane Craig, *Time and Eternity: Exploring God’s Relationship to Time* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001); Gregory E. Ganssle, ed., *God and Time: Four Views* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> H. Seebass, “*ʾachʾrît*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 1:210–212. These six passages are: Isa 2:2, Mic 4:1, Hos 3:5, Ezek 38:16, Dan 2:28, and Dan 10:14.

<sup>29</sup> It is undoubtedly true that Ezekiel’s prophecies point to the physical restoration (36:18) as well as the spiritual rebirth and revival of Israel (e.g., Ezek 36:25–28). However, Ezek 38–39 does not foretell the spiritual revival or the repentance of Israel just before the end of the world.

<sup>30</sup> See Boersma, 110, and other Bible scholars.

<sup>31</sup> Phrases like “unwalled villages” and “living without walls and without gates and bars” in Ezek 38:11 are parallel expressions to “living in safety” or “peaceful and unsuspecting people,” i.e., people who live in peace and without fear. Therefore, these phrases should not be interpreted literally, but as figures of speech.

<sup>32</sup> To live “securely” means ultimately under the rulership of the Messiah, because when the Messiah comes, Israel will live in security (Ezek 34:25,28; 37:24–28). In that regard, there is a very important *Targum Neofiti* on Num 14:26. The *Neofiti* targumist put Ezekiel’s prophecy in a Messianic context: “At the very end of days Gog and Magog will go out to Jerusalem, and they will fall into the hands of the king Messiah.”

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God's good would be established. The battle which he describes is thus in essence a final 'cosmic' battle in which evil would eventually be eliminated and righteousness be victorious."<sup>33</sup>

**Gog and His Allies**

There are five nations listed as Gog's allies in Ezek 38:5–6: Persia, Cush, Put, Gomer, and Beth-Togormah, besides Meshech and Tubal already mentioned in 38:2. Thus, there are altogether seven nations in confederation whose names are derived from Gen 10:2,3,6, and Ezek 27:10,13,14.<sup>34</sup> The number seven plays a significant role in Ezekiel, symbolizing completeness or totality, and in this specific context points to a universal conspiracy, a world plot against Israel.<sup>35</sup> The number of enemies is described in figurative language: "You and all your troops and the many nations with you will go up, advancing like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land" (Ezek 38:9) and again: "You will advance against my people Israel like a cloud that covers the land" (Ezek 38:16).

Though many solutions to the enigma of Gog's figure have been offered, there is no consensus among scholars who Gog is. Different theories have been proposed for the names of Gog and Magog with diverse

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<sup>33</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *Ezekiel*, The Daily Study Bible Series (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1983), 269.

<sup>34</sup> Alger F. Johns, "The Presentation of Ezekiel 38 in Evangelism," *Ministry*, August/September 1962, 28: "The eleven nations mentioned in [Ezekiel] chap. 38, and with only the exception of Persia, they are all sons, grandsons, or great-grandsons of Ham and Japhet, according to Genesis 10 and none of them are descendants of Shem, the patriarch." As for the identification of these nations, see discussion in T. Lust, "A Linguistic and Geographical Study of the Names of Ezekiel 38 and 39" (M.A. thesis, Andrews University, 1949); Boersma, 114–116; Otzen, 421; Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 432–436, 439–442.

<sup>35</sup> Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 441: "Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, and Beth-Togorma represent the northern extreme of the world known to Israel; Paras, Cush, and Put the southern extreme, again suggesting that the whole world is involved in this attack."

The phrase "This is what the Sovereign Lord says" is used seven times in Ezek 38–39; "for seven years" (39:9) the weapons of defeated Gog's army will be used for fuel; the seven months are needed for burying the bodies (39:12,14). Previously in the book of Ezekiel (25–32), there are prophecies against the seven foreign nations (Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt); the prophet utters seven oracles against Egypt (29:1–16,17–21; 30:1–19,20–26; 31:1–18; 32:1–16,17–32); and there are seven woes expressed (13:3,18; 16:23 [twice]; 24:6,9; 34:2).

historical<sup>36</sup> and symbolic/mythological<sup>37</sup> interpretations. Unfortunately, none of these hypotheses has sufficient biblical support to warrant its

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<sup>36</sup> A brief survey of different historical interpretations is more than sufficient: Gog represents the Scythians (advocated by J. Wellhausen, W. Gesenius); Magog is identified with the Scythians (Josephus); Gog is the Lydian king Gyges (ca. 670 B.C.), and consequently the land of Magog is Lydia (popularized by F. Delitzsch, J. Herrmann, W. Zimmerli); Gog refers to the dynasty of Gagi (personal name of Persian origin) in the territory north of Assyria, which is mentioned in a text of Ashurbanipal (L. Durr); Gog relates to a territory called Gaga mentioned in an Amarna letter (I, 38), which according to the context was located north of Syria, perhaps around Carchemish (O. Weber); Gog is Gasga, a name occurring in Hittite tablets which described a location on the borders of Armenia and Cappadocia (W. F. Albright); Gog is an officer in the army of the younger Cyrus ca. 400 B.C. (N. Messel); Gog (derived from Gaga in the Amarna letter) was used as a pseudonym for Alexander the Great (H. Winckler); Gog represents an official title, a prophetic role, based upon the Septuagint rendering of several kingly names in the OT and employed as a general name for any enemy of God's people at the time of the composition of the Septuagint (Num 24:7; Amos 7:1); Magog is interpreted either as an artificial form (Assyrian *mat gugi*, land of Gog), or as a "hebraizing" of an Akkadian *matGog* (=matGaga in an Amarna letter) (H. Winkler, R. Kraetzschmar, A. R. Millard); the name of the land comes first and that the name Gog was derived from it (J. G. Aalders, J. W. Wevers); Magog is a cipher or code for Babylon—reversing the letters of Magog and reading it as the following letter of the alphabet (J. Boehmer, L. Finkelstein, more recently A. J. Greig); Gog is identified with Antiochus IV Epiphanes (L. Seinecke, T. Boersma); Gog is a pseudonym for Antiochus V Eupator, reigning from 163 to 162 B.C. (G. R. Berry); Gog is Mithridates VI, king of Pontus from 120 to 64 B.C. (N. Schmidt). For sources of different theories, see footnote 4.

<sup>37</sup> In contrast to various historical explanations of the terms Gog and Magog, there is an attempt to understand these names symbolically or mythologically: (1) A. van Hoonacker suggested that the word Gog was actually derived from the Sumerian term *gug*, meaning "darkness"; therefore, Gog was the personification of darkness and evil because of the apocalyptic elements involved, and by consequence, Magog is the land of darkness; (2) Gog's army are demons, spirits of the dead, or mythical entities (K. G. Kuhn, M. Rissi); (3) Gog is the Akkadian god Gaga, which appears in *Enuma Elish* (see M. Streck); (4) Gog is as a leader and representative of the powers hostile toward God, and thus the historical names are only masks and disguises for a mythical/symbolic power that has nothing to do with history (W. Staerk); (5) H. Gressmann accepts the Gyges hypotheses as far as the origin of the name is concerned, but he holds that mythological ideas concerning a giant of primitive times (Og = Gog?) and of gigantic locusts lie beyond this figure; (6) Gog is interpreted as the "leader and representative of the powers hostile to God" (A. Lauha); (7) Ezek 38–39 is presenting real prophecy and future historical events, but in Rev 20 the whole picture is mythological (K. G. Kuhn); (8) Gog is a symbol for the eschatological final war in the context of Messianic expectations according to rabbinic sources (*b. Sanh.* 97b). For the last point, see the article in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 7:692–695, s.v. "Gog and Magog." For sources of different theories, see footnote no. 4.

