

ARMAGEDDON, GOG AND MAGOG

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INTRODUCTION

The common view in all popular prophecy books is that the great “end time” battle of Armageddon described in Revelations and in Ezekiel 38 and 39 is a coming invasion of Israel by a coalition of Arab armies led by Russia out of the north. This is totally false. There is no Russian invasion of Israel coming. The invasion of Israel by Gog out of the north has already happened in 37 BC and the battle of Armageddon already happened in 70 AD. Bible prophecy once again has been accurately fulfilled in history.

The Battle of Armageddon is certainly etched into the popular mind as the last great battle between good and evil. The word itself has become synonymous with apocalyptic cataclysms. All popular prophecy books relate this great battle to the prophecies of Ezekiel 38 and 39 where it speaks of Gog and Magog and a great army composed of people from different nations that would invade Israel when they have returned to their land and living peacefully. This great coalition of peoples would be destroyed supernaturally by God and the people of Israel would be miraculously saved.

In the popular interpretation of these prophecies we are told by almost all prophetic books that these prophecies refer to the modern state of Israel. The Gog and Magog alliance of nations is composed of Russia and the surrounding Arab states. This invasion takes place some time after the Antichrist who is the head of the European Union makes a peace treaty with Israel and the Jews have rebuilt their temple. For some reason never explained this supposed Antichrist head of Europe then enters the Jewish temple to declare that he is in fact God! The coalition of invading armies is identified as Russia from “rosh” and Moscow from “Meshech” and Tobolsk from “Tubal” etc.

The reason for this invasion of Israel given in Ezekiel is that they have come to “take great spoil”. But here things get even more difficult for these writers. What would Russia and the Arabs find so valuable in Israel that they would risk war to get it? This of course is never properly answered. Some writers suggest that Israel is going to discover oil and others mention the large deposits of potash in the Dead Sea. This whole scenario is of course increasingly implausible in the light of world affairs of the 21st Century.

- Russia couldn't successfully invade a weak nation like Afghanistan in 1979, never mind a nuclear power like Israel.
- Russia has plenty of oil and potash, what would

they want to invade Israel for?

- Russia does not have the logistical capability to move an army into the Middle East and to sustain it there for war.
- A Russian invasion of Israel has in fact already occurred when more than a million Russian Jews emigrated to Israel in the 1990's. They are happy to live there peacefully making money.

This Armageddon theory might have been very popular in 1979 when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan and the Islamic fundamentalists kicked the Shah out of Iran, it seemed the whole Middle East was ready to explode. Add to that the fact of Greece becoming the 10th nation to join the EU (the supposed revived Roman empire with 10 horns!) in 1981 and the Rapture to take place before 1988 and of course everyone was ready for the climactic battle of Armageddon to unfold in the 1980's. No wonder Hal Lindsey wrote his popular book “The 1980's: Road to Armageddon”. He and others like him of course made millions off their fanciful predictions, none of which have ever come true and never will come true.

What went wrong?

Not one prophecy book nor one prophet in America predicted the fall of communism! Why? Because all of the prophecy scenarios you read are obsessed with the defeat and retreat of the Church and the victory of the Antichrist! The Church must be rescued out of the earth through the Rapture to protect us from the Antichrist who will take over the world! For them there is no world revival, there is no prospect of disciplining the nations. So here we are 30 years later and no Russian invasion of Israel, no 200 million man army from China marching on the west, no Antichrist ruling over Europe. Instead what have we? According to the Economist magazine of Dec. 2006, we have 500 million charismatic evangelicals in the world and still growing strongly. In ten years? One billion?

Are we desperately trying to smuggle Bibles into Eastern

Armageddon

Europe and the Soviet Union praying for the underground Church? No! Churches are appearing all across Europe and Russia, Bibles are being downloaded from the Internet by the millions and in China more than 100 million evangelical Christians are meeting in homes for worship praying for the salvation of the pagan west.

What happened? Instead of a Russian invasion of Israel we had a gospel invasion of Russia! Instead of 200 million Chinese marching on the west we are seeing soon to be 200 million Chinese evangelicals marching on communism! Folks get with the Kingdom Agenda! The gates of hell cannot stand up to the triumphant marching Church of Jesus Christ who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords! He is the head of a victorious army in heaven and a victorious army on earth!

