

EZEKIEL

Chapter 38

Prophecy Against Gog

The word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, set your face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him 3 and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. 4 And I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed in full armor, a great host, all of them with buckler and shield, wielding swords. 5 Persia, Cush, and Put are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; 6 Gomer and all his hordes; Beth-togarmah from the uttermost parts of the north with all his hordes—many peoples are with you. 7 “Be ready and keep ready, you and all your hosts that are assembled about you, and be a guard for them. 8 After many days you will be mustered. In the latter years you will go against the land that is restored from war, the land whose people were gathered from many peoples upon the mountains of Israel, which had been a continual waste. Its people were brought out from the peoples and now dwell securely, all of them. 9 You will advance, coming on like a storm. You will be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your hordes, and many peoples with you. 10 “Thus says the Lord GOD: On that day, thoughts will come into your mind, and you will devise an evil scheme 11 and say, ‘I will go up against the land of unwalled villages. I will fall upon the quiet people who dwell securely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having no bars or gates,’ 12 to seize spoil and carry off plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places that are now inhabited, and the people who were gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell at the center of the earth. 13 Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish and all its leaders will say to you, ‘Have you come to seize spoil? Have you assembled your hosts to carry off plunder, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to seize great spoil?’ 14 “Therefore, son of man, prophesy, and say to Gog, Thus says the Lord GOD: On that day when my people Israel are dwelling securely, will you not know it? 15 You will come from your place out of the uttermost parts of the north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great host, a mighty army. 16 You will come up against my people Israel, like a cloud covering the land. In the latter days I will bring you against my land, that the nations may know me, when through you, O Gog, I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. 17 “Thus says the Lord GOD: Are you he of whom I spoke in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel, who in those days prophesied for years that I would bring you against them? 18 But on that day, the day that Gog shall come against the land of Israel, declares the Lord GOD, my wrath will be roused in my anger. 19 For in my jealousy and in my blazing wrath I declare, On that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. 20 The fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the field and all creeping things that creep on the ground, and all the people who are on the face of the earth, shall quake at my presence. And the mountains shall be thrown down, and the cliffs shall fall, and every wall shall tumble to the ground. 21 I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Lord GOD. Every man's sword will be against his brother. 22 With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him, and I will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur. 23 So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

Chs 38–39 Answers this question: Will God’s “servant David,” the one King of one nation, actually rule forever and put into effect an everlasting covenant (37:22–26), or will sinister forces combine to destroy His reign of peace? In order to allay fears for all time, God shows Ezekiel the very end of time. A

literalistic interpretation of such prophecies, which identifies the foes with individual nations on the historical scene, is not only highly speculative but also does violence to biblical imagery. (TLSB)

38:1 *The word of the Lord came.*† This statement, repeated often for receiving God’s word, stands as an introduction to chs. 38–39, which are a unit. The future restoration of Israel under the reign of the house of David (ch. 37), prefiguring the redemption of the spiritual Israel of all nations, will bring about a massive coalition of sinister powers to destroy God’s kingdom. But the vast host that comes against Jerusalem will end up as dead bodies strewn over the fields of the promised land. Palestine will become the cemetery of the enemy hordes (cf. ch. 37). (CSB)

38:2 *Gog ... chief prince.* Ringleader of this confederacy of evil. His name occurs nowhere else as the head of a foreign state. His base of operations must be inferred from the location of his allies. Gog appears also in the NT (Rv 20) and is defeated. This assurance of God’s enduring kingdom of grace is being fulfilled in the preservation of the Holy Christian Church (Mt 16:18). (TLSB)

land of Magog. In Ge 10:2; 1Ch 1:5 Magog is one of the sons of Japheth, thus the name of a people. In Eze 39:6 it appears to refer to a people. But since the Hebrew prefix *ma-* can mean “place of,” Magog may here simply mean “land of Gog.” Israel had long experienced the hostility of the Hamites and other Semitic peoples; the future coalition here envisioned will include—and in fact be led by—peoples descended from Japheth (cf. Ge 10). (CSB)

chief prince. Military commander-in-chief. Rosh is probably the name of an unknown people or place. Identification with Russia is unlikely, and in any case cannot be proven. (CSB)

