

Gog and Magog

Does the 'Ezekiel war' take place
before the great tribulation
after the great tribulation
or after the Millennial Kingdom?

August 2021

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In Ezekiel 38-39 there is a prophecy about Gog the great prince of Magog. Gog, leading many nations, according to the text, will invade Israel. These things are described after a prophecy in chapter 37 about the restoration of Israel. After the description of the invasion of Gog, from chapter 40 to the end of Ezekiel's prophecy in chapter 48, there is a description of the new temple in Jerusalem. Reading these chapters it becomes clear that all of this will take place at the end of the time on earth. Also known as the 'end times'.

There are more things described in the Bible that relate to the end times. The question we will address in this study is: at what point in the end times will the war of Gog and Magog take place? Will Gog attack Israel at the beginning of the Great Tribulation, at the end or after the Millennial Kingdom?

Some interpreters (this is not a scientific study and therefore I will not mention them further) see the 'Ezekiel War' as the start of the Great Tribulation, others see it as the battle at Armageddon, at the end of the Great Tribulation and still others believe it will happen at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. Where does this difference of opinion come from, is it a problem and can it be explained? Ezekiel 38-39 and Revelation 20 will serve as the main texts for this question.

Before we address this question, it is important to explain what the Great Tribulation is and what is meant by the Millennial Kingdom.

What is the great Tribulation?

There is much information in the Bible on the Great Tribulation. We want to limit ourselves here to what Jesus said about it:

¹⁵When therefore you shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place -let him who reads it take heed! - ¹⁶Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷Whoever is on the roof must not go down to get something from his house, ¹⁸and whoever is in the field must not return to what he left behind to get his clothes. ¹⁹But woe to the pregnant and nursing in those days! ²⁰And pray that your flight will not take place in the winter, nor on a Sabbath.

²¹For then there shall be a *great tribulation*, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, and such as never shall be again. ²²And if those days were not shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

²³If anyone therefore says to you, Behold, here is the Christ, or there, believe it not; ²⁴for false christs and false prophets will arise, and they will perform great signs and wonders, so that they will deceive-if it were possible-the elect as well.

²⁵See, I told you beforehand! ²⁶if therefore it shall be said to you, Behold, he is in the wilderness; go not forth; behold, he is in the inner chambers, believe it not, ²⁷for as the lightning cometh from the east and is visible unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of man be.

²⁸For where the dead body is, there the vultures will gather. ²⁹And immediately after *the tribulation* of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its shine, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be moved violently.

³⁰And then shall appear in heaven the sign of the Son of man; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man, when he cometh on the clouds of heaven with great power and glory. ³¹And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four corners of the earth, from one end of the heavens to the other end of it. (Matthew 24, translated from Dutch)

In summary, it says here that the great Tribulation will take place immediately before Christ's return. This will be a time so horrible that if it lasted longer than the time God set for it, no man (flesh) would be saved. The Tribulation, we know from Revelation (11) and from Daniel (9:27), lasts at least seven years. After the great Tribulation there is a period of one thousand years during which the whole world is ruled from Jerusalem and there is peace on the whole earth.

What is the Millennial Kingdom?

Characteristics of the Millennial Kingdom are described in many Old and New Testament prophecies. The term comes from what is written in Revelation:

¹And I saw an angel coming down from heaven with the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. ²And he seized the dragon, the old serpent, that is, the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, ³and cast him into the abyss, and shut him up in it, and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should have come to an end. And after that he must be set loose for a short time.

⁴And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the Word of God, who had not worshipped the beast and his image, who had not received the mark on their foreheads and on their hands. And they became alive again and went to *reign as kings* with Christ *for a thousand years*. (Revelation 20)

This Millennial Kingdom is thus a period of a thousand years. In these years, the people that reign, as it says in the text, are those who have been beheaded for their faith in Christ and who have not worshipped the beast (the Antichrist). They reign together with Christ.

Who are Gog and Magog?

Searching for an answer to the question when Gog and Magog are active, leads to the question who are Gog and Magog?

