

## MISTAKE 8

### THE EZEKIEL 38,39 INVASION IS NOT THE SAME MILITARY CAMPAIGN AS THAT OF ARMAGEDDON

There have been a number of Bible students who believe that the Ezekiel 38, 39 invasion of Israel describes the campaign of Armageddon as recorded in Revelation 16. However, a closer examination of these two events will demonstrate that they are not speaking of the same episode.

#### UNDERSTANDING ARMAGEDDON AND THE EZEKIEL 38,39 INVASION

Before we look at this mistake that needs to be cleared up, we should have a proper understanding of Armageddon as well as a basic understanding of the Ezekiel 38,39 invasion.

#### WHAT IS ARMAGEDDON?

While Christians often speak of “the battle of Armageddon,” the Bible never uses that phrase. In fact, the word Armageddon is used only once in the Bible:

Now the spirits gathered the kings and their armies to the place that is called Armageddon in Hebrew (Revelation 16:16 NET).

John transliterated the Hebrew phrase *har Megiddo* which means “the hill,” or the “mountain of Megiddo” to create the word Armageddon. Transliteration is taking the letters of a word from one language and then making up a new word in a different language.

The Hebrew word Megiddo means the “place of troops” or the “place of slaughter.” It is a geographical area in Israel in the lower Galilee. It is also called the “Valley of Jezreel” and “Plain of Esdraelon.” The total area is about fourteen miles wide and twenty miles long. Napoleon called it “the most natural battlefield of the whole earth.”

#### PAST EVENTS AT MEGIDDO

It was on this plain that a number of battles have taken place both biblically and non-biblically.

It is where Barak defeated the armies of Canaan (Judges 5:19).

Gideon met the Midianites at this place (Judges 7).

King Saul lost his life there (1 Samuel 31).

This natural corridor was also used by Titus and his Roman army on their way to Jerusalem where they eventually destroyed the city and the Temple in A.D. 70.

In the Middle Ages the Crusaders also traveled through it as did the British General Allenby when he defeated the Turkish armies in the First World War in 1917.

#### WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT ARMAGEDDON?

The passage in Revelation concerning the campaign of Armageddon has the armies of the nations of the world gathering together to fight. Through their demonic powers the unholy trinity, the devil himself, the final Antichrist, and the false prophet, will cause the nations of the world and their rulers to assemble their armies

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However, the writer of Revelation, John, makes it plain that all these massive military movements are taking place according to the plan of Lord. In other words, He has arranged everything:

And I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs leap from the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. They are demonic spirits who work miracles and go out to all the rulers of the world to gather them for battle against the Lord on that great judgment day of God the Almighty (Revelation 16:13-14 NLT)

Demonic miracles will impress these rulers to the extent that it will cause them to join the campaign.

Interestingly, while the Gentile nations of the world will view Armageddon as a military campaign, to God, it will be only a “dinner for the birds of the sky!” The Bible says:

Their entire army was killed by the sharp sword that came from the mouth of the one riding the white horse. And the vultures all gorged themselves on the dead bodies (Revelation 19:21 NLT).

In Zechariah 12 and 14 it describes this event from the point of view of Israel. Recall, that “the beast,” the final Antichrist, has set up his image in the temple at Jerusalem. Since many of the people of Israel will not bow down and worship him, the Holy City of Jerusalem will be the object of their campaign.

Yet the Scripture is clear that it is not merely the Jews who are involved. Indeed, the living God has a purpose for the Gentile, the non-Jewish, nations as well.

The outcome of the campaign is recorded in Revelation 19. The Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth and defeats these enemies that have defied Him. Long ago, the psalmist wrote of an event such as this:

He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure (Psalm 2:4-5 New King James Version).

In sum, the armies of the world who have gathered against Him and His chosen people, Israel, are destroyed at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

### **THE EZEKIEL 38,39 CAMPAIGN**

In contrast to Armageddon, the invasion recorded in Ezekiel 38,39 is of an entirely different nature. We can make the following observations about the differences between these two events.

#### **DIFFERENCE 1 THE COMBATANTS ARE DIFFERENT**

To begin with, Ezekiel 38 provides the names of the specific combatants that unite to invade Israel in the last day. They are limited to a few nations:

Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya will join you, too, with all their weapons. Gomer and all its armies will also join you, along with the armies of Beth-togarmah from the distant north (Ezekiel 38:5-6 NLT).