Do you think the current prophecy commentators on TBN Television and mass book sellers have learned from their mistakes and will start to recognize that the Kingdom of God has indeed come and in fact will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea? Not a chance! They actually take every opportunity to desperately look for any success of Satan and his kingdom and magnify this and announce this as proof that Satan and his kingdom is destined to cover the earth. In this they do the same work as "Lord Haw-Haw" and "Tokyo Rose" the infamous broadcasters in Germany and Japan who during World War 2 would broadcast to the Allied troops the victories of the Axis Powers to discourage the British and American troops!

So what in fact then does the Bible say about Armageddon and what about Gog and Magog? What I am about to write is going to be highly controversial. You are at first not going to accept it because you are so used to this enormous concentration of prophetic interpretation based on the current nation of Israel. But in this article I am going to show you that prophecy has already been fulfilled and in my article "The Return of Israel and Christian Zionism" I prove to you that 1948 was not the year that Ezekiel prophesied Israel would be a nation once again...that happened in 103 BC! So not only is there no great military victory ahead for the nation state of Israel against Russia but I believe the present state of Israel fulfills the prophecies about Israel's brother Esau (the Edomites) and will in fact collapse in defeat. (Included in my previous mentioned article.)

This spectacular failure of accepted prophecy interpretation is going to cause enormous problems within the worldwide evangelical movement. This problem was highlighted to me years ago when I attended a prophetic conference in Dallas and I spoke to a good brother who had some sort of mission to Israel looking for support and I asked him, "What would you do if Israel collapses? Are you so sure of your prophetic interpretation regarding the nation of Israel?". His answer to me was that he would just tear up his Bible because then he cannot trust it to be the Word of God anymore. There are millions of good Bible believing evangelicals who feel the same way as this brother! So read carefully, there is a lot at stake here! If you cannot accept what I am writing now at least put this in the back of your mind as "reasonable doubt" so that if the nation of Israel does collapse as I predict then re-read my articles. Bible prophecy is accurate, human interpretations are fallible...including mine!

It will help us to get the time of Armageddon right if we get the place of where Armageddon occurs right!

The common interpretation of all prophecy books is that God gathers the armies of Satan in the valley of Jezreel outside the town of Megiddo and there destroys them in a dramatic showdown. The valley of Jezreel outside Megiddo was the scene of some major battles in the history of Israel. So when you go on an Israel tour the guides take you to this valley and show you how the armies from the north, the south and the east are going to come meet in this valley in battle and the valley will be drenched in blood up to the horses' bridles. Very graphic and gruesome but not actually Biblical. Wrong town, wrong place!

The word "Armageddon" is only mentioned once in the Bible in Rev. 16:16 and never mentioned in the Old Testament even though it is a Hebrew word or words. John writes in Revelation, "*And He gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.*" So first we must understand that this is a Hebrew word and not Greek and it is therefore in the Hebrew translation of the words that we must understand the meaning of where this place called Armageddon is located.

The word Armageddon comes from two Hebrew words that you can look up in Strong's Concordance: "Har" meaning mountain or mount (Strong's word no. H2022) and "Megiddon" meaning gathering, assembly or congregation (Strong's word no. H4023). Putting these two words together we have the phrase "the mount of the assembly" from the words "har-megiddon". So we can see immediately that there is no indication here of a valley where armies are to be gathered but rather a mountain and not a town called Megiddo (otherwise the word would have been "Armageddo") but a word "megiddon" meaning "assembly". As we do not have the actual word "Armageddon" occurring anywhere else in the Bible we need to look for the phrase "the mount of the assembly" in the Bible to perhaps give us insight as to what is going on here. Remember, scripture is always the best interpreter of scripture. Are there any clues anywhere else in the Bible as to where the location of this "mount of assembly" might be?

