

The End Times According To Ezekiel, Part 1

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Ezekiel was from the tribe of Levi and was trained as a priest. No doubt He would have become one had his life not been abruptly interrupted. In 597 BC he and about 10,000 others were taken captive to Babylon in the 2nd siege of Jerusalem. Daniel and his friends had gone in the first one eight years earlier and in 11 more years the rest of the nation would be taken captive and the city and Temple burned to the ground. The 70 year Babylonian captivity had begun. There were actually two 70 year periods of judgment in play and they were offset by 19 years. One was the servitude of the nation, which began in 605BC with the first siege of Nebuchadnezzar, and the other was the desolation of Jerusalem which began in 586, at the end of the third siege, with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

The southern kingdom, called Judah, was all that was left of Israel since Assyria had conquered the north over 100 years earlier. Other prophets had warned the southern kingdom to learn the lesson of the north and turn away from their idolatry, and Ezekiel had much to say about it as well. But his chief aim was to remind them that they were the holy people of the holy temple, the holy city, and the holy land. By abandoning God for the pagan deities of their neighbors, Judah had not only become unclean as a people, but had defiled the temple, the city, and the land as well. God's only choice was to withdraw Himself, send the people into captivity and destroy the nation.

To show them that this was not their end as a people, God announced ahead of time that this national cleansing from their sin of idolatry had 70 year duration. They were to surrender to Nebuchadnezzar, go to Babylon, and live, rather than fight and die, and at the end of the judgment God would bring them back to rebuild.

Like the rest of his people, Ezekiel and his wife lived in relative freedom in Babylon where they acquired a house and settled in as the Lord had commanded His people to do. Ezekiel's contemporary Jeremiah had written:

This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." (Jeremiah 29:4-7)

In the fifth year of his captivity, Ezekiel was called as a prophet, giving rise to the book by his name. In it he demonstrates an extensive knowledge of both his own people's

history and culture and that of the world around him. He was a man of great intellect, able to see the big picture and convey it to others, and had a commanding grasp of a wide variety of topics. In some circles he's called "the father of the synagogue" for helping the Jewish people to maintain their relationship with God in the absence of a Temple through the synagogue form of worship that he designed.

The Book of Ezekiel speaks both of judgment and of restoration. The first 24 chapters deal with the Lord's case against His people, and His efforts to convince them that Jerusalem would really be destroyed, the land would lie fallow, and their temple would be burned to the ground. Ezekiel's pronouncements of judgment were harsh and unequivocal, leaving no room for hope. He explained why it was happening, and what they had done to cause it. He told them that God had been trying to get their attention, to show them that He alone is God and will not share His glory with another, and to persuade them to turn away from their idols and back to Him. But nothing had worked. The situation called for extreme measures. He had to make them see how serious He was. Some form of the phrase, "Then they will know that I am the Lord." appears 65 times in Ezekiel's writings in conjunction with the things God had determined to do, both in judgment and in restoration.

So Ezekiel took them through several stages of realization, from "God won't really do this", to "If God does this it's because He's punishing us for the sins of our fathers," and finally to "God is doing this and it's our own fault."

More than any other prophet, Ezekiel was often called upon to act out the prophecies God gave him, and in chapter 24 he was given two major doses of bad news, Jerusalem would fall and his wife would die at the same time. Because God didn't want His people to mourn the loss of Jerusalem, but to focus on its future restoration, He commanded Ezekiel not to publicly mourn the loss of his wife.

God also had Ezekiel pronounce judgment on Israel's neighbors for their treatment of His people. Chapters 25-32 contain Ezekiel's oracles of judgment against Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon and Egypt. They bore some of the blame for Israel's punishment because they had enticed the Israelites away from God with their own idolatry. All of them would be conquered by Babylon as well. The Lord had Jeremiah tell their envoys that their choice was to surrender to Nebuchadnezzar and live in their own lands or suffer His wrath and cease to exist as nations. (**Jer. 27:1-11**) Over the next few hundred years several of these nations permanently disappeared from the landscape.

In Chapter 33 the fall of Jerusalem was announced and explained, and in Chapter 34 the Lord said that since Israel's leaders didn't take care of the people, He Himself would accept responsibility for them and would send His Servant David to lead them. (David had been dead for 400 years, so this was interpreted to mean the Messiah, the son of David.)

Then follows a final pronouncement against Edom. As the Israelites fled the Babylonian army, soldiers from Edom had lain in wait to cut them off or alert the Babylonians to

their presence. Then, after the Israelites were gone, Edom looted their Jerusalem homes. And yet the people of Edom were descendants of Esau and therefore cousins of the Israelites. God took their treatment of His people personally and decreed the total desolation of Edom, which was accomplished by the Nabateans, who destroyed every trace of them.

And that brings us to chapter 36, where Ezekiel shifted to a promise of restoration and where our study on the End Times According To Ezekiel begins.

Ezekiel 36

A Prophecy to the Mountains of Israel

“Son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel and say, 'O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD. This is what the Sovereign LORD says: The enemy said of you, "Aha! The ancient heights have become our possession." ' Therefore prophesy and say, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because they ravaged and hounded you from every side so that you became the possession of the rest of the nations and the object of people's malicious talk and slander, therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Sovereign LORD : This is what the Sovereign LORD says to the mountains and hills, to the ravines and valleys, to the desolate ruins and the deserted towns that have been plundered and ridiculed by the rest of the nations around you- this is what the Sovereign LORD says: In my burning zeal I have spoken against the rest of the nations, and against all Edom, for with glee and with malice in their hearts they made my land their own possession so that they might plunder its pastureland.' Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel and say to the mountains and hills, to the ravines and valleys: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I speak in my jealous wrath because you have suffered the scorn of the nations. Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I swear with uplifted hand that the nations around you will also suffer scorn. (Ezekiel 36:1-7)

Son of man is the term Ezekiel used to identify himself. It's a generic term meant to emphasize his humanity. It's not to be confused with the Lord's title of Himself, "The Son Of Man".

Once the Israelites were gone, their neighbors assumed that the land was theirs for the taking. With the whole world to choose from, God has only claimed the Promised Land for Himself, so naturally that's the part the enemy wants, too, and he stirred up his forces to occupy it. Then as now people don't realize that it's the Lord who makes the land desirable, and when His people are not in it the land is not productive. The once-thriving produce industry in Gaza is a case in point. Having left it behind to help jump start the Palestinian economy, Israel has now been asked for help making it work again. The Palestinians have not been able to manage it profitably even though they supplied most of the workforce during the time of Israeli ownership. It's not that they're any less capable; it's that the Lord is no longer involved.

That's just one of the obvious parallels between Ezekiel's day and ours. Some have even gone so far as to try and create a connection between ancient Edom and the Palestinians of today. While it's easy to see the similarities, the Palestinian people are not the remnant of Edom come back to contend against Israel again. In the judgment the Lord had Obadiah pronounce against Edom, He swore to leave no survivors (**Obad. 1:18**) and that's what happened. The Palestinians were never an indigenous people, have never had a homeland and in fact didn't exist until the UN created the term and identified them as such following Israel's re-birth. But even if they were, Ezekiel shows that their claim to God's land is without merit.

“But you, O mountains of Israel, will produce branches and fruit for my people Israel, for they will soon come home. I am concerned for you and will look on you with favor; you will be plowed and sown, and I will multiply the number of people upon you, even the whole house of Israel. The towns will be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt. I will increase the number of men and animals upon you, and they will be fruitful and become numerous. I will settle people on you as in the past and will make you prosper more than before. Then you will know that I am the LORD. I will cause people, my people Israel, to walk upon you. They will possess you, and you will be their inheritance; you will never again deprive them of their children.

“This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because people say to you, "You devour men and deprive your nation of its children," therefore you will no longer devour men or make your nation childless, declares the Sovereign LORD. No longer will I make you hear the taunts of the nations, and no longer will you suffer the scorn of the peoples or cause your nation to fall, declares the Sovereign LORD.” (Ezek. 36:8-15)

This prophecy was partially fulfilled during the post-exilic period and in fact during the time of the Hasmonean Dynasty (142-63BC) the people flourished in a manner not seen since the reign of Solomon. But since they were driven from the land again following their rejection of the Messiah we know its complete fulfillment still awaits us.

This is one of the first clues we get that Ezekiel's prophecies of restoration primarily involve the time from 1948 into the Kingdom Age. There's no direct mention of the life, death, and resurrection of the Messiah and the subsequent 1900 year diaspora in the Book of Ezekiel, only the frequent promise that He'll gather them back from all the nations to which they've been scattered. It points to the latter day re-gathering, not the one after Babylon.

Again the word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, when the people of Israel were living in their own land, they defiled it by their conduct and their actions. Their conduct was like a woman's monthly uncleanness in my sight. So I poured out my wrath on them because they had shed blood in the land and because they had defiled it with their idols. I dispersed them among the nations, and they were scattered through the countries; I judged them according to their conduct and their actions. And wherever they went among the nations they profaned my holy name, for it was said of them, 'These are the LORD's people, and yet they had to leave his land.' I had concern for my holy name,

which the house of Israel profaned among the nations where they had gone. (Ezek. 36:16-21)

Here's a reminder of the cause of Israel's judgment. The shedding of blood refers to their practice of child sacrifice, a form of idol worship so abhorrent to God that He said it never entered His mind that they would do such a detestable thing. (Jer. 32:35) In Ezekiel's day the captives were taken to Babylon, yet this passage talks about their dispersal among the nations, a reference to events following their defeat by the Romans nearly 700 years later. Another clue pointing us to the End times.

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes.

