

JWB

World War III in Prophecy

Radio Sermons



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FOREWORD:

“Wars and Rumors of Wars”

During the closing days of His earthly ministry the Lord Jesus Christ was asked some questions by His disciples. *“And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world (age)?”* Matt. 24:3.

The Lord answered, “Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars.” The time period preceding His return and the end of this age will be marked with wars and rumors of wars. Jesus *did not* predict a time of world peace.

There have been two world wars since the beginning of this century. Will other world conflicts take place before the Lord finally stands upon the Mount of Olives to take charge of the kingdoms of the world? Yes, Scripture indicates that two more world conflicts *must* take place. These are still in the future, but, from today’s political climate, they do not appear to be far in the future. We designate these conflicts “World War III” and “World War IV.”

Russia will seek to invade Israel. Russia will be the nucleus of a confederacy seeking to destroy God’s chosen people. “World War III in Prophecy” is the theme of several ancient prophets, namely, Daniel, Joel, Isaiah and Ezekiel.

Ezekiel devotes two consecutive chapters to a description of that invasion. Here we find a detailed prophetic picture of World War III, and Ezekiel wrote these words almost 2,600 years ago! Never has this picture been clearer than today. In the chapters that follow, we will review Ezekiel’s prophecy of the coming conflict in the light of the current world political situation.

1.

The Northern Confederacy of Israel's Enemies

"And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee." Ezek. 38:1-6.

Ezekiel's prophecy of Israel's invasion by the northern confederacy is contained in the last division of his book (Chapters 34-48). Ezekiel 34 speaks of the rulers of God's chosen nation. Chapter 35 emphasizes the enemies of this people. Ezekiel 36 relates the nation's conversion. In Ezekiel 37 the inspired writer gives the prophecy of the nation resurrected. Chapters 38 and 39 consider God's chosen people in God's chosen land and the attempt of the northern confederacy to wrest that land from its rightful owners. Ezekiel 40 through 48 (the closing section of the prophecy) concerns the sanctuary that will exist in the kingdom of Messiah.

Ezekiel 38 and 39 tell of the coming northern confederacy of nations and the invasion of the Promised Land after Israel's restoration to it. This is the prophetic record of World War III.

Ezekiel opens his prophecy by identifying the source of his authority: "And the word of the Lord came unto me."

The words he was about to write came directly from God.

“Extension” and “Expansion”

The Lord told Ezekiel to deliver a message against a man and his kingdom. That man is “Gog” and his kingdom is “Magog.” The meanings of these two Hebrew names are uncertain. “Gog” has been said to mean “Extension,” and “Magog” has been said to mean “Expansion.” If these are correct, the terms might well point to the ruler of a vast territory, greater perhaps than that over which anyone else holds authority. This in itself provides a very powerful clue as to the identity of the nation being addressed by the LORD. From the standpoint of the size of the territory included, the most “extensive” and “expansive” political system in the world today is communism, headed by the nation of Russia.

Ezekiel does not leave us with just the probable meaning of these Hebrew names. Verse 2 calls Gog “the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.” The Hebrew word translated “chief” is *Rosh*, which means “head” or “chief.” However, this word may be either a common noun or a proper noun. The Hebrew text gives strong indication that it should be treated here as a proper noun, that is, a proper name. Ezekiel 38:2 would then read, “Son of man, set thy face toward Gog, the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him.”

The Hebrew word *Rosh* is believed to be the root of the name “Russia.” Genesis 10 gives Biblical identification for the above names: “*Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth: and unto them were sons born after the flood.*” The sons of Japheth are given in verse 2 as Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal and Meshech. The names in Ezekiel 38:2 are sons of Japheth. This is significant because ethnologists tell us that instead of going to the south, as did the Shemites and Hamites, the Japhethites moved to the north and became the people of the north. They went beyond the Caucasus Mountains and established their civilization beyond the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, in the area of Rosh, which we know today as modern Russia.

The first century historian Josephus identifies Japheth's son Magog with the Scythian tribes that were located in the region of the Black and Caspian seas. This area is due north of Israel, where the major cities of Russia are located today. The name "Moscow" is a modern form of the Hebrew word "Meshech." The Russian province that we call "Tobolsk" is derived from the Hebrew word "Tubal." There seems to be little reason to doubt that these ancient tribes were the progenitors of the peoples in both Europe and Asia, who eventually were welded into the "extensive" and "expansive" Russia of today.

"The Uttermost Part of the North"

Ezekiel also provides geographical information that points to the land of Russia. In Ezekiel 38:6 we read that the house of Togarmah is of the "northern quarters." Then, in verse 15, those armies under Gog are said to come "from thy place out of the north parts." And again, in Ezekiel 39:2, the Lord says He will cause Gog's armies "to come up from the north parts." The Hebrew expression translated "north quarters" in Ezekiel 38:6 and "north parts" in the other two references is the same. Literally, it should be translated "the uttermost part of the north" or "the extreme north." The expression designates an exact geographical location, not just a direction. A line drawn northward from any part of the land of Israel soon extends into the territory of Russia. And Russia extends beyond the Arctic Circle. There is no other territory that could possibly be designated as "the uttermost parts of the north." Geographically, Russia is positively identified.

God's message through Ezekiel is addressed to the political leader of Russia. Ezekiel is told to "prophesy against" this man, saying, "*Thus saith the Lord God; behold I am against thee, O Gog, the (chief) prince of (Rosh), Meshech, and Tubal: and I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords.*"

It is the words of the Lord GOD, not Ezekiel, that are spoken against Russia and her political leader. God is about to do a mighty work through this enemy of Himself and His people. But even though Russia is to be an object lesson for all the world, God declares that He stands against that "extensive" and "expansive" kingdom of Satan.

The scene God describes is that of preparation for military conquest. Russia is about to invade the land of Israel. God will use the evil and greedy nature of this materialistic empire to bring about His own purposes. God is in full control, and His power will bring about the world conflict pictured in this passage.

God Is In Control

In verse 4 God declares, "And I will turn thee back (or 'turn thee around'), and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth." The Russian beast is to be controlled by an external intelligence. God says, "I will turn thee around." He will dictate the direction of the war effort. I will "put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth." Just as one places a bit in the mouth of a horse he intends to control, God will put hooks into the jaws of Gog and Magog. Thus He will assume positive control over the movement of this war machine. The armies will be brought forth from the land of Russia as they attempt to accomplish their evil purpose against the land of God's people.

God says He will drive forth "all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords." The army is fully equipped. There is an infantry and a cavalry. A great multitude of horses and horsemen are in this invasion. The army is clothed with "all sorts of armour." This expression allows for many kinds of modern weapons which Ezekiel could not have adequately described in the words of his day. "All sorts of armour" could include tanks, armored vehicles and airplanes. That seems to be brought out by Ezekiel 38:9. "Thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land."

Russia is not to be alone in this movement against God's chosen nation. Five allied nations are mentioned by name. In addition to these, God tells this invading nation that they are also to have "many people with thee."

Several Allies Are Named

Who are these allies? They are mentioned specifically by name in verses 5 and 6: Persia, Ethiopia, Libya, Gomer and Togarmah and "all his bands." We have no trouble identifying Persia because that name continued until after the turn of the century for that specific land ~~south~~ and east of Palestine. Persia is modern day Iran. ~~south~~ north

Iran until just recently was considered a firm ally of the Western powers. Yet in a short span of a few months the Shah was deposed from the throne, and a "democratic Moslem state" has been set up there. This state has shown both enmity to the Western allies and a growing friendship toward the Soviet powers. The prophecy that Persia would be allied with Russia in World War III seemed remote only a few months ago. Yet today such an alliance is not only possible but probable.