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acceptance as the answer to Gog's identity. It seems, therefore, that the safe way of interpreting the fulfillment of Gog's prophecy is to stay within the parameters of explanation given by later biblical authors. Such an approach helps to avoid a speculative exposition of this prophecy and focuses on the canonical intertextual understanding of it.

Thus, this study does not support any historical fulfillment that falls prior to the exodus from the Babylonian exile or during it, because Ezekiel predicts a future event from his perspective. It rejects any political modern applications related to the second coming of Christ that overlook the New Testament interpretation of this prophecy.<sup>38</sup> It also opposes the mythological explanation, because the literary genre of Ezek 38–39 presupposes its historical fulfillment. On the other hand, we stand for the symbolic-historic interpretation rooted in the New Testament interpretation of this prophecy, where especially the book of Revelation provides material for the eschatological-apocalyptic understanding of Ezekiel's prophetic scenario.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> For example, in 1971, during the cold-war period, Ronald Reagan in his speech as governor of California pointed to Ezek 38–39 and stated: "Gog must be Russia . . . But it didn't seem to make sense before the Russian revolution, when Russia was a Christian state. Now it does, now that Russia has become communistic and atheistic, now that Russia has set itself against God. Now it fits the description of Gog perfectly" (cited from Millard C. Lind, *Ezekiel*. Believers Church Bible Commentary [Scottsdale, Waterloo: Herald Press, 1996], 320).

<sup>39</sup> This approach is in harmony with interpretative principles advocated by LaRondelle, Davidson, Doukhan, and Were. See Hans K. LaRondelle, "A Plea for a Christ-centered Eschatology," *Ministry* (January 1976): 18–20; idem, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1983); Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical τύπος Structures* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1981); idem, "Interpreting Old Testament Prophecy," in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, Biblical Research Institute Studies, vol. 1, ed. George W. Reid (Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2006), 183–204; Jacques B. Doukhan, *Mystery of Israel* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2004); idem, *Israel and the Church: Two Voices for the Same God* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002); Louis F. Were, *The Certainty of the Third Angel's Message* (Berrien Springs: First Impressions, 1979).

Our methodology functions in the framework of prediction-fulfillment and can be described as historical-typological with the eschatological-apocalyptic fulfillment in two phases (separated by the millennium). Two main principles of the prophecy (enemy's attack on Israel, and God's miraculous intervention on their behalf) are applied by analogy of situation to Christ (the Representative of Israel) and His church (enlargement of historical Israel). These christological and ecclesiological fulfillments are integrated into the whole typological scenario on the basis of historical correspondences. The multiple ecclesiological fulfillments (multiplicity is limited only to this aspect) are actually multi-

On the basis of known historical documents, one can safely conclude that there is no event in the history of Israel that would match with Ezekiel's description of God's intervention against the antagonistic forces of Israel's enemies. No such past happening is ever recorded. Thus, this prophecy was not fulfilled in biblical times (from the Babylonian captivity exodus to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70), nor in a more recent time.

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ple applications of the prophecy in principle that we call in this study pre-fulfillments or partial fulfillments. Finally, there is the antitypical eschatological-apocalyptic fulfillment of Gog's prophecy in two stages, which is the primary fulfillment of Ezekiel's predictions and its culmination. John's deliberate triple usage of Ezek 38–39 in the book of Revelation (in chs. 16, 19, and 20) provides a safeguard to our method of interpretation. In doing this, we retain the original context of the war concept.

In addition, Ezekiel hints to the future antitypical fulfillment by providing some typological indicators in the text itself: the non-historicity of Gog's figure; symbolism of place-names ("the Valley of the Travelers," and "the Valley of the Horde or Multitude of Gog"); symbolism of the number seven; temporal phrases like "in the latter days" or "when my people Israel are living in safety"; enemies coming from the north; and proclamation that the former prophets spoke about Gog.

Our interpretative model of Gog's prophecy differs from the apotelesmatic principle on two crucial points: (1) We stand for the specific historical-eschatological/apocalyptic fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy, while the apotelesmatic principle, on the other hand, speaks only about multiple applications/fulfillments. It seems that in the apotelesmatic system of interpretation there is no room for a specific or unique fulfillment. We distinguish between multiple applications in principle and the primary fulfillment and do not see all the fulfillments on the same level. (2) Our approach to the prophecy is historicist, and we do not integrate into our understanding of Gog's prophecy presuppositions and principles of symbolic, preterist, or futurist/dispensationalist schools of prophetic interpretation. Our typological structure is ingrained in actual history, and the antitypical fulfillment is bigger than type. Symbols point to historical realities of a higher level and not to abstract truth or ideas.

The Apotelesmatic principle of interpretation of Scripture (from the Greek word "apotelesma" meaning a conclusion or completion) refers to the fulfillment of a prophecy/prediction from the end, it means that each generation can see the prediction from their perspective as the final fulfillment. Desmond Ford defines the apotelesmatic principle in the following way: "This principle affirms that a prophecy fulfilled, or in fulfilled part, or unfulfilled at the appointed time, may have a later or recurring, or consummated fulfillment (*Daniel 8:14, The Day of Atonement, and the Investigative Judgment* [Casselberry: Euangelion, 1980], 302). For details, see William H. Shea, "The Apotelesmatic Principle: Philosophy, Practice, and Purpose" (Andrews University, unpublished paper, no date).

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**Partial Historical Fulfillment**

The closest but partial historical fulfillment of this prophecy in Old Testament times and the intertestamental period occurred during the Maccabean wars (2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.), when a few hundred Jews under the leadership of Judah Maccabee revolted against the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 B.C.) and unexpectedly defeated his enormous and well-trained Hellenistic army.<sup>40</sup> The Maccabees waged war against this oppressive Hellenistic ruler, who not only wanted to subjugate them but also change their culture and even religion.<sup>41</sup> The commemoration of their surprising victory gave birth to the Hanukkah festival.

