

Earth's Ultimate Conquest – God's Kingdom Restored by Divine Retribution on All Evil

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Date: 28 April 2024

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn now to our reading for this morning, and we are in the later chapters of Ezekiel and Ezekiel 38 and 39 this morning.

Ezekiel 38, and we're reading through to the end of 39. A long reading this morning, we begin there in 38 and verse 1. The word of the Lord came to me, son of man, set your face toward Gog in the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him and say, thus says the Lord God, behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, 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 shields, wielding swords.

Persia, Cush, and Put are with them, all of them with shield and helmet. Gomer and all his horses, Beth, Torgomer, from the uttermost parts of the north with all his hordes.

Many peoples are with you. Be ready and keep ready, you and all your hosts that are assembled about you, and be a guard for them. 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.

[1 : 55] 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. Thus says the Lord God, on that day thoughts will come into your mind, and you will devise an evil scheme and say, I will go up against the land of unwallled villages.

I will fall upon the quiet people who dwell securely, all of them dwelling without walls and having no bars or gates, to seize spoil and carry off plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places that are now inhabited.

And the peoples who are gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the center of the earth. Sheba and Dadan and the merchants of Tarshish and all its leaders will say to you, have you come to seize spoil?

Have you assembled your host to carry off plunder, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to seize great spoil? 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? 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. You will come up against my people Israel, like a cloud covering land.

[3 : 23] 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. Thus says the Lord God, are you he of whom I spoke in former days by my servants, the prophet of Israel, who in those days prophesied for years that I would bring you against them?

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. 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.

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 mountain shall be thrown down, and the cliff shall fall, and every wall shall tumble to the ground. I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Lord God. Every man's sword will be against his brother. And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog and say, Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. [5 : 08] And I will turn you about and drive you forward and bring you up from the uttermost parts of the north and lead you against the mountains of Israel. Then I will strike your bow from your left hand and will make you arrows drop out of your right hand.

You shall fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your hordes and all peoples who are with you. I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. You shall fall in the open field, for I have spoken, declares the Lord God. I will send fire on Magog and on those who dwell securely in the coastlands, and they shall know that I am the Lord. And my holy name I will make known in the midst of my people Israel, and I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel. Behold, it is coming, and it will be brought about, declares the Lord God. That is the day of which I have spoken. Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and make fires of the weapons and burn them, shields and bucklers, bows and arrows, clubs and spears, and they will make fires of them for seven years, so that they will not need to take any wood out of the field or cut down any out of the forests.

[6 : 32] For they will make their fires of the weapons. They will seize the spoil of those who despoiled them, and plunder those who plundered them, declares the Lord God. On that day, I will give to Gog a place for burial in Israel, the Valley of the Travelers, east of the sea.

It will block the travelers, for there, Gog, and all his multitude will be buried. It will be called the Valley of Haman-Gog. For seven months, the House of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land.

All the people of the land will bury them, and it will bring them renown on the day that I show my glory, declares the Lord God. They will set apart men to travel through the land regularly and bury those travelers remaining on the face of the land, so as to cleanse it.

At the end of seven months, they will make their search. And when these travel through the land and anyone sees a human bone, then he shall set it up, assigned by it, till the buries are buried in the valley of Haman-Gog.

Hamana is also the name of the city. Thus, they shall cleanse the land. As for you, son of man, thus says the Lord God, speak to the birds of every sort and to all beasts of the field, assemble and come, gather from all around to the sacrificial feast that I'm preparing for you, a great sacrificial feast on the mountains of Israel.

[8 : 04] And you shall eat flesh and drink blood. You shall eat the flesh of the mighty and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of he goats, of bulls, all of them fat beasts of Bashan.

And you shall eat fat till you are filled, and drink blood till you are drunk, at the sacrificial feast that I'm preparing for you. And you shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men and all kinds of warriors, declares the Lord God.

And I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see my judgment that I've executed, and my hand that I've laid upon them. The house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day forward.

And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt so treacherously with me that I hid my face from them and gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they all fell by the sword.

I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and the transgressions, and hid my face from them. Therefore, thus says the Lord God, Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for my holy name.

[9 : 26] They shall forget their shame, and all their treachery they have practiced against me, when they dwell securely in their land with none to make them afraid. When I brought them back from the peoples, and gather them from their enemies' lands, and through them have vindicated my holiness in the sight of many nations.

