

For Seven Months the house of Isra'el Will Bury Them in Order to Cleanse the Land

Ezekiel 39: 11-16

DIG: Why do you think it will take so long to bury the dead? Could the Jews be fleeing for their very lives and still have time to bury that many dead? When does this battle take place?

Ezekiel first brought out how great **the enemy forces** were by showing how long it took to burn **their** weapons. Now **he** underscores the same truth by emphasizing the length of time needed to **bury their dead**. Through this process, **the LORD** will be glorified because it will be very clear to **the people of Isra'el**, that the victory was **God's** doing and **His** alone.

On the day of **Gog's** and his allies' destruction, **God** will give **Gog** a burial place in **Isra'el**. The country that **they** want to turn into a graveyard will actually become **their own** graveyard. The location of this graveyard for the armies of **Gog** will be **in the valley of those who travel east toward the Dead Sea**, or more specifically, the Jordan Valley just northeast of the **Dead Sea**. **The valley** will be so clogged with the corpses of **Gog's** army that it will **block the way of travelers**. Instead of finding all the **loot** that **they** had wanted, **they** found **their graves** instead.

This mass cemetery **will be** given a new name, remembering **God's** victory over **Isra'el's** adversaries. **It will be called the Valley of Hamon Gog**. The first word, **Hamon**, is a Hebrew word meaning *multitudes*. **For seven months the house of Isra'el will be burying them in order to cleanse the Land**. This is in keeping with **Numbers 35:33-34**. **All the people of the Land will bury them, and the day I am glorified will be a memorable day for them, declares ADONAI ELOHIM (Ezekiel 39:11-13)**. Therefore, the destruction of **the invaders** will result in a new Jewish holy day. In addition to the holy days given by **Moses**, **the Jews** have always had a tendency to add holy days to commemorate great events. Because of the deliverance of **Esther**, there is now the feast of Purim (see my commentary on **Esther Bn - The Feast of Purim**). In commemoration of the deliverance by the Maccabees, **the Jews** celebrate Hanukkah or the Feast of Lights (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Hj - Then Came Hanukkah at Jerusalem and It Was Winter**). **Isra'el's** independence day is now celebrated. So when this **great army** is wiped out by supernatural means, it will become a new Jewish holy day.

Death came so suddenly to so many that it will take **seven months** to bury them all. All the facts emphasize the vast proportions of the catastrophe. There will be a need to **cleanse the Land** because bloodshed defiles it (**Numbers 35:33-34**).¹³⁹ **To cleanse the Land, scouts will be regularly employed to find hidden corpses. Some will go throughout the Land and, in addition to them; others will bury the bodies that will be found. At the end of the seven months they will begin their search for additional bodies.** Every single **corpse** must be buried. Not one can be left to defile the Land. Many of these **corpses** will fall into various crevasses and places where they would not be easily seen. But all the **bodies** missing in action will eventually be found. **As the scouts go through the Land and one of them sees a human bone, he will set up a marker beside it until the gravediggers have it in the Valley of Hamon Gog. Also a new Jewish town called Hamonah, or the multitude, to honor the multitude of the armies that were destroyed there, will be in the Valley of Hamon Gog. And so they will cleanse the Land (Ezekiel 39:14-16).** The seven months of burial is new information, not mentioned in **Chapter 38**.

The most controversial question is *when* will this invasion take place? There were specific scriptural clues given in the text (**Ezekiel 38:8, 11-12, and 14**). There were six specific clues. First, the invasion occurs when **Isra'el** is once again a state. Secondly, it happens when **Isra'el** is re-gathered out of many nations. Thirdly, **the Jews** will live in areas that **had long been desolate**. Fourthly, **the Israeli's** will be living in unwalled villages. Fifthly, **Isra'el** will be **living in safety**. Not once in these chapters has it said that **Isra'el** is living in peace, rather, it is living confidently and in security. Sixthly, all of the descriptions of **Isra'el** in the text are true of present day **Isra'el**.

The seven months of burying and seven years of burning are crucial in determining when the invasion will occur. For any view to be correct, it must satisfy the requirements of these seven months and seven years.¹⁴⁰ There are five different views. Arnold Fruchtenbaum lays them out in his book *Footsteps of the Messiah*.