From the many different proposals for a historical fulfillment of Gog's prophecy, the interpretation that identifies Gog with Antiochus IV Epiphanes seems most plausible.<sup>42</sup> However, it needs to be stressed that this explanation does not provide the full historical fulfillment, since not all details predicted in the prophecy were literally fulfilled: as for example, Antiochus IV Epiphanes did not die in Israel; his army was not defeated in the manner asserted in Ezekiel; Israel did not live at that time

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<sup>40</sup> See, especially, 1 Macc 2–4 and 2 Macc 8–9. The knowledge about Maccabean wars and Antiochus IV Epiphanes is derived from two primary sources: (1) First and Second Maccabees, see Jonathan A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 41 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976); idem, *II Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 41A (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983); Alphonse P. Spilly, *First Maccabees: Second Maccabees*, Collegeville Bible Commentary, vol. 12 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1985); and (2) Polybius, see *The Histories*, trans. W. R. Paton, The Loeb Classical Library, vols. 5 and 6, (London: Heinemann, 1922–1927).

<sup>41</sup> Boersma, 122: “The Seleucid dynasty managed to acquire a position of considerable power in northern Syria, extending its influence into Armenia and Asia Minor in the direction of the Black Sea. The center of Seleucid power was in northern Syria; the court capital was Antioch, located on the river Orontes. This corresponds exactly to the area that Ezekiel's prophecy refers.”

<sup>42</sup> See Jan G. Aalders, *Gog en Magog in Ezechiël*, Academisch Proefschrift—Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1951), 170–172; Boersma, 125. One of the reasons why I support this interpretation is that it is reflected by parallelism in Dan 11, where the figure of the king of the North plays a dominant role. The king from the North represents Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the beginning/middle of this chapter (11:13ff., and it is a matter of scholarly debate how many verses should be taken for describing him), and the same figure is used to point (among others) to the end-time Antichrist at the end of the chapter (and again it is a matter of discussion which texts should be taken as portraying him). Both figures are depicted as “king(s) from the North.” However, a detailed analysis and exposition of Dan 11 is the subject for another study.

altogether in security, etc. Therefore, Antiochus IV Epiphanes can only be partially identified with the antagonistic figure of Gog, the leader of the confederacy against Israel.

This does not mean that this prophecy concerning Gog could not occur exactly as predicted; one can envision the historical, literal fulfillment of Gog's prophecy in the context of Messianic expectations and Israel's faithfulness to God's leadership and His word. Nevertheless, we need to recognize that many Old Testament classical prophecies<sup>43</sup> were conditional, and because "the conditions were never met, the predictions were not fulfilled in literal Israel. Nor can all the details be projected into the future so as to have a fulfillment then. Only those features reiterated later by sacred writers can be taken positively to have future application."<sup>44</sup>

Our principle of interpretation lies in the recognition that the predicted future situation (described in historical terms although historically

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<sup>43</sup> A rich blend of different literary styles and features of Ezek 38–39 can be described in the following ways (examples are not exhaustive): (1) classical predictive prophecy—Ezek 38:1–6,17; 39:1–2; (2) rhetorical style—Ezek 38:7,10–13; 39:1–3; (3) apocalyptic features—Ezek 38:19–23; 39:17 (cataclysmic dramatic description of the end of Gog and his allies including hailstones, bloodshed, earthquake, and burning sulphur; God's miraculous intervention; non-historicity of Gog's figure; symbolism of names for places; symbolism of the number seven; sacrificial banquet; orientation to the distant future); (4) repetitious formulas—Ezek 38:16,23; 39:7,27,28; (5) drama—Ezek 39:9–16; (6) promise—Ezek 39:28,29; (7) judgment oracle—Ezek 38:2 (compare with Ezek 29:1).

On the issue of the literary genre and the discussion of whether Ezek 38–39 is apocalyptic, see Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1990), 202–204, 210; Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 427–431; Bøe, 86–88; Hummel, 1101–1102; Odell, *Ezekiel*, 466; Taylor, 245. Joyce states: "These chapters [Ezek 38–39] exemplify certain proto-apocalyptic features: radical eschatology, a strong emphasis on divine agency, and dualism, not only between present and future but also between good and evil. They also exercise a significant influence on later apocalyptic tradition" (213). John W. Wevers, *Ezekiel*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982 [first published 1969]), argues on the basis of similarities between Ezek 38–39 and Ezek 25–32: "The original impetus must be that of an oracle against the nation" (201).

<sup>44</sup> *SDA Bible Commentary*, 4:709. For the detailed ideal scenario of what would happen to Israel, Jerusalem, and the temple if they would have been faithful to God, see Davidson, "Interpreting Old Testament Prophecy," 193–200.

Because the divine conditions and described background were not met in fullness, so also the prophecy was not literally fulfilled. If the people of God, for example, had rebuilt without any delay the city and the temple after their return from the Babylonian exile (see Ezra 4, Hag 1–2, Dan 10), Gog's prophecy could have been literally fulfilled in time and space.



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not necessarily fulfilled) plays a crucial role in the typological structure. When there is a potential historical fulfillment in view, one encounters a “model” situation which functions as a type, and this type provides a foundation for the antitypical fulfillment of the prophecy. One needs to have in mind, however, that the antitypical fulfillment will be on a larger scale, because the type is always smaller than the antitype. This “bigger” feature of the antitype as a progression or intensification of the type is called a “Steigerung.”<sup>45</sup>

#### Fulfillment in Principle

If there is no clear-cut and full historical fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, one must carefully study “if” and “how” the New Testament writers interpret them, whether explicitly or implicitly. Jesus Christ’s teaching must be taken as the key interpretative factor and the New Testament inspired writers as the best expositors of these Old Testament predictions. Our basic hermeneutical principle in studying them is that the New Testament removes the geographical and ethnic restrictions of Old Testament prophecies while maintaining the Middle East imagery.<sup>46</sup> One needs to scrutinize the possibility regarding Gog’s prophecy if the biblical text has christological (Christ-centered), ecclesiological (church-centered), and/or eschatological (end-time-centered) fulfillment. This means that we need to search for the principle ideas of the prophecy concerning Gog and Magog and then relate it to Christ, His people, and eschatological/apocalyptic time.<sup>47</sup>

The principle thoughts derived from Ezek 38–39 can be summarized into two points: (A) the confederacy of enemies attacks God’s people; and (B) God intervenes on behalf of His people. This pattern was executed in the life of Jesus Christ and can be also seen implemented in

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<sup>45</sup> For a detail explanation of the “Steigerung” (“escalation”) principle, see Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*, 96, 276, 281, 290, 313; Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: Die typologische Deutung des Alten Testaments im Neuen* (Guetersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1939; reprint ed., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966), 19, 244; idem, “τύπος,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 8:252.

<sup>46</sup> LaRondelle, “A Plea,” 18–20; idem., *The Israel of God in Prophecy*.

<sup>47</sup> About the hermeneutical rules related to different functions of typology and how they work, see Davidson, “Interpreting Old Testament Prophecy,” 183–204; and idem, *In the Footsteps of Joshua* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1995), 24–35. For general rules of interpreting the Bible, see idem, “Biblical Interpretation,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Commentary Reference Series, vol. 12 (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 58–104.

many instances during Church history. Moreover, Ezekiel's predictions are fulfilled in the eschatological-apocalyptic time, according to the book of Revelation.

