

NOTES ON EZEKIEL 38-39

* * * **THE RUSSIAN/ISLAMIC INVASION OF ISRAEL** * * *

S.L.H.
Soli Deo Gloria!

"So the house of Israel shall know that I *am* the LORD, their God, from that day and forward." **Ezekiel 39:22**

AUTHOR: Ezekiel (c. 565 BC)

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE. The Book was written by Ezekiel the prophet, who was also a priest¹ (Ezek1:3). Ezekiel was taken captive to Babylon in 597 BC as part of Nebuchadnezzar's second deportation (Ezek1:2; 33:21). The Book opens in the fifth year of his captivity (592 BC; Ezek1:2), and the latest date mentioned is the twenty-seventh year of his captivity (570 BC; Ezek29:17). Thus, the book was probably completed circa 565 BC.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT. Ezekiel prophesied from Babylon during the first half of Judah's 70-year exile (Ezek1:1; cf. Jer25:11; 29:10). Since there is no immediate prospect for the deliverance of the captives, Ezekiel's prophetic ministry is apocalyptic (i.e., he places the hope of Israel in the LORD's promise to ultimately deliver the nation and fulfill all His promised blessings in the eschatological future).

MESSAGE OF EZEKIEL 38-39. The nation of Israel must be converted before Messiah returns (Hos5:15; Matt23:39). Israel's supernatural deliverance by the LORD from an overwhelming invasion by Russia and its Islamic client states will be the eschatological event that directly results in the conversion of the nation (Ezek39:22,28-29).

TIMING OF EZEKIEL 38-39. The placement in time of this future invasion relative to other major end-time events is the point of greatest debate concerning this prophecy. Various views have been advanced: (1) before the pre-trib rapture, (2) between the pre-trib rapture and the beginning of the Tribulation, (3) during the first half of the Tribulation, (4) near the end of the Tribulation, and (5) at the end of the millennial kingdom.

The reasons for dismissing (1), (2), (4), and (5) are briefly summarized. (1) Placing the invasion before the pre-trib rapture is inconsistent with its characteristic of imminency, which precludes any prophesied eschatological event preceding it. Furthermore, this event will result in the salvation of Israel (Ezek39:22); if it occurred prior to the rapture, the nation of Israel would be incorporated into the Body of Christ and included in the rapture, meaning the nation of Israel would not be present on earth for the Tribulation. (2) Placing the invasion between the pre-trib rapture and the beginning of the Tribulation creates a scenario in which the nation of Israel will have been wholly converted and Spirit-filled, with all of its obvious enemies having been supernaturally destroyed by the LORD, yet still signs a covenant with the Antichrist to

¹ If Ezekiel was 30 years old when the book opens (Ezek1:1), and he had already been in Babylon for 5 years (Ezek1:3), then he never actually served as a priest in the Temple at Jerusalem (cf. Num4:3).

ensure its security; such a scenario does not seem credible. (4) Placing the invasion near the end of the Tribulation effectively makes it part of the overall campaign usually called the battle of Armageddon. At this time the Antichrist will have been attempting to exterminate all Jews for three-and-a-half years, and the remnant will have fled the land of Israel for refuge in Bozrah/Petra (Rev12:13-17); this is inconsistent with the scenario of Ezekiel 38 which views Israel as dwelling in the Land in peace and security. (5) Placing the invasion at the end of the millennial kingdom is extremely tenuous, based solely on the mention of "Gog and Magog" in Revelation 20:7. These battles are completely different, with that of Ezekiel 38 involving the participation of a limited number of nations that are clearly identified, whereas the battle at the end of the millennial kingdom involves "[all] nations which are in the four quarters of the earth . . . the number of whom is as the sand of the sea". The participation of "Gog and Magog" in both battles is an incidental point of similarity.