"Ethiopia" and "Libya" are used in two different senses in the Old Testament. They were nations in Africa known as Ethiopia and Libya and their names continue to the present time. But there were also states adjacent to Persia that were known as Ethiopia and Libya. In Exodus we are told that when Moses had to flee from Egypt because he had slain an Egyptian, he went into the wilderness and married an Ethiopian. He did not go south into African Ethiopia, but rather that Ethiopia in the Arabian peninsula. There he married an Ethiopian who was a Shemite.

Although Ezekiel's prophecy could refer to African Ethiopia and Libya, it is more likely that he was speaking of the ancient Arab states. In the political climate of today, some Arab nations to the east and south of Israel are most definitely oriented with the Russian communist bloc.

“Gomer” and “Togarmah” are also listed. Gomer is named as the first son of Japheth in Genesis 10:2. Gomer is associated with the Germanic people, and this name would pertain to the Iron Curtain countries of eastern Europe, particularly East Germany. “Togarmah” has been associated with the Turkish peninsula and the provinces of southern Russia. It is likely that Togarmah can be identified with modern Turkey.

No Mention of Egypt

God goes on to say that there will be “many people with thee.” There will be allies other than those mentioned by name. Notice one curious thing about this prophecy. Egypt is not mentioned among the antagonists.

Again, until recently, Egypt was considered firmly in the camp of Israel’s enemies. Just as Persia (Iran) has made a recent move from one camp to the other, so has the nation Egypt. In our day there seems to be a very definite alignment toward the exact confederacy described in the words God gave through Ezekiel.

When is this invasion of the northern confederacy to take place? Has the prophecy been fulfilled already? The answer to the second question is, “No.” Israel has been the scene of many wars. Invasions have come from various parts of the world, north, east, west and south. Soldiers from all directions have crossed the nation of Israel throughout history. The Bible bears record of many of these wars. Others have occurred since the canon of Scripture was closed.

But none of these wars correspond to Ezekiel’s predictions. The fulfillment of his prophecy is still future.

The answer to the question concerning when this invasion is to take place is found in the continuing verses of Ezekiel’s prophecy. World War III is yet to come. The relationship of this prophecy to that of the regathering and regeneration of Israel (which precedes these chapters) strongly suggests that

this military conflict follows the regathering and regeneration of the faithful remnant. This would place the invasion after the rapture of the church and after the beginning of the tribulation. The further words of Ezekiel's prophecy confirm this time setting.

2.

The Invasion In "The Latter Years"

"Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them. After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them. Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee." Ezek. 38:7-9.

There is biting irony in Ezekiel's message of instruction to Gog to be fully prepared for the coming encounter. He was to see to it that all was in readiness as far as his confederates were concerned. He was to be a "guard" (literally their leader and commander) to them all.

Previously, God made it clear that He was in control. He has selected the time and the situation for this military encounter. God will use the evil within Gog himself to fulfill this prophecy. He said, "And I will turn thee around, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth."

Gog can never complain that the Lord God gave him inadequate time for the preparation. The God of heaven will

bring Russia and her confederates into Palestine because He is going to use these allied armies as the greatest object lesson this world has ever seen. But the invasion was not to occur in the immediate future from Ezekiel's standpoint. Centuries — even millennia — would pass before God brings about this encounter to demonstrate His power to protect His people.

Verse 8 provides an abundance of important details. First, God's notation of time indicates that the attack of the enemy would not take place for a long time. The actual events of the prophecy were not to be expected in the lifetime of Ezekiel or his contemporaries.

Two notations of time are made. "*After many days* thou shalt be visited" shows that a long period of time is to intervene between the giving of the prophecy and the fulfillment of it. Ezekiel, a contemporary of the Prophet Daniel, wrote these words in the sixth century B.C. During the same time period Daniel prophesied concerning the earthly history of God's chosen people. Daniel's prophecies leave a great "time parenthesis" between the first coming of Messiah and the testing that is to precede the second coming of Messiah, that time period which Scripture designates as "the seventieth week of Daniel." "After many days" indicates that the "time parenthesis" of the church age is not omitted in this prediction.

God's Power Will Be Exercised

The prophesied events that are to occur "after many days" constitute a "visitation" from the Lord. The Hebrew verb used is the usual one for a visitation, either in blessing or punishment. It refers to a time when God's power will be exercised upon the one receiving the visitation. God has emphasized that He and He alone will bring about the military invasion for which Gog is to "be prepared."

The second time designation is distinctly stated as being "in the latter years." Verse 8. This is equivalent to "the latter days" of verse 16. Both expressions designate a specific

prophetic time period, not just an interval of time as does the expression "after many days." This is significant in understanding the predicted time of this invasion. The "latter years" and the "latter days" refer to the latter time period of God's dealings with His chosen people Israel.

Daniel designated this time period as "the seventieth week," which refers to the final seven years of Israel's national existence prior to the setting up of Messiah's kingdom. These last seven years are separated from Israel's previous 483 years ("69 weeks") by an indefinite parenthesis of time. When "Messiah the prince" was "cut off" at the end of the 69th week, the time of Israel's national existence was interrupted to make way for this present age of God's grace and for God's program for the church. The last seven years of Israel's national existence prior to the setting up of Messiah's kingdom (Daniel's "seventieth week") are still future. These seven years are referred to as "the latter years" and "the latter days." Scripture also refers to these seven years as the tribulation. The Russian invasion of Israel will take place during the tribulation.

It is "after many days" that the northern confederation will be formed. It is in "the latter years" after Israel returns to the land, after the church has been removed from the earth, during the tribulation, that the invasion will take place. Ezekiel says the northern invaders shall "come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them."

Israel's Dispersion Will Be Over

Israel's dispersion among the nations was brought about by military weapons, that is, by "the sword." When the invasion comes upon the land of Israel, God's people will have been restored from the effects of the sword. Ezekiel was speaking of the nation as exiled by the sword (and the sword is representative of all the weapons) of the enemy. This can only designate a people who have been restored to the land

after a *long* exile among the nations of the world. Restoration from the dispersion of Hosea 3:4-5 will have taken place. This reinforces the declaration that the invasion will occur during the "the latter days," that is, during the tribulation.

The people of Israel will have been regathered "out of many people," that is, out of their dispersion among the nations of the world. Israel, so long a continual wasteland, will become prosperous because of her productive orchards, vineyards, dairy farms and chemical plants on the shores of the Dead Sea and manufacturing concerns, which will be developed there through Jewish ingenuity. The population of this prosperous nation will have been gathered out of many nations. The place of the regathering (and of the coming conflict) is referred to as "against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but is brought forth out of the nations." This definitely has in view a dispersion period much longer than the 70 years in Babylon.

"Brought Forth of the Nations"

The expressions in the latter part of verse 8 point to a nation of expanded territory, a national boundary that encompasses more land than is presently occupied by Israel. The nation extends to "the mountains of Israel," which would seem to include some of present-day Lebanon. This mountainous region has never, in all history, been fully occupied by Israel. This accounts for the expression "which have been always waste." The expanded boundaries encompass land that has been recaptured from various Middle East nations. Ezekiel says that this land "is brought forth out of the nations."

"And they shall dwell safely all of them" strongly indicates the time setting of World War III. When the Russian invasion comes, the people of Israel will be dwelling safely. This is an unusual statement, for there are not too many times when Israel is "dwelling safely" in God's prophetic program.

Israel is not "dwelling safely" today. Israel is an armed camp, living under an uncertain truce, surrounded by enemies. These enemies would gladly destroy every Israelite if only they could. They have not succeeded in doing so because of Israel's ability, willingness and readiness to fight. Under this situation the Israelites are not "dwelling safely all of them."