**1. Jesus Christ, the Personified Israel, as the Fulfillment of the Prophecy in Principle.** The pattern of Gog's prophecy was fulfilled in principle in the life of Jesus Christ, who is the Personified Israel,<sup>48</sup> and as such, the Representative of Israel<sup>49</sup> (see especially Exod 4:22; Isa 41:8–10; 42:1–9; 49:1–7; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12; 61:1–3; Hos 6:1–3; 11:1; compare with Matt 2:15; Acts 8:30–35). The first aspect, “the armies of Gog and Magog” united to crush Jesus, was fulfilled by Herod and Pilate, who, although enemies, were united in a confederacy in order to put Jesus to death. That conspiracy included the Gentiles and the people of Israel, and thus Jesus Christ experienced a universal plot against His person. Acts 4:27 attests to the situation in large: “Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed.” The second aspect was fulfilled by God's intervention on behalf of Christ, when He raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:24,32; 3:15,26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,34,37, etc.). His enemies were defeated, and Christ became the Victor.

**2. Multiple Ecclesiological Fulfillment of the Prophecy in Principle.** The prophecy regarding Gog is also in principle fulfilled in many analogical situations throughout the history of the Church. The New Testament authors note that what happened to Jesus Christ will be experienced by His people, because what occurred in His life will be tasted by

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<sup>48</sup> On the corporate personality, see studies of Philip Kaufman, “The One and the Many: Corporate Personality,” *Worship* 42 (1968): 546–558; C. Lattey, “Vicarious Solidarity in the Old Testament,” *Vetus Testamentum* 1 (1951): 267–274; J. R. Porter, “Legal Aspects of Corporate Personality,” *Vetus Testamentum* 15 (1965): 361–380; Stanley E. Porter, “Two Myths: Corporate Personality and Language Mentality Determinism,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43 (1990): 289–307; H. Wheeler Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980); J. W. Rogerson, “Corporate Personality,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 1:1156–1157. For the pitfalls of the concept of corporate personality, see the pertinent study of Richard M. Davidson, “Corporative Solidarity in the Old Testament” (Andrews University, unpublished paper, 1997).

The first coming of Jesus Christ inaugurated in His person the eschatological aeon which broke down into our history. From this perspective, the last-day events started with the incarnation and the cross (see Heb 1:1,2; 9:29; 1 Pet 1:20; 4:7; Acts 2:17; 1 Cor 10:11; 2 Pet 3:3; 1 Tim 4:1; 1 Thess 4:16–17).

<sup>49</sup> Davidson coins the term “Representative Israelite” in his chapter “Interpreting Old Testament Prophecy,” 194.

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those who faithfully follow Him (Matt 5:10–12; John 15:18–16:2; 2 Cor 1:5; 1 Pet 1:12–14). As He was persecuted, so will be His people, but as He was rescued, so will be God’s children (Isa 25:9; 63:9). Moreover, in the light of the New Testament teaching, the Church is a renewed Israel (Matt 21:43–44; Rom 2:28–29; 9:6–8; 10:12–13; 11:25–27; 1 Cor 10:32; Gal 3:7–9, 26–29; Eph 3:6–10; 1 Pet 2:9), not in the sense of a replacement of the historical Israel by a new entity (a view called supercessionism), but her enlargement (Eph 3:6–10; Rom 11:25–26; 1 Cor 12:12–13).<sup>50</sup> It means that a faithful remnant of historical Israel is enlarged by believing Gentiles who “together with Israel” (Eph 3:6) form one body, the Church (1 Cor 12:12–13, 27; Eph 1:22–23; 3:4–12). This community of faith consists of faithful Jews and Gentiles alike who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and have entered into a covenant relationship with the Lord. Consequently, any attack on God’s community, His covenant people, is an attack against God Himself (Zech 2:8), because Jesus intimately identifies with His followers who share Abraham’s faith (Matt 25:40, 45; Luke 10:16; Acts 9:1, 4–6). The persecution of the people of God followed by His intervention on their behalf points in principle to the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy.<sup>51</sup> In other words, when enemies of the Lord persecute God’s faithful followers, the Church with whom He closely associates as the Head of that body (Eph 1:22–23; Col 1:18), one encounters the christological-ecclesiological fulfillment of Ezek 38–39, because Gog and Magog take the face of the enemies of Christ and His Church.<sup>52</sup>

The spirit of rebellion against God’s people can be discovered in situations of crisis throughout history. It is sufficient to illustrate the point with a few examples: (1) Nero’s persecution of the Early Church; (2) the dominant Medieval Church’s fight against the Valdenses, Husites, or the Reformation; (3) communism’s attempts to crush religion

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<sup>50</sup> For the enlargement of true Israel by the joining of believing Gentiles, see an excellent study of Doukhan, *Mystery of Israel*; idem, *Israel and the Church: Two Voices for the Same God*. Doukhan profoundly explains the devastating consequences of supercessionist or replacement theory.

<sup>51</sup> Boersma correctly says that “the one flock, gathered from Israel, from the Jews and from the Gentiles, will be a further fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy” (112).

<sup>52</sup> This activity is a reminder of the antigodly behavior of the little horn of Dan 7–8 who persecutes God’s people and fights against the law of God (Dan 7:21, 25; 8:24–25).

It is significant to notice that the New Testament authors apply Ezekiel’s prediction of the cleansing of the land of Israel to the church of Christ (Titus 2:14; Eph 5:26; Heb 9:14). See also Boersma, 108–109.

and God's followers. In all of these crucial moments of history, the survival and victory of God's people was unexpected. The conspiracy against the faithful followers of God who responded in obedience to Him and His law failed. During those perilous situations, one can ultimately recognize God's protective hand on behalf of His people.

Thus, there are multiple pre-fulfillments of Ezek 38–39 during the history of the Church. When the situation is analogical in principle, one can discern preliminary fulfillment of the prophecy about Gog and Magog. It is important to stress that these fulfillments are only partial or typological since these multiple fulfillments in principle are anticipating the complete, or full-fulfillment of the prophecy in the eschatological time when God intervenes in fullness to definitely defeat and annihilate all God's enemies under the leadership of Satan. The remaining section of this chapter will take a closer look at the eschatological/apocalyptic final and primary fulfillment described in the book of Revelation.<sup>53</sup>

### **The Fulfillment of the Prophecy:**

#### **The Eschatological-Apocalyptic Fulfillment in Two Phases**

The prophecy of Ezek 38–39 has two eschatological-apocalyptic fulfillments—one connected with the second coming of Christ, and another associated with the end of the millennium. We need to ask how and where the prophecy of Ezekiel on Gog is interpreted in the apocalyptic book of Revelation.