Hebrews 12:22-23 tells us that we are "come to mount Zion...the general assembly" and Isaiah 14:13 Satan says, "I will ascend to heaven...I will sit upon the mount of the congregation". I am not going to do a study for you here of the wonderful spiritual truths behind the phrases, "Mount Zion", the "Heavenly Council", "the mount of the congregation". That is a separate study that has much hidden truth that I will do in another article. Suffice it to say that "Armageddon" does not take place in valley outside Megiddo. It is however the heavenly place also known as "Mount Zion" where God will sit among His divine council and gather the kings of the earth, the demons, Satan and the people for judgment! But this heavenly "Mount Zion" also throughout scripture has an earthly counterpart...the city of Jerusalem built on Mt. Moriah where Abraham was to have offered Isaac as a sacrifice (the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount). So the place where Ar-

Armageddon takes place is not outside Megiddo in a valley but in Jerusalem, built on Mt. Moriah, where God will bring a multinational army for a great slaughter. But has there ever been historically such a great battle in and around Jerusalem?

Yes, for it was here in 70 AD on the mount of assembly, Mount Zion, Jerusalem, that God gathered the nations of the world represented by the Roman legions of Titus and according to the Jewish historian Josephus (who was recording the whole event for posterity from the Roman side) the slaughter of 1,100,000 Jews crowded into Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles took place. Thus fulfilling the prophecy of Jesus, "But those mine enemies who would not that I should reign over them, bring here and slay them before me." (Luke 19:27) This resulted in the great deliverance of the true Israel of God as I will show you. This was Jesus returning in the clouds of judgment bringing destruction to "this generation" who was to see all these prophecies fulfilled as He promised in Matthew 23 and 24.

The historical background to the great Jewish revolt against Rome from the years 66-70 AD culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple give us the identity of who Gog and Magog is and how they invaded Israel from the north to come and "take great spoil" as Ezekiel 38 and 39 prophesied.

Ezekiel's Prophecy of Israel's Return

The context of the great war described in Ezekiel 38 and 39 is that Israel was first to return to their land which was prophesied by Ezekiel in chapter 36. Ezekiel was one of the captives in Babylon taken along with Daniel in the attack of Nebuchadnezzar on Jerusalem in 604 BC. In 721 AD the Assyrians had taken the northern ten tribes of Israel in captivity and deported them out of the land. Now the Babylonians had done the same with the remaining Israelites in the Kingdom of Judah. The nation of Israel was no more! Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. And looking upon this national tragedy from his captivity in Babylon the Lord shows Ezekiel a valley of bones representing Israel and asks, "can these bones live again?" (Ezekiel 37:3). Yes they can and they did!

In Ezekiel chapter 36 the Lord said Israel will return to their land and be a nation once again. In Ezekiel 4:4-6 the Lord tells Ezekiel that it will take them 390 years of fighting before they are a nation again and 40 years after that before they have a king again (Israel stands for the nation and Judah for the crown!). In 533 BC their 70 year captivity in Babylon ended as Jeremiah prophesied (Dan.9:2) and 390 years after that they achieved their independence from Syrian rule in 143 BC through the War of the Maccabees and in 103 BC they crowned their first king again after the captivity period. I am saying this to emphasize the following: the prophesied return of Israel as a nation was not in 1948 but 103 BC. The battles with Gog and his armies are not in the future but happened after 103 BC when Israel dwelt safe in un-walled villages in their own land!

The Historical Background

For those of you who wish to study this fascinating history of the historical fulfillment of Armageddon further I will give a series of clues on how to interpret Ezekiel 38 and 39. I will just give you a quick overview of the historical and scriptural fulfillment of Armageddon. You can then follow my clues and make a deeper study of the history of this period to see how accurately this prophecy was fulfilled.

An important principle of Bible interpretation is wherever possible, let scripture interpret scripture. So if Ezekiel 38 talks about "Meshech" this does not mean Moscow as all the prophecy writers maintain. The Psalmist says in Psalm 120:5 "Woe is me that I sojourn in Meshech". David had to flee from Saul for his life and live among the Philistines in Meshech. He did not flee to Moscow!

To find the meaning of "Gog", again you go back into scripture for clues for his identity. Ezekiel 38:17 the Lord specifically says of Gog, "*...art thou he whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them*". That means we will find clues to who this ancient enemy of Israel is in other prophetic scriptures. Folks get real! This is not Russia!