Then they shall know that I am the Lord their God, because I sent them into exile among the nations, and then assembled them into their own land.

I will leave none of them remaining among the nations any more, and I will not hide my face any more from them, when I pour out my spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord God. Well, amen. May God bless his word to us. Well, do turn with me to the passage that Paul read to us, Ezekiel 38 and 39, this prophecy against Gog.

And as you're doing that, just listen to these words from the very end of the Bible, in Revelation chapter 20. Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth.

[10:45] Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle. Their number is like the sand of the sea, and they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city.

But fire came down from heaven and consumed them. And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

If you type Gog and Magog into Google, as I did during the week, you will find more than three and a half million hits.

The most recent ones you'll find are all to do with the current hostilities in Israel and in Gaza. The ones from a year ago and more are mostly about Ukraine and Russia.

When I was young, in the 1970s, particularly following the Yom Kippur War in Israel, there was a certainty among many evangelical Christians that the Soviet Union would soon invade Israel from the far north, just as Ezekiel 38, verse 15 predicted.

[12:00] And that's because verse 2 here, if you look, and if you look at the footnote, you'll see it can be translated, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, which clearly sounds like Russia and Moscow.

I'm not kidding. You see, there does seem to be an irrepressible fascination with the Bible for many who see it as full of mysterious codes that are to be cracked.

What it tends to reveal, sadly, is a lot of cracked pots among such people, not serious Bible students, because their whole approach to the Bible is the very antithesis of its true function, which is not to conceal, but to reveal.

It is public truth that we have in front of us here, not secret codes. And that's what we've been seeing, isn't it, with the book of Revelation. Revelation. With Paul in the evenings.

The clue is in the name, Revelation. It reveals. And what we'll see when we come back to that in July, as we look at the last few chapters, is that although many find it is mysterious, what I read just now there in chapter 20 about Gog and Magog is in fact a very clear message.

[13:16] Satan will be destroyed. God's saints will be vindicated. And final judgment will be passed on all evil in the world.

And you see, in quoting there from Ezekiel, John the Apostle is showing us that he understands the book of Ezekiel much better than many contemporary Christians seem to.

What we saw last week was that John is very clear, isn't he, all through his own gospel, where he sees so much of Ezekiel being fulfilled directly in the message and the ministry of Jesus.

And because he understood that from Jesus himself, all the scriptures of the former days must be fulfilled in the person and work of the Christ, the Messiah. John applied the scriptures, not asking the question that, well, many modern day Christians seem to ask when we go to the Bible, what's this saying about me and about my life, but rather, what does this teach us about God and his Christ?

What does it teach about his ultimate purpose for this world, which is now being fulfilled in these last days, the days ever since the first coming of Christ, and which await the great consummation at his return?

[14:31] And John understood that, as we saw last time, everything that Ezekiel is speaking about here from chapter 34 onwards is all about the ultimate restoration of God's kingdom in the latter days.

And that is certainly what chapters 38 and 39 here are focused on. Verse 8 of 38, the latter years. Verse 16, the latter days.

Multiple references all the way through to that day, the day that I'm speaking of. That's the term that the prophets always repeatedly use, isn't it, for the coming of the great day of the Lord, the day of judgment and of salvation.

And verses 17 and 18 here in chapter 38 contrast, if you look, the former days with on that day, the latter days. Verse 16, when God will cause the whole earth to quake and all the people, all the beasts on it, when he rains down judgment, on the whole world amid these absolute cosmic convulsions.

And then, chapter 39, verse 7, his holy name will be profaned no more. Judgment will be complete. And chapter 39 ends just as the wonderful chapter 37 ended, with no separation of God from his people anymore.

[15:56] and God's Spirit poured out on the whole of his household, all his people. None left any longer among the nations, but all gathered home to his presence.

Ezekiel is dealing here with ultimate things. After the wonderful hope that's portrayed in chapters 34 to 37, of the ultimate vindication of his kingdom under the forever king, the David, the king forever, the prince of peace.

After that, none will prevent it, far less reverse it. However great the opposition might be, not the whole world, not even the forces of hell itself, will ever prevail against his kingdom.