Meshech and Tubal. These sons of Japheth (see Ge 10:2; 1Ch 1:5) are probably located in eastern Asia Minor (cf. 27:13; 32:26). They are peoples and territories to the north of Israel (cf. vv. 6, 15; 39:2). As in the days of the Assyrians and Babylonians, the major attack will come from the north. (CSB)

38:3 *I am against you.* Cf Ps 2. Their doom is sealed by the sevenfold “thus says the Lord GOD” (Ezk 38:3, 10, 14, 17; 39:1, 17, 25). As the attack is to come in the remote future, so those who launch it are likewise described as hailing from the farthest borders of the world known to ancient Israel. (TLSB)

38:4 *I will bring you out.* Emphasis is on the fact that God is completely in control of all that is to follow. (CSB)

God will give free reign to the evil scheme (v 10) and base human motives, but will overrule them and make them serve His purposes. So He used the lust for power of the Assyrians (Is 10:5) and the Babylonians (Chaldeans; Hab 1:6). (TLSB)

put hooks in your jaws. As with Pharaoh in 29:4, Gog is likened to a beast led around by God.

horses and horsemen. Typically describes chariots. (TLSB)

38:5–6 *Gomer ... Beth-togarmah.* Descendants of Japheth, they represent peoples living in the north (cf v 15). Allied with these attackers from the north are Persia in the east and Cush and Put (Egypt) in the south. (TLSB)

38:5 *Cush.* The invading forces from the north are joined by armies from the south. (CSB)

Put. Libya (Africa). (CSB)

38:6 *Gomer*. Another of Gog’s northern allies, mentioned in Ge 10:3; 1Ch 1:6 as one of the sons of Japheth. According to non-Biblical sources, these peoples originated north of the Black Sea. (CSB)

Beth Togarmah. Togarmah is one of the children of Gomer. (CSB)

It should be noted that the number of evil allies is seven, the same as the total number of nations addressed in the Gentile oracles (chapters 25–32; cf. those who accompany Egypt in Sheol in 32:17–32). “Seven years” (39:9) and “seven months” (39:12, 14) appear symbolically later. This common numerical symbol of completeness makes the point that no localized skirmish is in mind, but rather a universal conspiracy against God’s people. The same point is made by the wide geographical range of Ezekiel’s names of nations, extending from the northern to the southern extremes of the world known to Israel. (CC)

38:8 *After many days ... In latter years.*† After all the events of national restoration, the immigration and settlement in Israel as described in chs. 34–37 will be completed and the Messianic kingdom established. See Isa 2:2. (CSB)

mustered. God lines them up for battle. (TLSB)

all of them. Ezekiel’s immediate audience was the faithful exiles of Israel. The end-times fulfillment will apply to their spiritual descendants—the new Israel, the Church (cf Gal 6:16). (TLSB)

38:9 *like a cloud*. Jeremiah similarly describes the invasion from the north in Jer 4:13. (CSB)

38:10 *On that day*. A phrase common to other prophetic writings but found only here in Ezekiel; it refers to the day of Gog’s invasion of Israel. (CSB)

thoughts will come into your mind. The divine initiative (v. 4) is paralleled, as it often is in Scripture, by human action (cf. Dt 31:3; Isa 10:6–7). (CSB)

evil scheme. A raiding expedition (see v. 12). (CSB)

38:11 *land of unwallied villages*. Speaks of a blissfully peaceful, ideal future time when walls no longer will be needed. See Zec 2:4–5, which assumes, as does this passage, that the Lord alone is sufficient protection (cf. 36:35–36). (CSB)

Gog expects little or no resistance in conquering and plundering cities. This feature of the prophecy looks beyond the physical defenses of restored Israel (e.g., soon after the return from Babylon, Nehemiah enclosed Jerusalem with a wall; Ne 1–7). (TLSB)