The context and the time element of the prophecy is important. It occurs after Ezekiel 36 when the Lord prophesied the return of Israel back to the land. I have already shown you that this was dramatically fulfilled in 143 BC when Israel regained their independence as a nation and 103 BC when they had a restoration of the monarchy. It is also prophesied to occur in "the latter days". I have already shown you in my article "Matthew 24 and the End Times" from numerous scriptures that when the Bible speaks of "the last days" or "the latter days" it speaks of the last days of the Jewish dispensation of the Old Covenant which ended with the appearance of the Messiah Jesus Christ. We are not living in "the latter days", we are living in the Kingdom Age. So Ezekiel 38 occurs before and during 70 AD.

But it would also happen during a period when Ezekiel says that Israel is dwelling in peace and prosperity in un-walled villages (Ez.38:11). This is certainly not applicable to Israel of today where there is no peace and where the world's biggest wall is being built to protect Israeli settlements. However the Israel of 37 BC when Gog and his invading army from the north captured Israel, it certainly was peaceful and prosperous. In 63 BC the Roman general Pompey marched through the Middle East region with his legions and annexed Judea and the surrounding countries. This was of great economic benefit for the region as it brought peace, international trade and prosperity to a region beset with continual wars while allowing the Jewish kings to continue their rule.

Gog, this ancient enemy of Israel, is to come with an international invading force from the north to take "great spoil". As mentioned already, there is no "great spoil" to be had for Russia by invading Israel. But there was great spoil to be had in 37 BC which I will shortly show you.

The Identity of Gog

We can find other references to “Gog” in the Old Testament but to do that you must understand something about how ancient Hebrew was written. In ancient Hebrew written by Ezekiel and the prophets there were no vowels like a,e,i,o,u. It was all just written as consonants. So Gog would be written GG. It was only later in about 900 AD with the Masoretic text that vowels were added and then sometimes it would be a guess as to which vowels you put in. There are two other references in the Old Testament to an ancient enemy of Israel called “GG”. He is called “Agag” in our Bible (Nu.24:7 and 1 Sam.15:32-33) and it gives us a valuable clue to the identity of “GG” in Ezekiel 38. Agag in both cases is described as the king of the Amalekites. Thus the term “GG” is a title for a ruler such as Pharaoh of the Egyptians or Abimelech of Philistia.

Amalek was a grandson of Esau the brother of Jacob and the descendants of Esau were generally known in the Bible as Edomites (they lived in Edom) who aligned themselves with their other family clan the Amalekites. The leader of this group of Esau’s descendants had the title of “GG”. It is among these people that we can find the prophecies that the Lord refers to in Ezekiel 38 that He speaks of in times past. These prophecies refer to the ancient hatred that Esau had for his brother for stealing his birthright blessing and his plot to gain back this lost inheritance in time.

In Gen. 27:36-41 we are told that after Jacob steals his birthright Esau cries to his father Isaac and asks for a blessing for himself and his descendants. Isaac tells him he will dwell in the fat of the land but will serve his brother. But Isaac also prophecies to Esau that *“the time shall come to pass when thou shall have the dominion and shall break his yoke from off thy neck”*. But this was not good enough for Esau who vowed *“when the days of mourning for my father are at hand then I will slay my brother Jacob”*.

This war between the descendants of Esau and Jacob continued during the time of the Exodus when the Amalekites attacked Israel. Exodus 17:14,16:

“And the Lord said unto Moses, write this for a memorial in a book and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua; ...because the Lord has sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”

This was such an important prophecy that the Lord made Moses write this down as a memorial for generation after generation. There is to be war with Amalek until they are wiped out.

The prophecies of Obadiah and Malachi further confirm the prophecy of Isaac that Esau (Edom) will break the yoke of Israel off his neck, take dominion and possess the land of Israel...but that God will destroy them after they do this! The entire book of Obadiah is a prophecy against Esau/Edom that they will take Jacob’s possession but that the Lord will fight against them.

This is repeated in Malachi 1:3-4:

“And I hated Esau and laid his mountains and heritage waste...whereas Edom says, we are impoverished but we will return and build the desolate places; Thus saith the Lord of hosts, they shall build but I will throw down; and they shall call them the border of wickedness, and the people with whom the Lord has indignation forever.”