A Deceptive Time of Peace

Scripture indicates that there is one future time when Israel will be "dwelling safely." That period occurs during the first three-and-one-half years of Daniel's seventieth week. Israel's leader will have signed the "covenant of hell" with the head of the revived Roman Empire. That one will have extended his military protection to Israel and she will have been able to relax her military stance. The nation will have confidence in the military power of the Western coalition of nations and through this confidence will "dwell safely." This would appear to be the time period that is pinpointed for the Russian invasion of the nation Israel.

"Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee." Russia and her communist bloc allies will sit in the north country as a military opponent of the "man of sin." Their leader Gog will observe the richness of the resources of Israel, which is under the military protection of the Western coalition of nations. The richness of the resources, especially the military resources, of Israel will stir up the jealousy and greed of Gog and his confederates. This is the motivating influence God will use as His "hooks in the jaws" of this enemy confederacy. Gog will decide to challenge the military power of the Western nations. He and his confederates shall come down "like a great cloud to cover the land," determined to subject it to their own authority. But they will soon find with whom it is they have to deal.

Verse 9 strongly suggests that the military assault on Israel will begin with an air invasion: "Thou shalt ascend

(that is climb upward) and come like a storm, thou shall be like a cloud to cover the land (this would seem to refer to military action in the atmospheric heaven, that is, to an air attack), thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee." A full-scale invasion, participated in by all those allies mentioned by name (as well as those simply designated as "many people with thee"), is described by these words.

Russia and her allies will not be bluffing. They fully intend to settle the Jewish question forever. However, there is no possibility that their efforts will meet with success. God has previously prophesied, "Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal."

3.

The Motivation of the Confederacy

"Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwallled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land. Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?" Ezek. 38:10-13.

God's message to Gog (the future political leader of Russia) continues in these verses penned in the sixth century B.C. by the prophet Ezekiel. God has prerecorded the very

thoughts of the future Russian prince and the very words he will speak as he decides to initiate World War III: *"Thus saith the Lord GOD: It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought."* "At the same time" he makes the final evil decision to launch a full-scale land invasion into the territory held by God's chosen people, Gog will be planning an act of aggression against God Himself.

"At the same time" refers back to verse 8. From the time this message was given to the time of the fulfillment would be an interval of "many days." After that period, in a time interval designated as "the latter years," Gog will initiate his war against God's people. The "latter years" refer to the seven years of the "seventieth week of Daniel." This final evil decision and the resulting war will come during the time of the tribulation.

Verse 9 indicates that the full-scale land invasion launched by Gog and his allies will be preceded by an air strike. The words that follow imply that the success of the air strike is the motivation behind Gog's decision for the invasion (especially since there appears to be no retaliation from the leader of the Western coalition of nations, who has covenanted to protect Israel). That decision is the "evil thought" of verse 10. That "evil thought" is recorded as spoken words in the next two verses.

The Target Identified

In verse 11 Gog designates both the land and the people that he expects to subdue in his declaration of a war of aggression. "I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates."

A most important aspect of this entire prophecy is contained in these words. Gog tells us that the people of Israel will be dwelling securely, "all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates." This description of the land of Israel can only apply to modern times.

In the past when Israel previously occupied the land, it was customary to build walls around prosperous cities. As a minimum, a city would have a fortress with a wall around it as a place where the people of the city could retreat under conditions of impending attack. Now, since the reestablishment of the nation Israel, this ancient custom has been discontinued. There is an obvious reason for this. A wall offers no protection against the weapons of modern warfare.

How did Ezekiel, writing 2,600 years ago, know that at some future time the military situation would be such that cities would be built without walls? The answer is simple. Ezekiel was moved by the Spirit of God to record prophecy. This prophecy gives the words of an evil political leader who would live more than 26 centuries later. These words describe Israel's situation today!

Once again, in verse 11 we are told that the people of Israel are "at rest," that they "dwell safely." Israel is not "at rest" and is not "dwelling safely" now. Israel is literally an armed camp with enemies surrounding her. Only her military alertness has kept her free from conquest since the time of her birth in 1948. Military service is compulsory for everyone of fighting age, and Israel's defense forces are constantly on the alert. Gog's words cannot apply to the present-day situation.

Israel — "At Rest" in the Future

Israel will be "at rest" and "dwelling safely" during the early part of the "seventieth week of Daniel." Her covenant with the false messiah, the political leader of the Western coalition of nations, the revived Roman Empire, will have been signed. Israel will depend upon the military might of that Western empire for her protection. She will relax her own military posture and will be dwelling securely. That "land of unwallled villages" will appear to be an easy target for Gog's aggression. The people of Israel are "dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates" because they depend on the military protection promised by the "bloody and deceitful man." Psalms 5:6. But this man, this

“little horn” of Daniel 7, does not retaliate against Gog’s initial air strike. Gog believes that victory is in his hand.

Therefore, thinking that it will be easy to subdue a people who are practically unarmed and who are dwelling in a land of unwallled villages, Gog’s army sets forth with boldness and self-assurance, determined to enrich itself by the spoils of Israel. Greed is the motivation of the northern confederacy. The greed of Gog and his allies is the “hook” God will put into the jaws of this tremendous war machine. Greedy for Israel’s wealth, this ungodly company will embark on a campaign of conquest for gain. It is now common knowledge that the mineral wealth of the Dead Sea is the greatest in the world. Israel has become fabulously wealthy in many things since 1948. A major cause of unrest in the Middle East today is the desire Israel’s enemies have for her wealth.

The envious eyes of Gog will not be further denied. Because the probing air strike did not result in any military action by Israel’s covenanted protector, Gog reasons that this is the time to satisfy his greed. World opinion will mean little to the leader of this northern confederacy when he calls upon what he believes to be his superior military might.

Gog’s attack is to be launched “upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land.” This definitely describes Israel as she will exist during the earlier part of Daniel’s seventieth week. The people will have been regathered from the dispersion of this present age. They will have come out of the nations of the world. And they will have collected “cattle and goods.” The wealth of the nation will have been greatly increased as God’s people enter that time of their severest testing. From outward appearances, they are “dwelling securely.”

Israel — Central in Scripture

Israel will “dwell in the midst of the land.” Verse 12.

Ezekiel used an interesting phrase to define the area of the world against which this attack will be launched. The word translated "midst" literally means "navel." The word translated "land" is often rendered "earth." The clause actually speaks of those "that dwell in the navel of the earth." The land of Israel is in the very center of the earth as far as God's view is concerned. The origin of God's earthly coordinate system is at the temple site in Jerusalem.

The Jewish Midrash Tanchuma, Quedoshin makes the following comment: "As the navel is set in the center of the human body, so is the land of Israel the navel of the world . . . situated in the center of the world, and Jerusalem in the center of the land of Israel, and the sanctuary in the center of Jerusalem, and the holy place in the center of the sanctuary, and the ark in the center of the holy place, and the foundation stone before the holy place, because from it the world was founded."

Gog will have little regard for international opinion. He will believe that his military might will overcome any resistance the rest of the world might offer. However, he will stir up a "protest" against his action, issued by a group of people who consider themselves friends of Israel. "Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof" will be aroused and alarmed by Gog's military action.

A Feeble Verbal Protest

But in spite of their alarm, there is no indication that they make any preparation to defend Israel. Instead, they issue a feeble verbal protest in the form of a series of meaningless questions. The naive questions remind us of the kinds of protest that are issued against Russian aggression. "Art thou come to take a spoil? Hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? To carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?" Gog will laugh in the face of such spineless protest.