(3) Placing the invasion in the first half of the Tribulation best harmonizes with all of scripture, for the following reasons. First, Ezekiel asserts that it will occur "in the latter years" (Ezek38:8), during "that day" in which the LORD pours out His "fury" and "wrath" upon the enemies of Israel (Ezek38:18-19); this is language that normally applies to the Day of the LORD (i.e., the 7-year Tribulation period; cf. Joel2:11; Zeph1:14-18). Second, this invasion takes place after Israel's regathering to the Land, but while still in unbelief (Ezek38:8). Third, this invasion occurs at a time when Israel is dwelling in the Land in peace and security (Ezek38:8,11,14); this is consistent with the first half of the Tribulation, during which the security of the nation of Israel is ensured by their covenant (i.e., peace treaty) with the Antichrist (Isa28:15-18; Dan9:27; 1Thess5:2-3; Rev6:1-2; the 2nd Seal Judgment in Rev6:3-4 could be the Ezekiel 38 invasion). Fourth, in the aftermath of this invasion the nation of Israel is finally and completely converted and Spirit-filled (Ezek39:22,28-29; Cp., Jer31:33; Ezek36:26-27); if this occurs during the first half of the Tribulation, it comports well with the fact that the Antichrist forsakes his covenant with Israel and attempts to destroy the Jews beginning at the midpoint of the Tribulation (Dan9:27; Rev12:13-17). The conversion of the nation of Israel during the first half of the Tribulation is also consistent with the typology of Joseph and the seven years of famine in Egypt/Canaan (Gen41:25-27); if Joseph is a type of Christ, his brethren are a type of Israel, and the seven years of famine are a type of the Tribulation, then the reconciliation of Joseph and his brethren after the second year of the seven years of famine (Gen45:6) suggests the conversion of the nation of Israel to Christ will occur after the second year of the Tribulation. This view has been held by many classic dispensationalists², including Walvoord, Unger, Ryrie, Pentecost, and Dyer.

OUTLINE OF EZEKIEL 38-39.

- I. Invasion of Israel by Russia and Its Islamic Clients **Ezek38:1-16**
- II. The LORD's Judgment/Destruction of the Invaders **Ezek38:17-39:24**
- III. Conversion and Spirit-filling of the Nation of Israel **Ezek39:25-29**

² This observation is not meant to assert an argument from authority. However, the fact that so many serious and generally sound students of prophecy (i.e., dispensationalists) have held this position means it should not be cavalierly dismissed.

CHAPTER 38

INVASION OF ISRAEL BY RUSSIA AND ITS ISLAMIC CLIENT STATES

An invasion of the Land of Israel by one identified as Gog (Ezek1:2) will occur "in the latter years", when the nation of Israel is at peace and dwelling in safety (Ezek38:8); this will be the case during the first half of the Tribulation, when Israel's security is enforced by its covenant with the Antichrist (Dan9:27). Gog's invading force will be comprised of Russia and its Islamic client states (see CHART: IDENTIFICATION OF NATIONS IN EZEKIEL 38).

- [1] This prophecy came to Ezekiel as "the word of the LORD".
- [2] The leader of the invading force is "Gog"; in Hebrew, this name means *high* or *lifted up* (cf. Isa24:21-22). His appearance here will be during the Tribulation, but he will also be a principal leader in the rebellion at the end of the millennial kingdom (Rev20:7-8). Thus, "Gog" is not a man, but a (fallen) angelic "prince" (i.e., principality; cf. Eph6:12); Gog is the "chief prince" of the ancient kingdom of "Magog" (Cp., Dan10:13,20), meaning *the land of Gog*, which includes "Meshech and Tubal". "Magog", "Meshech", and "Tubal" were the sons of Japheth (Gen10:2) who populated that geographical area known today as Russia³. Gog is the primary angelic principality responsible for deceptively influencing the people/nation of Russia.

Identification of Nations in Prophecy. How does an ancient prophet communicate to readers who live thousands of years in the future concerning peoples and nations, since the names of nations change with the passing of time? In the Bible, he does so by using the ancient designations of peoples established by God in the Table of Nations (Genesis 10). An understanding of the sons of Noah (i.e., Shem, Ham, and Japheth), their immediate descendants, and the peoples/nations into which they were divided after Babel, provides a fixed frame of reference by which to identify nations in Biblical prophecy. While these ancient designations often do not provide crisp, one-to-one correspondences to modern nation states, the ethnic correspondences are generally clear.

