

THE NATIONS CONSPIRE

Ezekiel 38-39

I've spent considerable time sitting on the edge of my seat the last 10 days or so.

This morning's message has suffered at the hands of the bowl games.

I spent considerable time sitting on the edge of my seat—Tuesday night, and then again Wednesday—I probably should say morning!—Wednesday and Thursday morning!—wondering how it would turn out!

GOD is not sitting on the edge of His seat wondering how the conflict between the nations will turn out!

He controls history. He wrote the script!

More than 2,500 years ago, He told us what we could expect to see happen in modern history!

Psalms 2 supplies the foundation: man's *constant* rebellion against God.

Man is in rebellion against God's authority and against His king.

From the beginning of history people have clenched their fist in God's face and dared Him to do something about it.

They have rebelled against the authorities He has established.

But God isn't sitting on the edge of His seat wondering how it will come out!

1 Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? ***2*** The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. ***3*** "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters." ***4*** **The One enthroned in heaven laughs**; the Lord scoffs at them. ***5*** Then he

*rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,
6 “I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.”*

God is on the throne.

He is humored by man's feeble attempt to overthrow His plans.

He can stop a man's plans as easily as we can turn out the lights—on *anyone*, whenever HE chooses.

*It's foolish to try to defeat God or destroy His people.
It won't work!*

God *laughs* at the thought.

Man's rebellion against God is particularly evident in the attacks the world's rulers have directed against God's people, Israel.

In Gen 12:3, God says He will bless people who bless Israel and He will curse people who curse Israel.

Those who submit to God's authority are concerned about His people.

In the end, nations that try to destroy God's people are themselves destroyed!

An attack against Israel is an attack against God Himself.

Yet the nations continue in their warfare against God's people.

The “kings of the north” have fought against them for thousands of years.

(That includes Assyria, Babylonia and Persia => today we call them Syria, Iraq and Iran)

This isn't a *new* attack; and it doesn't surprise God!

In New Testament times it was Rome.

In recent history it was Hitler.

In our day it's the Palestinians, the same "kings of the north,"
and the Arab nations together.

Current history conforms to what Ezekiel saw over
two thousand years ago. He describes events that
prepare the way for Messiah's coming.

Ezekiel 38 and 39 tell the story.

Ezekiel looks ahead to the end—*perhaps to OUR times!*

THE INVASION OF ISRAEL 38:1-16

When does this attack occur?

Surrounding context describes Israel's restoration
(36-37, 40-48)

Ezekiel's theme: "They will know that I am the Lord!"

Prophecies before the fall of Jerusalem 1-32
(Judgment)

FALL OF JERUSALEM 33:21

Prophecies after the fall of Jerusalem 33-48
(Comfort/Encouragement)

PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE RESTORATION 33-39

PROPHECIES CONCERNING ISRAEL 36-37

Judgment of enemy nations 36:1-7

Prosperity in the land 36:8-15

Reminder of their sin 36:16-21

Purification of the nation 36:22-38

Restoration of the nation 37

God brings them back to life!

PROPHECIES AGAINST GOG AND MAGOG 38-39

(These lead to . . .)

PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE MILLENNIUM 40-48

One aspect of preparation for His kingdom: judgment of Gog and Magog.

Israel has been restored to their land => *peace and security*.

They are back in the land.

They are sitting in an unwallled city—peaceful and secure—probably protected by a peace treaty. They are confident the peace will last.

God unites this final generation of opponents for one last battle.

THE INVADER'S ALLIANCE 38:1-9

God draws together an alliance of old enemies, from northern nations and southern nations, to attack Israel 38:1-7

The invader is identified as “Gog,” who lives in the land of “Magog.”

He is ruler of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal.

Many evidences identify these areas with modern Russia, especially the distribution of nations in Gen. 10.

There seems to be plenty of evidence that Magog was an ancestor of the Scythians and Slavic peoples, who are now a strong element in the Russian population.

“Meshech” is written in old Assyrian inscriptions as “Mushku” and in Greek as “Moschoi”

These areas are identified with areas to the far north, most of which were part of the former Soviet Union (Now included in Russia and the “-stan” republics).

To south: Cush = Ethiopia and some North African/Arab states; Put = Libya (Ghaddafi).