Who are "Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of

Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof"? The names "Sheba" and "Dedan" first appear in Genesis 10:7. They were the sons of Raamah, who was a son of Cush, who was a son of Ham. These men settled in the Arab lands, and the names doubtless refer to Arab nations. The exact identification of these nations cannot be made with certainty. This verse of Scripture does indicate that Israel will have some friends among the Arab nations during the earthly days of the tribulation.

"Tarshish" is generally identified with the lands of the far west of Europe, including perhaps a part of Spain, but very definitely Great Britain. The word seems to refer to nations in the vicinity, and beyond, the Strait of Gibraltar. It is very likely that a land far to the west of the Mediterranean Sea, a land unknown in Ezekiel's day, may be included in this expression. This could be the American continents. It could be the United States of America.

Ezekiel's prophecy includes "all the young lions thereof" with the three names designating the impotent protestors against Gog's movement. "Lion" in Scripture symbolizes a king or political ruler as well as a kingdom. "Young lions" symbolize relatively recent political kingdoms, with their rulers. Since the newly formed kingdoms (from the viewpoint of Biblical prophecy) are situated in the Western lands (such as Iceland and the Americas), it would seem that Ezekiel's expression "Tarshish" includes not only the older kingdoms near the western end of the Mediterranean Sea but also those new kingdoms to the far west. Probably the United States of America is included among the "young lions" of Tarshish.

In keeping with current cold war politics the nations who are nominally "friends of Israel" issue their protest. "Art thou come to take a spoil?" Of course Gog has moved toward Israel to spoil her! "Hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey?" Just think how Gog will laugh at this one! Are you mobilizing your military forces "to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?"

When he recovers from his fit of laughter, Gog will assure these protestors, "Of course not!"

Gog's vast army moves toward Israel to "take a spoil," to "take a prey." Greed is Gog's motivation, but God is in control. He has brought about the military situation of World War III for His purpose.

4.

God's Purpose for the Invasion

"Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it? And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes." Ezek. 38:14-16.

Once again, the Lord addresses Himself to that leader of the hostile confederacy who has planned the plundering of restored Israel. Throughout this prophecy there is repeated emphasis upon the time element. Gog's plans for invasion come "in that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely." That is the time when Israel dwells with a false security under the unbroken covenant with the antichrist, during the first half of Daniel's seventieth week, the tribulation period. Israel will feel that she has nothing to fear from former enemies because of the great military might of her sworn protector. This is only an imagined security, however, because the real value of the covenant as a protecting shield for this little nation has not yet been tested.

With emphasis on the *imagined* security, God asks Gog

the ironic question, "Shalt thou not know it?" The LORD knows full well that Gog will have already acquainted himself with Israel's defensive condition to insure success for his attack. Gog has already tested the validity of Israel's covenant. He has launched a probing air attack against Israel, and there has been no retaliation. Now he prepares for a full-scale invasion.

For the second time, God reveals the originating point of this great invasion of World War III: "And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts." This geographical description can only designate territory controlled by Russia. In the past (until our day) Russia was never a world power. She rose to that position not long after the last world conflict in the 1940's. It was in the year 1948, the same year Israel saw her national rebirth, that Russia was first recognized as a world power to be reckoned with. We have seen her rise to prominence in fulfillment of prophecy.

An Army Mounted on Horses

Israel's invasion will be by a massive army moving from the north, under the leadership of the political prince of Russia, Gog himself. Verse 15 vividly describes the massive military force. The invading army consists of "thou (that is, Gog), and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army." Emphasis is placed on the fact that a large part of the army consists of cavalry. God's description applies to both the Russian army and her allies: "All of them riding upon horses." Many wonder whether this invasion will actually take place in modern times because of the emphasis on soldiers mounted upon horseback. The horse is an obsolete "weapon" of war. Was Ezekiel describing an invasion that took place in days when horses were used for military maneuvers?

It is a fact that modern-day Russia has the largest and finest cavalry ever assembled and trained for military purposes. Russia's terrain and the weather conditions render mounted horse soldiers invaluable for military operations

there. Consequently, she has bred and trained a vast number of military horses, and she has trained cavalry soldiers to mount them. Russia has the power to assemble just such an army as is described here.

The present oil situation points toward another practical reason why this great invasion will be carried out primarily by Russian cavalry. Tanks, armored vehicles and airplanes require vast amounts of petroleum products. An acute shortage of oil would certainly cause military commanders to plan their maneuvers with "vehicles" that do not require petroleum. The horse has always been — and still is — just such a "vehicle."

Oil — A Probable "Prize"

Russia is to invade Israel "to take the prize," and it just may be that the most significant part of that prize is the oil stored beneath her land. Many believe Israel has vast oil reserves, though there has been little development of these resources.

It is possible that Ezekiel used the word "horses" to describe modern mechanized vehicles of war. He would have had no adequate vocabulary to describe modern war machines. Therefore, the "horses" of verse 15 could include both living horses and modern mechanized vehicles. The large amount of weapon debris mentioned in Ezekiel 39:9 tends to support the idea that mechanized vehicles *are* included among the "horses" of Gog's large army.

The invading force is described as "a great company" and a "mighty army." "A great company" specifies that the invading army will include a great multitude of soldiers. But it is the vast number of weapons of war and equipment (along with the ability to use them) that forms "a mighty army," one of the greatest military machines the earth has ever known. And this mighty force is to be directed toward the defeat of God's chosen people, Israel.

A Massive Military Movement

“And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land.” The invading army will move right to the very border of Israel without encountering any military resistance from the nations that voiced the feeble protest of verse 13. Neither will there have been any military resistance from the leader of the Western coalition of nations who covenanted to protect Israel.

“As a cloud to cover the land” most likely has a double meaning. A cloud covering the land would normally direct attention to the military action in the air space above the battle ground. No doubt, Gog will have air support for his massive land army. However, the land army itself can also be described as “a cloud covering the land.” In the prophecy of Joel, the idea of a “cloud” is associated with the swarms of locusts that came as a plague upon the land. The locust plague came in waves, and the various waves consisted of both the flying and the crawling forms of the insects. This is probably the picture intended here. The “cloud” that covers the land consists of both the massive land army along with its airborne support.

The time of this invasion is repeated in verse 16: “It shall be in the latter days.” This expression applies to Daniel’s seventieth week, and to the tribulation. Gog will invade Israel during the days of the seven-year tribulation period.

God Never Instills Evil

“And I will bring thee against my land.” God Himself will bring about the circumstances that lead to this great military action of Gog. God is in control, and God has turned Gog around “and put hooks into thy jaws.” In spite of this description, God never instills in the heart of man any evil purpose or device. Scripture nowhere says that God has done so. He is the promoter of good, never evil.

God is the Sovereign Ruler and Over-Ruler of the universe. Therefore, it is true that God will bring the enemy

against His land. Actually, He will bring these nations to the doom they themselves will have prepared by the evil in their wicked hearts.

This is similar to what Moses faced with Pharaoh of Egypt at the time of the Exodus. God did not implant the stubbornness that was shown out by his actions in the heart of that Egyptian king. But God allowed Pharaoh to be surrounded by circumstances which brought out all the wickedness that was in his heart. By this viewpoint, it can be truthfully said that "God hardened Pharaoh's heart."

God's purpose for the prophesied invasion is brought out in the latter part of verse 16. He will make Gog and his forces an object lesson for the heathen nations of the world. "I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes."

