

Survey of the Bible Ezekiel 38-39

Last week we discussed the two sticks that Ezekiel prophesied about as it related to the divided nation of Israel and one of the things we saw is how prophecy regarding God's people must necessarily be prophecy about Jesus Christ who is the Redeemer of His people.

And if it is about Jesus Christ then it must be about the Kingdom of our Lord and who is part of that kingdom. If we limit the people of God to only one ethnic group, in this case the nation of Israel, then we miss the larger message of what God is telling us through His prophet Ezekiel.

And the broader message is that God has instituted a new and everlasting covenant with every people group in the world, not just Israel. In fact, as we've seen time and again, the Israel that Ezekiel is addressing is the Israel that Paul spoke of as he was writing to a predominantly Gentile church in Galatia.

Galatians 6:14-16 ¹⁴ But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵ For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but *a new creation*. ¹⁶ And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and *upon the Israel of God*.

That new creation that Paul speaks of is the Israel of God. And that new creation or creature is anyone who embraces Christ as Lord and Savior.

^{NAU} **2 Corinthians 5:17** Therefore if anyone is *in Christ, he is a new creature*; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

And this is the covenant people that Ezekiel is addressing as he ends chapter 37.

Ezekiel 37:26-28 ²⁶ "I will make a covenant of peace with them; *it will be an everlasting covenant with them*. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. ²⁷ "My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. ²⁸ "And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when *My sanctuary is in their midst forever*.""

And of course, when the Lord who sanctifies Israel, (and here we must defer to the definition that has fulfilled the shadow of the physical nation of Israel, which is in essence the new Israel found in anyone who is in Christ), this Israel will be blessed when God's sanctuary or tabernacle is in their midst forever.

And what sanctuary or tabernacle will be in the midst of God's people forever?

Christ Himself, Immanuel.

Revelation 21:1-3 ^{NAU} Then *I saw a new heaven and a new earth*; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "***Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,***

Every reference to Israel as the people who will dwell with their God forever is ultimately addressing the Israel of God in the new covenant, and this was the point the writer of Hebrews was making.

Hebrews 8:8-13 ⁸ For finding fault with them, He says, "***BEHOLD, DAYS ARE COMING, SAYS THE LORD, WHEN I WILL EFFECT A NEW COVENANT WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND WITH THE HOUSE OF JUDAH;*** ⁹ NOT LIKE THE COVENANT WHICH I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS ON THE DAY WHEN I TOOK THEM BY THE HAND TO LEAD THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT; FOR THEY DID NOT CONTINUE IN MY COVENANT, AND I DID NOT CARE FOR THEM, SAYS THE LORD. ¹⁰ "FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS, AND I WILL WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS. AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. ¹¹ "AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN, AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, 'KNOW THE LORD,' FOR ALL WILL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM. ¹² "FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE." ¹³ When He said, "A new *covenant*," He has made

the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

And so, as we continue through Ezekiel it must be placed in the context of this new covenant where God dwells or tabernacles among His people forever on the new earth.

Up to this point Ezekiel has been addressing a divided nation that has been dispersed among the nations as both the southern kingdom, that is Judah, and the northern kingdom identified as Israel, are both under God's judgment as they have rejected God as their King and Savior.

But the promise that God will join His people together into one new people of both Jew and Gentile is seen toward the end of chapter 37 as Ezekiel uses the imagery of Judah and Israel finally coming together as one nation.

Ezekiel 37:21-22 ²¹ "Say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; ²² and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms.

Again, if we don't see the symbolic language of Ezekiel as God fulfilling His promise to redeem a people for Himself found in the New covenant of Jesus Christ then we miss the point of this prophecy.

Ephesians 2:11-22 ¹¹ Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision " by the so-called "Circumcision," *which is* performed in the flesh by human hands-- ¹² *remember* that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. ¹⁷ AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE

TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; ¹⁸ for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

Now as we come back to Ezekiel we must keep in mind that he is writing to the sons of Israel during a time in their history where the powers of the known world were coming against Israel and have taken them into captivity. They have been dispersed over all the earth, if you will.

Keep in mind too that Ezekiel is writing at the same time as Jeremiah and possibly the prophet Joel. And they essentially all have the same message for the sons of Israel. 'God has judged you through the nations surrounding you and will disperse you but will one day bring you back to the land', which God accomplished when Cyrus, king of Persia made a decree for the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem around 535 BC. Both Ezra and Nehemiah write about that.

But there is another promise from God that He will ultimately judge those nations who came against the called out people known as Israel.