38:12 *spoil ... plunder*. Robbing God and His people. (TLSB)

center of the earth.† The Hebrew for “center” also means “navel,” a graphic image for the belief that Israel was the vital link between God and the world (the idea occurs also in 5:5). The word occurs elsewhere in the Bible only in Jdg 9:37. Since the Hebrew for “land” can also mean “earth,” Jerusalem is both the center of the land of Israel and the center of the earth in God’s plan of universal redemption. (CSB)

38:13 *Sheba*. Southwest corner of the Arabian peninsula (modern Yemen), known for trading (Job 6:19; see 23:42; 27:22; 1Ki 10:1–2). (CSB)

Dedan. Associated with Edom (Ezk 25:13). (TLSB)

Tarshish. The possibility of acquiring much booty arouses the interest of others as well, which they express by peppering Gog with verbose questions, which to a large extent simply repeat his own language from 38:12. Conceivably, a challenge to Gog is implied, but more likely the questions simply represent the desire of others to share in Gog's attack against God's people, as well as the vision of easy spoils in which they can also share. Whether on a large international scale or in smaller, even personal, contacts, the picture of sinful human nature's greed and covetousness rings all too true. (CC)

38:15 *many peoples ... a great host*. Just how vast their numbers were is evident from these facts: (1) after their defeat, their discarded weapons provided Israel with firewood for seven years; (2) their corpses filled a valley; (3) an organized effort over a period of seven months was necessary to search out and bury all the enemy dead (39:9–16). (TLSB)

riding on horses. Cavalry. (TLSB)

38:16 *latter days*. The seven heathen nations denounced in chs 25–32 did not prevent the rehabilitation of the Babylonian exiles in the Promised Land. Proceeding from this point of fulfilled prophecy, Ezekiel envisions the era when Israel is no longer the name of a nation but the symbolic title of a spiritual fellowship open to all races and peoples. In these latter days of the messianic age, demonic attempts will indeed be made to destroy the Kingdom of the Prince of Peace, which is not of this world and therefore seems to be an easy prey for its enemies. (TLSB)

I will bring you against My land. Israel, as a representation of God's spiritual kingdom. (TLSB)

38:17–23 The assault on Israel is no sneak attack. God knew about it before it was even conceived. His prophets spoke about it in former days. (TLSB)

38:17 *Are you not the one I spoke of ... ?* Probably a general reference to earlier prophecies of divine judgment on the nations arrayed against God and his people. (CSB)

There really can be no doubt that the question God addresses to Gog requires a positive answer, as implied at the end of the verse: "I would bring *you* against them." That answer is made more emphatic by approaching it indirectly through a question, which does not simply make the assertion, but suggests an inquiry for the sake of getting a definite answer. (CC)

prophets ... prophesied. Though they did not mention Gog by name, they foretold the defeat of God's enemies who, like Gog, rise up against Him. (TLSB)

38:19 *earthquake*. Signaling the mighty presence of God, who comes to overwhelm the great army invading his land. (CSB)

38:20 The fourfold listing of the animal world indicates the totality of nature. (CSB)

38:21 *I will summon a sword*. God's sword of judgment (Isa 34:5–6; Jer 25:29).

The sword, together with pestilence and famine, is frequently mentioned as a divine implement of punishment (cf 5:1, 12, 17; 6:3; 11:8). (TLSB)

Every man's sword will be against his brother. The coalition of Israel's enemies will turn on itself, as did the armies that attacked Judah in the time of Jehoshaphat (2Ch 20:22–23). (CSB)

38:22† The list of divine weapons describes the judgment to be executed in the cosmic dimensions of the final “day of the Lord” (see Isa 24:17–23; 29:5–8; 66:15–16; Joel 2:30–3:16; Am 8:9; Zec 14:1–21). (CSB)

Three pairs of plagues are in God’s arsenal: (1) war, including disease that comes with war; (2) violent storms; and (3) the volcano-like destruction God used on Sodom and Gomorrah (Gn 19:24). (TLSB)