- [3] "Gog" is the enemy of "the lord GOD", who is "against" him.
- [4] God will use Gog and the nations under his influence for His purpose (i.e., to chasten the nation of Israel), in the same way He used the Babylonians (cf. Hab1:5-10). That God will "turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws . . . and bring thee forth, and all thine army" indicates these nations will be divinely compelled to play this role in His prophesied eschatological plan. This "army" and "great company" will attack with "all sorts of armor", suggesting that the prophet struggled to describe modern warfare with the limited vocabulary of ancient Hebrew.
- [5] Allied "with them" (i.e., the Russians) in this attack will be "Persia, Cush, and Put". "Persia" is Elam, a son of Shem, in the Table of Nations (Gen10:22), but has been updated to the contemporary

³ Memory of the ancient names "Meshech" and "Tubal" is likely preserved in the modern names *Moscow* and *Tobolsk*, the historic capitals of western (European) and eastern (Asia; i.e., Siberia) Russia, which are separated by the Ural mountains.

name in Ezekiel's day; Persia is modern day Iran. "Cush" and "Put" were sons of Ham (Gen10:6). In the ancient Hebrew perspective, Africa was comprised of Mizraim, Cush, and Put: Mizraim was Egypt, Cush was Africa south of Egypt (i.e., black Africa, translated Ethiopia in some modern versions), and Put was Africa west of Egypt (i.e., north Africa, translated Libya in some modern versions). Thus, allied with Russia in this invasion will be Iran, north Africa, and black Africa (today, all Islamic nations and largely client nations subservient to and supported by Russia).

- [6] Also part of Gog's alliance are "Gomer" and "Togarmah", a son and grandson of Japheth in the Table of Nations (Gen10:2-3); this is modern day Turkey, yet another Islamic nation that has become a client of Russia. Included also are "all its hordes; and many peoples with thee", suggesting that other minor nations not listed by name will also participate in this invasion of Israel.
- [7] "Gog, of the land of Magog" (v2) is exhorted to "prepare" this alliance, and to "be thou a guard unto them". It is a present day reality that Russia is the primary supplier of technology, especially weapons, to this "company" of Islamic nations.
- [8] This invasion will take place "in the latter years" (i.e., the end times). It will be a time after the nation of Israel has been reestablished (May 14, 1948), with the Jews (partially) regathered "out of many peoples . . . brought forth out of the nations" to the land of Israel by means of "the sword" (i.e., war). Key to understanding the timing of this invasion is the important detail that the Jews will be "dwell[ing] safely" (reiterated in v11) in the land of Israel; that is not true today, nor will it be true during the second half of the Tribulation (when the Antichrist will drive them out of the land in his attempt to exterminate all Jews; cf. Rev12:13-14), but it will be true during the first half of the Tribulation (when Israel's security will be thought to be ensured by their covenant with the Antichrist; Cp., Isa28:18; Dan9:27).
- [9] When the nations led by Gog come against Israel, their forces will be overwhelming. The figurative language used by the prophet may suggest, in part, a massive aerial attack.
- [10] The motivation behind this attack on Israel by Russia and its Islamic client states is "evil" (with the demonic principality Gog as their leader, it is diabolical).
- [11] It is reiterated (Cp., v8) that the attack occurs at a time when Israel is dwelling in the land, at peace, and believing it is secure. This scenario best comports with the first half of the Tribulation, after Israel has entered into its covenant (i.e., peace treaty; Dan9:27) with the Antichrist and believes he is committed to ensuring their security. The literal description of the cities of Israel as "without walls, and having neither bars nor gates" is consistent with modern, rather than ancient, Israel.
- [12] This description of the land of Israel is consistent with its modern manifestation. For the better part of two millennia after the destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD) and the start of the Diaspora (135 AD), the land of Israel was desolate and sparsely inhabited. Only after the return of the Jews began in earnest in the late 19th

century has it been gradually repopulated and restored to a state of productivity. There are two largely independent agendas at work behind this invasion of Israel by Russia and its Islamic client states. First, the agenda of the angelic principality Gog is a desire to destroy the nation of Israel and exterminate the Jewish race⁴; it is possible that this agenda will be shared by the Islamic nations that participate in the invasion. Second, the human agenda of Russia is "to take a spoil" (i.e., the regathered nation of Israel has something of value that Russia wants). Until quite recently, the land of Israel was thought to be devoid of any significant natural resources (the wealth of the modern nation being entirely dependent upon the productivity and intellectual ingenuity of the Jewish people); however, recent discoveries of massive reserves of natural gas below Israel and just off its shore in the Mediterranean Sea (perhaps prophesied in Gen49:25 and Deut33:13,24) have dramatically changed that geopolitical calculus.