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<sup>53</sup> It is highly significant to note that the vocabulary, echoes, imagery, concepts, themes, pre-texts, and allusions of the book of Ezekiel are used very often in the book of Revelation, even though verses from the book of Ezekiel are not directly quoted in Revelation. Consult Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece* ([Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1979], 764–765); Albert Vanhoye, "L'utilisation du livre d'Ezechiel dans l'Apocalypse," *Biblica* 43/3 (1962): 436–476; C. Mackay, "Ezekiel in the New Testament," *Church Quarterly Review* 162 (January–March 1961): 4–16; Bøe, 6–19; Marko Jauhiainen, *The Use of Zechariah in Revelation*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2, Reihe, 199 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); Jean Pierre Ruiz, *Ezechiel in the Apocalypse: The Transformation of Prophetic Language in Revelation 16,17–19,10*, European University Studies, Series 23, Theology (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1989), 11–180; and Dieter Säger, ed., *Das Ezechielbuch in der Johannesoffenbarung*, Biblisch-theologische Studien 76 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2006).

Ruiz writes that Revelation is the New Testament book that "uses the Old Testament the most, while citing it the least" (63). Ellen G. White claims that "in the Revelation all the books of the Bible meet and end" (*The Acts of Apostles* [Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1911], 585).

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**1. The Pre-millennial Fulfillment.** (a) The events described in Ezek 38:19–22a<sup>54</sup> find their echo in Rev 16:18–21, where terms like “great earthquake,” “hailstones,” “fiery wrath,” “plague,” “mountains,” are used.<sup>55</sup> Significantly, the new symbolic term “Babylon” (Rev 16:19) is employed in this passage instead of “Gog and Magog.”<sup>56</sup> The great hailstones mentioned in Ezek 38:22a are referred to in the seventh plague, when hail weighing about a talent will magnify the destruction already wrought (Rev 16:21). The fire may be the “lightning” of Rev 16:18.<sup>57</sup>

In Ezekiel God’s intervention swiftly and completely devastates Gog and his allies; however, in Rev 16 the seven plagues gradually strike the wicked. The horizon is broadened so that the final destruction of the wicked will be universal as the last plague takes place at the second coming of Jesus Christ, during which all the wicked will die (2 Thess 1:7–9; 2:8–10; 2 Pet 3:11–12; Rev 19:20). The eschatological universal battle is presented apocalyptically: a major earthquake takes place, the cities collapse, every island flees away, the mountains are thrown down, the hailstones fall (Rev 16:17–21). However, the people of God do not need to enter into the battle, according to the further depiction of the fall of

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<sup>54</sup> Ezekiel 38:22 reflects God’s judgment upon Sodom in Gen 19:24. See Joyce, 215.

<sup>55</sup> See Bøe, 5, 274–276; Ruiz, 261–265; Jan Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and their Development*. JSNTSS 93 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic P, 1994), 121–125; Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, JSNTSS 115 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic P, 1995), 122; Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. The New International Greek Text Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 976; George Wesley Buchanan, *The Book of Revelation: Its Introduction and Prophecy*, The Mellen Biblical Commentary: Intertextual (Lewiston: Mellen Biblical P, 1993), 440.

Behind Rev 16:18–21 is also the plague sequence of the Exodus story as well as the theophany language at Sinai (Exod 7–13; 19:16–19; 20:18). See Ruiz, 258–291; Moyise, 123–124. However, several echoes of Ezek 38 in Rev 16 make the Old Testament background clear. Ruiz points to the following correspondences of both texts: (1) actions are the manifestations of God’s wrath; (2) reference to earthquakes; (3) effects of the earthquakes on the mountains; and (4) hail is part of God’s judgment (Ruiz, 263–265).

<sup>56</sup> It is interesting that in the book of Ezekiel there is no oracle against Babylon in the section regarding foreign nations (chs. 25–32). John uses names of the Old Testament in a symbolic way, like “Jezebel” (2:20) and “Balaam” (2:14).

<sup>57</sup> In Rev 16 the description culminates with the second coming of Christ (the seventh plague). It is important to note that also other New Testament writers portray fearful cataclysmic events with dramatic convulsions of nature that will precede the coming of the Son of Man (Luke 21:25,26; 2 Thess 1:5–11; 2 Pet 3:10–14). See also the description of this situation in a developed imagery described by Ellen G. White in *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1950), 638.

Babylon in Rev 17, because panic breaks loose in “Babylon’s” army, and they strike each other down (17:16–18).

The relationship between Ezek 38–39 and Rev 16 is further strengthened by the battle description.<sup>58</sup> Revelation 16:12 notes that the great river Euphrates will dry up to prepare the way for the kings from the East.<sup>59</sup> The Euphrates was a river in Babylon that flowed from the north. According to Rev 17:15, water is a symbol for nations. In the book of Ezekiel, these nations from the north are Gog’s allies, paralleling the Euphrates river of Rev 16:12. The drying up of the river would be referring to Gog’s loss of support. In the same way as the army turned on one another in Ezek 38:21b, so will the followers of the beast have an internal fight, according to Rev 17:16. This is a picture of the division and a foreshadowing of Gog’s ultimate judgment of destruction and annihilation. The judgment is clearly described in the seventh plague, where Babylon is Gog, and ch. 17 depicts the punishment of this great Antichrist’s power. Fisch aptly comments on the text of Ezek 38:21: “In the panic created by God’s presence, the heathen hordes will not distinguish between friend and foe but wildly strike with their swords, killing one another. This happened in the past (cf. Judg vii.22; 1 Sam xiv.20).”<sup>60</sup>

(b) The prophecy of Ezek 38–39 is further applied in Rev 19 to the events closely related to the second coming of Christ. Revelation 19:17–18 implements the imagery and phraseology of Ezek 39:17–20 about the

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<sup>58</sup> The battle of Armageddon in Rev 16 describes the same situation of the opposition of the wicked, who behave like Gog and Magog in Ezekiel’s prophecy, to the people of God. This analogical situation relates Rev 16 with its seven last plagues to Ezek 38–39.

<sup>59</sup> A historical type of this occurred when Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. On the fall of Babylon, see James B. Prichard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. with suppl. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969), 306; Herodotus, *The History*, trans. David Grene (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987), 1.191; and Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1914), 7.5.15, 29–30.

<sup>60</sup> Solomon Fisch, *Ezekiel; Hebrew Text & English Translation with an Introduction and Commentary*, Soncino Books of the Bible Series (London: Soncino, 1950), 258. He also states that “the universal panic will be caused by God’s manifestation in behalf of Israel” (257). On God’s judgments upon His people and/or pagan nations, see, for example, Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 22 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 363–388; idem, *Ezekiel 21–37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 22A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 415–449, 572–593; Iain M. Duguid, *Ezekiel. The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 447–450.

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animal “banquet.”<sup>61</sup> In this passage, the prophecy refers to the conflict between the followers of Jesus Christ and their enemies: “the beast,” “the false prophet,” and “the kings of the earth.” These are new names for Gog and Magog. In both passages the birds are invited to the great supper of God.<sup>62</sup> In Ezek 39 birds eat the defeated forces of Gog and his allies, while in Rev 19 birds prey on the defeated army of the beast and the false prophet who are thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur (Rev 19:20). Imagery of the banquet interconnects this prophecy with other biblical authors (Isa 34:5–11; Jer 46:10; Lam 2:21–22; Zeph 1:7–9), but the parallel between Ezek 39 and Rev 19 is the most specific.<sup>63</sup> Revelation 19:19 describes the conspiracy of the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, who together with the false prophet have gathered to make war against Christ and those who are with Him. Then Rev 19:20–21 depicts God’s intervention and their total defeat.