“For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God. I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and make it plentiful and will not bring famine upon you. I will increase the fruit of the trees and the crops of the field, so that you will no longer suffer disgrace among the nations because of famine. Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices. I want you to know that I am not doing this for your sake, declares the Sovereign LORD. Be ashamed and disgraced for your conduct, O house of Israel! (Ezek. 36:22-32)

These 10 verses contain the clearest possible denial of the Replacement Theology heresy. Israel could not forfeit God's promises by rejecting the Messiah because Israel's behavior is not at issue. God clearly told them that He wasn't going to re-gather them out of all the countries because of any thing they had done to deserve it. In fact it would be in spite of what they had done. He was going to re-gather then because He promised that He would. And then He was going to give them a new heart and put His spirit in them. This can only happen when one is born again, and it couldn't have happened after Babylon because the Lord hadn't come yet. The day will come when they will live in the Land, God will be their God and they'll be cleansed from all of their impurities. To deny that this is yet to happen is to accuse God of breaking His word to His people.

" This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On the day I cleanse you from all your sins, I will resettle your towns, and the ruins will be rebuilt. The desolate land will be cultivated instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass through it. They will say, "This land that was laid waste has become like the Garden of Eden; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited." Then the nations around you that remain will know that I the LORD have rebuilt what was destroyed and have replanted what was desolate. I the LORD have spoken and I will do it.'

"This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Once again I will yield to the plea of the house of Israel and do this for them: I will make their people as numerous as sheep, as numerous as the flocks for offerings at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts. So will the ruined cities be filled with flocks of people. Then they will know that I am the LORD." (Ezek 36:33-37)

Chapter 36 is an overview that extends from the regathering in 1948 into the Kingdom Age. In it, the Lord promised to bring them into the Land, cleanse them from all of their sins, install a descendant of David as their shepherd, give them a new heart and put His spirit in them, take them as His people and be their God and completely rebuild their nation.

200 years earlier He had sent Isaiah to tell them:

"Remember this, fix it in mind, take it to heart, you rebels. Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.

I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do. (Isaiah 46:8-11)

Now He was sending Ezekiel to give them the details. The bird of prey was Babylon, whose symbol was an eagle with a lion's head. The man from a far off land was Nebuchadnezzar who He called His servant (**Jer. 25:9**). God's plan was to cleanse them and restore them once and for all, and what He has planned He will do.

Although God had known from the beginning of time that Israel would reject the Messiah's offer of the Kingdom, it was a bona fide offer just the same, and had they accepted it **Ezekiel 36** would have been fulfilled beginning in 30 AD. But they didn't and the door was opened to the Gentiles, in part to make them envious. As a result, we have been cleansed from all of our impurities and from all of our idols. He has given us a new heart and put a new spirit in us; He has removed from us our heart of stone and given us a heart of flesh. And He has put His Spirit in us and moved us to follow His decrees and be careful to keep His laws. But we should be neither ignorant nor conceited. (**Romans 11:25**) The Church has not replaced Israel; we've just been included in the promise. (**Gal. 3:29**) For if their transgression has brought such riches to us how much greater riches will their fullness bring? (**Romans 11:11-12**). Chapter 37, the vision of the dry bones, is up next.

The End Times According To Ezekiel, Part 2

As I said in part one of our study, Ezekiel ignored all of the post exilic period, the First Coming, and the subsequent 1900 year diaspora in his book, skipping from Jerusalem's destruction in 586 BC all the way to the regathering of the Nation in 1948. One possible explanation is that after the Shekinah Glory departed the Temple before Jerusalem was destroyed (**Ezekiel 10**) He has never returned and won't until the beginning of the

Millennium (**Ezekiel 43**). The entire Second Temple period took place without the Spirit of God ever hovering between the Cherubim above the Ark in the Holy of Holies.

In fact, the Ark itself, along with its Mercy Seat and Cherubim, has been missing since before the Babylonian captivity began. According to the Mishna, the official codification of Jewish oral laws, there was no furniture in the 2nd Temple's Holy of Holies, just a stone platform, called the foundation stone, on which the Ark had rested in the 1st Temple. The first high priest who entered the 2nd temple's Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur should have immediately come running out of the Temple shouting. "Ichabod! Ichabod! (Inglorious! Inglorious!) The glory of the Lord has departed and we must repent until the cloud of His Presence again fills the Holy of Holies!" But instead, for several hundred years they conducted the ceremony as if He was there, sprinkling the blood on the foundation stone and hoping He would forgive them from afar. After the 2nd Temple was destroyed in 70 AD they could no longer even do that.

Ezekiel's focus on holiness could explain his 2600 year omission from Israel's history. Remember, his chief aim was to remind them that they were the holy people of the holy temple, the holy city, and the holy land. By abandoning God for the pagan deities of their neighbors, Judah had not only become unclean as a people, but had defiled the temple, the city, and the land as well. God's only choice was to withdraw Himself, send the people into captivity and destroy the nation.

Ezekiel 36 was an overview that extends from the regathering in 1948 into the Kingdom Age. In it, the Lord promised to bring them into the Land, cleanse them from all of their sins, install a descendant of David as their shepherd, give them a new heart and put His spirit in them, take them as His people and be their God and completely rebuild their nation.

In Chapter 37 we'll begin to see how all this will come about. Let's get started.

Ezekiel 37

The Valley of Dry Bones

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

I said, "O Sovereign LORD, you alone know."

Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.' "

So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.' "So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.

Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.' "(Ezek. 37:1-14)

That this prophecy is in some stage of fulfillment cannot be denied. During WW2 the Nazis' final solution was the complete eradication of the Jewish people. They were hunted down, rounded up and sent to death camps, marked for execution. Then in the closing days of the war, the Allies liberated the camps and those whose hope was gone came out of the places that were intended to be their graves. I'll never forget watching the news films of those skeletal figures in their striped prison garb walking through the gates of the camps, their eyes filled with wonder and bewilderment. Could it really be happening? 3 out of every 4 prisoners had died inside the walls of those camps, and the remainder who came out could simply not believe it was finally over. Later, after visiting the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem it was clear to me that I had witnessed the record of this prophecy's partial fulfillment.

Because it wasn't complete. The breath (Hebrew ruach) that was breathed into these skeletons came from the four winds, signifying that it was by a sovereign act of God and not because of anything they had done to deserve it. (Ezek. 36:22) And it wasn't the Ruach haKodesh, the Holy Spirit. That blessing is yet to come for them. What this means is that the nation would first reappear on the world scene in its human spirit only, not in union with God. First they would have to realize that the Lord had done this and was behind their re-birth. That will happen after the Battle of **Ezekiel 38**, and after that will come **Zechariah 12:10** when the blinders are taken totally off and they finally see Jesus as their Messiah. Then the Holy Spirit will come, the dead will literally come out of their graves, (**Daniel 12:2**) the nation's resettlement in the Promised Land will be complete, and the prophecy will be fulfilled in total.

One Nation Under One King

The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, take a stick of wood and write on it, 'Belonging to Judah and the Israelites associated with him.' Then take another stick of wood, and write on it, 'Ephraim's stick, belonging to Joseph and all the house of Israel

associated with him.' Join them together into one stick so that they will become one in your hand.

"When your countrymen ask you, 'Won't you tell us what you mean by this?' say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am going to take the stick of Joseph—which is in Ephraim's hand—and of the Israelite tribes associated with him, and join it to Judah's stick, making them a single stick of wood, and they will become one in my hand.' Hold before their eyes the sticks you have written on and say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land. I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. There will be one king over all of them and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms. They will no longer defile themselves with their idols and vile images or with any of their offenses, for I will save them from all their sinful backsliding, and I will cleanse them. They will be my people, and I will be their God. (Ezek. 37:15-23)

Nearly 400 years before Jerusalem was destroyed, the nation had split. The Northern Kingdom had separated from the South over idolatry. The north was most often called Israel but was also referred to as Ephraim a dozen times or more. **Isaiah 11:13** is a good example. The south was always called Judah, or in New Testament times by the Greek version, Judea. From the time of their latter day regathering they would henceforth be one again.

You may have had missionaries visit your home, representing a group whose founder was Joseph Smith. If you entered into their discussions, they may have expressed their belief that Joseph Smith appears in the Bible, citing **Ezekiel 37:16** as their proof. Their interpretation of this passage is that the word stick means scroll so the stick of Joseph is his scroll, the Book of Mormon. The stick of Judah is the Bible. One day, they say the two books will be joined together and the world will understand that the Book of Mormon really is another testimony of Jesus Christ. Some Mormons think of themselves as the remnant of the tribe of Ephraim, who came to the New World at the time of the Babylonian captivity. (Recent DNA research has cast doubt on this view.) To them, having the Book of Mormon in their hands fulfills the meaning of Ezekiel's words that the stick of Joseph is in Ephraim's hand.

There three problems with this interpretation. The first is that it's out of the context of the passage, which is the reunion of the northern and southern kingdoms. Joseph and Judah are two sons of Jacob who represent the two components of the divided Kingdom (Ephraim was one of Joseph's sons.). Second, as I mentioned, Ephraim was an alternate name for the northern Kingdom. And third, the Hebrew word translated as stick here appears 328 times in the Old Testament but never means a scroll. It means “a piece of wood.”

“My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children will live there forever, and David my servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them

forever. My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. Then the nations will know that I the LORD make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever.' "(Ezekiel 37:24-28)

This is the ultimate conclusion of the prophecy and is clearly yet future to us. It's intended to be seen as a Kingdom Age prophecy, to be fulfilled after the 2nd Coming during the period of time that the Church calls the Millennium. One or more descendants of David will be the Prince spoken of in more detail later in the Book of Ezekiel. Remember the ultimate Son of David, Jesus, will be King of the whole Earth. This prince governs Israel only. The Temple and its use will also be described in detail in chapters 40-47. At that time Israel will once again be the Holy People of the Holy Temple, the Holy City and the Holy Land.

Oh, By The Way

Even casual students of prophecy know that the next event on Ezekiel's agenda is the battle that brings Israel back into a covenant relationship with God, arouses their national demand for a Temple and ushers in the 70th week of Daniel, the last 7 years before the Lord returns. And for the first time secular news sources in Israel have started mentioning **Ezekiel 38**, calling it the Battle of Gog/Magog. Just a few weeks ago, three prominent Rabbis in Israel barely stopped short of identifying US President Bush as the Gog of **Ezekiel 38**, addressing him by Gog's title, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal instead.