First is the Mid-tribulation view. It holds that this event will take place in the middle of the Great Tribulation. Those who hold this view say that **Isra'el** will be living in a time of safety right up to the time when the antichrist reveals himself and his persecution of **the Jews** begins. They believe that this invasion is the same as the invasion of the king of the north in **Daniel 11:40**. But to live in safety does not require living in peace. Why would **God** intervene to save **Isra'el** at this point, and then immediately allow the massive persecution of **the Jews** in the second half of the Great Tribulation (**Matthew 24:15-28; Revelation 12:6-17**)? While the invasion of **Daniel 11:40** does happen in the middle of the Tribulation

one can only conclude that it is not the same as this invasion. The simple reason is that in **Daniel 11:40** the king of the north is always Syria. But more importantly there is the problem of the **seven months of burial**. If this event happened in the middle of the Tribulation the **seven months of burial** would extend into the second half of the Tribulation, the period of time when **the Jews** are fleeing **Isra'el** without having any time to bury **their own dead**, let alone time to **bury enemy dead**, or time to build a new **Jewish town called Hamonah**. In addition, this view has a problem with the seven years of burning. If the Russian invasion occurs in the middle of the Tribulation, the seven years of burning would have to include the second three and a half years of the Tribulation and three and a half years of the messianic Kingdom. **Therefore, the Mid-tribulation view has a problem with both the seven months of burial and the seven years of burning.**

Second is the Post-tribulation view. It holds that the invasion will take place at the end of the Great Tribulation. Those who hold this view say that this invasion is the same as the campaign of Armageddon. But there are too many differences between the two invasions. For example, in **Ezekiel** only some nations were aligned against **Isra'el**, and other nations opposed the invasion. But in the campaign of Armageddon all nations, without exception, come against **the Jews (Zechariah 12:1-4 and 14:1-2)**.

Secondly, the attack in **Ezekiel** is only from the north. But in the campaign of Armageddon it comes from the entire world, from every direction.

Thirdly, there is a difference in purpose. In **Ezekiel**, the purpose of this invasion is to take the plunder and capture the loot. However, the purpose of the campaign of Armageddon will be to destroy all **the Jews** once and for all.

The fourth difference is the matter of opposition. In **Ezekiel 38:13** we learned that there will be other nations protesting the invasion. But in the campaign of Armageddon there is no protesting because all the nations on the earth come against **the Jews**.

Fifthly, there is a difference in the manner of destruction. In **Ezekiel** the destruction of the invading army comes by natural and supernatural means: an earthquake, mountains will be overturned, cliffs will crumble, city walls will fall to the ground, torrents of rain, hailstorms and pandemonium among the invading troops. But in the campaign of Armageddon the Second Coming itself destroys the enemies of **Isra'el**.

Sixthly, the place of destruction is also different. In **Ezekiel** the destruction of **the invaders** takes place on the mountains of **Isra'el**. However, in the campaign of Armageddon the destruction of the armies of the world is in a long stretch of territory from Bozrah, or Petra, south of the Dead Sea in present day southern Jordan, all the way back to just outside the city of Jerusalem in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

The seventh point of difference involves the timing of the invasion. The **Ezekiel** invasion takes place when **Isra'el** is living in safety in the Land. But the Campaign of Armageddon occurs while **Isra'el** is in flight and hiding outside **the Land**. Furthermore, this interpretation has a problem with both the seven months of burial and the seven years of burning. If this invasion occurs at the end of the Great Tribulation, in conjunction with the Campaign of Armageddon it would mean that they would be burying the dead **seven months** into the messianic Kingdom. That is inconsistent with what we know about **Yeshua's** messianic rule. In addition, the seven years of burning would also continue into the messianic Kingdom and that also is inconsistent with the renovation of the earth as described in **Isaiah 65:17**. **Therefore, the Post-tribulation view also has a problem with both the seven months of burial and the seven years of burning.**

Third is the Interlude view. It holds that the attack will take place in the interlude between the Great Tribulation and the messianic Kingdom. The basis of this position is the assumption that there will be a period of time, or an interlude, after the end of the Great Tribulation (and the Second Coming), and before the messianic Kingdom is set up. But there are also objections to this view. While it is clear from **Daniel 12:12** that there is indeed an interlude between the end of the Great Tribulation and the start of the messianic Kingdom, it is only seventy-five days long. **Seven months** of burial would be a total of 210 days and that would mean that the burial would have to continue for at least 135 days into the messianic Kingdom. That again is inconsistent with the renovation of the earth for the Kingdom. Of course the seven years of burning would continue well into the Kingdom, which would be contrary with the renovation of the earth. **As a result, the Interlude view also has a problem with both the seven months of burial and the seven years of burning.**

Fourth is the end of the Messianic Kingdom view. It believes that the invasion in **Ezekiel** is the same as the **Gog** and **Magog** mentioned in **Revelation 20:7-9**. Indeed there is an invasion of **Isra'el** after the thousand years of the messianic Kingdom by **Gog** and **Magog**. But there are two key objections. First, the **Ezekiel** invasion comes from the north, whereas the **Revelation** invasion comes from all over the world. Secondly, this view also fails to answer the **seven months** of burial and the seven years of burning. There would be burials taking place **seven months** into the Eternal State (see **Fq - The Eternal State**). Yet we read

that soon after this invasion, the earth will be destroyed. John tells us: **Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away (Revelation 21:1a)**. So there would be no time (or place) for **seven months** of burial or **seven years** of burning. We also learn that just after this invasion that all of the unsaved are to be resurrected from the **dead** to stand at the **great white throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-15)**. Why bother spending **seven months** burying these **dead** when they are going to be resurrected anyway? **Thus, the end of the messianic Kingdom view also has a problem with both the seven months of burial and the seven years of burning. In fact, all of the first four views have the same problem. But the fifth view deals adequately with both of these issues.**