Territory mentioned also includes Iran and Iraq.

Quite an alliance against Israel, by modern standards!

Sound like circumstances we've seen?

God unites Persia (Iran) with other kingdoms from the South.

Several years ago the alliances didn't seem right.

Then came Kuwait, "Desert Storm," plus recent statements from Iran, and suddenly the pieces seem to be coming back into place again!

Right now *Russia* looks like an improbable player. *Wait a few years!*

God is always able to bring the pieces back into place to remind us that He's in charge and that He will fulfill what He has promised!

God Himself draws them to Israel!

They unite to attack Israel, which God has brought back from all over the world, that is sitting confidently in cities without walls

—NO protection

38:8-9

THE INVADER'S THINKING 38:10-13

These nations see Israel's defenseless position and think they can take advantage of her weakness.

They attack with great power, thinking this is their chance to take Israel by surprise and get rich off

an unsuspecting, defenseless victim.

Many people believe Israel's confidence is the result of a peace treaty Antichrist makes with them, according to Daniel 9:27.

It doesn't take a lot of imagination to envision a modern super power signing a treaty to protect Israel from neighbors who want to destroy them!

A number of peoples—especially those far away—ASK what these nations are doing.

But NO ONE *DOES ANYTHING* about it!

Israel could *eventually* be persuaded to trust such a guarantee!

THE INVADER'S ATTACK 38:14-16

They don't realize that God has called them there to destroy them.

God permits this attack to glorify His name before the nations that don't acknowledge Him.

They're about to discover Who is God, by means of His judgments.

When it's over, they'll know Who they've been playing around with!

JUDGMENT OF THE INVADER 38:17-39:29

When they strike, God will work in a way that will distinguish Him from all the pagan gods of the nations.

All will be able to see the difference and recognize that He is God! 38:16

God will intervene and destroy the attacking nations

38:17-23

DESTRUCTION OF THE INVADER 38:17-23

Notice repetition of "I" ("My", "Myself") *God does it all!*

Israel doesn't have to defend herself.

When God sees them coming, He becomes angry and fights against them.

He creates such confusion among them that they kill each other.

It rains hail, fire and brimstone on them.

That great army will be destroyed by God.

God will glorify His name before those nations that think they're going to destroy Israel.

BURIAL OF THE INVADER 39:1-16

Their rebellion will be squashed and their countries destroyed

The nations will then recognize Who is God. 39:1-8

Israel will go out to clean up what's left. 39:9-16 (9-13) . .

The spoils provide enough fuel to make fires for 7 years.

It takes 7 months to bury the dead and clean up the land.

BANQUET OF THE WILD ANIMALS 39:17-21

God invites wild animals to come enjoy the remains, a great banquet!

They will dine on flesh of fighting men, and drink blood of princes.

First beasts swarm in to clean up the meat.

Only bones remain—the people pick up the *bones* in the battlefield—not bodies.

GOD'S PURPOSE 39:22-29

From that day on, Israel acknowledges Yahweh as her God 39:22

Even pagan nations recognize God's purpose in allowing Israel to suffer 39:23-24

Israel's fall isn't due to the weakness of their God.

Israel's fall was sent by God because of their sin—to correct them.

When the discipline ends, Israel will be re-established in the land

and enjoy fellowship with God 39:25-29

God's name is glorified and His relationship with His people is reaffirmed.

Then they will know that Yahweh is their God

God will again be glorified by His treatment of His people.

HOW SHOULD THE CAPTIVES RESPOND TO THIS ANNOUNCEMENT?

The people in captivity can trust God.

They're in these circumstances due to sin—*but it doesn't end there!*

God hasn't forgotten His promises. He will still fulfill them totally!

He's in control of everything and will yet return to them.

LESSONS FOR GOD'S PEOPLE TODAY:

We shouldn't be surprised by the direction of modern trends and current events!

Yes, the nations still rage and conspire against God!

They've been raging and conspiring for thousands of years.

In the light of this passage I've been watching events in Iran the past few weeks!

I want to read you something:

Iran's President Has His Eye On Armageddon

By **CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER** **The Washington Post**

December 19, 2005

Lest you get carried away with the good election news from Iraq, consider what's happening next door in Iran. The wild pronouncements of the new Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, have gotten sporadic press ever since he called for Israel to be wiped off the map. He later amended himself to say that Israel should simply be extirpated from the Middle East map and moved to some German or Austrian province. Perhaps near the site of an old extermination camp?