The prophets declared that the descendants of Esau (Edomites and Amalekites) would throw off the yoke of Israel and would possess the land of Israel and take the dominion but the Lord will make a war against them and destroy them out of the land. This is the battle that Ezekiel 38 is referring to and why the Lord says that Gog is the one He has spoken of long before that He will have war with from generation to generation.

Israel Regains Independence

After the Israelites were taken into captivity the land was desolate. The northern 10 tribes were taken in captivity by the Assyrians in 721 BC and the southern kingdom of Judah was taken by the Babylonians in three deportations with the last one 587 BC leaving the city of Jerusalem desolated, the temple destroyed and the land empty. The desolate places were soon filled by other people moving in, including the Edomites taking over the southern portions of Judea and establishing there the Kingdom of Idumea.

In 533 BC a small group of about 42,000 Israelites returned out of Babylon to the land of Israel now occupied by others. They were called upon by the Lord to rebuild Jerusalem and its walls and rebuild the Temple. All this took place under the guidance of Ezra and Nehemiah. During this time Palestine came under the rule of the Persians and after Alexander the Great defeated the Persians the Greeks ruled Palestine. After Alexander’s death his empire was divided into 4 kingdoms by his generals (as Daniel prophesied would happen). The Syrian kingdom now ruled Palestine under the Seleucid rulers. Things were peaceful for a number of years until a Seleucid ruler Antiochus Epiphanes decided he wanted all the Jews in Palestine to stop worshipping the Lord and they must be converted to good Greeks, speaking Greek, worshipping Greek gods and adopt a Greek way of life. Antiochus decided to desecrate the Jewish Temple by offering a pig on the altar and setting up a statue of Zeus in the Temple on 25th December of 167 BC. This was a declaration of war and also resulted in the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy in 12:11-12:

“And from the time that the daily sacrifice be taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up shall be a thousand and two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waits and comes to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.”

The Maccabee family under the leadership of the father Matityahu and his five sons rallied the Jews into an uprising against Syria, and started the war for Israel’s liberation and restoration as an independent nation in 167 BC against their Syrian overlords. Their first campaign was to liberate and cleanse the great temple mount in Jerusalem

of the Syrian abominations. This was completed by 164 BC after 1290 days fighting (celebrated today by the Jews as Hanukkah, the feast of Purim). But all of Jerusalem still had to be liberated. This took another 1335 days of fighting and was completed in 160 BC. Daniel 12:11-12 was fulfilled exactly in history, there is no future Antichrist coming to a future Temple in Jerusalem!

The great war campaigns the five Maccabee brothers eventually gained independence for Israel in 143 BC from Syria. They consolidated their new nation with a series of battles to regain all the old territory that belonged to the nation of Israel. In 125 BC they defeated the southern kingdom of Idumea (home of the Edomites) and then forced them to convert to Judaism and had all the males circumcised. From that time on all the Edomites were also known as Jews as they not only were descended from Abraham through Esau but were now also living in Judea (and therefore Judeans or Jews) and many also had converted to become religious Jews. Which is why the Jews told Jesus, "We be Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to any man" (John 8:33). The descendants of Jacob were in bondage in Egypt but not the descendants of Esau, yet both were Abraham's seed. Can you see now why some Jews believed in Jesus and other Jews persecuted Him and why Jesus twice said, "I know those who call themselves Jews but are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan" (Rev.).

The rule of the Maccabees continued until in 47 BC Julius Caesar made Antipater the king of the Idumeans, A (they still retained a small kingdom in the south of Palestine) the procurator of Judea. In 42 BC he was assassinated and through a struggle the last of the Maccabees, Antigonus took back the rulership of Judea. But the Edomites were not finished...they intended to take the land!

Gog Invades Israel

Antipas the King of the Idumeans (and for a short while procurator of Judea) had a very clever and ambitious son called Herod. At the young age of 25 Anthony made Herod tetrarch of northern Palestine which he administered very ably for the Romans extracting taxes and extending the borders of his reign. In 37 BC Herod went to Rome where Anthony and Octavian gave him the crown of Judea making him king of the region and also gave him a Roman army to kick the last Maccabee king, Antigonus out of Jerusalem. This he proceeded to do.