The new names for Gog and Magog in the bird’s banquet imagery (the beast and the false prophet) lead into the whole corpus of prophecy about the beast, the false prophet, and their interconnection, especially in Rev 13, where the plot to put God’s people to death is pictured (Rev

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<sup>61</sup> This intertextuality is plainly attested. See Buchanan, 511; Bøe, 276–277. The “great supper of God” (Rev 19:17) is in sharp contrast to the “wedding supper of the Lamb” (Rev 19:7).

It is interesting that in Ezekiel this banquet is called “the sacrifice” or “the great sacrifice” or “my table” (39:17–20). Even though the drinking of blood was included, this activity was strictly forbidden during the sacrificial meal in Israel (Lev 7:26–27; 17:10–14; 19:26; Deut 12:16; 15:23). Thus, Ezekiel’s description is actually a parody on the genuine sacrificial feast. Fisch interprets that “my feast” literally means “my sacrifice” and states: “The two ideas are interconnected, since one was usually the occasion of the other” (262). On the other hand, the drinking of blood is omitted in Rev 19 (only the eating of flesh is retained) in order to not create any association with the celebration of the “Lord’s supper” when symbols of flesh and blood are partaken.

<sup>62</sup> In Ezek 39 birds and beasts are invited to prey on dead bodies, but in Rev 19 only birds are mentioned in order that the reader would be not confused and try to identify these creatures with beasts of Rev 13.

<sup>63</sup> Thus Bøe, 378: “It is true that the phenomenon of birds and beasts eating the flesh of dead soldiers can be found here and there in ancient literature, but Ezek 39, 17–20 is unique in the highly elaborated way it uses the topic, as well as in the insistence on seeing this as God’s enterprise. We have not found any other ancient text which takes up this thematic except for Ezek 39, Rev 19, 17–21 and a short note in the *Sibylline Oracles* 3 (cf. ch. 5,3,1). . . . John is making use of Ezekiel’s invitation, not only of a common theme. . . . This use appears to be conscious on John’s part.” Bøe came to this unequivocal conclusion on the basis of the penetrating comparative study on the topic. See Bøe, 276–300.

13:15–17).<sup>64</sup> Revelation 14:9 describes the power opposing the three angels' messages as "the beast and the image of the beast," and Rev 17 presents God's judgment upon Babylon, because Gog here represents those who are engaged in a false system of worship.<sup>65</sup> Thus, John clearly uses the imagery of the prophecy of Ezek 38–39, but changes the terminology to avoid any confusion with the Antichrist powers. Only in Rev 20, in the climactic depiction of the antigodly powers, does he actually employ the terms "Gog and Magog."<sup>66</sup> Since John's readers should have been familiar with Ezekiel's apocalyptic prophecy, he thus reinterpreted the account of Ezek 38–39 without distorting the original intent of the prophecy by pointing to an ultimate eschatological/apocalyptic fulfillment.<sup>67</sup>

**2. The Post-millennial Fulfillment.** Revelation 20:8–10 describes a final, complete, and definitive fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy regarding Gog and his antagonistic forces. The names of Gog and Magog<sup>68</sup> are employed as a collective term for every foe of God and His faithful people. The culmination depicts the last judgment of God when Satan, described in the book of Revelation as the archenemy of God (Rev 12:7–12), and all his allies are destroyed. The devil has been the leader of the opposition, standing behind acts of rebellion from the very beginning.

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<sup>64</sup> Gog's disguised attacks are aimed especially against God's faithful remnant (Rev 12:17; 14:12; 17:14).

<sup>65</sup> In the book of Revelation, Gog and Magog are spiritual Babylon (a very broad term which covers like an umbrella all other antigodly symbols)—a false apostate religious system in all forms that persecutes those who believe or think differently. It is a system that fights against God's law, is proud, and uses state power to enforce its requirements. Babylon is everywhere people try to be saved and reach heaven by their own works, achievements, obedience, or performance (see Gen 11:4; Dan 1:1–2; 7:25; 8:11–12; Rev 17:1–6; 18:7).

<sup>66</sup> For the list of correspondences and differences between Rev 19:17–21 and 20:7–10, see Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 394.

<sup>67</sup> For further discussion, see commentaries of David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52c (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 1046–1050, 1093–1108; Buchanan, 440, 536–554; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 348–350, 360–367; Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 2002), 549–572.

<sup>68</sup> The rhyming word-pair "Gog and Magog" is a hapax legomenon in the whole Bible. However, the study of the LXX opens "the way for a shift away from 'Gog from the land of Magog' over to 'Gog and Magog', like we find it in Revelation as well as in some other parts of the Gog and Magog traditions" (Bøe, 385). See his discussion of the matter on pages 133 and 312–315.



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Gog and Magog in Rev 20 are more than just a confederacy of a few nations, they have evolved into an universal symbol representing God's eschatological enemies.

In Rev 20 Gog and Magog fight against the New Jerusalem, whereas in Ezek 38–39 they fight against the “mountains of Israel.”<sup>69</sup> But the most important thing is not the city or the mountains, but the people who live there. The emphasis is on the people, the true remnant of God, and the city or the mountains are only the setting or frame of the real context. Gog attacks God's people, who are the center of attraction because they belong to Him.<sup>70</sup> Ezekiel 38:12 hints at the city of Jerusalem when noting that the enemies are going to attack people “living at the center of the land.” If so, then the earthly Jerusalem in Ezek 38–39 is replaced by the New Jerusalem in Rev 20.

In Revelation there is a constant play with numbers.<sup>71</sup> The number seven is dominant (seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven plagues, etc.). It is interesting that the numerical value of the Hebrew letters of the phrase “Gog and Magog” is seventy (7 x 10).<sup>72</sup> Seventy is the number of nations listed in the table of nations in Gen 10 (the Japhethites are fourteen nations; the Hamites form thirty nations, and the Semites twenty-six nations). Thus, seventy nations symbolize the totality of nations, and in the case of Rev 20, all the wicked people and nations who have ever rebelled against God.

Revelation 20 explains the meaning of Gog and Magog more fully. In Ezekiel Gog rises from the north along with other nations, but in Revelation they come from the four corners of the earth. Louis Were rightly argues that “the number four is employed in the Scripture for the whole world.”<sup>73</sup> It means that Ezekiel's prophecy is made universal in Revelation. As the second coming of Christ and the final judgment is a

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<sup>69</sup> In Ezekiel the term “mountains of Israel” plays an important role. He uses this phrase in a double sense: (1) literal—real mountains; (2) metaphorical—the people of Israel (36:1,8,9; 6:2,8; etc.) Therefore the expression “against the mountains of Israel” and “against Israel” are parallel. This expression is a synecdoche.

<sup>70</sup> Otzen thinks that Ezek 38 and 39 are based on a tradition in which the nations attack Jerusalem (424).