And that's why the forces of evil here in these chapters are represented by these rather strange names. Gog, the ruler, not mentioned anywhere else in the Old Testament, but from the land of Meshech and Tubal in Magog.

If you think back to the oracles against the many nations that we saw in chapter 25 to 32, they're all against contemporary nations in Israel's world, but that's not so here.

[17:09] There's seven nations here, five more in verses five and six, alongside Meshech and Tubal. Surely that's a symbolic number of completeness. And all of them, you will find, come from the table of nations way back in Genesis chapter 10.

All of them are descendants of Ham and Japheth. So they represent this age-old struggle with the descendants of Shem, the seed of promise that we read about in Genesis chapter 9 at the end. So this is not an ethnic struggle, not a political struggle, it's a spiritual one. It represents the massed ranks of the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman, the people of faith, right through the unfolding story of God's redemption.

And that's underlined by another description of these enemy hordes here in chapter 38, verse 15, and in chapter 39, verse 2. They're from the uttermost parts of the north.

And again, that often, in the prophets, epitomizes the enemies of God's covenant. You can read it all through Isaiah and through Jeremiah, for example. It's not a specific historical entity, necessarily.

[18:23] And of course, the imagery throughout these two chapters here in front of us, they're replete, aren't they, with themes of cosmic judgment, apocalyptic judgment, far beyond anything in history.

Chapter 38, verses 19 and 20, it pictures a great unraveling of the whole world as well as humanity. Collapse of cliffs and mountains reminiscent of the judgment of the flood.

Chapter 39, as we've seen, speaks in hyperbolic terms about a cataclysmic slaughter, bodies piled so high it would take seven months with the entire population actively burying the dead.

One writer reckons that, if you add it all up, that comes to about 400 million bodies. It takes seven years to burn all the plundered weapons.

Notice all the seven. There are seven oracles in these two chapters. It's significant. This is not a literalistic prediction of any invasion in the history books quite clearly.

[19:25] Now, what Ezekiel is talking about is exactly what the book of Revelation is talking about in its dealing with what's there called Armageddon. Scholar Douglas Stewart says this, it's a figurative description of the powers of darkness influencing the world to try and crush God's people and the sure and total victory of God against these forces, guaranteeing his people the peace that he has promised them forever.

Revelation 20, verse 8, indeed, identifies Gog and Magog precisely as a figure for all of the foes of the Messiah. And you see, that is why the Apostle Paul tells us, doesn't he, that all of these things written in these former days are written for us who live in these latter times to give us encouragement, to give us hope.

My goodness, we need encouragement and hope, don't we? Our world does look increasingly bleak for the Christian church, growing opposition, growing enemies of Christ and his people and all that he stands for.

But you see, what these two chapters are telling us is that God's people will never again be overcome totally by the nations as Israel once was during her exile.

As Palmer Robertson puts it, no superpower will arise in the future to altogether overpower the restored people of God. As Jesus himself said, the gates of hell will not prevail against his church. [20 : 59] As Paul the apostle put it, nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Because in him, whatever may come against us, in him we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

And that's the message of these chapters. It's not secret codes for those in the know. This is a clear revelation for the whole world. It's a real warning to the enemies of God, to the promoters of evil, only defeat and destruction awaits you.

But it's a great comfort also to all the household of God in the Messiah and the Prince of Peace is complete deliverance which is utterly certain. So let's look with a little bit of detail at these seven oracles in these two chapters.

There's four that announce the defeat of enemies. Then there's two that foretell the destruction of all evil. And then the seventh promises the deliverance of all Israel.

Look at the first four oracles in the whole of chapter 38. They announce the complete defeat of all enemies. Look at verses 1 to 9.

[22 : 12] There's a vivid picture there of what we sang about in Psalm 2. The nations raging, set together against the Lord and his anointed. It's a description of defiant hordes.

They muster against God's people. Verse 4, all your army. Verse 6, all his hordes. Many peoples. Verse 7, all your hordes. You and your hordes.

Verse 9. These seven ancient nations represent a ring around Israel as one scholar says, more or less on the horizons of the known world.

An archetypal symbolic depiction of the opposition of the nations to God's people. Notice verse 8. After many days in the latter years.

This is a vision for long, long after the return of exiles. It depicts many peoples, verse 8, plural, gathered now on the mountains of Israel.