But some, myself included, believe that there's too much that still has to happen for Ezekiel's battle to happen right now. In past studies, I've spoken about Turkey, called Meshech and Tubal in verse 3, as currently being on the wrong side, and Israel's condition in verse 11, unwallled villages full of unsuspecting people, hardly describes the current climate there. Then there are the current major players, like the Palestinians, Syrians, Lebanese, Egyptians and Jordanians, who are all missing in the Ezekiel line-up. Does anybody think they'll just disappear, or sit this one out?

These and other problems have scholars wondering about the possibility of another battle or two before Ezekiel's. **Isaiah 17** says that Damascus will be destroyed. It almost came to pass last fall, and many were surprised when it didn't. If the fall of Damascus precedes **Ezekiel 38** that would explain Syria's absence, but what about the others?

This question has a few scholars taking another look at **Psalms 83**, and for some pretty good, if circumstantial, reasons. **Psalms 83:4-8** contains a line up against Israel that historians can't connect to any specific time in Israel's past. That means it could still be in our future. And if that's the case, it might be the event between now and **Ezekiel 38**, whether in conjunction with the fall of Damascus or separately, that puts everything into place.

"Come," they say, "let us destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more."

With one mind they plot together; they form an alliance against you- the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, of Moab and the Hagrites, Gebal, Ammon and Amalek, Philistia, with the people of Tyre. Even Assyria has joined them to lend strength to the descendants of Lot. (Psalm 83:4-8)

Their objective is right out of today's headlines, and it takes almost no imagination to see that the names of Israel's antagonists in **Psalm 83** could be representative of Israel's current enemies, and include most of those missing from **Ezekiel 38**. I'm not suggesting that all these ancient people have come back to contend with Israel again, but those who inhabit the lands of these ancient people today are for the most part enemies of Israel just like the original occupants were. The Ishmaelites are the true Arabs of today and still live in the Arabian Peninsula. Saudi Arabia is the most prominent. Gebal (aka Byblos) and Tyre can be tied to Lebanon. Today's Palestinians are neither the Philistines nor the Edomites of history. And today's Jordanians aren't the descendants of Ammon or Moab either, but both reside in the lands of their ancient counterparts. The Amalekites and Hagrites were from Edom, where Jordan is today, and the Assyrians populated lands belonging to Syria now. This is a prophecy that along with **Isaiah 17** bears watching, because Israel's victories against these enemies could make them into a larger, more powerful, wealthier nation, one that could get careless about their security and be taken by surprise sometime later.

Since Ezekiel made no attempt at a chronological history, it shouldn't surprise us that he didn't mention the fall of Damascus or this 2nd Arab coalition from Psalm 83. It's another confirmation that the study of prophecy has to include all of God's word not just a few popular chapters.

But we're in a study of the End Times According To Ezekiel so **Psalm 83** and **Isaiah 17** notwithstanding, our next study will cover chapter 38.

The End Times According To Ezekiel, Part 3

We have now come to **Ezekiel 38**, the battle between Israel and a coalition of Moslem nations that comes on the threshold of Daniel's 70th Week and will kick off the End Times in earnest. We'll review the 2600 year old prophecy in light of recent world events.

What Time Is It?

First of all, let's get some kind of time frame started. Although Ezekiel's prophecies aren't consecutive they are chronological. In other words, he didn't include every event of the End Times, but those he did include are in the proper sequence according to time. Falling between Israel's modern re-birth, prophesied in **Ezekiel 36-37**, and the Millennium,

covered in **Ezekiel 40-48**, the battle of **Ezekiel 38-39** has to take place after 1948 but before the 2nd coming, and all agree it hasn't happened yet.

This has led some to see the passage as a description of Armageddon, but as we'll see there are several prominent nations missing from this battle whereas **Zech. 14:2** prophecies that all the nations will join the battle on that day. Even if you take the phrase "all the nations" to mean only Israel's neighbors, you've still got a problem because Ezekiel's list of attackers leaves out some that you'd expect to be involved.

Also, Ezekiel prophesied that the Lord would use this battle to turn Israel back to Him and to complete the return of Jews from all over the world to Israel, not leaving any behind. (**Ezek. 39:28**) This leads me to believe that the battle of **Ezekiel 38-39** is the event that re-starts the clock on the 490-year period of time spoken of by Daniel, the famous 70 weeks of **Daniel 9:24-27**. The 483rd year of that prophecy had come when the Messiah was crucified and the Temple destroyed, stopping the clock seven years short of complete fulfillment.

And there it's remained. But I believe the dramatic victory the Lord wins over Israel's enemies in Ezekiel's battle will start the clock again. It will convince them to officially re-instate their Old Covenant relationship and demand a Temple for worship. It's this Temple that's later desecrated by the anti-Christ, kicking off the Great Tribulation. That makes Daniel's remaining seven years the last ones before the 2nd Coming, so Ezekiel's battle will be a dramatic sign that the Lord's return is very near, on a par with the re-birth of the nation.

With all this in mind, let's begin a careful study of **Ezekiel 38**, to prepare us for these events now because many believe that they'll become reality soon.

*The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; prophesy against him and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army-your horses, your horsemen fully armed, and a great horde with large and small shields, all of them brandishing their swords. Persia, Cush and Put will be with them, all with shields and helmets, also Gomer with all its troops and Beth Togarmah from the far north with all its troops-the many nations with you. (**Ezek. 38:1-6**)*

Who Are These People?

I believe that Gog is a supernatural being, leading both the battle of **Ezekiel 38** and the final battle at the end of the Millennium 1000 yrs later. (**Rev. 20:8**) Perhaps he's Satan's counter part to Michael the Archangel. For what it's worth, there's an obscure reference in the Septuagint translation of **Amos 7:1** to Gog, The King of the Locusts. The identification of Gog as locusts' king is revealing since **Proverbs 30:27** states that locusts have no king. This hints that the "locusts" of **Amos 7** are not intended to be natural beings, but symbolic of something else. There's a similar passage in **Revelation 9:11** where locusts from the Abyss are described as having a king, and are clearly demonic. Are these two references giving us a clue to Gog's supernatural nature as well? I think so.

You won't find any hint of this in translations of **Amos 7** rendered into English from Hebrew. You can only get there from the Greek translation. But with no connection to any physical territory or people as there is with Magog and the others named in **Ezekiel 38**, and with Biblical appearances so far apart in time, there's good reason to believe that Gog is a non-human character, one of Satan's own.

In contrast, there are over 130 historical references tying Magog to the ancient Scythians (they defeated Saul at the battle of Beth Shean and nailed his body to the gate of the city). They include Josephus and Herodotus, called the father of history. The Great Wall of China was known as the "Ramparts of Magog" in ancient times and was built to protect China from Magog. Some see a striking similarity between what's known about the Scythians and the Mongol Hordes of Genghis Kahn. Magog was a son of Japeth and inhabited central Asia. His children, the Scythians, are the ancestors of today's Russian people.

Meshech and Tubal were brothers of Magog and are linked to the same general area, but more likely with the Turkic people. Josephus associated Meshech with Cappadocia, home of the ancient Hittite Empire in Eastern Turkey.

There are many opinions on what the "hooks in the jaw" phrase describes, but I think it's becoming clear that Vladimir Putin is determined to make Russia a world power again, with dominating influence in the Middle East, and that's what will drive him into this battle. I think Gog is whispering in Putin's ear right now, persuading him to do this. And the Lord is encouraging this because it's the only way to get Israel's attention.

Persia is the ancient name for Iran. Cush and Put were sons of Ham and brothers to Mizraim (which means "two Egypts") and Canaan. Narrowly they are called Ethiopia (Cush) and Libya (Put) but both were in possession of much larger territory in the past. The word Cush has a Hebrew root meaning black, and can be representative of the black races of Africa, while Put can represent the north part of the continent; Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Mauritania, etc. Note that all are sons of Ham and therefore not Semitic. The common denominator among African nations is religion (Islam) not race (Arab).

Gomer was Magog's brother and settled along the Danube River in what would become Eastern Europe. Beth means house in Hebrew. Togarmah was a son of Gomer. The Armenians of today call themselves the House of Togarmah. The Turks (but not the Kurds, who are the ancient Medes of Media-Persia fame) are also included. As with the African nations, the characteristic all these nations have in common is their religion, they're all Moslem.

"Get ready; be prepared, you and all the hordes gathered about you, and take command of them. After many days you will be called to arms. 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. You and all your troops and the many nations with you will go up, advancing like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land. (Ezek. 38:7-9)

The fact that Israel is the target in this passage is self evident, but a controversy rages around the Hebrew word *betach* translated "in safety" in verse 8. A secondary meaning, "carelessly" could mean that they're not really safe but just think they are and so their guard is down. From outward appearances it looks like it would take a truly miraculous change in Israel's current situation to achieve either of the conditions this word implies.

As I mentioned last time, some are beginning to think that a fulfillment of **Psalm 83** and **Isaiah 17** are needed to create the climate in which Israel would be living in a false sense of peace without walls and gates. The idea is that if Israel took off the gloves and went bare knuckle against the terrorists who live next door, they'd win hands down. There'd be no more Palestinian problem, no Hamas and no Hizbollah. Israel would wind up with more territory, something that would bring greater security, and the country's reputation of invincibility would be restored, and along with it their confidence. They'd also have the room they'll need to accommodate the return of Jews from all over the world who'll stream into Israel after **Ezekiel 38**.

In **Isaiah 49:19-21** the prophet foretold of this return that began as a trickle with Israel's re-birth and will expand into a flowing river and then a mighty torrent.

"Though you were ruined and made desolate and your land laid waste, now you will be too small for your people, and those who devoured you will be far away.