This invasion will occur after the "acceptable year of the Lord" has passed. The church will have been caught up to heaven. God will once again be dealing with His chosen nation as He dealt with them in Old Testament times. He is their Champion, and He is their Strength. He will demonstrate to all the nations of the world that Israel is the "apple of His eye" and the subject of His protection. Therefore, He will bring Gog's vast armies to the very borders of Israel, and then He will destroy them by supernatural means. Thus, there will be no reasonable doubt in the hearts of all that God does exist and that He does protect His people.

When God states that He will be "sanctified in Gog," the thought is not that this puffed-up, earthly ruler will in any way add to the character or attributes of God. The word "sanctified" means "set apart." The object lesson of Gog's defeat is to be used to "set apart" the true and living God from the false "gods" the heathen worship.

The "god of forces" (that is, the god of materialism) is worshiped in Russia. That god is also worshiped in many

other nations of the world. In the LORD's dealings with Gog, the God of all the universe will be recognized as holy. Just as circumstances reveal to all the wickedness and godlessness of men, so circumstances also reveal the blessedness and holiness of God. God's attributes will be recognized by the unsaved of the world through His actions against Gog's mighty military force.

5. Jehovah, the Champion of His People

“Thus saith the Lord GOD; Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them? And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD.”
Ezek. 38:17-23.

Once again, God identifies Himself as the source of this

message to Gog, the Russian prince and military commander. And He asks Gog a question: "*Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them?*"

God's question is designed to bring out the fact that a very long time intervenes between the writing of the message and the fulfillment of it. The question was directed to Gog in the context of the far-future day of fulfillment. The prince, Gog, had not yet been born when the Lord GOD spoke these words. Many centuries are to pass before this message will come to the attention of the individual to whom it is directed. The great gap of time between the writing of the message and the application of it is emphasized by the content of this question. "*Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel?*" That is, "*Are you the one who lives near the end of that age of man — over two and one-half millennia after my words were written — the one actually spoken of in those Scriptures penned by the prophets of Israel?*", which prophesied in those days (when the prophets of Israel lived and wrote) many years (after the actual writing that are to transpire before Gog's invasion) that I would bring thee against them?"

Mentioned by Other Prophets

The word "prophets" in verse 17 is plural. Although the primary writing that God has in mind is this very prophecy of Ezekiel, the plural designation "prophets" indicates that other Scriptures are in view also. It is true that this end-time invasion was predicted by other Old Testament prophets. Daniel 11:40 speaks of this same invasion. Daniel designates Gog as "the king of the north." "*And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries and shall overflow and pass over.*" Daniel's statement does indicate that the invasion of "the king of the north" will involve an air attack ("like a whirlwind"), mechanized war vehicles along with the horse-mounted

cavalry ("with chariots, and with horsemen"), as well as a naval strike ("with many ships"). The "he" of the last clause refers to the leader of the Western coalition of nations. God is speaking of this world ruler's action which is to be initiated after Gog has been destroyed.

Joel 2:1-27 describes this conflict with the king of the north. This prophecy opens thus: "*Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand.*" The fact that Joel is truly speaking a prophecy against the northern confederacy is brought out in verse 20. "But I will remove far off from you the northern army." God's purpose for the conflict described by Joel is brought out in verse 27. "*And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.*" Joel's statement of the purpose of this conflict is exactly that of Ezekiel. Gog and his northern confederacy are to be made the greatest object lesson the world has ever known.

Isaiah also seems to be speaking of the leader of the northern confederacy and of his end-time movement against Israel when he writes of "the king of Assyria" in Isaiah 10:12. This man is mentioned as "the Assyrian" in Isaiah 30:31-33 and in Isaiah 31:8-9. Both passages foretell the great object lesson that God will give to the earth through His personal defeat of the northern confederacy.

Yes, the Russian prince who is to come on the world scene in the days preceding and during Daniel's seventieth week is the one of whom God has said, "I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel." As Gog's greed pulls him into the territory of Israel, Jehovah God will stand in his way. "*And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel.*" God will deal with this invading army. He will speak

in His indignation, and the nations of the earth shall learn that He is concerned about the deliverance of His chosen people.

"Enough" — Says the Lord

God's reaction to the audacity and insubordination of Gog and his army is stated in bold terms and with vivid imagery. The picture is of the breath which an angered man inhales and exhales through his nose. God's patience has been exhausted with this attempt of Israel's enemies to annihilate her. The LORD Himself is Israel's Champion. He will undertake the destruction of Israel's enemies. He will use no secondary agent. This is to be a final and irrevocable judgment. God will control both natural and supernatural mechanisms of destruction as He wages His decisive war against the northern confederacy.

It is interesting to note the sequential order of the mechanisms God will use against the invading northern forces as mentioned in the final verses of Ezekiel 38. First will come earthquake, then anarchy, then pestilence and finally natural disasters. God's violent shaking of the earth will affect every area of nature, both animate and inanimate. *"Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground."* Verses 19-20. All the earth will be aware of the Source of the power that is being brought forth for the destruction of Gog and his armies.

God's higher creation, man, will be thrown into confusion and civil strife as a result of the supernatural manifestation of God's power. *"And I will call for a sword against him (Gog) throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword shall be against his brother."* The nations of the world which have previously not been willing to oppose Gog and his invasion will now be called

upon to enter active military conflict with the invading force. "Mountains" in Scripture represent political nations. God says that He will now call for such military force. But supernatural panic will come upon man, and reason and judgment will be taken away. There will be rebellion within the invading armies, and soldiers of the same uniform will fight one another. Anarchy will come as a part of God's great object lesson for the world.

The judgments listed seem to follow the pattern of destruction of Sodom and the plagues of Egypt. *"And I will plead against him (Gog) with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone."*

Judgments Listed Coincide

It is not coincidence that the series of judgments brought by God upon the world to halt the invasion of the northern confederacy precisely matches the order of judgments mentioned in the Olivet Discourse. The sequence of events also precisely matches the first four "seal" judgments of Revelation 6. First, God will bring a mighty earthquake that will wreak havoc upon the enemies of Israel, filling the hearts of their followers with fear and dread as well as destroying many of them. This will be followed by anarchy. Then pestilence will break out among the hosts led by Gog. Supernatural calamities, hailstones, fire and brimstone falling from the skies will literally annihilate the over-confident armies led by the prince of Magog.

The great invasion of Israel by Russia and her allies will come in the first three-and-one-half year period of Daniel's seventieth week, the time of the tribulation. The man of false peace will have gained political power in the earth as he climbs to his position as the head of the revived Roman Empire. See Revelation 6:1-2. The Russian invasion of Israel brings war and takes peace from the earth. Rev. 6:3-4. The great disasters brought on by this world conflict result in rampant inflation and economic chaos in the earth. Rev.

6:5-6. And the aftermath of all this is pestilence and death. Rev. 6:7-8. Ezekiel's prophecy of World War III plays an important part in the events of the first half of the tribulation.

God does not take delight in judgment. He states fully why He must visit man in His wrath: *"Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD."* By the supernatural manifestations of God's power, rebellious man will come to realize the existence, nature and power of the great God who is the Sovereign of the universe.

6.

The Doom of the Confederacy

"Therefore, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel: And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. Thou shalt fall upon the open field: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God. And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the LORD. So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord GOD; this is the day whereof I have spoken. And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the

shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years: So that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire: and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord GOD."
Ezek. 39:1-10.

Ezekiel 39 continues the prophecy begun in chapter 38. It does not record another invasion by Gog, as some Bible expositors have claimed. Rather, this chapter predicts the same invasion described previously, but from a different viewpoint. Verse 1 reaffirms the Lord GOD as the author of this message to Gog, "the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal."