[23 : 13] Verse 11. Living in total peace without any need for fortifications or armor. It's a vision of the time when the peace of God has been established among his people, wonderfully fulfilling all his covenant promises.

And yet, somehow, somehow, there is still a pent-up threat of real evil to be dealt with. But God will deal with it decisively.

Notice verse 4. It's God himself who forces these enemies out into the open for a final confrontation. I will put hooks in your jaws. I will bring you and all your army.

It's the same language, remember, from chapter 29, verse 4. God putting hooks into the jaws of the great dragon of the Nile to destroy him.

And that's a clue, I think, again, to what is really behind all of this. Because these defiant hordes are driven by diabolical hatred. And that's seen in the motives that are revealed there in verses 10 to 13.

[24 : 22] They are utterly evil, verse 10, an evil scheme. This is not a normal war. This is a totally unwarranted massacre of peaceful, unarmed, and unsuspecting people.

A people, notice verse 12, who were gathered from all nations, but now living at the center of the earth. That's a conscious echo of way back in chapter 5, verse 5.

Remember, God called his people to be a light at the very center of the nations, at the center of the world. And now, the people of God's kingdom have been restored, and they are at the center of the world, the light of the world, the salt of the earth.

Now, there's nothing at all in the post-exile history of Israel that remotely resembles this vision of peace. And this is clearly the aftermath of what chapters 34 to 37 promised, the rule of a new David, establishing his covenant of peace, extending his worldwide kingdom.

This is depicting the era of the triumph of the gospel of Christ. And yet, the conflict isn't yet finally over, is it?

[25 : 38] The dragon and his hordes will not yield their empire without a fight. It's what we saw so clearly in Revelation chapter 12, isn't it? The dragon, that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, was thrust down, cast down, and all his demonic angels with him.

And yet, remember, he's furious, and he's waging war on God's people while he still can, because he knows his time is short.

And you see, the conflict in these latter days that Ezekiel sees will actually be greater than the conflict in his former days, because the battleground is now involving the whole earth to its farthest extremities.

The assembled hosts of a world at odds with God are determined to exploit and to plunder and to destroy all that is holy and good, all that is rich and wonderful, all the fruit of the enrichment from the very center of the world brought about by the triumph of the Son of David among his people.

So we shouldn't be surprised today, should we, when we see such a concerted effort worldwide to attack, to destroy, to plunder the entire heritage of the biblical faith that it's given to our world.

[27 : 04] in our western world today, it's this woke Marxism that has such a demonic hatred for anything, anything remotely expressing a biblical worldview, just as the old Soviet Marxism did.

In other parts of the world, it's radical Islamism attacking every hint of biblical faith, just as Hindu nationalism is doing now in India.

There are plenty of other manifestations, aren't there, of this grand global alliance, which is a conflict between the powers of evil and Satan himself, and all representatives of God in this world.

And that's why anyone who represents God in any way at all is involved in this demonic attack, not just those who are truly the Lord's people, the true seed of faith, that any who to the hordes of raging haters, any who seem to represent God in any way at all.

And that's why you find so often that persecution of the Christian church and hatred for Jews goes hand in hand because to the satanic hordes, both alike stand for God.

[28 : 26] Both alike remind godless powers of Him. And that's why as one writer says, wherever godlessness is on the increase, there will ultimately witness an eruption of anti-Semitism and anti-Christian persecution.

And that is something that we have seen, haven't we, in recent days all around us, in our own streets, in our own city, and in our nation. Well, all such evil manifestations are evidence of that diabolical hatred of the defiant hordes.

It is the spirit of Antichrist abroad in the world. And that would strike terror into our hearts, were it not for the great assurance here in verses 14 to 16 that it is a divine hand that is in control, even of these most terrifying threats.

On that day, verse 14, in the latter days, verse 16, notice again the futuristic, the ultimate feel of this vision. In those times, you will come, says verse 14, from the uttermost parts of the north, you and many peoples, a great host, a mighty army, innumerable forces against God's people, verse 16, like a cloud enveloping them completely, but, notice verse 16, you will come full of diabolical hatred, but, it's God himself who is bringing them.

In order that at last the whole world will know God's sovereign power. Do you see, when through you I will vindicate my holiness before their eyes.