The children born during your bereavement will yet say in your hearing, 'This place is too small for us; give us more space to live in.'

Then you will say in your heart, 'Who bore me these? I was bereaved and barren; I was exiled and rejected. Who brought these up? I was left all alone, but these—where have they come from?' "

The prior fulfillment of **Psalm 83** and **Isaiah 17** also helps explain why Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt won't be participating in **Ezekiel 38**.

"‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On that day thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil scheme. You will 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. I will plunder and loot and turn my hand against the resettled ruins and the people gathered from the nations, rich in livestock and goods, living at the center of the land." Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish and all her villages will say to you, "Have you come to plunder? Have you gathered your hordes to loot, to carry off silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods and to seize much plunder?"' (Ezek. 38:10-13)

Israel is described here as a country at peace in the idiom of Ezekiel's day, a land of unwalled villages, when this enemy coalition attacks, and other countries not mentioned before take notice. Again we see that something significant will have happened to change Israel's perception of the surrounding nations.

Sheba and Dedan are first mentioned as grandsons of Cush in **Genesis 10:7**. Later, in **Genesis 25:3**, we read of grandsons of Abraham named Sheba and Dedan as well, born to Jokshan, a son of Abraham and his 2nd wife, Keturah. From the passage it's not clear which pair of grandsons is being referenced, but commentaries none-the-less identify these two as representing the nations of the Arabian Peninsula, notably Saudi Arabia.

According to archaeologists W. F. Albright and Wendell Phillips, Sheba was on the southwestern edge of the Arabian Peninsula across the Red Sea from present-day Ethiopia. Sheba is known in history as Saba in Southern Arabia, home to the Sabaeans of classical geography, who traded in spices with the other peoples of the ancient world. Dedan was probably the habitat of the Arabs in the northern part of the Arabian Desert, which is modern-day Saudi Arabia. The ancient capital of Saudi Arabia is still called Dedan on many maps today.

Tarshish was a son of Javan, who settled the area of Southern Greece. There are three schools of thought where Tarshish is concerned. One view locates Tarshish to the East, accessible from Solomon's great seaport at Ezion Geber on the Red Sea. But since Javan and his family traveled north and west from Babel at the confusion of tongues, it seems unlikely. Large sea going vessels were often nicknamed "Ships of Tarshish" and more likely this is how Tarshish came to be linked with Ezion Geber, since both Solomon and Hezekiah built such vessels there. Others see this as a reference to ancient Tartessus, a seaport in southern Spain, near Gibraltar. They recall the sea going navies of the Phoenicians, who operated Ships of Tarshish out of nearby Cadiz. They sailed as far north as England for tin, a metal used in the making of bronze and other alloys, which they mined in Cornwall. Some believe that the name Britannia is actually derived from a Phoenician word meaning "source of tin." If so, since the ships of Tarshish brought tin to the ancient world, this reference could be to Great Britain making the "lions" (KJV) or "villages"(NIV) of Tarshish Great Britain's colonies, of which the US is most prominent today. The fact that the lion is a symbol of the British Empire lends support to this view.

All that being said, the most provocative point here is that the very coalition of western nations that freed Kuwait and deposed Saddam Hussein are not engaged here, but instead question the invaders' intentions from the sidelines.

"Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: In that day, when my people Israel are living in safety, will you not take notice of it? You will come from your place in the far north, you and many nations with you, all of them riding on horses, a great horde, a mighty army. You will advance against my people Israel like a cloud that covers the land. In days to come, O Gog, I will bring you against my land, so that the nations may know me when I show myself holy through you before their eyes. (Ezek. 38:14-16)

Here the Lord makes His intent unmistakably clear. He's orchestrating this event to reveal Himself to the world once again. The years and years of debate over God's existence, begun with the German School of Higher Criticism in the 1800's and continued in the modern rationalism of the 1950's will be put to naught as God uses this battle to poke His head through the fabric of the sky and shout, "I'm still here!"

“‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Are you not the one I spoke of in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel? At that time they prophesied for years that I would bring you against them. (Ezekiel 38:17)

The absence of any specific reference to Gog in any other prophetic writings (except the Greek version of Amos 7:1) lends credence to my theory that he's a supernatural figure who has influenced various nations to rise up against Israel. Gog is not a traditional enemy like Edom or Philistia. He has no human descendants who've grown into an

historic nation opposed to the Lord's people. Nor is there a geographic location on Earth we can point to as his homeland. He's a supernatural enemy who the Lord will deal with in a supernatural way.

This is what will happen in that day: When Gog attacks the land of Israel, my hot anger will be aroused, declares the Sovereign LORD. In my zeal and fiery wrath I declare that at that time there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. The fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, every creature that moves along the ground, and all the people on the face of the earth will tremble at my presence. The mountains will be overturned, the cliffs will crumble and every wall will fall to the ground. I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Sovereign LORD. Every man's sword will be against his brother. I will execute judgment upon him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him. And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.' (Ezek. 38:18-23)

With signs reminiscent of all the Heaven-fought wars of the past, the Lord is aroused in anger to execute judgment against the invaders of His land and enemies of His people. And as He has done before, He sows confusion in the hearts of Israel's enemies so that they commence attacking themselves while He unleashes the classic weapons of divine intervention. Earthquakes, plagues, bloodshed, rain, hailstones, and burning sulfur; these are His signature signs. Neither Israel, nor the enemy coalition, nor those watching from afar will fail to interpret them correctly.

So ends chapter 38. Next time we'll see why some think this battle goes nuclear and get another good reason why it's not the last battle of the Age of Man.

The End Times According To Ezekiel, Part 4

So far in this study, we've seen the prophecies of Israel's latter-day rebirth. We've learned that they would first appear again in unbelief, thinking that they had brought themselves back to life and that they themselves had built, populated, and defended their homeland. But we've read God's declaration that He was behind this, although not because of anything they'd done to deserve it. In fact He said He would bring them back in spite of their behavior in the world.

In our last episode we saw that one day soon God will decide to step from behind the scenes and reveal Himself directly to His people and to the world, through signature signs like fire, hail, and earthquakes that always signaled His presence in Old Testament times. He had Ezekiel tell them and us that this will happen in the context of a great battle that would catch them off guard and almost put an end to them. But at just the right time He will intervene and save the day. Now He's going to tell us how this will happen.

Ezekiel 39

"Son of man, prophesy against Gog and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around and drag you along. I will bring you from the far north and send you against the mountains of Israel. Then I will strike your bow from your left hand and make your arrows drop from your right hand. On the mountains of Israel you will fall, you and all your troops and the nations with you. I will give you as food to all kinds of carrion birds and to the wild animals. You will fall in the open field, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in safety in the coast lands and they will know that I am the LORD.

“‘I will make known my holy name among my people Israel. I will no longer let my holy name be profaned, and the nations will know that I the LORD am the Holy One in Israel. It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign LORD. This is the day I have spoken of. (**Ezek. 39:1-8**)

The King James has the more accurate rendering for the beginning of this passage. The phrase translated I will turn you around and drag you along in the NIV and others, literally reads I will turn you around and leave but the sixth part of you which means that 5/6ths of the Moslem forces will be destroyed. The Hebrew concept is roughly equivalent to the one behind the English word "decimate." Although decimate originally described the punishment requiring that 1 in 10 soldiers in a mutinous Roman Legion be executed, figuratively it has come to mean that something is all but totally destroyed. Synonyms are "annihilate" or "wipe out." So it is with the Hebrew. When the Lord brings this Moslem coalition into the mountains of Israel, He will also use the ensuing battle to wipe them out. Because they're too big a force for Israel to handle alone, He'll cause them to attack each other. Then He'll make their weapons and ammunition fall from their hands.

Some interpret the idea of sending fire on Magog and those who live safely in the coastlands as warning of a nuclear exchange. Magog refers to Russia of course, but the identity of the coastlands is less clear. The Hebrew word literally means "a coast, island, or shore" and in **Jeremiah 25:22** the phrase "beyond the sea" is used to help locate them, the sea being the Mediterranean. This reference could easily be pointing to Europe, and some even believe the US is in focus here. But as I've said, I don't think this attack can take place until the US is out of the picture, so we'll have to wait and see.

Also the Hebrew word translated in safety is the same one that's used to describe Israel's state of mind in **Ezek. 38:8**. Again it denotes a sense of carelessness, this time on Europe's part, as if they don't believe this kind of thing could happen to them and therefore aren't prepared for what's coming.

And once more the Lord explains His real purpose. He's going to use this battle to announce to one and all that He's Israel's Protector and Champion. The nations of the world are being told that to get to Israel, they'll have to go through Him.

" Then those who live in the towns of Israel will go out and use the weapons for fuel and burn them up—the small and large shields, the bows and arrows, the war clubs and spears. For seven years they will use them for fuel. They will not need to gather wood from the

fields or cut it from the forests, because they will use the weapons for fuel. And they will plunder those who plundered them and loot those who looted them, declares the Sovereign LORD. (**Ezek 39:9-10**)

In Ezekiel's day people burned wood for heat and so that's the idiom he used to describe the situation. In fact, the passage indicates that all of Israel's energy needs for 7 years will be met by converting the energy from the weapons the enemy leaves behind to peaceful use. I can't imagine the enemy carrying in enough of any traditional energy source to supply Israel's national power and heating needs for 7 years, so a more modern application is in order. Let's say nuclear. The old Soviet Union converted submarine reactors into electric power plants so the notion isn't that far fetched. And as you'll see, the clean-up procedures for this battle are remarkably similar to today's nuclear decontamination process. Why only 7 years then, when a nuclear reactor could theoretically supply energy needs for much longer? If, as I believe, this battle will introduce the 70th week of Daniel, 7 years worth of energy is all they'll need. After that, the Lord will supply their needs. (**Rev. 22:5**)

“On that day I will give Gog a burial place in Israel, in the valley of those who travel east toward the Sea. It will block the way of travelers, because Gog and all his hordes will be buried there. So it will be called the Valley of Hamon Gog.

