

Gog-Magog Battle - Before the Tribulation?

By Nathan Jones

We have deciphered the general timing clues given by Ezekiel and concluded that the Gog-Magog Battle has to be future.

The first clue is the use of the terms "latter years" (Ezek. 38:8) and "last days" (Ezek. 38:16). The second clue is the historical record that shows no such battle in Israel's history has fit the description. The third is that Israel is a nation once more. The fourth is that the nations that comprise the invading coalition are finally united today by their hatred of the Jews. And, the fifth clue from Ezekiel 38:11 is that Israel has to be living unsuspecting and in peace.

In an attempt to pinpoint the exact timeframe for the occurrence of Ezekiel's prophecy, the following arguments will weigh the pros and cons of different future scenarios, beginning with the time period before the 7-year Tribulation. The following two views lie heavily on the Pre-Tribulation Rapture viewpoint.

I'll seek some ideas from what I believe is the best written book on the subject ? Northern Storm Rising by Dr. Ron Rhodes.

Before Both the Rapture and the Tribulation

Supporters of this view are Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins of the Left Behind series, and Joel Rosenberg who wrote the popular Ezekiel 38-39 themed book Epicenter.

Pros:

- 1) Israel taking seven years to burn the weapons for fuel (Ezek. 39:9) matches the seven year timeframe given in Daniel 9:27 that the Tribulation will last. Since both take seven years, Gog-Magog would have to happen before the Tribulation.
- 2) A supernatural defeat by God would leave the Muslim world in ruins and their faith in Allah shattered. Islam would no longer be a threat that holds the Jews back from rebuilding the prophesied Third Temple which the Antichrist will later desecrate at the midpoint of the Tribulation (Dan. 9:27 and 2 Thess. 2:3-4). The Jews must build their new Temple before the half-way point, and certainly could before the Tribulation if there was no Muslim opposition.
- 3) God declaring Himself to the world is in character with His willingness to warn the world before impending judgment. A great multitude could come to God before the Rapture due to God revealing Himself more fully by His victory in the Gog-Magog Battle, and so more people would be included in the Rapture and avoid the wrath of the Tribulation.
- 4) The Jews having to flee into the desert 3.5 years into the Tribulation due to the Antichrist's abomination in the newly built Temple may cut them off from being able to burn the Gog-Magog invader's weapons (Matt. 24:15-16). If they couldn't get to the weapons to burn them in the prophesied amount of time, at least 3.5 years would be needed before the Tribulation, placing the Gog-Magog Battle well before the Tribulation begins.

Cons:

- 1) Placing the invasion before the Rapture would contradict the first general time clue of the terms "latter years" (Ezek. 38:8) and "last days" (Ezek. 38:16). Old Testament prophets like Ezekiel used these terms to indicate a specific "time of Jacob's trouble" for Israel, which is the Tribulation.
- 2) Placing the invasion before the Rapture would contradict the fifth general time clue which says Israel will be living in unsuspecting peace before the attack. Unless the peace is derived from a Psalm 83 scenario where Israel has subjugated its surrounding neighbors, true peace may only come to Israel by the peace covenant made between the Antichrist and Israel (Dan.

9:27). That covenant starts the seven year countdown of the Tribulation.

3) The New Testament teaches that no prophetic event has to occur before the Rapture, called "imminency." Imminency precludes such prophetic events like the Gog-Magog Battle from happening before the Rapture.

4) The removal of the "Restrainer" allows the Antichrist to rise to power (2 Thes. 2:6-8). Because the Church is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16), the removal by the Rapture of the Holy Spirit's work through the Church must then take place before the Antichrist can arise and create the peaceful precondition for Israel.

After the Rapture But Before the Tribulation

A popular supporter of this view is Dr. Tommy Ice of the Pre-Trib Research Center.

Pros:

1) Certainly the world will be in chaos due to a Pre-Tribulation Rapture, which Russia and its Muslim coalition could use to seize the opportunity to attack a friendless Israel.

2) Having the Muslim nations shattered before the Tribulation gives the Antichrist an easier time of making good on a peace covenant with Israel.

3) With the more christianized nations in tatters due to a Pre-Tribulation Rapture and the Islamic world in ruins from the Gog-Magog Battle, the remaining European world power could fill the vacuum in the Middle East. By making a peace treaty with Israel and easily conquering the lands of the once Middle-Eastern Muslim countries, the Roman Empire could truly be revived once more. The only remaining world powers would be East-Asian, and the Bible records their continued existence (though under the control of the Antichrist) until the end of the Tribulation (Rev. 16:12).

4) With the Muslim world in tatters, Israel would have no resistance to their rebuilding the Temple at the onset of the Tribulation.

5) The Rapture does not start the Tribulation, but rather the signing of the peace covenant between the Antichrist and Israel does (Dan. 9:27). This fact would allow a 3.5 year or more time delay between the Rapture and the Tribulation, giving Israel the full seven years to burn the weapons from the Gog-Magog Battle before being forced to flee into the desert (Matt. 24:15-16).

Cons:

1) Placing the invasion before the Tribulation would contradict the first general time clue of the terms "latter years" (Ezek. 38:8) and "last days" (Ezek. 38:16). Old Testament prophets like Ezekiel used these terms to indicate the specific "time of Jacob's trouble" for Israel, which is the Tribulation.

2) The peaceful precondition of Ezekiel 38:11 in which Israel has to be living unsuspecting and in peace before the Gog-Magog Battle may depend on the peace covenant with the Antichrist. Since the Antichrist can't be revealed until the Tribulation begins, Israel would not attain the conditional requirement for the Gog-Magog invasion to occur.

In the next part of this "Impending Invasion of Israel" series we'll analyze the possibility that the Gog-Magog Battle could happen during the 7-year Tribulation.

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