- [13] "Sheba and Dedan", grandsons of Ham (Gen10:7), are ancient Arabia (today, Saudi Arabia and perhaps some of the other minor Gulf States). "Tarshish" is Britain (see: Tarshish and All Its Young Lions). Saudi Arabia, the U.K. (and perhaps the U.S.A., Canada, and Australia) will voice an objection to this attack, but apparently do not intervene on behalf of Israel.

Tarshish and All Its Young Lions. Tarshish, a grandson of Japheth (Gen10:4), is Britain. In the Bible, Tarshish is presented as an island kingdom (Gen10:4-5; Ps72:10) whose people are sea-faring traders (Isa2:16; Ezek27:25; 38:13). Etymologically, the name Britain is related to the word for tin. In the ancient world, the Cornwall region (i.e., southwest) of Britain was an important source of tin (Cp., Ezek27:12), an element necessary in the production of bronze. Tarshish's "young lions" is likely an allusion to its colonization of the U.S.A., Canada, and Australia/New Zealand, English-speaking nations still its de facto political allies. At the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom, it will be "the ships of Tarshish" that transport the remaining Jews and their wealth, still dispersed around the world (today, residing principally in the U.S.A.), to the land of Israel (Isa60:9).

Note on the U.K. and Brexit. Many view the formation and evolution of the European Union (EU) as the geopolitical infrastructure that will eventually emerge as the Revived Roman Empire (i.e., the final phase of the 4th Gentile kingdom prophesied to oppress Israel; cf. Dan2:40-45; 7:23-27; Rev13:1-7). Here, Britain (i.e., the U.K.) appears to act independent of the Antichrist's kingdom. This may indicate that the U.K. is not a member of the Revived Roman Empire, in which case their recent departure from the EU (i.e., Brexit) could be prophetically significant.

⁴ The agenda of Satan and his angels has long been the extermination of the Jewish race. Since the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to establish His messianic kingdom on earth is dependent upon a restored and regenerated nation of Israel (cf. Hos5:11; Ps118:22-26; Matt23:37-39), he believes the eradication of the Jews will thwart the plan of God and prevent his prophesied judgment (Isa14:15; Ezek28:17-19; Matt25:41; Rev20:10).

Note that one of the "spoils" is "silver and gold". The enormous wealth of King Solomon (cf. 1Kgs10:14,22-23) has never been discovered and is thought by many to have been hidden in subterranean chambers below the Temple mount before the invasion of the Babylonians. Perhaps a great cache of "silver and gold" will be uncovered in the activities associated with the rebuilding of the Temple in the first half of the Tribulation (made possible by the covenant with the Antichrist).

- [14] Through the prophet Ezekiel, "the Lord GOD" prophesies directly to "Gog". In prophetic passages, "in that day" is a reference to the Day of the LORD (i.e., the 7-year Tribulation); in this case, the first half of the Tribulation, when "the people of Israel dwell safely" in the land.
- [15] "Gog" will come from his "place" (i.e., Magog), which is "out of the north parts" (in the Hebrew text, literally *the uttermost parts of the north*). This necessitates that Magog, the "place" of "Gog", be Russia, not Turkey; while Turkey is north of the land of Israel, it cannot be described as *the uttermost parts of the north*.
- [16] Notice that God describes the land of Israel as "my land". Also juxtaposed are the sovereignty of God who guides history toward His appointed end (Isa46:9-11) and the free will of both the angelic principality Gog and his human armies. Clearly, God is using "Gog" to fulfill His purpose of chastening the unbelieving nation of Israel; yet, neither "Gog" nor the invading nations are compelled against their wills, but are willing participants with their own evil agendas. In the end, they will be righteously judged by God for their attack on Israel; by the supernatural intervention of God on behalf of Israel to judge her enemies, He will glorify Himself in the eyes of both Israel and "the heathen" (i.e., the Gentile nations).

THE LORD'S JUDGMENT/DESTRUCTION OF THE INVADERS

The LORD judges the Russian/Islamic armies who attack Israel based on the terms of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen12:3).