“For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land. All the people of the land will bury them, and the day I am glorified will be a memorable day for them, declares the Sovereign LORD.

“Men will be regularly employed to cleanse the land. Some will go throughout the land and, in addition to them; others will bury those that remain on the ground. At the end of the seven months they will begin their search. As they go through the land and one of them sees a human bone, he will set up a marker beside it until the gravediggers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon Gog. (Also a town called Hamonah will be there.) And so they will cleanse the land' (**Ezek 39:11-16**)

If this valley is east of the Dead Sea, as the King James translation implies, it would be in Jordan today, and even in Ezekiel's day would have been outside Israel's borders. Yet verse 11 clearly locates the burial place in Israel. Therefore I believe the NIV translation is more accurate and the valley Ezekiel's referring to is more likely the one traditionally called the Valley of the Shadow of Death (**Psalms 23:4**) that was part of Israel during Ezekiel's time. If so, it's at the bottom of the old Jericho Road that still runs east from Jerusalem to Jericho and is on the way to the Dead Sea. And remarkably, it's in territory occupied by the Palestinians today. Does Ezekiel's battle effectively wipe out any Palestinian claims to Biblical land? Or is this one more clue that the battle described in **Psalms 83** will have preceded it and the Palestinian claims have already been done away with?

It will require the combined efforts of all Israeli citizens for 7 months to bury the enemy dead. After that they'll hire professionals, some to decontaminate the land and some to search for any bodies the people may have missed. They won't touch any bones they find, but will set up markers and call the professionals to come take them away. This method fits modern Nuclear Biological Chemical Warfare decontamination procedures to a tee.

Did the Lord have Ezekiel write this to show us the type of weaponry being used? Between this and the energy reference above, it sure looks that way.

"Son of man, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Call out to every kind of bird and all the wild animals: 'Assemble and come together from all around to the sacrifice I am preparing for you, the great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel. There you will eat flesh and drink blood. You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth as if they were rams and lambs, goats and bulls—all of them fattened animals from Bashan. At the sacrifice I am preparing for you, you will eat fat till you are glutted and drink blood till you are drunk. At my table you will eat your fill of horses and riders, mighty men and soldiers of every kind,' declares the Sovereign LORD. (**Ezek. 39:17-20**)

The carrion birds and scavengers will have a field day due to the carnage left behind on the battlefield. Earlier the enemy force was described as being a great horde, like a cloud covering the land. Now that it's been decimated there are dead bodies everywhere. This is not unique in Israel's history. Josephus wrote that after the Battle of the Galilee in 68 AD there were so many dead bodies floating in the Sea that you couldn't see the water.

"I will display my glory among the nations, and all the nations will see the punishment I inflict and the hand I lay upon them. From that day forward the house of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God. And the nations will know that the people of Israel went into exile for their sin, because they were unfaithful to me. So I hid my face from them and handed them over to their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their offenses, and I hid my face from them.

"Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will now bring Jacob back from captivity and will have compassion on all the people of Israel, and I will be zealous for my holy name. They will forget their shame and all the unfaithfulness they showed toward me when they lived in safety in their land with no one to make them afraid. When I have brought them back from the nations and have gathered them from the countries of their enemies, I will show myself holy through them in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind. I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD." (**Ezek 39:21-29**)

Following this victory the Lord will complete the return of His people Israel to their land, begun in the early 1900's and made official in 1948. Though He caused them to be scattered all over the world, He'll now bring them back, not leaving any behind. Since about 55% of the world's Jewish people currently live outside of Israel this will be some homecoming. But having witnessed His defeat of their enemies, Jews from all over the world will flock to Israel and to Him, yearning for a reinstatement of their Old Covenant relationship. And after waiting for nearly 2000 years for them to return, He certainly won't refuse them now.

For their part they'll soon build a Temple, Old Covenant worship being impossible without one. Following the instructions from **Ezekiel 40-48**, which we'll begin exploring next time, they'll build the Temple in Shiloh, about 12 miles (20km) north of Jerusalem. I

believe this is the Temple that will be made desolate by the anti-Christ and later cleansed at the beginning of the Millennium, just as the second Temple was first made desolate and then cleansed in the time of the Maccabees.

And so this battle will mark the beginning of Daniel's 70th week, the last 7 years of human history before the Lord returns. Having given this prophecy to Israel, Ezekiel doesn't get into any detail about its immediate aftermath, especially as it relates to the world's subsequent reactions. But for we who are the Church today, the Battle of **Ezekiel 38-39** carries more significance in what Ezekiel didn't say than in what he did.

From our study of **Ezekiel 38-39** you can see that there are really only a few major preceding conditions left before this prophecy can be fulfilled. Turkey has to switch sides, the US has to be taken out of the picture, and Israel has to be living in an assumed state of peace with its neighbors. So when will this happen?

In almost 60 years of Israel's modern existence, there really hasn't been a day when this condition has been met, although enemy sneak attacks in 1967 and especially 1973 did take the country by surprise as to timing. The simultaneous invasion by Egypt and Syria on Yom Kippur 1973, with Jordan and Iraq right behind them, brought Israel perilously close to defeat. Historians report that due to "a rare moment of flabbiness in Israeli intelligence and in the government, Israel did not expect any attacks from its neighbors just at this point in time." (Both the Jewish Yom Kippur and Moslem Ramadan forbid waging war during their observance, and in October 1973 as the attack began these Holy Days overlapped.)

It took a week for Israel's forces to recover and go on the offense. Two weeks after that the war was over, cease-fire arrangements having been negotiated by the UN. In the treaties that followed, Egypt regained control of the Suez Canal and the Sinai Peninsula lost in 1967 and Syria got back a small portion of the Golan Heights, although had the UN not stepped in, Israeli forces would have soon entered both Cairo and Damascus.

Those Who Don't Learn From History...

Not since then has there been such a relaxed state of readiness by Israel and indeed it's hard to see how one could happen in the future. In fact the Bible mentions only two possibilities for a time of peace in the entire End Times scenario, and neither fits the bill. The first occurs at the outset of Daniel's seventieth week when the anti-Christ makes his initial appearance. By means of peace he will deceive many, Daniel 8:25 (KJV) tells us.

The other time is during the 1000 years of peace known as the Millennium or Kingdom Age. Let's rule that one out right away. First of all it's an unparalleled time of peace personally administered by the Prince of Peace. Israel won't have any enemies to attempt a sneak attack until right at the end when Satan is freed from his 1000 years of captivity to lead them. And second, the end time prophecies in Ezekiel are sequential, first the latter days re-gathering of the Jews to Israel in chapters 36-37, then this battle, then from chapter 40 on it's the Millennium. The Battle of **Ezekiel 38-39** has to follow the modern re-gathering but precede the Millennium. It can't happen at the Millennium's end.

So let's go back to the first possibility, the beginning of Daniel's 70th week. **Daniel 9:27** reveals that as one of his first official acts, the anti-Christ will enforce a seven-year covenant with Israel that includes permission to build a Temple. (This seven year period is called Daniel's 70th week.) But because of the controversy it would stir up, most Jews today don't want a Temple and won't want one till the Creator of the Universe dramatically reveals Himself to them. He does so in the Battle of **Ezekiel 38-39**, and after that they'll be clamoring for a Temple, regardless of the consequences. Old Covenant observance requires it. So it appears that this battle has to precede Daniel's 70th week, too early for the anti-Christ's false peace.

Also, the fact that the anti-Christ emerges as a peacemaker implies that some parts of the world will have recently been at war. Perhaps even a war involving a nuclear exchange, which will have left the world in shock, desperate for a plan that would prevent that ever happening again. Satan's "man of peace" with his seven year covenant will have just the thing to put the world at ease and allow him to begin his meteoric rise to world dominance.

Have You Reached A Verdict?

As we see, circumstantial evidence weighs heavily in favor of the anti-Christ revealing himself on the heels of Ezekiel's battle rather than before it. And so neither of the Bible's identified possibilities for peace will take place in time for this battle. That means that some dramatic chain of events, similar to those that led to the "sudden" fall of the Soviet Union, will have to occur soon to place Israel in the vulnerable state necessary for Ezekiel's prophecy to be fulfilled.

From what we currently understand about End Times Prophecy, the two events most likely to create such a sudden change in the political climate are the destruction of Damascus, foretold in **Isaiah 17** and the battle that's the subject of **Psalms 83**. No alliance against Israel such as the one described there has happened in history, and if the Lord grants the psalmist's request to destroy them, the Palestinians, Jordanians, Lebanese, and Syrians will all cease to be a threat when it's over. In its aftermath, Israel will be larger, stronger, and feel more secure than at any time in its modern history. Perhaps secure enough to let down their guard a little.

So What's The Point?

Now why is all this so important to us? Well, we've already made a case for the anti-Christ to appear right after the battle of **Ezekiel 38** and we know from the passage itself that the Lord uses it to reveal Himself to Israel and draw them back to Him.

But here are two more good reasons. First, you'll recall from our study in 2nd Thessalonians that the church has to disappear before the anti-Christ can be revealed. (**2 Thes. 2:7**) And second, in the past when the Lord's focus was on Israel there was no Church, and while it's been on the Church there has been no Israel. These two entities seem to be mutually exclusive in the Lord's workings, so if He's going to focus on Israel again the Church has to disappear (**Romans 11:25 & Acts 15:14-18**).

So if the Church has to disappear before the anti-Christ can be revealed and if the Church has to disappear when the Lord turns again to Israel, and if both these are outcomes of the Battle of **Ezekiel 38-39**, you can see why it's so important to us. By the way, none of this is meant to modify or refute the Doctrine of Imminence, which holds that the Lord could come at any time. In fact rather than saying that Ezekiel's battle has to happen before the Rapture, I'm saying that it looks more like the Rapture has to happen before Ezekiel's battle.