Thus Herod the Great fulfilled the prophecies of Gog of Ezekiel 38. He was the "GG" or leader of the Edomite/Idumeans because he was the son of the King of Idumea. He was also the Chief Prince of Meshach (Tetrarch of northern Palestine). He gathered an international Roman army made up of men from all over the Roman empire and invaded Israel from the north. He came to take great spoil. There were two great sources of income during this time. The collection of taxes for Rome (of which Rome was happy to share a large portion with those given franchises to extract tax) and the control of the Temple income in Jerusalem.

Herod the Idumean, King of the Jews, now set about the business of wealth extraction with great gusto. He rebuilt the great temple in Jerusalem into one of the great wonders of the world allowing temple revenues to increase dramatically. He built new cities (Caesarea), built temples, amphitheaters, held games and spectacles.

The descendants of Esau had now broken the yoke of Jacob and taken the dominion just as Isaac prophesied and they not only controlled the land of Israel but also the Temple and the priesthood. They had it all. But they were not satisfied. They were still under Roman rule. After the death of their king Herod, the Romans decided to rule this region with their own leaders. No need to share the spoils with the Idumeans. But this was not acceptable to the Zealots and Idumeans who started agitating for complete independence from Rome. The Zealots believed in the time prophecies of Daniel that the Messiah would come in their time to bring them a great deliverance from their enemies and restore to the Kingdom to Israel. They had rejected Jesus as Messiah.

The Edomite Jews were not interested in Jesus as Messiah. They wanted a great military leader to deliver them from Roman rule. Jesus prophesied in Matthew 23 and 24 what was to come. He saw what was coming...Ezekiel 39 and the prophecies of the destruction of Gog (the Edomite Jews) and his confederates (the Zealots). Armageddon was coming and it would happen to the generation that was then alive to hear the words of Christ.

Jesus Prophecies Armageddon

Please refer to my article on "Matthew 24 and the End Times". I give you an outline of why the period leading up to 70 AD was considered by the New Testament writers to be the "last days". It was the last days of the old Jewish dispensation. The entire prophecy of Jesus in Matthew 23 and 24 was a prediction of the great destruction of Ezekiel 38 and 39 and came upon that generation of 33 AD to 70 AD just as He said it would. This was the "great tribulation" that He spoke of.

Background to the Destruction of Gog

We have identified Gog and his allies as the Idumean hierarchy who had taken over the Judean Kingdom. This included both religious Jews who were Idumean converts to Judaism who called themselves Jews as well as secular Idumeans known in the Bible as "the Herodians" who were secularists who liked the Grecian lifestyle but were also Zealots and nationalists who wanted freedom from Rome. The Lord organized a special set of circumstances so that the prophecy of Ez. 38&39 could be fulfilled. Gog and his allies would be slaughtered by the Romans on all the mountains of Israel and even in distant cities like Alexandria where 50,000 died in the Jewish revolt and thousands more in places like Damascus and other cities of the empire.

The Jewish Revolt

The Jewish revolt that led to Armageddon was not just a

The Liberation of Israel

Result of the Messianic prophecies of the time but also by direct provocations from Rome. Caligula in 40 AD had decided that he was a god and demanded the Roman senate worship him as god. He also demanded a statue of himself be erected in the temple in Jerusalem. The Zealots remembered this abomination from Antiochus Epiphanes time in 167 BC and remembered how the Jews revolted successfully against their Syrian masters through divine intervention. They felt the same would happen again against Rome. They went throughout the Roman empire to synagogues to spread sedition and independence from Rome saying the Messiah was coming and would deliver them.

At the same time the Apostles were going throughout the world also to the synagogues preaching Jesus is the Messiah who had already come and that His Kingdom was not of this world. The disciples were persecuted everywhere by both the Sanhedrin as well as the Zealots. They were beaten, scourged and put to death. Jews all over the world had a choice: Jesus is the Messiah or the Messiah was to still come to Jerusalem and deliver Israel from Rome and establish the Kingdom. The wheat and the tares were being separated! The Lord's angels were going out to bring in His true sheep and separate them from the goats.