- [17] The "Lord GOD" says He has "spoken of old by [His] servants, the prophets", that He would "bring thee against them". It is not obvious that there were specific prophecies of this Russian/Islamic invasion of Israel before Ezekiel; it may be a reference to the general principle in the Mosaic Covenant of chastening the rebellious nation by means of its enemies (Deut28:25-26), or specific prophecies of the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions as examples of it (cf. 2Kgs20:17-18; Isa10:5-6; Hab1:5-10).
- [18] God's judgment of Gog's Russian/Islamic armies that come against Israel will happen "at the same time" as when His "fury" is aroused. This invasion will result in great Jewish loss of life⁵, which is a phase of God's purging out of the nation of Israel all rebellious Jews who will not repent and return to Him (Cp., Ezek20:33-38) in preparation for the conversion of the nation.

⁵ Two-thirds of all Jews will perish during the Tribulation (Zech13:8).

- [19] By use of the terms "my jealousy", "my wrath", and "in that day" (i.e., the day of the LORD), this verse makes clear that the Russian/Islamic invasion of Israel takes place **during the Tribulation**. Coincident with this invasion will be "a great shaking in the land of Israel".
- [20] This earthquake and its results could be associated with the 6th seal judgment (Cp., Rev6:12-17).
- [21] Part of the supernatural destruction of the Russian/Islamic armies will include the invaders turning on themselves in the confusion of battle (i.e., so-called friendly fire; Cp., Judg7:22; 1Sam14:20; 2Chron20:23; Hag2:22).
- [22] The destruction of the Russian/Islamic armies will be supernatural, including "pestilence", "overflowing rain", "great hailstones", "fire", and "brimstone" (Cp., 1st, 2nd, 3rd trumpet judgments; Rev8:7-11).
- [23] By this supernatural intervention on behalf of Israel, God will "magnify" and "sanctify" Himself before all "nations", such that even those who refuse to repent will be forced to acknowledge the existence and power of "the LORD" (Cp., Ps9:16; Ezek37:28; Rev6:15-17).

CHAPTER 39

REVIEW OF THE PROPHECY AGAINST GOG AND DESTRUCTION OF INVADERS

In the typical fashion of Hebrew historical narrative, Ezekiel 39 revisits the grand event outlined in Ezekiel 38, providing additional details and highlighting the most important elements (Cp., Genesis 1-2; 10-11; Nehemiah 3-4ff; Isaiah 30-31; Revelation 16:17-18:24).

- [1] God reiterates that He is "against ... Gog" (Cp., Ezek38:2-3), the "prince" (i.e., angelic principality) who influences, deceives, and leads "Meshech and Tubal" (i.e., Russia; Cp., Rev16:14; 20:3).
- [2] The Magog invasion will come from "the north part" (Cp., Dan11:40; Joel2:20). God Himself will intervene and "turn ... back" the invaders, but only "the sixth part" (i.e., one-sixth) will survive. Two purposes of God are involved relative to Russia and its Islamic client states: first, they will be used by God to chasten the regathered nation of Israel so it will repent and turn to the LORD for salvation; second, God will righteously judge them for their sins, especially their persecutions of the Jews (Gen12:2).
- [3] The ancient people of Magog (i.e., the Scythians) were renowned for their expertise with "bow" and "arrows", used here as metaphors for modern implements of war. Today, their descendants (the Russians) are a fighting force similarly feared.
- [4] The human carnage resulting from the death of five-sixths of the Russian and Islamic invaders will be unimaginable, only to be exceeded by that which follows the battle of Armageddon (Rev19:17-21).