Beginning in chapter 40 the focus will shift to the Millennium, Israel's Kingdom Age. We'll learn a lot about the coming Temple and about life in Israel after the 2nd Coming. We'll see God's return to the Temple after a 2600 year absence, signifying that the people, the Temple, the City and the Land will all have become holy again.

The End Times According To Ezekiel, Part 5

At the end of **Ezekiel 39** we saw that the Lord will use the great battle He's just had Ezekiel describe to reveal Himself to Israel and complete the return of His people to their land. He promised not to leave any behind. Some Christians have a hard time accepting the fact that when the Jews return to God as a nation, they'll build a Temple and practice animal sacrifice again. But by saying that in the middle of the 70th week the anti-Christ will put an end to sacrifice and offering, Daniel confirmed just that. For 2000 years there's been no Temple and for 2000 years there's been no sacrifice, but **Daniel 9:27** tells us that both will be part of the first half of the 70th week.

From **Zechariah 12:10-14** we learn that just prior to the 2nd Coming the eyes of the nation will be opened as God pours out a spirit of grace and supplication and they finally come to understand that the Lord Jesus is their Messiah after all, The entire nation will go into a period of mourning at this realization, and at that time they'll be cleansed from their sin and impurity, (**Zech 13:1**) finally holy again.

You remember that God's major complaint against Israel was that through their idolatry they had defiled not only themselves as God's Holy people, but also the Holy Temple, the Holy City, and the Holy Land. Only in retrospect can we even begin to see what a serious affront to God that was.

The Lord had to go back to His place in Heaven, the people had to go into captivity, the Temple and City had to be destroyed by fire, and the land itself had to lie fallow for 70 years. And although it's often overlooked, even though the Lord made good on His promise to restore the people, the City, the Temple, and the Land, He Himself never returned. Even when Jesus came to visit, He stood and taught on the Temple Mount, but He never entered it. In 70 AD the Temple was destroyed and since then there hasn't been

another, so the Lord has been absent for 2600 years, since before the Babylonian captivity.

But just as the over riding promise to the Church is that we'll live in Heaven with the Lord, (**John 14:2**) so the Promise to Israel is that God will one day return to dwell among His people, and in the Book of Ezekiel that promise comes true. Skipping right over the Rapture of the Church, Daniel's 70th Week, the Great Tribulation and the 2nd Coming, Ezekiel now takes a journey through time to view the land of Israel as no man has even seen it. The people having been made holy again, his last 8 chapters will focus on the other three things, the Temple, the City and the Land. Let's join him.

Ezekiel 40 - 43:7

*In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the fall of the city—on that very day the hand of the LORD was upon me and he took me there. In visions of God he took me to the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain, on whose south side were some buildings that looked like a city. He took me there, and I saw a man whose appearance was like bronze; he was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a measuring rod in his hand. The man said to me, "Son of man, look with your eyes and hear with your ears and pay attention to everything I am going to show you, for that is why you have been brought here. Tell the house of Israel everything you see." (**Ezekiel 40:1-4**)*

The date was April 28, 573 BC, early in the 25th year since Ezekiel had been carried off to Babylon in Nebuchadnezzar's 2nd siege of Jerusalem. In Ezekiel's first view of the restored land, we can see hints of the topographical changes that will accompany the 2nd Coming. Again we'll turn to Zechariah because although Ezekiel didn't mention this happening, Zechariah did.

In **Zechariah 14:4** we read, *On that day (the Lord's) feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.*

Zechariah 14: 10-11 adds, *The whole land, from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem, will become like the Arabah. But Jerusalem will be raised up and remain in its place, from the Benjamin Gate to the site of the First Gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the royal winepresses. It will be inhabited; never again will it be destroyed. Jerusalem will be secure.*

Jerusalem will be split in half east to west by an earthquake that obliterates the current Temple mount, *opening* a great valley through the middle of the city. Everything south of Jerusalem will be lowered to the level of the Dead Sea valley while Jerusalem itself will be raised up to occupy the southern slopes of a tall mountain. **Psalm 48:2** adds; *Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.*

His guide takes Ezekiel directly to the Temple where they begin a detailed tour of the building, its courts, walls, and gates. Ezekiel's descriptions and measurements are so specific that two things become readily apparent. One, no Temple like this has ever been built, and two, from his description alone one could be. This Temple will be like previous ones in some respects and different in others. Rather than labor through all the intricate measurements, we'll just high light the similarities and differences.

Animal Sacrifice

In the portico of the gateway were two tables on each side, on which the burnt offerings, sin offerings and guilt offerings were slaughtered. (Ezek. 40:39)

“Every day you are to provide a year-old lamb without defect for a burnt offering to the LORD; morning by morning you shall provide it.” (Ezekiel 46:13)

The first thing we're told about Jewish life in the Millennial Kingdom it that animal sacrifices will again mark each and every day. As much trouble as some have knowing that the Jews will return to animal sacrifice during the 70th week, seeing them continue in the Kingdom Age after Israel acknowledges the Messiah is even more distressing to them. We'll explore the other Holy Days and offerings next time, but before he describes anything else about the Temple; Ezekiel highlights this fact, so it deserves more of our attention.

The distaste with which many people view this subject helps to show the extent to which our acceptance of the so-called theory of evolution has contaminated our thinking. The ASPCA, PETA and other groups who advocate animal rights are all of the opinion that man is just another animal who shouldn't use his elevated position in the animal kingdom to mistreat his less fortunate “relatives”. But these same groups have no problem with the millions of human lives that have been sacrificed, often for no higher motive than the convenience of their parents, on the altar of materialism. The old bumper sticker sums up our upside down thinking. “Be a hero, save a whale. Save a baby, go to jail.” God, who created man and animal alike, ordained the practice of animal sacrifice for man's benefit and His Word contains no teaching on animal rights. Don't get me wrong. I love my dog, and I don't eat meat or animal products. But I don't confuse those things with my religious beliefs.

As for why the Bible says that the sacrifice of animals was only intended to look forward to the Lord's ultimate sacrifice, and once He had died there was neither need nor justification for animals to die, I can only say that these things were written to and for the Church. Life on Earth in the Kingdom Age will be different from life in the New Jerusalem, and Earth's one-world religion will be a lot more like Old Testament Judaism than New Testament Christianity. Where the cross is concerned, the suggestion that animal sacrifice will be a necessary reminder of what happened there in the future just as it was a necessary prophecy of what would happen there in the past is good enough for me. And as Isaiah said, us questioning the Lord is a lot like the pot questioning the potter.

Temple Measurements

He also measured the outer sanctuary (Holy Place); it was forty cubits long and twenty cubits wide. (Ezek. 41:2)

And he measured the length of the inner sanctuary; it was twenty cubits, and its width was twenty cubits across the end of the outer sanctuary (Holy of Holies) (Ezek 41:4)

The dimensions of the temple proper are the same as in previous ones. But that's where the similarity ends.

Inner Appearance

The outer sanctuary, the inner sanctuary and the portico facing the court, as well as the thresholds and the narrow windows and galleries around the three of them—everything beyond and including the threshold was covered with wood. The floor, the wall up to the windows, and the windows were covered. In the space above the outside of the entrance to the inner sanctuary and on the walls at regular intervals all around the inner and outer sanctuary were carved cherubim and palm trees. Palm trees alternated with cherubim. Each cherub had two faces: the face of a man toward the palm tree on one side and the face of a lion toward the palm tree on the other. They were carved all around the whole temple. From the floor to the area above the entrance, cherubim and palm trees were carved on the wall of the outer sanctuary.

The outer sanctuary had a rectangular doorframe, and the one at the front of the Most Holy Place was similar. There was a wooden altar three cubits high and two cubits square; its corners, its base and its sides were of wood. The man said to me, "This is the table that is before the LORD." Both the outer sanctuary and the Most Holy Place had double doors. Each door had two leaves—two hinged leaves for each door. And on the doors of the outer sanctuary were carved cherubim and palm trees like those carved on the walls, and there was a wooden overhang on the front of the portico. (Ezek 41:15-25)

Whereas in Solomon's temple the interior was overlaid with gold, and in Herod's the walls were polished limestone supporting a ceiling of wood wrapped in gold, the interior of this temple will be finished in wood alone. The representations of cherubim carved into the wood will have only the faces of a man and a lion. The four faces described in views of the cherubim (**Ezek 1: 10** and **Rev. 4:7**) symbolize four characteristics of the Messiah. The face of a man stand for His humanity, the lion speaks of His kingship, the ox, being a beast of burden, describes His Servitude, and the eagle proclaims His deity. Only His humanity and kingship will be emphasized in the Kingdom Age. He is the Son of Man and King of the Whole Earth. Together with the cherubim, the palm trees carved into the wooden walls are meant to bring the Garden of Eden to mind.

The Ark of the Covenant with its atonement cover, the golden altar of incense, the table of show bread and the menorah, all of which were either made totally of gold or of wood covered by thin sheets of gold, will not be found in this temple. The only piece of furniture is a wooden altar called the Lord's Table. And rather than the thick tapestry veil

that separated the two rooms of former Temples and kept everyone out of the Holy of Holies except on Yom Kippur, this Temple has double doors, each one hinged in the middle so they fold back against the walls. By this we know that the way into the Holy of Holies is open. Having been reconciled to His Creation by the cross, (**Col. 1:19-20**) God has made Himself accessible to all His children.

The Shekinah Glory Returns

Then the man brought me to the gate facing east, and I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory. The vision I saw was like the vision I had seen when he came to destroy the city and like the visions I had seen by the Kebar River, and I fell facedown. The glory of the LORD entered the temple through the gate facing east. Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

*While the man was standing beside me, I heard someone speaking to me from inside the temple. He said: "Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever. The house of Israel will never again defile my holy name—neither they nor their kings—by their prostitution and the lifeless idols of their kings at their high places. (**Ezek. 43:1-7**)"*

And so after a 2600 year absence, the Shekinah Glory returns to the Temple. This signifies that the People, the Land, the City, and the Temple have finally been made Holy once again. This is the fulfillment of **Hosea 6:2**, "After two days he will revive us and on the third day He will restore us that we may live in His Presence."