[30 : 12] Through you. Remember how in chapter 36, verse 23, God said he would vindicate his holiness through his great salvation, through the cleansing of his people, through making them holy.

Well, here, also, God will vindicate himself through his enemies, in his just and righteous judgment of their evil. God allows his enemies their head.

Indeed, what we're being told here is God ordains it. I will bring you against my land in order to show the world that he is a holy and just God who does punish all evil.

And that's what verses 17 to 23 depict, isn't it? Utterly defeated human hubris. Man's hubris and hatred of God is defeated and God's holiness is declared.

These great hordes of defiant and diabolical hatred, they meet their nemesis, verse 19, in the great earthquake of a truly great God, verse 23.

[31 : 24] So, I will show my greatness and my holiness. You see, the deliberate answer is a far greater greatness hammering this point home here.

An unavoidable ultimate judgment is coming for Gog and for all his hordes. Verse 22, I will enter into judgment with him. I will rain on him and his hordes fire and sulfur.

If you look at verse 17, excuse me, it's difficult to be sure whether the question there, are you he with whom I spoke in former days? It's difficult to know if it should be answered yes or no.

I don't think it's critical, but I think it is better to take this as a no because the point seems to be that he's contrasting the former days when God brought many nations against Israel as a judgment on

Israel's sin, their disobedience.

He's contrasting it now with something very different in the future but on that day, verse 18, it will be God's wrath unleashed ultimately against all his people's enemies. This isn't like when he brought Babylon and Assyria as instruments of judgment on his own people.

[32 : 36] This is now God's judgment on the world that hates him and hates his people. And God's people are being pictured here, aren't they?

It's now back where they should be, right at the center of the earth, the center of God's purpose, and God is in the midst of them to defend them and to destroy all who would hate them and try and destroy them.

the whole earth, we're told, and everything in it, verse 20, will quake at my presence. I will summon a sword against God on all my mountains.

And the picture there is cataclysmic. It's universal judgment. It's echoes of the Genesis flood, of the judgment on Sodom, the plagues on Egypt.

All of these rolled into one. And the purpose, verse 29, sorry, verse 23, So, I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known.

[33 : 42] A revelation to the world of God's greatness that He is powerful to defeat all enemies and also, not just His greatness, but His goodness as He removes evil and wickedness from the world.

God will cleanse His kingdom of every last vestige of everything evil, everything that spoils this world. And that's the emphasis of the next two oracles in chapter 39, verses 1 to 24, the complete destruction of all evil.

There's repetition from verse, from chapter 38, but there's also a developing clarity. First of all, verses 1 to 10 describe a complete slaughter and spoiling of all enemies.

And then, verses 11 to 24, pictures a complete cleansing and consuming of all evil. Look at verses 1 to 8, they depict utter slaughter.

All enemies will completely perish. Verse 6, I will send fire on Magog and those who dwell securely in the coastlands, probably best rendered there, the distant lands.

[34 : 50] the idea seems to be it's not just those who are directly involved in this attack, it's all their allies, all the world over, all enemies will be destroyed. Because, verse 1, I am against you, O Gog.

It's all God's doing, you see. I will lead you against the mountains of Israel, God's kingdom, and I will strike you and you shall fall, verse 4.

It is coming, verse 8, and it will be brought about. This is the day of which I have spoken. It is utterly certain, it is unstoppable, it is irreversible.

And God, the world's true sovereign, does it all himself to show the world that he is Lord and Judge. So that, verse 7, do you see, his holy name will be known among his people and no longer profaned among his enemies.

God himself does all this and all that's left for his people is what verses 9 and 10 describe, the utter spoiling. All enemies are completely plundered.

[36 : 01] And what a wonderful picture it is of ultimately just retribution. Verse 10, they spoil and plunder those who have spoiled and plundered them. It's a just retribution, but it's also a joyful restoration.

All the vast trove of weapons, do you see, are repurposed for fuel, serving everyone's needs for the perfect seven years. Now, that's the promise, isn't it, repeatedly, of God's great King, the Prince of Peace.

Remember Isaiah in Isaiah chapter 9? For every boot of the trampling warrior in battle tumult, and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.

For unto us a son is, a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Peace. Micah also famously spoke about swords being beaten into plows, and spears into pruning hooks, and war being no more.