<sup>71</sup> On the symbolism of numbers, see John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968).

<sup>72</sup> “Gog” (3 + 6 + 3 = 12); “and” (6); “Magog” (40 + 3 + 6 + 3 = 52): 12 + 6 + 52 = 70.

<sup>73</sup> Were, *The Certainty*, 207.

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cosmic event, so is the destruction of Gog's forces at the second coming and at the end of the millennium.<sup>74</sup> In this sense,

the prophecy of Ezek 38–39 does not concern merely the Middle East, but is a prophecy comprehending the *whole* world. All the Hebrew prophets present the *world-wide* scenes of the last days in a Palestinian setting and, . . . the Revelation employs the local scenes of the Old Testament in predicting the world-wide events of the last days.<sup>75</sup>

The local stands as a type for the global. Thus, the definition of Gog and Magog becomes clear: according to Rev. 20:8, Gog and Magog are symbolic names for the hosts of the wicked of all generations of the humankind who oppose God Himself and His people.<sup>76</sup>

**Summary and Conclusion**

The prophecy of Ezek 38–39 describes the failure of the confederacy of Gog and his allies against Israel because God intervenes on behalf of His people and utterly destroys their enemies.<sup>77</sup> This prediction of attack and defeat, however, never occurred in history, even though it could have

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<sup>74</sup> Boersma is right when he states: "Throughout history God will destroy the power of the Antichrist and he will definitely do so during the consummation. Ezekiel's prophecy will not be completely fulfilled until fire descends from heaven to consume the nations from the four corners of the earth, that is, Gog and Magog, Rev. 20:7–10" (124).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Taylor, 245: "Gog is to be understood as the personification of the cosmic forces of evil."

<sup>77</sup> What is described in Ezekiel and Revelation after Gog's defeat? Ezekiel 40–48 focuses on the temple, whose Holy of Holies is most probably in the form of a cube (Ezek 41:3–4; compare with 1 Kgs 6:20), and in Rev 21–22 the emphasis is on the New Jerusalem, which may be also in the form of a cube (Rev 20:16). John does not see the temple in the New Jerusalem (Rev 20:22) because the whole city is the temple. The local temple of Ezekiel's vision is made universal in the book of Revelation (see Gregory K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004], 23–26). In both cases, it is underlined that God dwells among his people! The last sentence of Ezekiel's prophecy ends: "The Lord is there" (48:35), and Rev 21:3 affirms: "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God." Thus, it is significant that both biblical books end with the Gog's battle, the vision about the New Jerusalem/Temple, and the Presence of God.

See also George R. Beasley-Murry, *The Book of Revelation*, New Century Bible New Series (London: Oliphants, 1974), 297; and George B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine*, Harper's New Testament Commentaries (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 256.

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happened under different circumstances. But this potential historical situation serves as a type for a threefold fulfillment: (1) in Christ (the Personified Israel and the Representative of Israel)—the christological fulfillment; (2) in the church (Israel consisting of believing Jews and Gentiles)—the ecclesiological fulfillment; and (3) at the time of the end in two phases (at the second coming of Christ and at the end of the millennium)—the antitypical eschatological/apocalyptic fulfillment. The first two fulfillments are only fulfillments in principle, but the third one is the primary or full-fulfillment.

This study demonstrates that the cross, the central point in salvation history, enlarged the application of the prophecy concerning Gog and Magog. Before the cross it referred to a literal war in Palestine against Israel as a nation, but after the cross it describes the eschatological war against God and His people. John's triple usage of Ezek 38–39 in chs. 16, 19, and 20, makes it evident that he deliberately employs its imagery and interprets it.<sup>78</sup> He universalizes Ezekiel's prophecy. Gog and Magog are no longer local political enemies of ethnic Israel, but eschatological adversaries of all generations of the wicked people from Adam to the second coming of Christ who stubbornly rebel against God, His values, and His faithful followers. Bøe's final conclusion in his study stresses this point: "John is the first writer known to us who leaves the ethnic and national understanding of Gog and Magog as the enemy of Israel."<sup>79</sup>

Thus, the phrase "Gog and Magog," used at the culmination point in Revelation, is the cipher or code under which God's hostile forces are masking but manifested historically on many occasions, in various characters, figures, and symbols. The activities of Antiochus IV Epiphanes provide a fitting example of it, and he may be understood as a partial fulfillment of Gog's prophecy and a prelude to the antagonistic powers like

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<sup>78</sup> Bøe, 381: "The cluster of allusions to Ezekiel 38–39 found in Revelation 19,17–21 and 20,7–10, together with the reference to Ezekiel's oracles in the use of the names Gog and Magog in Rev 20,8, point to a deliberate and reflected meditation on Ezekiel's prophecies." Revelation's threefold usage of Gog's prophecy in 16:18–21; 19:17–20, and 20:7–10 provides solid hermeneutical guidance, backs our methodology, and shields against eisegesis. Many scholars recognize that Ezek 38–39 is used in these three places in Revelation: see, for example, Randall Fowler White, *Victory and House Building in Revelation 20:1–21:8: A Thematic Study (Millennialism)* (Ph.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1987), 149–151; G. K. Beale and Sean M. McDonough, "Revelation," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, eds. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 1137, 1144, 1149.

<sup>79</sup> Bøe, 388. He explains: "This harmonizes with the nature of the people of God throughout Revelation, being a universal rather than an ethnic group of people" (ibid.).

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the little horn of Dan 7–8, the beasts of Rev 13, and Babylon of the book of Revelation. From the time of Jesus, who tasted the full attack of Gog and Magog forces in principle, this disguised Antichrist power was growing in intensity and magnitude. Throughout history, by analogy of situation, one can discern the Antichrist's power at work (from Nero's persecution, through different attacks on the faithful followers of God by the Inquisition, to the atheistic and communist persecution, Christian and Islamic extremism, and religious terrorism).<sup>80</sup> There are institutions, nations, communities, denominations, societies, regimes, atheism, capitalism, materialism, spiritualism, and other kinds of isms that may stand in opposition against God and His people; and in this case, it is a situation where the principles of Gog's prophecy apply. This application in principle does not preclude a particular apocalyptic fulfillment at the end of time; on the contrary, it leads to it (see figure 1).

Figure 2 depicts the development and growth of Gog's power. The apostasy and enmity of this antigodly force matures, ripens, and builds to a crescendo in the last generation at the end of the world's history. This generation will attack God's people during the battle of Harmageddon. However, this rebellion will climax after the millennium with the all-encompassing generations of the evil-doers aligned against God and His followers who live securely in the New Jerusalem. With the passage of time, Gog incorporates all unrepentant sinners and becomes a symbol for the whole rebellious world. This happens, however, in progression and involves a long-growing process.