Next time we'll hear the Lord's first words after returning to live among His people and get a glimpse of the officials who will govern the nation and how they'll do it. Like most other things, it's different from before. We'll also see significant differences in the offerings they'll present and the Holy Days they'll celebrate.

The End Times According To Ezekiel, Part 6

From our last installment, we can see that Ezekiel's Temple will be much different from either previous one in both appearance and function. The Holy Place will have no Menorah, no incense altar, and no table of show bread. A wooden altar will be its only piece of furniture. A thick veil separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies in previous Temples and no one was allowed through the veil except the High Priest and then only on one day each year, Yom Kippur. In Ezekiel's Temple the veil has been replaced by folding doors, and there will be no ark, and no mercy seat in the Holy of Holies.

At the close of our last study we saw the Shekinah Glory return after a 2600 year absence and proclaim that this Temple is where He will live among the Israelites forever. Now we'll hear His first words to them upon doing so.

The Lord's Accusation

The LORD said to me, "Son of man, look carefully, listen closely and give attention to everything I tell you concerning all the regulations regarding the temple of the LORD. Give attention to the entrance of the temple and all the exits of the sanctuary. Say to the rebellious house of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Enough of your detestable practices, O house of Israel! In addition to all your other detestable practices, you brought foreigners uncircumcised in heart and flesh into my sanctuary, desecrating my temple while you offered me food, fat and blood, and you broke my covenant. Instead of carrying out your duty in regard to my holy things, you put others in charge of my sanctuary. This is what the Sovereign LORD says: No foreigner uncircumcised in heart and flesh is to enter my sanctuary, not even the foreigners who live among the Israelites. (Ezek. 44:5-9)

This accusation could only refer to the anti-Christ and False Prophet, one of whom will apparently serve as a kind of High Priest after the Temple is made desolate during the Great Tribulation. Uncircumcised in heart means the foreigner will not be a Christian, for as Paul wrote to the church, circumcision is of the heart. (**Romans 2:29**)

Uncircumcised in the flesh means he won't be a religious Jew either. Some have wondered how Israel could accept a non-Jew as their High Priest, but remember they like everyone else will be totally persuaded by his miracles that he is the one they've been waiting for. (**2 Thes. 2:9**) **Daniel 11:37** says he'll have no regard for the God of his fathers nor for the one desired by women, a reference to the Messiah. This confirms that he'll be neither a practicing Jew nor a Christian.

The Prince

The prince himself is the only one who may sit inside the gateway to eat in the presence of the LORD. He is to enter by way of the portico of the gateway and go out the same way."(Ezek. 44:3)

“The prince will have the land bordering each side of the area formed by the sacred district and the property of the city. It will extend westward from the west side and eastward from the east side, running lengthwise from the western to the eastern border parallel to one of the tribal portions.

(Ezek. 45:7)

It will be the duty of the prince to provide the burnt offerings, grain offerings and drink offerings at the festivals, the New Moons and the Sabbaths—at all the appointed feasts of

the house of Israel. He will provide the sin offerings, grain offerings, burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to make atonement for the house of Israel. (Ezek. 45:17)

In **Ezek. 34:23-24** the Lord had promised, *I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. I the LORD will be their God and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken.*

This tells us that a descendant of David's will be the Prince in Israel. He'll be a human in natural form because he'll be a sinner (**Ezek. 45:22**) and he'll have children. (**Ezek 46:16**) He will not be the original David, nor will he be the Messiah, but he will be the ruling authority in Israel, subject only to the Messiah.

Although he provides the animals for offerings, he can not enter the inner court since he won't be of the priestly family. He will stand at the gate while the priests prepare and sacrifice the animals. (**Ezek. 46:2**)

The Levites and The Priests

“The Levites who went far from me when Israel went astray and who wandered from me after their idols must bear the consequences of their sin. They may serve in my sanctuary, having charge of the gates of the temple and serving in it; they may slaughter the burnt offerings and sacrifices for the people and stand before the people and serve them. But because they served them in the presence of their idols and made the house of Israel fall into sin, therefore I have sworn with uplifted hand that they must bear the consequences of their sin, declares the Sovereign LORD. They are not to come near to serve me as priests or come near any of my holy things or my most holy offerings; they must bear the shame of their detestable practices. Yet I will put them in charge of the duties of the temple and all the work that is to be done in it.

“ ‘But the priests, who are Levites and descendants of Zadok and who faithfully carried out the duties of my sanctuary when the Israelites went astray from me, are to come near to minister before me; they are to stand before me to offer sacrifices of fat and blood, declares the Sovereign LORD. They alone are to enter my sanctuary; they alone are to come near my table to minister before me and perform my service. (Ezek. 44:10-16)

“In any dispute, the priests are to serve as judges and decide it according to my ordinances. They are to keep my laws and my decrees for all my appointed feasts, and they are to keep my Sabbaths holy.

I am to be the only inheritance the priests have. You are to give them no possession in Israel; I will be their possession.” (Ezek. 44:24, 28)

Zadok the Priest remained faithful to King David even when many others around him doubted that he could effectively reign due to his advancing years and the strife within his own family. As a reward David made him the High Priest just before yielding the throne to Solomon. Now Zadok's descendants are given the favored place in all of Israel, that of being closest to God in His Temple.

As in days of old the priests will be the keepers of the law and will settle disputes among the people according to God's law. And as before the tribe of Levi will receive no land grant, The Lord is their inheritance. They will eat the offerings as always, in rooms dedicated for that purpose (**Ezek. 44:29-30**) and derive their incomes from the tithes of the people.

There will be no High Priest, that office being permanently filled by the Lord. There's no indication that He'll preside at any ceremony, however. One of the priests will accept that duty and act under the supervision of the Prince, who although from the tribe of Judah, will be responsible to supervise the presentation of offerings from the thresh hold of the gateway to the inner court.

The Altar

There will be an altar for sacrificing the various burnt offerings in the courtyard just outside the Temple and there the priests will perform the ongoing and precise work of preparing and presenting the endless sacrifices to God. But unlike before there will be no bronze laver or washing station. Also different from before is that this altar will be made of dressed stones and can be approached by ascending steps, in place of the unhewn stones and ramp that were required previously. A seven day long purification ceremony will be necessary to make atonement for the priests and the altar before it will be acceptable for use. Beginning on the eighth day their sacrifices and offerings will make the people acceptable to the Lord. (**Ezek 43:13-27**)

The Sacred District

" When you allot the land as an inheritance, you are to present to the LORD a portion of the land as a sacred district, 25,000 cubits long and 20,000 cubits wide; the entire area will be holy. Of this, a section 500 cubits square is to be for the sanctuary, with 50 cubits around it for open land. In the sacred district, measure off a section 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 cubits wide. In it will be the sanctuary, the Most Holy Place. It will be the sacred portion of the land for the priests, who minister in the sanctuary and who draw near to minister before the LORD. It will be a place for their houses as well as a holy place for the sanctuary. An area 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 cubits wide will belong to the Levites, who serve in the temple, as their possession for towns to live in.

“You are to give the city as its property an area 5,000 cubits wide and 25,000 cubits long, adjoining the sacred portion; it will belong to the whole house of Israel.

“The prince will have the land bordering each side of the area formed by the sacred district and the property of the city. It will extend westward from the west side and eastward from the east side, running lengthwise from the western to the eastern border

parallel to one of the tribal portions. This land will be his possession in Israel. (Ezek. 45:1-8)

In the center of the nation a tract of land will be set aside for the priests and the Temple. We'll discuss its exact location when we look at the distribution of the land. This area will measure about 7 miles by 6 miles. The priests will have their homes there on about half of this land with the rest being set aside for the Temple. Just south of this district will be a portion for the Holy City and east of it another one for the Prince and his family.

Offerings and Holy Days

As we discussed in our last installment animal sacrifice will be practiced on Earth during the Millennium. In addition to the daily sin offering, there will be many other offerings as in Old Testament times, for Sabbaths, New Moons and other festivals, and for the atonement of the people. (**Ezek. 45:17**) The Levitical feasts observed in the Old Testament will be modified with First Fruits, Pentecost, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur eliminated. Only Passover, followed by the seven days of Unleavened Bread (**Ezek. 45:21-24**) and the seven day Feast of Tabernacles (**Ezek. 45:25**) will be observed. Passover will no longer include the sacrifice of a lamb, the Passover Lamb having already been sacrificed once for all time.

Everyone on Earth will be required to come to the Holy City each year for the Feast of Tabernacles. If any nation adopts an official policy exempting its people from attending this annual pilgrimage, they'll experience drought and plague, (**Zechariah 14:16-19**) for this is the great celebration of the restoration of Israel and the in-gathering of the nations to their Creator.

The End Times According To Ezekiel, Part 7

We've come to the conclusion of the millennial portion of the Book of Ezekiel, and of the book itself. After devoting 7 chapters (40-46) to the Temple and its offerings, the Priests and the Prince, the final two chapters (47-48) discuss the land in general and its distribution among the tribes during the Millennium. But as they do, we're given clues as to the Temple's location in the Land, so we'll begin our concluding installment there. For the purposes of clarification, we'll back up a bit in time to gain some perspective from several other books of the Bible.

The Coming Temple

There is no Temple in Israel today, but according to Prophecies in **Daniel 9:27**, **Matt 24:15** and **2 Thes 2:4**, a Temple will exist in Israel at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. This is confirmed by **Revelation 11:1** which describes John measuring a Temple during the first half of Daniel's 70th week, before the Great Tribulation begins. Its location is the "Holy City." **Rev. 11** also introduces the 2 witnesses who preach in the

"Great City" and are ultimately killed there, their bodies left lying in the street. The Great City is identified as the place where the Lord was crucified: Jerusalem. But is Jerusalem also the Holy City? We'll see. First, Zechariah explains the day of the Lord's return.