[37 : 11] Well, there's certainly a bull market in defense stocks today, isn't there? Maybe we should call them offense stocks, because our government seemed to be very, very determined to be at war.

Think of what those billions and billions could do. If they were repurposed for agronomy to feed the world, for the arts to cheer its people.

How many years could the world's need for power be provided by all the plutonium and all of those nuclear weapons if it was put into reactors to make electricity for the population?

What about if all the fuel that's used for these fighter jets zooming around all the time was taking people in vast numbers to beautiful beaches for holidays? Or think about the vast, vast numbers of lives lost instead being lived long and to the fullness.

It is coming and it will be brought about. This is the day of which I have spoken, says the Lord. But for that to happen, not only must all enemies perish and their territory be plundered, but all evil must be purged, must be put away.

[38 : 27] And that's what verses 11 to 24 depict. Verses 11 to 16 depict all evil being completely cleansed, you see, from God's kingdom. Another symbolic seven of completeness, this time a complete purging of the land, of every last stain of death, even the death of enemies.

Verse 12, for seven months the house of Israel will bury them in order to cleanse the land. everyone will be involved. The entire land will be searched, verse 14, so as to cleanse it.

Every last bone, verse 15, will be buried and thus they shall cleanse the land, verse 16. Complete cleansing from every last stain of evil.

It's the same emphasis exactly you'll see in Revelation chapter 21, the prelude to the perfection of the new heavens and the new earth, the new Jerusalem, where nothing unclean will ever enter. And not only is all evil cleansed from the land, but all evil is utterly consumed, it is destroyed, it is disposed of utterly and completely. And that's the reality conveyed by this grotesque cartoon-like picture of a ghastly banquet, a sort of sacrilegious feast, which is like a reverse of all of Israel's sacrificial system.

[39 : 53] You've got unclean birds, unclean animals, assembled to eat the flesh and drink the blood, verse 18, of all the mighty ones of the world, the rulers, the bloated fat cats, the military warlords, and so on.

All kinds of warriors, verse 20, who warred against the Lord and against His people with their weapons, not just to destroy and hurt their bodies, but to pollute their minds, to corrupt their spirits. It's a horrifying imagery, isn't it? It's like one of those ghastly paintings of hell by Hieronymus Bosch and the likes. But as Chris Wright says, it conveys a horrifying reality.

that those who utterly and implacably remain enemies of God and His people will face utter destruction.

All evil will be completely consumed, destroyed, disposed of. So that God's kingdom is completely cleansed of every last stain.

[41 : 01] And the result on that great day will be that the whole of creation will know that the Lord is great and that He is good.

Look at verses 21 and 22. God's people, the house of Israel, verse 22, will know that the Lord is their God in the judgment that He has executed on all evil in the nations, in all nations, verse 21. The word judgment there means His justice. His judgment on evil is good, it's right, it is to be glorified as truly just and holy. And look at verses 23 and 24.

All the nations will also know that God is just and holy because, you see, He punished even His own people for their iniquity. Verse 24, I dealt with them according to their uncleanness.

I hid my face from them. God's glory, He is made known in His justice which is consistent for all, for outsiders and for insiders, you see.

[42 : 05] He vindicates His own holiness. He has great power to ensure great purity in His world. God is both great and He is utterly good.

And when we look around at our world, this assurance of God's justice, of His certain judgment on evil, that should comfort us, should it not? that He ultimately does, as the psalmist say, make wars to cease to the ends of the earth.

He breaks the boat. He shatters the spear. There's great comfort in God's good greatness in judgment.

But there's also fear, isn't there? Because it's not just the evil out there in the world that we need to think about. it's the evil in here, in the human heart. And we need hope, don't we, of something more than judgment.

Otherwise, we also are in dire peril. But there is something more than great judgment. There is also great mercy. And that's what the seventh and perfect oracle proclaims, the complete deliverance of all Israel.

[43 : 24] See, at verse 25 there, suddenly this apocalyptic portrayal of the final great denouement of history, it snaps back into the immediate presence. Now, says the Lord. He's saying, now that I've laid out for you the whole of my unfolding certain future through my ultimate restoration, everything He's been speaking about from chapter 34 onwards, now you know that my people will have a future forever in my forever kingdom, that there will be ultimate peace from your enemies.