In fact, a number of countries will “sit out” the battle:

Sheba and Dedan and the traders of Tarshish with all its young warriors will say to you, “Have you come to loot? Have you assembled your armies to plunder, to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to haul away a great amount of spoils?” (Ezekiel 38:13 NET).

On the other hand, Armageddon will involve all the nations of the earth:

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For they are the spirits of the demons performing signs who go out to the kings of the earth to bring them together for the battle that will take place on the great day of God, the All-Powerful (Revelation 16:14 NET)

For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to wage war; the city will be taken (Zechariah 14:2 NET)

Hence, at the outset we find an entirely different cast of characters for each battle:

### **DIFFERENCE 2            THERE ARE DIFFERENT LEADERS IN EACH BATTLE**

There are different leaders in these two military campaigns. The Ezekiel 38,39 invasion is led by a personage with the title “Gog.” He is the leader of a regional group of nations.

The armies of Armageddon are led by the Final Antichrist who is last ruler of the revived Roman Empire. His domination will be worldwide.

### **DIFFERENCE 3            ISRAEL IS NOT “AT PEACE” WHEN ARMAGEDDON HAPPENS**

In Ezekiel, the Bible says that Israel will be “at rest” or “living securely” when they are invaded by these various nations. In other words, they are unsuspecting that an invasion is about to occur:

A long time from now you will be called into action. In the distant future you will swoop down on the land of Israel, which will be enjoying peace after recovering from war and after its people have returned from many lands to the mountains of Israel. You and all your allies—a vast and awesome army—will roll down on them like a storm and cover the land like a cloud (Ezekiel 38:8 NLT).

You will say, “I will invade a land of unwalled towns; I will advance against those living quietly in security - all of them living without walls and barred gates (Ezekiel 38:11 NET).

On the other hand, the campaign of Armageddon takes place at the end of the Great Tribulation period where the world is anything but “at peace” and “rest.”

Indeed, many from Israel will have fled into the wilderness to be supernaturally protected by the Lord for some three and one half years.

When the dragon saw he had been thrown down to the earth, he hunted for the woman who had given birth to the son. But the woman was given the two wings of a great eagle so she could fly to the place prepared for her in the desert. There she would be taken care of for three and one-half years, away from the snake (Revelation 12:13-14 New Century Version).

Other Jews will have been persecuted and killed before this escape.

### **DIFFERENCE 4            THE ARMIES ARE DESTROYED BY DIFFERENT MEANS**

Furthermore, in Ezekiel, the armies are destroyed by various shakings of nature which include hail, torrential downpours, fire and sulphur:

I will summon the sword against you on all the hills of Israel, says the Sovereign LORD. Your men will turn their swords against each other. I will punish you and your armies with disease and bloodshed; I will send torrential rain, hailstones, fire, and burning sulfur! In this way, I will show my greatness and holiness, and I will make myself known to all the nations of the world. Then they will know that I am the LORD (Ezekiel 38:21-23 NLT).

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However, at Armageddon they are destroyed by the personal appearance of the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus Christ on His return to the earth:

Then I saw the beast and the kings of the world and their armies gathered together to fight against the one sitting on the horse and his army. And the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who did mighty miracles on behalf of the beast—miracles that deceived all who had accepted the mark of the beast and who worshiped his statue. Both the beast and his false prophet were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. Their entire army was killed by the sharp sword that came from the mouth of the one riding the white horse. And the vultures all gorged themselves on the dead bodies (Revelation 19:19-21 NLT).

### **DIFFERENCE 5            THE TWO MILITARY CAMPAIGNS HAVE A DIFFERENT PURPOSE**

The Ezekiel 38,39 invasion will be to plunder the land of Israel:

I [the leader Gog] will go to those formerly desolate cities that are now filled with people who have returned from exile in many nations. I will capture vast amounts of plunder, for the people are rich with livestock and other possessions now (Ezekiel 38:12 NLT).

The campaign of Armageddon will be for the purpose of obliterating the Jewish people:

Watch, for the day of the LORD is coming when your possessions will be plundered right in front of you! I will gather all the nations to fight against Jerusalem. The city will be taken, the houses looted, and the women raped. Half the population will be taken into captivity, and the rest will be left among the ruins of the city (Zechariah 14:1-2 NLT).