The resistance broke out into full scale revolt in 66 AD. The Zealots forced the priests to stop the sacrifices for Rome and the Emperor. Independence was declared. The Roman garrison in Jerusalem was massacred, General Cestius and the Roman legions of Syria march on Jerusalem and surround the city and then mysteriously withdraw back to Syria. The Christians inside Jerusalem recognize this as Jesus warning to them to flee Jerusalem when they see it surrounded by armies. They fled to Petra.

Eventually Rome had to mobilize its largest army ever of 60,000 men under Vespasian and his son Titus to put down the rebellion. It took 42 months of campaigning in Judea from 66 AD to the final destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD to finalize the destruction of Gog and his allies. As Rev. 11:2 prophesied it would.

All over the Roman world the Jews who had rejected the gospel gathered in Israel for the great deliverance that did not come. Josephus tells us that over 1,100,000 of them had gathered for the great Feast of Tabernacles of 70 AD expecting a miraculous deliverance. They were all caught up inside the city surrounded by legions of Rome. Inside the city it was chaos! As Ezekiel 38:21 prophesied, "...every man's sword will be against his brother" There was an Idumean army inside the walls, a Zealot army, gangsters and factions...and they all slaughtered each other until the city streets ran with blood. By the time the Romans breached the walls most of the city was already dead in the massacres.

The survivors of this great war spent years burning the wood of the siege weapons that Rome built to breach the walls of Jerusalem in fulfillment of Ezekiel 39:9-10. The great wealth of the Temple that Rome looted from this war was enough to build the Coliseum in Rome which Vespasian did after becoming Emperor.

The great theme of Ezekiel 38 and 39 was that the Lord would bring about a great liberation of Israel from their enemies. It is one thing to identify the time that these prophecies are fulfilled and the historical actors involved, we must be careful also to keep the purpose of the whole prophecy in mind. Israel was to be divinely liberated! And it is here that an objection comes to my contention that the war of 66-70 AD could be Armageddon. The objection basically is this: How could Israel be liberated according to Ezekiel 38 and 39 when in actual fact the Jewish nation was almost destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD, where is the great liberation?

It is here where Christian Zionists get Bible prophecy very wrong! Paul made it clear that just because you are a genetic descendent of Abraham does not mean you are a true Israelite! There is no salvation by race or DNA. "they are not all Israel who are of Israel" (Romans 9:6) There is an Israel after the flesh (1 Cor. 10:18) and an Israel of God (Gal. 6:16). "...therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham" (Gal.3:6-7)

Not everyone in Judea who called themselves Jews were indeed true Israel, and Jesus said the wheat would be separated from the tares. All these false Jews were the enemies of true Israel who persecuted Jesus and also persecuted the early Church. The only persecution that both Jesus and the disciples and the early Church had up to the time of Nero were the false Jews who controlled the Sanhedrin and the political and economic hierarchy of Judea.

So when Ezekiel 38 and 39 talk about the salvation of Israel and the deliverance of Israel it means salvation and deliverance from their real enemies who were persecuting and oppressing them...the Idumean nationalists and Jews. After 70 AD all that persecution stopped. The Judaizers who had infiltrated the Church and were persecuting Paul were gone with the destruction of Jerusalem. Their cause was lost.

Now here is a warning to the Church...

Rev. 20 speaks of Gog and Magog once again emerging and trying to deceive and persecute the Church. Once again they will try to possess the land of Palestine as they did in Herod's time. That time came in 1948. The Israeli state is not the prophesied return of Israel to the land. It is once again Edom trying to gain their stolen inheritance. There is no blessing there where you get locked up for passing out Bible tracts and cannot preach the Gospel. This is not a holy land, it is an unholy land that is still persecuting the true Israel of God. There is no blessing there.

But like old blind Isaac in his old age who was deceived by Jacob who made himself up to be like Esau his brother so that he could fool his blind father in giving him Esau's blessing...the descendants of Esau are making themselves out to be Jacob to fool a blind evangelical Church out of our inheritance. It is we the triumphant Church of Jesus Christ that will bring in the Kingdom of God on earth, not a supposed 144,000 Jews from Israel. When Israel collapses that deception will also pass away, liberating the evangelical Church to fulfill its Kingdom mandate!