- [5] After the battle, the human remains littering the "open field" will be a significant problem.
- [6] Some view the "fire" that destroys "Magog" as a metaphor for modern warfare, including nuclear weapons; but with the direct involvement of the LORD, it could just as easily, and probably more likely, be supernatural "fire" from heaven (Cp., Gen19:24; Rev18:8). The "fire" will target not only the invading forces themselves, but also destroy "those who dwell securely in the coastlands" (i.e., Russia and the Islamic nations from which the armies were raised). The unlikely and supernatural nature of their destruction of the invaders will cause all to "know" that it came from "the LORD" (Cp., Isa66:19).
- [7] By this supernatural intervention on behalf of the nation of Israel, both "Israel" and "the [Gentile] nations" will "know" that it is "JEHOVAH, the Holy One of Israel" (i.e., the God revealed in the Bible) who alone is sovereign. At this point in history, the times of the Gentiles are drawing to a close, such that God will no longer "let them pollute [His] holy name any more" (cf. Dan2:31-45; Luk21:24).
- [8] That "this is the day of which I have spoken" is a reference to the Day of the LORD (i.e., the Tribulation), which is the time of judgment of the Gentile nations (Zeph1:14-18); Russia and the Islamic nations are judged during the first half of the Tribulation, with the remainder of the Gentile nations judged during the second half of the Tribulation at the Battle of Armageddon.
- [9] Following this battle, the cleanup of the land of "Israel" will include the "burn[ing] of weapons", lasting "seven years". Some have viewed this particular detail as especially important in determining the timing of this invasion, usually being hesitant to allow this "seven year" burning of weapons to extend beyond the Second Coming and the inauguration of the Millennial Kingdom; however, no such restriction is warranted, as the burning of Babylon will extend into and throughout the Millennial Kingdom (Cp., Rev19:2-3).
- [10] Apparently, this "burn[ing]" of "weapons" will provide for a significant portion of the energy needs of Israel for seven years; thus, ironically Israel will "spoil" and "rob" those who had intended to "take a spoil" (Ezek38:12) from them.
- [11] The "multitude" of dead bodies of the armies of "Gog" will be buried "east of the sea"; if this is a reference to the Dead Sea, it would be a burial site down wind of the nation of Israel proper. The site will become known (throughout the Millennial Kingdom) as "the Valley of Hamon-gog", which means *the multitude of Gog*.
- [12] The "burying" of the dead bodies, required to "cleanse the land", will take "seven months". If this invasion occurs in the second year of the Tribulation (Cp., Gen45:6), this would allow adequate time to complete the burial process before the remnant flees to Bozrah/Petra at the midpoint of the Tribulation (Rev12:6,13-17).
- [13] The destruction of the enemies of Israel will be to the "renown" of the Jews and the "glory" of "the Lord GOD"; it will be a clear demonstration that God keeps the commitments He made in the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Gen12:3).

- [14] The "task" of burying the dead bodies will be assigned to "men" dedicated to the activity (i.e., professionals), though they will be aided in locating the last of the remains by "passengers" (i.e., ordinary people who report remains discovered during travel). It is reiterated that the burial process will take "seven months".
- [15] Those "passengers" (i.e., travelers) that discover an unburied "bone" will mark it with a "sign" for subsequent disposal by the professional "buriers".
- [16] The principal "city" associated with the cleanup project, located at or near the Valley of Hamon-gog, will come to be known as "Hamonah" (meaning *multitude* or *horde*).
- [17] Aiding in the cleanup of the human remains will be a feast upon the carnage by "every feathered fowl" and "every beast of the field" (Cp., Rev19:17-18).
- [18] This scene is likened to a pagan festival in which the revelers in attendance feast upon the multitude of animals which have been sacrificed. Geographically, "Bashan" is the northern part of the land of Israel historically associated with the tribe of Dan (Deut33:22), which was particularly susceptible to pagan idolatry (1Kgs12:28-30).
- [19] In this case, it is not pagan idolaters who have offered this "sacrifice", but the LORD Himself.
- [20] In this case, the sacrifice is not of "rams", "lambs", "goats", and "bullocks" (v18), but of "horses and chariots", "mighty men", and "men of war" (i.e., the enemies of Israel).
- [21] It is a purpose of the LORD that all "the nations" recognize His "hand" in this supernatural defense of the nation of Israel. It is also His purpose to ultimately establish the nation of Israel, which He refers to as "my glory" (Cp., Isa46:13), as the head of all "the nations" (Deut26:19; 28:1,13).
- [22] The supernatural deliverance of the nation of Israel from this Russian/Islamic invasion will be the event that directly results in the repentance of the nation and their return to the LORD; Israel will be a saved nation (Rom11:26) "from that day and forward".
- [23] The "nations" have long misunderstood the reason for all the misfortunes of the Jews and their suffering under oppression from the Gentiles; the suffering of the Jews is not because of any weakness or inability on the part of the God of Israel (Cp., Num14:15-16). Even many Christians believe God has permanently "cast away his people" (Rom11:1).
- [24] After this supernatural display of God on behalf of His people, all "the nations shall know" (v23) that God never abandoned Israel; rather, He allowed the nation of Israel to be chastened for their "iniquity", "trespass", and "transgressions" (according to the terms of the Mosaic Covenant; Lev26:14-39; Deut28:15-68), until they repented and returned to Him (Lev26:40-46; cf. Isa59:1-2).