God makes it clear that He will use Gog's action as an object lesson for the nations of the earth. The Lord GOD will direct Gog's army by the "hooks" He has placed in its jaws. "And I will turn thee around, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and I will cause thee to come up from the uttermost parts of the north, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel."

The meaning of the Hebrew word translated "leave" in the phrase "leave but a sixth part of thee" is vague. Some scholars feel this clause should be rendered "drive thee on." Probably the former rendering is correct, that it is God's intent to cause five-sixths of the invading army to lose their lives. God will use the greed and malice within the heart of the prince of Russia to bring this large invading force down upon "the mountains of Israel," a probable reference to the Golan Heights, those highland areas located near the northeast boundary of Israel.

Chapter 38 shows that God Himself will take initial action in bringing about the destruction of Gog's invading force. First will come an earthquake of such magnitude that all nature will be affected by it. This will be followed by

supernatural insanity, pestilence, overflowing rain, great hailstones and brimstone.

The Invaders Will Be Disarmed

The actions of God result in the essential disarmament of the invading force: *"I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand."* The modern-day "bow" is the missile launcher. The modern-day "arrows" are the missiles themselves. God's initial actions against the invading army will immobilize their high-explosive and nuclear-tipped projectiles that are poised against Israeli targets. This will halt the offensive march of Gog's army and bring an end to the lives of five-sixths of those men of the invading force. Gog himself will fall with his army: *"Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee."* Gog's "easy victory" will be turned into total defeat.

The tremendous number of men who will meet their doom upon the "mountains of Israel" will not be able to be buried. But God has preordained a solution to the problem of disposing of the many dead bodies. He will have prepared a great multitude of carrion-eating birds and beasts. The bodies of Gog and many of his followers will be devoured by these living "janitors" of the earth: *"I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beast of the field to be devoured."*

God seems to be speaking personally to Gog in verse 5. The doom of the leader of this great invasion is to come in an open field that is part of the area previously designated as "the mountains of Israel." *"Thou shalt fall upon the open field: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD."*

Russia To Be Attacked

After the death of Gog the nation he ruled over will also be destroyed. After five-sixths of Gog's army is destroyed by God, an attack will be launched upon the territories of Russia and her allies. Verse 6 indicates that those nations standing in

opposition to the Russian communist bloc will observe the destruction of the northern confederacy's army. This will be the signal for the Western powers to launch an all-out nuclear attack on the mainland territories that were the sources for this great military force.

Although God could also accomplish His purpose against those nations by supernatural means, the indications are that the Western coalition of nations will be used to destroy the national territories of the northern confederacy: "*And I will send a fire on Magog (Russia), and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the LORD.*" The "isles" referred to are the coastland and islands of the Mediterranean. Specific nations of the northern confederacy, such as Togarmah (Turkey), are preordained to undergo nuclear destruction in the "fire" that is to be sent upon Magog.

God not only has stated His purpose for the great carnage and destruction that will result from the Russian invasion of Israel, He also has identified Himself as Israel's Messiah in verses 6 and 7. It is Jesus Christ, God-Incarnate, God the Son, who is delivering this message through the Prophet Ezekiel. "*They shall know that I am the LORD. So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: And the heathen (Gentiles) shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.*"

The "Holy One in Israel" is Messiah. He is the God of the Old Testament. He is the "I AM" of the Burning Bush. He is the "Word of Prophecy" who spoke through the prophets of Israel. And He is the One who is speaking through Ezekiel in this prophetic message to Gog.

"*Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord GOD; this is the day whereof I have spoken.*" The Lord has spoken of His judgment upon the northern confederacy as though it were an accomplished fact. The absolute certainty that World War III is to be fought at the appropriate time and that it will

come out exactly as God has told Gog, is emphasized in these words. "Behold, it is come, and it is done!"

Russia and her Communist bloc allies may ignore this message from God today. However, this does not make the slightest difference in the final fulfillment of the judgment. When that day arrives, when the opening three-and-one-half years of the tribulation are upon the world, World War III will come. "This is the day whereof I have spoken."

The Spoilers Are Spoiled

The destruction of Gog's army will be complete. And Israel will not have to defend herself, for the LORD will act on her behalf. Those who were the intended victims become the victors. Those who were to be taken as spoil become the spoilers. *"And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years: So that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests: for they shall burn the weapons with fire: and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord GOD."*

Israel will use the weapons of the invaders for fuel. Some have thought it strange in this modern age of metallic warfare that such a prophecy could ever be fulfilled literally. As strange as it may seem, it is known today that Russia has built weapons of a very hard and strong wood product. This new wood product has been used to construct tanks and armored vehicles. The wood replaces metallic armor plate. Even guns and missile launchers have been built by the Russians from this processed wood.

Advantages of Wooden Weapons

There is a distinct advantage in the use of wood for modern warfare: wood has a very low radar detectability factor. Vehicles made of wood can move upon the ground

with less chance of being detected and tracked by modern surveillance radars. In addition to the advantages of this type of construction material, the processed wood is still capable of being burned. It burns completely with very little ash and gives off intense heat.

In our day, Ezekiel's prediction concerning burnable weapons is not so remote. Wooden weapons are not without their range of use. The "hand staves" mentioned are those with which animals were usually driven. In this prophecy the expression refers to some weapon of war. The additional items listed are definitely weapons; and although these weapons are the kind that were in use in Ezekiel's day, the vocabulary used could also describe more modern weapons. All the major weapons seem to be made of material that can be burned. In a day of "energy shortage," the discarded weapons will serve a very useful purpose for Gog's intended victims. This material will fuel the cooking and heating fires of Israel.

"They shall burn them with fire seven years." Symbolically seven expresses completeness, but it is probably intended here as the literal time interval during which the fuel will be useful. Some have felt this precludes fulfillment of this prophecy during the seven-year tribulation period because seven years from the date of Gog's destruction would extend into the early years of the millennium.

But there is really nothing wrong with this. It is possible that the vast spoil of fuel furnished by Gog's armies will still be in use during the early years of the Lord's earthly reign. The long duration of the time interval over which this fuel will be burned emphasizes the vastness of the numbers of weapons that will be brought upon the "mountains of Israel" by the invading force.

Israel will be able to implement a meaningful energy conservation program as a result of the intended invasion. God has seen to it that there will be no fuel shortage in His chosen land. The enemies of His people will deliver fuel to

continue the economy of this people. It will not be necessary for them to take wood from their own forests, but they can be allowed to grow and replenish themselves for verdant coverage of that land during the Lord's reign.

What a turning of tables God has done upon the enemies of His people! The plunderers will be plundered, and the robbers will be robbed. Exactly what Gog's great army intended for Israel will be visited upon them! This is a vivid example of "the law of recompense in kind." The Lord God told Abraham, "*And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*" God will keep His promise to Abraham as He brings about the doom of the northern confederacy.

7.

The Valley of Hamon-gog

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea: and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call it The valley of Hamon-gog. And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land. Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them; and it shall be to them a renown the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord GOD. And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it: after the end of seven months shall they search. And the passengers that pass through the land, when any seeth a man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog. And also the name of the city shall be Hamonah. Thus shall they cleanse the land." Ezek. 39:11-16.

Gog's greed for Israel's wealth will bring him and his invading armies to her land. Gog's intent is to "take a spoil, to take a prey, to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil." But God will turn the tables. Instead of "taking a spoil," Gog himself will be spoiled. "They (Israel) shall spoil those that spoil them, and rob those that rob them." Gog's intention to take all that belongs to Israel will instead result in him giving up all he has, including his life.

