

Is Israel on Verge of God-Magog War?

There is no question that the nation of Israel could be facing an unprecedented attack coming from all sides—Iran from the east, Hezbollah from the north, the Houthis from the south and Hamas (what is left of it) from the west. In fact, by the time you read this article, that attack may have already been launched. But is Israel on the verge of an apocalyptic war prophesied in the Bible? In my view, the answer is clearly no.

To be sure, there are some Bible teachers who believe Ezekiel 38-39, containing the famous Gog and Magog prophecy and following the even more famous prophecy of the dry bones coming to life in Ezekiel 37, should be interpreted symbolically rather than literally. In other words, whatever the chapters meant in Ezekiel's day, more than 2,500 years ago, has no bearing on the current situation in the Middle East. The correct interpretation today is spiritual only.

Other Bible teachers scour the Scriptures, looking for prophecies that tie in with today's headlines or help predict tomorrow's headlines.

In my view, both of these fall short of the mark.

Those who read these chapters symbolically fail to realize that other prophecies in Ezekiel (and related prophetic books) graphically described the destruction of Jerusalem and the exiling of tens of thousands of Israelites into Babylon, along with their return from exile, things that took place literally. To claim chapters such as 38-39 are purely spiritual (or symbolic) in meaning is to make an arbitrary interpretive decision without scriptural justification. Why are these chapters spiritual and the others literal?

Those who read every prophecy in the Bible as if it applied to

today fail to recognize the ancient contextual meaning of many biblical prophecies. They also wrongly assume that we are the last generation, something that cannot be known with certainty at this point in time.

I would recommend that we use this simple principle of interpretation: If the Bible clearly promises certain things will happen on a grand, worldwide scale and those things have still not happened (in part or in full), then their fulfillment should be expected in the future.

I'm not referring here to a specific prophecy concerning an individual or nation that had an expiration date on it or had explicit conditions attached to it.

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I'm referring to events that are described with absolute certainty, as in something like, "In the coming days, thus and such will happen. The whole earth will know it, and God will be glorified through it." If those events have not yet come to pass, we can be certain they still will. The Lord has decreed it.

As for the background to Ezekiel 38-39, it was written at a time when the Jewish people were in exile and Babylon, but Ezekiel had prophesied that they would return to their homeland, as had other prophets of the day such as Jeremiah. This return is prophesied explicitly in Chapters 36-37, with Chapter 37 containing the "dry bones" prophecy mentioned above.

Yet some of the specific details in Chapters 36-37 have still not come to pass. In other words, the exiles did return, but not in the expected numbers, not with the expected glory and not in a way that led to national transformation. Quite the contrary.

That's why many of us see the events of the last 100-plus years as having great prophetic significance, as the Lord continues to bring the Jewish people back to their ancient homeland on a grander scale than the world has ever seen. And it is the reality of this physical return that gives us confidence that there will be a spiritual return as well.

Ezekiel 38-39 contain a prophecy in which Gog, ruler of the land of Magog, leads a coalition of nations to attack Israel, including Persia (modern-day Iran), but God intervenes dramatically to defeat these forces and protect His people. The passage ends with God's promise to restore Israel and pour out His Spirit upon the Jewish people in the land of Israel.

Has this final cataclysmic war taken place yet, along with the promised end-time victory for Israel? Certainly not.

Could it be imminent?

For a number of reasons, I believe the answer is no.

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First, speaking to the invading nations, the text states, "In future years you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. They had been brought out from the nations, and now all of them live in safety" (Ezek. 38:8, NIV). Indeed, the attackers actually say, "I will invade a land of unwalled villages; I will attack a peaceful and unsuspecting people—all of them living without walls and without gates and bars" (Ezek. 38:11).

This cannot possibly describe Israel today, a nation under siege, a nation with protection and fences and walls, a nation that is anything but "unsuspecting." (The Oct. 7 massacre was not a matter of Israel being "unsuspecting" as much as failing

to heed many clear signs of warning while looking for attacks elsewhere.)

Second, the Gog-Magog war is clearly a final-days event, meaning if it was to begin now then we would be in the closing days or months (or, at most) years of human history. Given the fact that as many as 3 billion people—roughly 40% of the world's population—have never heard the name of Jesus or had any meaningful exposure to the gospel, there is much work yet to be done in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Third, in light of the prayer of Jesus for the unity of the body, I cannot imagine that we as a family of believers are ready to meet our Lord. Is *this* the best He can do in terms of getting a people on earth who, on some level, resemble Him and can rightly represent Him?

Fourth, since the Scriptures speak of the end-time turning of the Jewish people to the Messiah yet, at present, perhaps 1% of the Jewish population worldwide embraces Yeshua as Messiah, I have a hard time reconciling this fact with the idea that we have just a few days (or months or years) to go before the end.

I'm aware, of course, that other Bible teachers place the Gog-Magog prophecy at the end of the millennial kingdom (the 1,000-year Messianic reign), as per Revelation 20, which pushes this war into the distant future. And I'm aware that there are many interpretive debates within these chapters, most obviously, determining the identities of Gog and Magog.

I'm simply responding here to the question of whether this prophesied war is imminent, and again, to the best of my knowledge the answer is no.

That does not mean that, for a moment, we should stop praying for Israel and the surrounding nations or that we should minimize the grave potential of the current conflict, which could result in much bloodshed. It simply means that Israel

could be on the verge of a very costly war without that war being the final conflict of Gog-Magog.

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