Magog is found in the list of Noah's descendants:

¹These are the descendants of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood. ²The sons of Japheth are: Gomer, *Magog*, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. ³The sons of Gomer are: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. ⁴The sons of Javan are: Elishah and Tarshish, the Kittim and the Rodanim. ⁵From them are descended the people who spread over the coastal lands of the nations, in their countries, each according to his language, according to their families, among their peoples. (Genesis 10)

Gomer, Magog, Javan and Tubal are sons of Japheth. All these descendants of Noah became ancestors of nations. Javan's descendants are supposed to have settled in Greece, Magog and Tubal's descendants are supposed to have moved north after the Flood, towards the Caucasus. There are people who see Turkey in Magog. I assume, like many other interpreters, that Magog was the ancestor of peoples who went to live north of the Caucasus. In this way, Magog is the ancestor of the Russian peoples. Magog means 'land of god'.

Gog, as he is described in Ezekiel, is the great (=important) prince of Magog and the nations mentioned above.

²People's child, set your gaze on Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him. (Ezekiel 38)

Are Gog and Magog mentioned in the Bible?

After the list of nations in Genesis (10), the name Gog appears once more as a descendant of Reuben (1 Chron 5:4). In the end of times, Gog only appears in the text of Ezekiel (38-39) and in Revelation (20). It is in these two Bible places that Gog is first spoken of as the leader of Magog. Ezekiel describes their role in the end times. In Revelation, Gog and Magog are mentioned after the Millennial Kingdom.

The 'problem' of Gog and Magog

In the prophecies, in addition to exhortations for those who live during the time of the prophet, God also gives information about the future. He gives this information to prepare those who live in the time of the prophecy for the things to come (Revelation 1:1). This also applies to the prophecies about Gog and Magog. It is clear that Gog and Magog are active in the end times. What is less clear is when exactly that raid of Gog and Magog will take place.

The options, as they present themselves are, as noted, the raid will take place before or after the Tribulation, or as a third possibility: after the Millennial Kingdom.

Ezekiel's prophecy about Gog and Magog describes several things that are also described in other prophecies. Some things described in the prophecies cannot possibly happen *before* the Millennial Kingdom, and other things mentioned cannot possibly happen *after* it. How this is to be understood, we hope to find out in this study. We will begin with the question of whether Gog attacks Israel at the end of the Millennium.

Will Gog attack Israel at the end of the Millennium?

The first part of the text of Ezekiel 38 indicates that Gog will attack Israel at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. Ezekiel is instructed to describe what he sees and hears. But who is this Gog of whom God speaks?

Cast your eyes on Gog (Ez. 38:1-3)

¹The word of the LORD came to me: ²Child of man, fix your eyes on Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him. ³Say, Thus saith the Lord LORD: Behold, I will send for you, Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal!

This little study is not about the names of peoples and in which countries they can be found. The names of the nations mentioned here are first found in Genesis 10. Scientists have looked for these people in local archives and traditions and they have found all of them. In this study we will only mention that Gog is the chief prince of Magog and Tubal. It is noteworthy that Tubal is not mentioned further in any part of the Bible.

Gog at the head (Ez. 38:4-7)

How powerful Gog is, is shown by the many nations at whose head he stands:

⁴I will turn you around, I will put hooks in your jaws, and I will cause you to go out: you, with all your army, horses and horsemen, all excellently clothed, a great fighting force with large and small shields, all wielding the sword. ⁵By them are Persia, Cush, and Put, all with shield and helmet, ⁶Gomer with all his troops, Beth-Togarmah, in the far north, with all his troops, many nations with you. ⁷Be prepared and make ready, you and all your force, which is gathered with you. Be a watchman for them.

The nations mentioned here lie in a circle around the place from where humanity began to spread over the earth after the Flood. Persia is today's Iran, the Cush lived in Ethiopia/Egypt, Gomer in the Caucasus, and Beth-Togaramah is seen from the Caucasus further north, and the Puteeans lived in today's Libya. Gog mobilizes almost all of the Middle East, Northern Africa, Turkey and everything north of Turkey.

If Gog and Magog are mobilizing so many nations against Israel in the end times, does this mean that Gog is the Antichrist?

Is Gog the Antichrist?

The Antichrist is one of the important figures in the Great Tribulation. He is called the 'Beast out of the Sea' in Revelation. Daniel (9) speaks of him as he who "will confirm a covenant". Jesus in Matthew (24:15), quotes Daniel (11:31) when He speaks of him as the 'abomination of destruction'. The Antichrist will allow himself to be worshipped in the temple as God according to Paul in 1Thessalonians 2:4. The Antichrist is an indication of a single living person who is active in the great Tribulation.