Now that you know that, I can tell you that it will begin with an end to this historic exile. Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob, of his natural seed, these exiled Judeans, to begin the fulfillment of everything He's been speaking about.

It's not just you and your little flock I'm concerned with though. Notice verse 25, I will have mercy on the whole house of Israel, all of God's people.

And the ultimate purpose is the glory of God's own holy name. And it will be finally fulfilled only when, as verse 29 says, God's face is no longer hidden from them anymore.

And His Spirit is poured out, you see, on the whole house of Israel. Those who are gathered from all nations, notice verse 28, where no one is left outside the fold anymore among the enemy nations, brought in under the one shepherd.

[44 : 55] The coming historical return of the exiles, which began about 50 years after this, in a way it was to be a living enactment. It was like one of Ezekiel's active prophecies of this ultimate coming home of all of God's true household forever.

for people to whom God had previously said, do you remember, He would show no pity, no mercy, all the way through those chapters of judgment.

Now, verse 25, there is mercy for the whole house of Israel. Previously, God said He would only pour out His wrath upon them, do you remember?

But now, look at verse 29, He'll pour out His own spirit on them. And previously, verse 24, do you see, God had hidden His face from them? Now, verse 29, He will not hide His face from them anymore, forever.

What a transformation. Everything transformed from the past, but not everything forgotten. Verse 26 here is mistranslated in the ESV.

[45 : 59] It should read, they will bear their shame. It echoes chapter 36, verse 31. Remember when it said, you will remember your evil ways. They will always remember what they've been saved from.

Verse 28 is absolutely clear. They will know that God punished them for their sin. Their misery wasn't misfortune, it wasn't bad luck. They were deserving fully of God's wrath.

But instead, they were gathered by God, saved from their sins. Not for their righteousness, but by God's sheer grace. I will have mercy on the whole of my house of Israel.

It's a great mystery, isn't it? But the Bible is absolutely clear. God's great mercy triumphs even over His great judgment. So that through His people's salvation, utterly undeserving, by His sovereign hand, verse 27, you see, through them, He will vindicate His holiness in the sight of all the world. God's kingdom restored by His divine retribution on all evil and the renewal of His divine righteousness in His people forever.

[47 : 23] That is earth's ultimate conquest. So in what way then do these chapters bring us encouragement and hope and endurance as Christ's people today?

Well, four things as we close. First of all, these chapters show us that the only reason for the existence of Gog and his hordes is to serve, to magnify the glory of God.

Through you, O Gog, I vindicate my holiness. And that's the message. It's just like what Paul says of Pharaoh, isn't it, in Romans 9, verse 17, He was raised up that I may show my power through you and that my name may be proclaimed in the earth.

All such evil exists to reveal God's glory and His just punishment of evil and His great power to those who are His in saving them from that evil.

Every single manifestation of devilish evil in opposition to God will glorify God. If the chief end of man is to glorify God, so also is the chief end of the devil, no other.

[48 : 41] Like the prophet Balaam, remember, who could not curse God's people but promised only of his Messiah. He will bring glory to God and His Christ. And that's a wonderful thing for us to remember, isn't it?

Whenever we feel fear and dread of so much evil in the world, evil in the end cannot frustrate the purpose of God's saving glory. It can only further it and make it greater.

If you doubt that, think, think of Satan's greatest achievement. The zenith of his achievement in history was to put the Son of God on the cross by the hands of evil men. But as Peter said, all he could do was what your hand and your plan predestined to take place. Never forget the devil's chief end, which will always be achieved to his great fury, but to glorify God. Second, our human history demonstrates that that is consistently so. Where people have heard, I think, as I said in the past, to try and pin down the identity of God too specifically to the Goths or the Vandals or the Mongol hordes or the Turks, as Martin Luther said, or the Soviets or whoever it might be.

[49 : 55] They're right, in a sense, to see that the hordes of Gog are an ever-present reality throughout the Bible's history and throughout recent history. As Chris Wright says, history is littered with brutal Gogs who have thought they would eradicate the people of God.

They've not triumphed so far, and this vision affirms that they never will. And so both these, the witness of Scripture and the witness of history, should encourage us, a great encouragement. Thirdly, these things do also call us to great endurance because there will continue to be such manifestations of Gog and his hordes throughout the last days until the very last of the last days and the final destruction of all evil.