### **DIFFERENCE 6            THE DIRECTION FROM WHICH THE ARMIES COME ARE DIFFERENT**

Part of the armies that meet at Armageddon will come from the “kings of the east:”

Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great Euphrates River, and it dried up so that the kings from the east could march their armies toward the west without hindrance (Revelation 16:12 NLT).

However, the Ezekiel 38,39 will be led by armies from the “north:”

Therefore, son of man, prophesy against Gog. Give him this message from the Sovereign LORD: When my people are living in peace in their land, then you will rouse yourself. You will come from your homeland in the distant north with your vast cavalry and your mighty army (Ezekiel 38:14,15, NLT).

I will turn you around and drive you toward the mountains of Israel, bringing you from the distant north (Ezekiel 39:2 NLT).

### **DIFFERENCE 7            GOD’S INTERVENTION CAUSES THE WORLD TO SEE HE IS SUPERNATURALLY WORKING WITH ISRAEL**

The Lord will use the His miraculous intervention of the invasion of Ezekiel 38, 39 to cause Israel to see that He is working with them again:

I will display my majesty among the nations. All the nations will witness the judgment I have executed, and the power I have exhibited among them. Then the house of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God, from that day forward (Ezekiel 39:21,22 NET).

The Lord’s protection of Israel becomes clear at least by the midpoint of the final seven year period.

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In this way, I will make known my holy name among my people of Israel. I will not let anyone bring shame on it. And the nations, too, will know that I am the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. That day of judgment will come, says the Sovereign LORD. Everything will happen just as I have declared it (Ezekiel 39:7 NLT)

On the other hand, the campaign of Armageddon occurs at the very end of this final seven year period. It ends with the Second Coming of Christ to the world. At that time the world will know that God the Father, and the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, are the Ones punishing the unbelieving world:

Then everyone—the kings of the earth, the rulers, the generals, the wealthy, the powerful, and every slave and free person—all hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. And they cried to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to survive?” (Revelation 1:7 NLT).

### **DIFFERENCE 8            THE ARMIES ARE DESTROYED AT DIFFERENT LOCATIONS**

The armies at Armageddon will fill the land of Israel and reach Jerusalem:

For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to wage war; the city will be taken, its houses plundered, and the women raped. Then half of the city will go into exile, but the remainder of the people will not be taken away (Zechariah 14:2 NET).

At the time of those events,” says the LORD “when I restore the prosperity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather the armies of the world into the valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will judge them for harming my people, my special possession, for scattering my people among the nations, and for dividing up my land. (Joel 3:1,2 NLT),

However, in Ezekiel, this Russian led coalition will be is destroyed on “the mountains of Israel”

Son of man, prophesy against Gog. Give him this message from the Sovereign LORD: I am your enemy, O Gog, ruler of the nations of Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around and drive you toward the mountains of Israel, bringing you from the distant north. I will knock the bow from your left hand and the arrows from your right hand, and I will leave you helpless. You and your army and your allies will all die on the mountains. I will feed you to the vultures and wild animals (Ezekiel 39:1-4 NLT)

### **DIFFERENCE 9            CHRIST RETURNS TO THE EARTH AT ARMAGEDDON, NOTHING IS SAID ABOUT THAT IN EZEKIEL**

Finally, at the end of the campaign of Armageddon, Jesus Christ returns to the earth. Nothing whatsoever is stated about this in Ezekiel.

To the point, the Bible makes it quite clear that there are two major invasions of Israel during the last seven year period.

### **SUMMARY**

Therefore, we can sum up the differences between the Ezekiel 38,39 invasion and the campaign of Armageddon as follows.

1.        The military campaigns will be in different locations
2.        They will have different combatants

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3. Israel is not at peace when Armageddon happens
4. The combatants are destroyed by different means
5. The two military campaigns have different purposes
6. The direction from which the armies come from are different
7. God's intervention in the Ezekiel invasion causes the world to see He is supernaturally working with Israel. This truth is already well known at Armageddon
8. The armies are destroyed in different locations
9. Jesus Christ returns at Armageddon, He does not in the Ezekiel 38,39 invasion.

It is clear that we are dealing with two different events that are still to take place in the future.