CONVERSION AND SPIRIT-FILLING OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL

The New Covenant was ratified with the death of Christ (Matt26:28), and since Pentecost all believers have enjoyed some of the blessings it makes possible (e.g., regeneration, the forgiveness of sins, a permanently indwelling Holy Spirit). However, the New Covenant is a covenant between the LORD and the nation of Israel (Jer31:31; Heb8:8), and it will not be formally inaugurated until Israel (as a nation) repents and returns to the LORD (cf. Deut30:1-10; Jer31:33-34; Act3:19-21); this occurs following Israel's deliverance from the Russian/Islamic invasion during the first half of the Tribulation⁶.

- [25] "Now" is a key timing cue. While the regathering of Jews back to the land of Israel began in earnest in the late 19th century, and continues to the present day, it will not be completed until after the return of Christ (cf. Matt24:31); the completion of this ingathering⁷ awaits the conversion of the nation and the inauguration of the New Covenant (cf. Deut30:1-6). Note Ezekiel's designation of "mercy" applied to "the whole house of Israel", which is equivalent to Jeremiah's "with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah" (Jer31:31); when Ezekiel and Jeremiah recorded their prophecies, the kingdom of Israel had been divided and scattered for approximately 150 years.
- [26] The "shame" suffered by the Jews outside the land of Israel at the hands of the Gentiles have been an application of the "curses" as stipulated under the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Lev26:32-39; Deut28:63-68).
- [27] The prophets speak of two times of the LORD regathering exiled Jews back to the land of Israel; the first was a regathering from Babylon after 70 years of captivity (Ezr1:1-4; Jer29:10; Dan9:2), the second will be an end-time regathering from every nation on earth (cf. Deut30:3-5; Is11:11-12; Jer31:8; Ezek36:24; Amos9:14-15; Matt24:31). When Ezekiel speaks of gathering the Jews "again ... in the sight of many nations", he refers to the second, end-time regathering.
- [28] "Then" is another key timing cue. This final regathering of Jews to the land of Israel will be exhaustive, leaving "none of them any more" in "captivity among the nations" (Matt24:31), but it will not happen until "they" (i.e., the nation of Israel) "know that I am the LORD, their God" (i.e., after their conversion).
- [29] This eschatological event of the LORD "pour[ing] out [His] Spirit upon the house of Israel" is a manifestation of the New Covenant

⁶ The key to resolving the issue of the time of the Ezekiel 38-39 invasion of Israel involves the proper recognition of two important clues. First, Israel's deliverance from this invasion directly results in the conversion of the nation (Ezek39:22-29). Second, Joseph, his separated brethren, and the seven years of famine in Egypt/Canaan (Gen41:25-27) are an extended and relevant type; if Joseph is a type of Christ, his brethren are a type of Israel, and the seven years of famine are a type of the Tribulation, then the reconciliation of Joseph and his brethren after the second year of the seven years of famine (Gen45:6) indicates the conversion of the nation of Israel to Christ will occur after the second year of the Tribulation.

⁷ The complete and final ingathering of the nation of Israel to the land of Israel will be the prophetic fulfillment of the 7th feast of the LORD, the Feast of Tabernacles (or "ingathering"; cf. Exod23:16; 34:22; Lev23:33-43).

finally applied to the regenerate nation of Israel (cf. Jer31:33-34; Ezek36:26-27; 37:14; Joel2:28-32; Zech12:10; Rom11:26-27).

Note on Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17. Clearly, Ezekiel 39:29 and Joel 2:28 refer to the same eschatological event. The quotation of Joel 2:28 in Acts 2:17 does not imply fulfillment of this prophecy on the day of Pentecost, but it is merely an application made because of certain similarities shared by the two events (see extended discussion of this in the *Notes on the Book of Joel*).

--- S.D.G. ---

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