On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south ... Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him. (Zechariah 14:4-5)

Zechariah was writing about the very day of the Lord's return. On one of my trips to Jerusalem I stood on the Mt. Of Olives in the place where tradition says He ascended from. As I looked due west toward the Mediterranean I was astonished to discover that if He returns to the same place from which He left, as suggested by **Acts 1:11**, this East-West valley will pass straight through the current Temple mount, destroying it and anything that may be standing upon it, and moving the northern part of the city up the south facing slope of a mountain that will be created at the same time. (**Zechariah 14:10**)

On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter. The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name. (Zechariah 14:8-9)

On that same day a river will fill the valley creating a waterway from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea. Now let's go to Ezekiel 47.

The man brought me back to the entrance of the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar. 2 He then brought me out through the north gate and led me around the outside to the outer gate facing east, and the water was flowing from the south side.

He asked me, "Son of man, do you see this?" Then he led me back to the bank of the river. When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river. He said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Sea. When it empties into the Sea, the water there becomes fresh. Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live. Fishermen will stand along the shore; from En Gedi (On the Dead Sea's western shore) to En Eglaim (on the eastern shore) there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds—like the fish of the Great Sea. But the swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt. Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing." (Ezekiel 47:1-2, 6-12)

Like Zechariah, Ezekiel also described a river flowing from under the south side of the Temple and then eastward to the Dead Sea, where it makes the sea fresh, and **Revelation 22:1-2** confirms this. Both Ezekiel and Revelation speak of trees that line the river bearing fruit each month for food and for healing, and both Zechariah and Revelation indicate that the River flows through the city. If, as it appears, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and

Revelation are all describing the same river, then an interesting scenario begins to emerge.

This scenario requires a Temple to be present on the day the Lord returns, but since the current Temple mount will have been destroyed in the creation of the river valley mentioned above, this Temple must be somewhere else. Since the river originates under the Temple and flows south from its south side before heading east and west, the Temple must be north of the newly created river valley.

As we'll see, plotting the land grants for the 12 tribes given in **Ezekiel 48** on a map of Israel places the Sacred District of the new Temple somewhat north of the current City of Jerusalem. This new location is in the ancient City of Shiloh, where the Tabernacle stood for nearly 400 years after the Israelites first conquered the Land. This is the new Holy City and its name will be Jehovah Shammah according to **Ezekiel 48:35**. In English it means "the LORD is here" consistent with His promise to dwell among the Israelites forever. (**Ezek 43:7**)

The Shiloh location meets all the requirements for the Temple location mentioned in the above references. The current Temple Mount in Jerusalem would not.

Reviewing Ezekiel 44:6-9, we remember that this Temple will have been defiled in a way never seen in history, therefore at a time yet future to us. A foreigner un-circumcised in heart (neither Christian) and flesh (nor Jewish) will have been given charge of the sanctuary while offering sacrifices. According to the chronology of Ezekiel, this defilement will have taken place after both the 1948 re-gathering prophesied in **36-37** and the national wake-up call prophesied in **38-39** but before the Millennial Kingdom begins. The only event we know of that fits in that time frame is the Great Tribulation. **Daniel 9:27** agrees with the timing placing the Temple's defilement in the Middle of the 70th week. Paul's prophecy of **2 Thes. 2:4** confirms the nature of the event, saying that the anti-Christ will set himself up in the Temple proclaiming himself to be God. In **Matt. 24:15-21** Jesus said it will kick off the Great Tribulation.

Remember, the rabbis call Ezekiel's Temple the 3rd Temple. If the anti-Christ will come from a Moslem background that would prevent him from destroying or defiling the Islamic mosques and shrines on the current Temple Mount. After all it's also likely that Islam will be the one world religion during the end times and the Temple Mount contains its 3rd holiest place. Being the great peace maker, it makes sense that in his covenant with Israel he will come up with a location for the Temple that satisfies both religions, allowing them to co-exist for a time. What better location than the one right out of Israel's own scriptures?

This Temple will be defiled in the middle of the last 7 years, but will be the source of living water that begins flowing on the day the Lord returns (**Zech 14:8**). After it's made holy again, in what I believe will be the prophetic fulfillment of the Feast of Hanukkah, this same Temple will be used during the Millennium to memorialize the Lord's work at the cross. Its offerings and ceremonies will provide the necessary perspective for children born during the Kingdom Age to choose salvation just as you and I have had the perspective of the Lord's Supper in making our choice. Remember, He said, "Do this in

memory of Me until I come." **Acts 15:14-16** confirms that after the Lord has taken a people from among the gentiles for Himself (the church) He will return and re-build David's fallen Tabernacle (the Temple). This is the Millennial Temple so vividly described in **Ezekiel 40-46 and it will be built in Shiloh.**

The New Jerusalem

While we're at it, let's have Ezekiel solve the Jerusalem / New Jerusalem problem for us as well. For as long as I've been studying these things, there has been debate over the location of the New Jerusalem. Some wonder how the Lord could permit redeemed believers and non-believing natural humans to co-exist in the Millennium. Others wonder how a city with a foot print 1400 miles square and tall could be located in Israel when the whole country won't be big enough to accommodate it.

Carefully examining **Rev 21** and **22**, we notice that John never actually says that the city arrives on earth. We are only told he sees it coming down out of heaven, prepared as a bride. (Not that the city IS the bride, but that as with a bride on her wedding day, no effort has been spared to make it look its absolute best.)

I don't believe the city ever rests on the Earth's surface, but rather orbits in the proximity of Earth, like a satellite or perhaps another moon.

Also, by comparing the descriptions of New Jerusalem with Jehovah Shammah we see some similarities but enough differences to dispel any notion that John and Ezekiel could have been describing the same place. Consider the following:

New Jerusalem

(All verses from Rev.)

12 gates named after Israel (21:12)
12 foundations named after Apostles (21:14)
1400 miles square and tall (21:16)
Coming Down from heaven (21:2)
No Temple ... God and the Lamb are its Temple (21:22)
No sin; nothing impure will ever enter (21:27)
No more death (21:4)
No natural beings ... only the perfected (21:27)

Jehovah Shammah

(All verses from Ezekiel)

12 gates named after Israel (48:30)
Foundation not described
One mile square (48:30)
Located in Israel on Earth (40:2)
Temple just north of the city (40:2)
Daily sin offerings in the Temple (45:13-15,17)
Still death (44:25 also Isa 65:20)
Natural Beings (46:16)

With the differentiation of these two Holy Cities, the apparent conflict between Jewish and Christian eschatology is resolved. Israel was promised that one day GOD would come to Earth to dwell among them forever, while the Church is promised that Jesus will come to take us to heaven to live with Him there. Both promises come true.

Since Ezekiel specifically quoted the Lord's promise to dwell among the Israelites forever (**43:7**) and then described the new Holy City, while Jesus promised to return for the Church to take us to be with Him (**John 14:1-3**), they must have been talking about two

different destinations. They were. Heaven is the New Jerusalem where we will dwell with the Lord forever, while the Holy City on Earth is Jehovah Shammah where God will dwell in the midst of His people Israel forever.

Israel's Boundaries

With that, we'll shift to the overall boundaries of the land as described in **Ezek. 47:13-20**. Plotting the ancient references as best as we can, we see that the Northern boundary will run east from the Mediterranean coast across from Cyprus, just north of the 35th parallel and about 100 miles north and west of present day Damascus. In the vicinity of Hamath on the Orontes River in Syria, it will intersect with the Eastern boundary which runs south passing just west of Damascus, east of the Sea of Galilee and then along the Jordan River through the Dead Sea to Zoar, which is just below its southern shores in the vicinity of the 31st parallel. From Zoar the Southern border goes south west toward Kadesh Barnea and then westerly in a curved route to the Wadi al Arish or River of Egypt (not the Nile) near the 31st parallel again. Then it follows the river North West to meet the south eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Israel's Western boundary is the eastern coast of the Mediterranean.

So the Millennial Kingdom will extend from about 100 miles north of Damascus to about 100 miles south of Jerusalem and from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River. It will include all of present day Lebanon, parts of Syria including the Golan Heights, and all of the West Bank and Gaza. This area closely resembles the original boundaries given in **Numbers 34:1-12**.

Tribal Allotments

The Land will be divided into 14 roughly equal portions by drawing parallel lines across the land running west to east. There will be seven portions north of the Sacred Portion and five south of it. The Sacred District with the Holy City, the Temple and allotments for the Levites and the Prince will occupy the remaining 2 portions.

North of the Sacred District, beginning with the northern most portion will be the tribes of Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, and Judah in that order. Continuing south of the Sacred District the five remaining tribal allotments will belong to Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulon and Gad in that order.

On that day HOLY TO THE LORD will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the LORD's house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar. 21 Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the LORD Almighty, and all who come to sacrifice will take some of the pots and cook in them. And on that day there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD Almighty. (Zechariah 14:20-21)

The land will be holy, the people will be holy, the city will be holy, the Temple will be holy, and the Lord will dwell with them there forever.

Here then is the sequence of end times events according to Ezekiel. Following a long period where the Land had lain desolate, the Jewish people would return in the latter days, as if from the dead. At first they wouldn't recognize God as the author of this but would claim the credit themselves for their resurrection. Israel's return to God will come after the battle of **Ezekiel 38-39**, and the Jewish people will re-establish their covenant (old not new) with Him. This will require a return to Levitical practices and so a Temple will be built. Following Ezekiel's instructions as interpreted by the anti-Christ, this Temple will be located north of Jerusalem in Shiloh. Some time between the Battle of **Ezekiel 38-39** and the beginning of the Millennium, during the time of the Great Tribulation the Temple will be made desolate, but will be cleansed again upon the Lord's return. During the Kingdom Age on Earth this Temple will serve as the dwelling place of God fulfilling His promise to live among His people Israel forever. Amen.