Except that there were no such camps, indeed no Holocaust at all, says Ahmadinejad. Nothing but "myth," a "legend" that was "fabricated ... under the name 'Massacre of the Jews.'" This brought the usual reaction from European and American officials, who, with Churchillian rage and power, called these statements

unacceptable. That something serious may accrue to Iran for this -- say, expulsion from the U.N. for violating its most basic principle by advocating the outright eradication of a member state -- is, of course, out of the question.

To be sure, Holocaust denial and calls for Israel's destruction are commonplace in the Middle East. They can be seen every day on Hezbollah TV, in Syrian media, in Egyptian editorials appearing in semiofficial newspapers. But none of these aspiring mass murderers is on the verge of acquiring nuclear weapons that could do in one afternoon what it took Hitler six years to do -- destroy an entire Jewish civilization and extinguish six million souls. Everyone knows where Iran's nuclear weapons will be aimed. Everyone knows they will be put on Shahab rockets that have been modified so they can now reach Israel. And everyone knows that if the button is ever pushed, it will be the end of Israel.

But it gets worse. The president of a country about to go nuclear is a confirmed believer in the coming apocalypse. Like Judaism and Christianity, Shiite Islam has its own version of the messianic return -- the reappearance of the Twelfth Imam.

Last month, Ahmadinejad said publicly that the main mission of the Islamic Revolution is to pave the way for the reappearance of the Twelfth Imam. As in some versions of fundamentalist Christianity, the second coming will be accompanied by the usual trials and tribulations, death and destruction. Iranian journalist Hossein Bastani reported Ahmadinejad saying in official meetings that the hidden imam will reappear in two years.

So a Holocaust-denying, virulently anti-Semitic, aspiring genocidist, on the verge of acquiring weapons of the apocalypse,

believes that the end is not only near, but nearer than the next American presidential election. This kind of man would have, to put it gently, less inhibition about starting Armageddon than a normal person.

It gets worse. After his speech to the U.N. in September, Ahmadinejad was caught on videotape telling a cleric that during the speech an aura, a halo, appeared around his head right on the podium of the General Assembly. "I felt the atmosphere suddenly change. And for those 27 or 28 minutes, the leaders of the world did not blink... It seemed as if a hand was holding them there, and it opened their eyes to receive the message from the Islamic Republic."

Negotiations to deny this certifiable lunatic genocidal weapons have been going nowhere. Everyone knows they will go nowhere. And no one will do anything about it.

I'm not referring to these facts in order to stir up a protest or anger against Iran.

It's the significance of these statements in the light of Ezekiel 38 that catches my attention. These events could well lead into precisely the kind of movement Ezekiel predicts.

As long as Christ delays His coming, the nations will continue to rage for thousands more.

But God isn't sitting on the edge of HIS seat! He's in charge.

Everything *will* happen just as HE planned!

WHILE IT MAY APPEAR THAT THINGS ARE OUT OF CONTROL, GOD CONTROLS HISTORY, EVEN IN THE MIDST OF POWERFUL PAGAN NATIONS THAT DON'T ACKNOWLEDGE HIS EXISTENCE.

He's still in charge!

God will defend His people and destroy those who would destroy them.

This week we've considered the scary side of the process by which God will restore His people and establish His kingdom. Next week we're going to see the bright side.

Whether we're focusing on the scary side or the bright side, it's still His program.

He's carrying out the plan, exactly as He said He would.

We don't have to be afraid!

He's in charge. He'll do it right!

We can trust Him!

He will never leave us nor forsake us!

Lamentations 3(22-23) was written while Israel was in captivity.

God's people were under attack;

Their land was destroyed

In the darkness, the prophet affirms that it's because of God's unfailing love they weren't destroyed.

His compassion for them continues. It shows itself anew every morning.

"GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS!"

That's our hope too!

His faithfulness is great.

We can trust Him—even in uncertain times!

Such times will certainly increase in coming years—We can still trust Him!

He continues to laugh at the raging and plotting of the nations!

WE CAN TRUST HIM!