However, Gog's invasion of Israel will secure for him one earthly possession. He will be granted a burying ground for himself and for those of his invading army who die with him. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel." The piece of real estate Gog will win by his great military effort is to forever bear his name. It is to be called "The valley of Hamon-gog," that is, "The valley of the multitude by Gog."

Death will come so suddenly to the armies of Gog that they will have no opportunity to bury their dead. The mortal blow will come as though it were in a moment. The dead bodies of the invading soldiers will be strewn everywhere in the valley of Hamon-gog. This will be the valley of the Jordan above the Dead Sea, which is designated by Ezekiel as "on the east (literally, 'in the front') of the sea." Gog's burying place is to the east of the Dead Sea.

The valley of Hamon-gog will be so clogged with the corpses of Gog's soldiers that the way will be impassable for travelers. (The word "passengers," used several times in this passage, refers to those travelers who are passing through the land.) These decaying corpses will poison the very air: "And it shall stop the noses of the passengers." They would be a source of grievous pestilence to the whole land if steps were not taken almost immediately to properly bury them. Therefore, a great squad of grave-diggers will be formed. The business of this burial squad will be to go throughout the entire section where Gog's army has been destroyed and bury the bodies in order to cleanse the land.

An Awesome Task

This work will continue for seven months before the last bodies will have been covered. This fact further emphasizes the vast proportions of this great military catastrophe. The land of Gog's destruction will need cleansing because God has said that bloodshed defiles a land. "*So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.*" Numbers 35:33.

Burying Gog's dead will to an extent engage the entire nation of Israel. "Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them." Some will be part-time workers; however, there will be a full-time burial squad, too. "And they shall sever out men of continual employment"; that is, the authorities of Israel will detach a squad of men from their regular occupations and assign them to the full-time task of burying Gog's dead. They are to go into the valley of Hamon-gog and bury each corpse as they come to it. The squad is given authority to enlist the services of those who are simply passing through the area to help them with this momentous task. The interment squad will pass "Through the land to bury with the passengers (those passing through the land) those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it." The full-time burial squad will continue their task for the entire seven months. "After the end of seven months shall they search."

Even beyond the seven-month burial period, there will still be some corpses that have not been covered by the earth. Those passing through the polluted area will be charged by law to look for these unburied corpses. When a body is found, the one who finds it is to set up a marker over the spot. Some of the burial squad will still be occupied with the job of burying even beyond the specified seven-month period. These will look for the markers and will dispose of the human remains so marked. "*And the passengers that pass through the land, when any seeth a man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley*"

of *Hamon-gog*.” In this way the land will be cleansed from its defilement and the air purified.

Gog will not go without his earthly reward. A memorial to the disaster of World War III will be left in the form of the name of a city. The name “Hamonah” means “multitude” and it will remind future generations of this tragedy. This city will stand throughout the duration of earth’s history as a reminder of the folly of opposing the God of Israel. Even in the millennium “Hamonah” will stand as a monument to the folly that was brought to an end there.

“And also the name of the city shall be Hamonah. Thus shall they cleanse the land.” Ezek. 39:16.

8.

A Feast of Birds and Beasts

“And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord GOD.” Ezek. 39:17-20.

Previously this prophecy was directed to the Russian prince Gog. But beginning with verse 17 God is no longer speaking to Gog. God’s message is now addressed, not to men, but to the animals of the lower creation. “And, thou

son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field."

Now the burial crews will be assisted. The birds and beasts that feed upon carrion will help clear away the rotting corpses.

God will increase the scavenger population to assist the Israeli burial crews with the task of cleaning the valley of Hamon-gog. Israel's rising prosperity, especially in food production, will contribute to an increase in wildlife population. God will apparently also alter the breeding habits of certain carrion-eating birds so as to produce more offspring. Even now reports from Israel indicate that some varieties of vultures that normally hatched one egg at a time are now hatching up to four eggs at once. The population of the field animals also is reported to be increasing at a high rate.

God's message to the birds and beasts is "*Assemble yourselves and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood.*" God speaks of slaying Gog's multitude as though this were His sacrifice to the animals of the field. Men have been slain! Their blood has been poured out upon the ground! And God calls the carrion-eating creatures to come and partake of the slain soldiers!

God has drawn a parallel to the animal sacrifices made on behalf of men during those days His presence was manifested in the tabernacle and the temple of Israel. In those days men received symbolic cleansing from the blood of the animals sacrificed upon the altar of burnt offering. Men partook of the flesh of these sacrificial animals as a symbol of the spiritual nourishment God provides for His redeemed ones. The shed blood of the animals pointed to the Messiah, whose blood was to be poured out for the redemption of many. The flesh of the animals represented His broken body, which

provides spiritual food for sustaining the spiritual life received through His cleansing blood.

The Picture is Reversed

However, we see the tables turned. Unclean animals will partake of a sacrifice of unclean men offered, not by themselves, but by God.

This is part of the cleansing of the earth for the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. Man, through his sins, polluted the earth. Adam's sin brought God's curse upon the earth: "Cursed is the ground (earth) for thy sake." Gen. 3:17. The animals never sinned; their pollution results from man's sin.

In cleansing the polluted earth and animal kingdom, God will offer a sacrifice of men. From God's viewpoint, this sacrifice is the army of Gog. The feast of birds and beasts foreshadows God's soon-coming cleansing of the polluted earth.

But why should there be a sacrificial feast at all? The earlier message indicates the impossibility of completing the burial all at once. God will assist the burial crews through the work of these scavengers. Both symbolic spiritual cleansing and real physical cleansing are to be accomplished.

"Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan." The animals mentioned are figurative of the different ranks and callings of the slain men. Here in verse 18 the actual, or literal, passes over into the figurative with the reference to princes, then rams.

The land of Bashan (east of the Jordan) was famous for fine pastures and well-fed cattle. According to the Mosaic law the fat and blood of animals, considered the most holy portions, were offered to God. These were not to be consumed by the worshipers. However, God's message to the

birds and beasts indicates that He will allow even these parts of the sacrificed men to be consumed by the animals. This fact provides increased insight into God's purpose for allowing this extensive conflict and slaughter to take place. God's great purpose of this object lesson for both the Gentile nations and Israel is emphasized in the concluding verses of Ezekiel's prophecy.

The great slaughter and carnage that is to take place upon "the mountains of Israel" is brought out in verses 19 and 20: The quantity of provision from this bizarre and unusual feast will be more than ample: "*And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord GOD.*" God refers to the sacrificial feast as "my table" because the LORD Himself will hold this feast. The entire prophecy of World War III emphasizes that God is in control of all proceedings. Man's sin and greed will be used by God to bring about His purposes in the earth. The language of God's message to the birds and beasts is chosen to bring out the idea of vast carnage, deserved judgment and irrevocable doom.

Reference in Revelation

In chapter 19 of the Book of Revelation we again see the fowls of the air called to the great supper of God to glut themselves on the flesh of kings, captains, mighty men, horses and those who sat upon horses. A feast of birds, similar to that spoken of by Ezekiel, will take place near the end of the Battle of Armageddon. God will use that second feast of birds and beasts for again cleansing the land of Israel at the end of the tribulation, the time of the coming in power and great glory of Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. That second feast is a part of "World War IV in Prophecy." But the feast spoken of by Ezekiel is part of an earlier cleansing. It is part of World War III, which is to take place in the early part of the tribulation.

It is evident from God's Word that the various powers to

be destroyed in the last days will be dealt with in a similar manner. The tribulation is part of the "day of vengeance of our God." Isa. 61:2. During this time God Himself will pour out His wrath upon those who have spurned His grace and have arrayed themselves in bloody opposition to earth's rightful King, our Lord Jesus Christ.