It was Ezekiel's near contemporary, Daniel, who saw that so clearly, didn't he, in his visions in Daniel 9 to 12. To the end, to the end, there shall be war, he's told.

A great conflict. And Jesus himself tells us that. In this world, you will have tribulation. But he also said, take heart, for I have overcome the world.

[51 : 06] And when we're very conscious of that battle, we need not fear because God's church will not be overcome. Enemies are the ones who will be defeated, ultimately destroyed.

And so we can endure. And that is because, finally, ultimately, Gog and all the forces of evil behind all Gog's in this world, which is the dragon, that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, he has already been defeated.

And he will certainly be utterly destroyed and disposed of forever. And God's people will be delivered forever. None remaining among the nations anymore, never having God's face hidden from them ever again.

And the spirit, you see, that animates Gog, Satan. He was defeated decisively on the cross. Jesus said, now is the judgment of this world. Now will the ruler of this world be cast out.

And that's what John the apostle saw himself at the cross of Jesus with his own eyes. And later it's what he saw in that vision in Revelation, Satan and his angels being thrown down with all his demonic hordes.

[52 : 20] Paul says to the Colossians, Jesus disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to shame, triumphing over them in his cross. And that means that he and all of his hordes will be destroyed and will be disposed of forever.

That's what John saw in his vision in chapter 20 of Revelation. Gog and Magog gather for battle against God's city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them.

And the devil and all his are disposed of in the lake of fire forever. And then at last the world, utterly cleansed and renewed, becomes a new heaven and a new earth.

God and mankind brought together forever. And that is certain. That consummation was sealed forever at the cross of Christ, the eternal covenant, sealed with the blood of the Lamb of God.

The end shall come, therefore, says Paul to the Corinthians. When God, when the Son delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule, every authority, and every power, for he must reign until he puts all his enemies under his feet.

[53 : 37] And that's what we are living through now in our lives in these days. The risen Lord Jesus is overcoming every last enemy. He is vindicating his holiness in the sight of many nations through his people.

As the devil rages, knowing that his time is short, as he makes war on Christ's people, as we seek to do that. But do you remember the voice from heaven, what it said to John?

About the Christians, the saints throughout the world being warred on by the evil one. They have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.

It's the same message, you see, as here in Ezekiel. Only it's wonderfully clearer for us now, isn't it? God has done it all. It's just like here in Ezekiel 39, 1 to 8.

God has destroyed the enemy himself. He has disarmed him in the cross. The blood of the Lamb has conquered. God has done it all in Christ. All that is left for his people is the plunder and the spoil of verses 9 and 10, spoiling Satan's kingdom, disarming his every weapon of oppression and tyranny over the human race.

[54 : 46] How do we do that? Well, not with worldly weapons now, says Paul. But as John said, conquering him by the word of our testimony to that glorious gospel of Christ.

That is the power that plunders Satan's kingdom. That's the power that destroys his strongholds, that takes every thought captive to obey Christ, as Paul puts it.

It's the certainty of earth's ultimate conquest through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ that arms us for the ongoing conquest of the gospel to open the eyes of those who are blinded by the evil one. And instead flood their lives with the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. So that as God promised here, way back to Ezekiel, he will not hide his face from them anymore.

There's no conquest more wonderful, is there, for us to see, than when warriors or weapons that were once amassed against God and his Christ are beaten into witnesses and witness for Christ's glory in his gospel.

[56 : 04] So may God grant us that joy more and more through our prayers and through our proclamation of him. As we see people throw down their weapons and turn them to bring glory to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen. Lord, we thank you for the great assurance of your word in every place and the great assurance that we have sealed forever in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That this earth, that all its evil, has been conquered forever by our glorious Savior. And as we await his return to finally dispose of all that still blots this creation.

We pray, Lord, that you would fill us with confidence and fill us with hope and help us to endure as we proclaim that which you have promised and that which you have done through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So help us, Lord, we pray, to march on in gospel strength and serve you day by day until that great day. For we ask it in Christ's name.

[57 : 28] Amen. Warfare shall end at length. All foes be overthrown. And then, my soul, if faithful now, the crown of life awaits your brow.

So march on, my soul, with strength. Amen.

Amen. Thank you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

you