Ezekiel 38:1-5 ^{NAU} And the word of the LORD came to me saying, ² "Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him ³ and say, "Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. ⁴ "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 splendidly attired, a great company *with* buckler and shield, all of them wielding swords; ⁵ Persia, Ethiopia and Put with them, all of them *with* shield and helmet;

Ezekiel 38:17-23 ¹⁷ "Thus says the Lord GOD, "Are you the one of whom I spoke in former days through My servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied in those days for *many* years that I would bring you against them? ¹⁸ "It will come about on that day, when Gog comes against the land of Israel," declares the Lord GOD,

"that My fury will mount up in My anger. ¹⁹ "In My zeal and in My blazing wrath I declare *that* on that day there will surely be a great earthquake in the land of Israel.

A couple things to notice here. The first thing is the name of the nation that comes up against Israel.

Where do we see the name Gog and Magog in the New Testament?

The book of Revelation.

Do you think it's a coincidence?

No. in fact, Ezekiel is introducing the very nation that will be destroyed by God, according to Ezekiel in 38:18, "on that day" where God's fury will mount up in His anger.

What Ezekiel is describing is a day where God's wrath will be poured out on Gog and Magog precisely because of their trying to destroy Israel.

Ezekiel 39:1-8 ^{NAU} "And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal; ² and I will turn you around, drive you on, take you up from the remotest parts of the north and bring you against the mountains of Israel. ³ "I will strike your bow from your left hand and dash down your arrows from your right hand. ⁴ "You will fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who are with you; I will give you as food to every kind of predatory bird and beast of the field. ⁵ "You will fall on the open field; for it is I who have spoken," declares the Lord GOD. ⁶ "And I will send fire upon Magog and those who inhabit the coastlands in safety; and they will know that I am the LORD. ⁷ "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 will know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. ⁸ "Behold, it is coming and it shall be done," declares the Lord GOD. "That is the day of which I have spoken.

Have you got the imagery? Alright, let's go to the place in the New Testament where this is fulfilled.

Revelation 20:1-10 ^{NAU} Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. ² And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³ and he

threw him into the abyss, and shut *it* and sealed *it* over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time. ⁴ Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I *saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. ⁷ When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. ⁹ And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰ And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

There's a lot of stuff going on here. But let's look at the overall picture of both scenes as Ezekiel and John describe it.

In Ezekiel Gog and Magog come against Israel to try and destroy her, but the Lord intervenes as He fights for His people and ultimately judges Gog and Magog as we read in verse 6 of Eze. 39 . ⁶ "And ***I will send fire upon Magog*** and those who inhabit the coastlands in safety; and they will know that I am the LORD.

The same scene is described in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 20:6-9 ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. ⁷ When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, ***Gog and Magog***, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. ⁹ And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and

the beloved city, *and fire came down from heaven and devoured them.*

The Gog and Magog in Ezekiel is the same Gog and Magog in Revelation and it is describing the same event. The final judgment of God's enemies against His people. And in both instances this takes place on that day, which is describing a particular day.

With this in mind we must see that the day that Ezekiel is describing is the same day that John describes in Revelation 20 with the same day being described earlier in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 16:13-17 ¹³ And I saw *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; ¹⁴ for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of *the great day of God, the Almighty*. ¹⁵ ("Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.") ¹⁶ And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon. ¹⁷ Then the seventh *angel* poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done."

It would be very easy to confuse the prophetic language in both Ezekiel and Revelation with the reality of what this language is actually describing. And what it is describing is what Jesus describes using the same prophetic language as His disciples asked Him about His second coming.

Matthew 24:27-37 ²⁷ "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. ²⁸ "Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. ²⁹ "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. ³¹ "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. ³² "Now learn the

parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; ³³ so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, *right* at the door. ³⁴ "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³⁵ "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. ³⁶ "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. ³⁷ "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.

What Jesus, Ezekiel, and John are all describing in prophetic language is the last day when God comes against all of His enemies and judges the world in righteousness while saving His people, the Israel of God, both Jew and Gentile, as He returns to set up His eternal kingdom.

It is on this last day that all men are raised from the dead, some to eternal life and the rest to eternal damnation, described as the Great White Throne judgment.

Revelation 20:11-15 ¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

But it is also on this last day that God recreates the existing universe as He judges it with fire but from its ashes creates the new heavens and new earth.

2 Peter 3:10-13 ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. ¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning,

and the elements will melt with intense heat! ¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

Everything is moving toward this day. For you and me in Christ we will finally be delivered from Gog and Magog, and Babylon; all images of the world and its system of hating and coming against God, with Satan leading the charge.

And Ezekiel puts it into perspective and sums it up.

Ezekiel 39:6-8 ⁶ "And I will send fire upon Magog and those who inhabit the coastlands in safety; and they will know that I am the LORD. ⁷ "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 will know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. ⁸ "Behold, it is coming and it shall be done," declares the Lord GOD. "That is the day of which I have spoken.

There will be a day when God will make all things right and Ezekiel describes this judgment on Gog and Magog, which is describing the world coming against God's people from chapters 38 and 39.

But the glorious news is what Peter has described of this future kingdom and Ezekiel gives us a taste of this new kingdom in the next few chapters and we'll look at that next time.