The fulfillment of the Gog and Magog prophecy in Revelation is a perfect description of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, a war with many battles. The outcome of this war, described under a mosaic of different symbols, leads to either life or death. Jesus is the Victor, since He won the key battle of this war when He died on the cross. God's love, truth, and justice triumphed and will conquer once again (Rev 17:14). He is the Victor of the ultimate war, and everyone who chooses Him, identifies and stands with Him, can share in His victory (Rev 3:20–21; 12:10–11; 16:15).<sup>81</sup>

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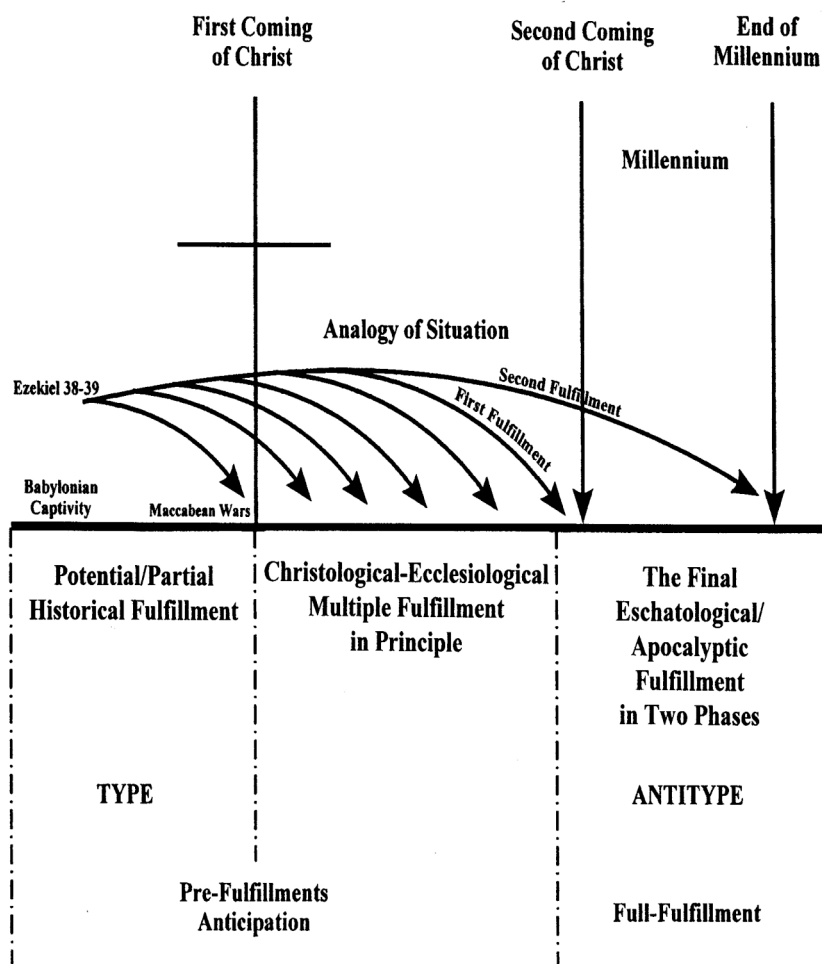
<sup>80</sup> Greig correctly says that "atheistic communism could well find a place among this depiction of the enemies of God, but it is the referent of a symbol much more encompassing than communism itself" (14–15).

<sup>81</sup> See George E. Vandeman, *Showdown in the Middle East* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1980), 16.

Satan makes an effort to mislead believers regarding the true nature of prophecy. In our days, his plans are the same as they were when Jesus came into the world for the first

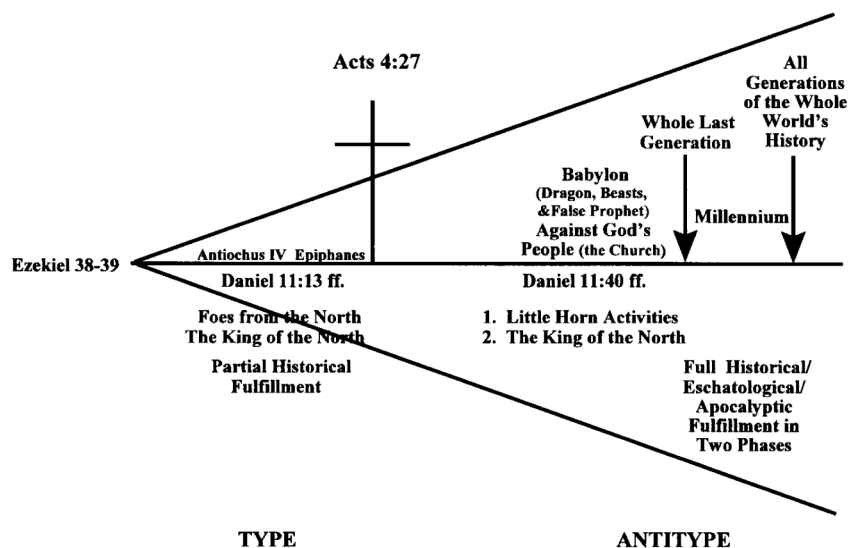
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Figure 1



time. At that time, God's people believed in a political Messiah, and thus they were diverted from essential spiritual truth into political events, selfish ambitions, and their own interests. This kind of seduction is also present in our time when believers are misled to interpret Ezekiel's prophecy about Gog and Magog as political events in Palestine: as the war between West and East, as God's judgment upon Russia and its allies. Such a view is popular among some Christians (especially among the dispensationalists) and politicians, but it leads to a cheap religious sensationalism and not to Christ.

Figure 2



← This figure means the enlargement and growing of the Antichrist power.

In spite of the judgment scenario of Ezek 38–39, this passage brings a message of hope, because it assures God’s people that the Lord will ultimately destroy all who destroy the qualities of life (Rev 11:18). He is the Sovereign Ruler and in control of history. His victory is certain and incontestable as it depends on Him, not on us humans! He will accomplish His purposes. He will intervene in human history on behalf of His people at the apocalyptic time of the end. When God’s victory is complete, then every knee will go down before God and acknowledge that His judgments are just (Phil 2:10–11; Rev 15:3–4). Thus, the leading tone of Ezekiel’s prophecy is comforting.<sup>82</sup> This prophecy demonstrates

<sup>82</sup> Hummel aptly states: “What has happened is that Ezekiel’s prophecy of a penultimate event in human history (‘the latter years/days,’ 38:8, 16) has become a prophecy of the final, ultimate, universal victory by the Messiah over the cosmic forces of evil. In NT context, this means that the victory of Jesus won on Calvary over our sin, death, and the devil is in principle complete (‘it is finished,’ John 19:30), but still awaits its consummation at the end of human history. Every time we partake of Eucharist, we proleptically

*MOSKALA: THE GOG AND MAGOG PROPHECY*

God's wonderful love and care for His people as well as His sovereignty, victory, greatness, and power.

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join the celestial victors in 'a foretaste of the feast to come'" (1103). Edward J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 247: "It reveals clearly to us Christians how strong are the principalities and powers that would overthrow us. Yet this fact should not cause us discouragement, since the greatness of our foes only serves to reveal to us again how much greater our God is." On this message of hope with practical applications, see Lamar Eugene Cooper, Sr., *Ezekiel: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, The New American Commentary, vol. 17 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 345–348.