9. The Nations Shall Know

"And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward. And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions have I done unto them, and hid my face from them." Ezek. 39:21-24.

The remainder of God's message shows His purpose in bringing about the invasion of the northern confederacy and His judgment upon the forces of Gog. This passage is addressed to the Prophet Ezekiel. The Lord's glory will be manifested among the heathen nations when they see judgment executed upon Gog. There is no possibility that the hand of God will be overlooked in this mighty display of His power. The defeat of Gog and his invading army will come about by supernatural means. Military action by the coalition of Western nations will not take place until after Gog's army is defeated. Then that military action will be directed toward the destruction of those nations from which the invading forces originated. The fact that God's supernatural power protected His chosen people Israel will not be ignored in any part of the populated earth. God will use this military

conflict to show the world the greatest object lesson ever seen.

“And I will set my glory (kabod) among the heathen (goyim), and all the heathen (goyim) shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them.” The Hebrew word *kabod* can be translated as “weight,” “heaviness” or “honor.” It is God’s authority and ability to rule over the affairs of the earth that is in view in this word. This Hebrew word *goyim* refers to all the non-Jewish people of the earth. The heavy hand of God will have been laid upon a major portion of the earth’s population, but this intervention of God in the affairs of man is only a precursor to the much more extensive judgment that is yet to come.

An Unmistakable Message

Not only the nations, but the house of Israel will also recognize then that the Lord their God intervened in Israel’s behalf. Jews will turn to Him as in the days of their fathers, when He brought them out of Egypt, and there will be no further turning away. They will follow Him throughout the continuing judgments of the “latter years” (the tribulation) and also into the glorious millennial kingdom that is to follow the return of Messiah. “So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward.”

As a result of God’s great object lesson, the nations will understand that Israel suffered through the centuries because of her iniquities. “And the heathen (goyim) shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword.”

The chosen people trespassed against God in rejecting their Messiah and in crucifying the Lord of glory. Therefore, He fulfilled His prophecy against them. The prophecy was given through God’s servant Hosea. *“For the children of*

Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king: and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter day." Hosea 3:4-5. The people had trespassed against God. Therefore He turned His face from them and gave them over to the hand of their enemies. They had been dispersed among the *goyim*. So throughout all the intervening centuries they had fallen by the sword.

"According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions have I done unto them, and hid my face from them." God refused to intervene for them. Rather, He had turned His face away when they cried to Him. But in these days of the latter years, all this is to be brought to an end.

Messiah will come to Israel "in the fulness of time," to bring salvation to His people and to bring in the righteous reign upon the earth promised to that chosen people. But the people loved their sins more than they loved God. They rejected the One who had come to them. Hosea penned our Lord's prophetic words many years earlier: *"I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early."* Hosea 5:15. In the early years of "their affliction" Gog and his hordes will be brought from the "uttermost parts of the north." The invasion of Gog from Magog is to be a sign to the chosen people that God is fighting on their side. "For the Jews require a sign." I Cor. 2:22.

The Blessing of the Lord

We are given the results of this sign in the continuing words of Hosea: *"Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up."* Hosea 6:1.

In that coming day God will no longer have "turned His face away." All that intervening time will be at an end. His

chosen people will turn back to Him in repentance. He will then turn His face upon them in blessing.

The nations (*goyim*) will know all this through the object lesson of World War III. But this will not bring repentance among those political powers of the last days. The invasion of Gog from Magog and his defeat by the power of God is to result in those continued judgments recorded in Revelation 6:5-8. The nations will recognize God's power, but they will refuse to subordinate themselves to it. The attitude of individuals toward World War III is seen in the words of Revelation 6:15-17. *"And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondsman, and every free man hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"*

Yes, the nations *shall* know.

10. Israel Shall Know

"Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. Neither will I

hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD." Ezek. 39:25-29.

As this prophecy closes, God is no longer addressing Gog, the prince of Russia. He is no longer addressing the carrion-eating birds and beasts of the valley of Hamon-gog. Now He is speaking through His prophet to those who will heed His Word.

Verse 25 makes it quite clear that the full return of the captivity of Jacob will be after the onslaught and defeat of Gog and his hosts. The events prophesied in these two chapters will take place during the time of the tribulation — during Daniel's seventieth week — and before the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. The word "now" places the things that are said in these closing verses subsequent to the invasion and judgment of Gog and his invading army. "*Now* will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name."

A Rapid End to Suffering

After the destruction of the great northern confederacy, God will be prepared to bring a rapid end to the many years of suffering of His chosen people. "For the Jews require a sign." I Cor. 1:22. God will have provided a sign for His people in the supernatural defeat of the invading armies. Israel will have seen God's great sign, and the remnant will at last recognize Jesus of Nazareth, the One they pierced, as their LORD, their Messiah, their God and their King. The closing events of the tribulation will bring to an end the church-age dispersion of this people.

God will "bring again the captivity of Jacob." "Jacob" refers to the house of Israel in its unconverted state. God will bring the sons of Abraham out of captivity from among the nations of the earth. This does not refer to the return from the Babylonian captivity for God says, "*Now* will I bring *again*."

The campaign of Armageddon will bring to a conclusion the prophesied "seventy weeks" of time that were determined upon the people of Israel. Daniel, a contemporary of Ezekiel, spoke of these "seventy weeks" and the things God would accomplish at the end of this time period as he recorded Gabriel's message to him "in the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus." Here are the words Daniel heard as recorded in Daniel 9:24. *"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy (place)."* The six things mentioned here will be completed through the final suffering that is to come upon the house of Israel. The specific "shame" and "trespasses" in view in verse 26 of Ezekiel's prophecy were committed during the days preceding the invasion of Gog, "when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid." The brief period of continued suffering must come upon the reclaimed people. But this will lead to the wonderful blessings of God mentioned in these closing verses of the prophecy.

No More Dispersion

When God finally regathers Israel out of enemy lands and is sanctified in her in the sight of many nations, then the Jews shall know that Jehovah is indeed their God. Jehovah will be revealed in that day in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who caused Israel to go into the present dispersion. He is also the One who will regather them. He will not leave one of His people wandering among the nations. Neither will He continue to hide His face from them. He will look upon them in infinite grace and loving-kindness. The rejected Christ Himself speaks the closing words of this prophecy. *"Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD."*

Lastly, God *will* pour out His Spirit upon the house of Israel during the millennium and acknowledge the Jews once more as His own. The prophet Joel spoke of the coming of "World War III in Prophecy" in Joel 2:15-20. He also spoke of the results of this invasion and the effects these results will have upon the final restoration of Israel.

Joel's prophecy was mentioned by the Apostle Peter in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:16-21): "*And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.*"

The fulfillment of Joel's prophecy is now to come. "For I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD." God speaks of this pouring out of His Spirit as though it is an accomplished fact. Yet this message was given at least 2,600 years before the actual fulfillment.

World War III Will Come

There is to be a third World War. God will permit the formation of the northern confederacy of Russia and her satellite nations. The greed of the prince of that northern confederation will motivate an invasion of the land of God's chosen people. God will destroy the invading armies. God will permit the Western coalition of nations under the authority of a world dictator to launch a military attack against Russia and her allies. The destruction that follows will remove all military opposition from the path of this man desiring to make himself a world dictator. He will then assume the position of supreme ruler of the entire earth. This will lead to those last three-and-one-half years of Israel's suffering in the earth.

The Lord GOD, Jesus of Nazareth, will use His super-

natural destruction of the invading armies as a vivid object lesson for His people. He will show them that He is on their side and that in grace He will offer them final forgiveness and final deliverance. Through this soon-coming invasion of "the latter years," *Israel shall know.*

The End