Fifth is the Pre-tribulation view. It believes that the invasion by **Gog** and **Magog** happens before the Great Tribulation starts. From the text of **Ezekiel 38:1 to 39:16**, this view arrives at specific conclusions. First, **Isra'el** is established in the **Land** before the Great Tribulation in security. Second, the Russian alliance invades **Isra'el** during this time of security before the Tribulation. Third, the alliance is destroyed in **Isra'el** sometime before the Great Tribulation. There are three areas of support for this position.

First, the description of **Isra'el** found in **chapters 38 and 39** fits **Israel** as she now exists before the Great Tribulation. **Isra'el** is a nation that has **recovered from war**, a **people who were gathered from many nations**, the **mountains of Isra'el**, which had long **been desolate**, are now inhabited, and **they** are living in **safety (Ezekiel 38:8-12 and 14)**. Unfortunately, many people have interpreted the word **safety** to mean peace. But in **chapters 38 and 39** the Hebrew word for **peace**, *shalom*, is not used one single time. **They** are living in **safety**, but not necessarily because of a state of peace, but living in a state of confidence in **her** own strength. This is very characteristic of **Isra'el** today. To that end, **the Israelites** are living in **unwalled villages (Ezekiel 38:11)**. The kibbutzim in **Isra'el** today fit this description quite well. **Therefore, the description of Isra'el found in these two chapters fits the nation as she now exists before the Great Tribulation.**

Secondly, Russia today, in spite of the fall of communism, is still a major world power before the Tribulation. Her rise to power coincided with the reestablishment of **Isra'el** following World War II. **Today Russia has the military capability to launch a military invasion of the type described by Ezekiel.**

Thirdly, this view best answers the problem of the **seven months** of burial and the **seven years** of burning. There is time for the burials and the burning to happen without extending into the second half of the Tribulation, the Interlude, or the Eternal State. According to

this view, the invasion must take place at least three and a half years before the Great Tribulation starts. **Therefore, the pretribulational view is the only one that has no problems with either the seven months of burial or the seven years of burning.** These are the three areas of support for this view; however, there are three objections.

First, the most common objection is that **living in safety** always refers to the thousand-year messianic Kingdom. They say that **Isra'el** will live in peace and security at that time, and the messianic Kingdom is something that **Isra'el** will not experience until the Great Tribulation is over with. However, this is an overstatement. While it is true that the phrase **living in safety** is used of life in the messianic Kingdom, this is true only in a few cases. Most of the time it is not true (**Leviticus 25:18-19, 26:5; Deuteronomy 12:10; First Samuel 12:11; First Kings 4:25; Psalm 4:8, 16:9; Proverbs 1:33, 3:23 and 29; Isaiah 47:8; Jeremiah 49:31 and Zephaniah 2:15**). The **Jeremiah** reference is very important because it uses the same phrases that are found in **Ezekiel 38:11**. This proves that the phrase is used more when *not* talking about the messianic Kingdom, than when talking about it.

The second objection states that this view contradicts the doctrine of imminency, or that **the Lord's** return could happen at any time. However, stating that something must precede the Tribulation is *not* the same as stating that it must precede the Rapture unless you maintain that the Rapture begins the Tribulation. The act that starts the Tribulation is not the Rapture, but the signing of the seven-year covenant between **Isra'el** and the antichrist. Nothing else. This view states that invasion will occur before the signing of the seven-year covenant. This does not destroy any argument of imminency, because the Rapture may still come even before the invasion of **Isra'el** by Russia. Therefore, this view does not state that this invasion will occur before the Rapture; it only asserts that the invasion by **Gog** and **his** allies will occur before the Great Tribulation.

The third objection asks the question, "How could **the Jews** apostatize and sign a seven year covenant with the antichrist so soon after they had seen revival?" But the real question should be, "Why would that be so shocking?" This was often true in history of the TaNaKh. There was rapid apostasy following the various miracles of the exodus and their travels in the Sinai Desert. There was speedy apostasy after the revivals of Hezekiah and Josiah. There was swift apostasy at Nineveh after the city repented under the preaching of **Jonah**. Consequently, because this has happened before, it should not be a big shock that it would happen again.¹⁴¹

As previously stated, we do not know exactly when this invasion will occur. But when it does, it will be considered **the first birth pain**, whether it happens first or not.