If both Gog and the Antichrist are powerful political and military figures who, either attack Israel themselves or stir up the nations of the world to do so in the end times, are they the same person? Described in a different way?

The idea that Gog and the Antichrist are the same person presents quite a few problems. At the end of the Tribulation they might be the same person. At that point, the Antichrist must use his powers of persuasion to rally the kings of the world to his agenda. This is what Revelation says:

¹³And I saw out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, come three unclean spirits, like frogs. ¹⁴For these are the spirits of demons, doing signs and going out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them for the war of the great day of God Almighty. (Revelation 16:13-14)

The beast is the Antichrist in the above quote, it says here, gathers the armies of the whole world. Could he then be called Gog when he gathers the armies of Magog and the nations of the Middle East and around them? This is not however very likely. Gog cannot be the Antichrist *after* the Millennial Kingdom as Revelation (20) describes, because at this time he will already have been cast into the lake of fire. From what the text says, he may be operating in the spirit of the Antichrist after the Millennial Kingdom (the Millennium), but he is a different person. It seems more likely

that Gog is the title of a ruler. Thus, Gog the king of Magog might sound similar to 'Caesar the grand prince of Rome'. There will be a problem, we will see later, if we think of Gog as the same physical person each time.

While Gog appears to be a powerful player in the Tribulation, there is no further connection between him and the Antichrist in the Bible. There is also a difference in the power base between the Antichrist and Gog. The power base of Gog is described as lying in Russia (in the far north) while the power base of the Antichrist seems to be in Europe. The Antichrist is described in Daniel (9:26-27) as the leader of the restored Roman Empire.

So even though Gog and the Antichrist are both great enemies of God and His people Israel, there is no indication that Gog and the Antichrist, are the same person.

The state of Israel during the invasion (Ez. 38:6-13)

We know that the Antichrist is active during the Great Tribulation. During that time Israel is under severe political and military pressure. If we read the first part of Ezekiel 38, we would not get the impression that Gog is invading Israel at a time when the country is going through a tough time:

⁸After many days you (Gog) shall be punished. At the end of the years you will come into a land restored from the sword, gathered from many peoples on the mountains of Israel, which had become a permanent desolation. When they have been led out from among the nations, they will all dwell *unconcerned*. ⁹You will advance, you will come as a desolation; you will be like a cloud and cover the land, you and all your troops and many nations with you. ¹⁰So says the Lord LORD: In that day it will come to pass that deliberations will arise in your heart and you will plot an evil plan.

¹¹You will say, I will march against a land of unwalled villages; I will go to people who live quietly and unconcerned, who all live without a wall and a lock and have no gates, ¹²to commit robbery, to loot, to turn against the ruins now inhabited, and against a people gathered from the heathen peoples, who have acquired cattle and property, who dwell in the midst of the land. ¹³Sheba, Dedan, the merchants of Tarshish and all their young lions will say to you, Have you come to commit robbery? Have you gathered your forces to rob booty, to bring silver and gold, to take cattle and property, to commit a great robbery?

The moment Gog invades Israel, it says:

1. Is at the "end of the years";
2. Is when Israel has recovered from the war;
3. Is when all the Jews from all over the world have returned to Israel;
4. Is when the inhabitants of Israel live in a state of unconcern: In a "land not walled in.
5. Israel is very rich. All the nations that Gog has in his entourage think they can share in the spoils they will find in Israel (silver, gold and cattle).

None of this describes a situation of political and military instability in Israel, as is the case at the end of the Great Tribulation. In this prophecy Israel is described a very prosperous nation. When will that be? When will Israel have recovered from what war, when will all the Jews from all over the world have returned to their land, when will the Jews live in a state of untroubled prosperity? When will the problems with the Palestinians and Arabs, the United Nations and Iran be resolved? When will Israel be so rich that many countries will think they can enrich themselves with their possessions?

There are interpreters who point out that this text is an indication that Gog will invade Israel at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. They point out that research shows that, despite the rocket- and other attacks, most people living in Israel feel very safe there. It is claimed that they live unconcerned, in a country that has recovered from the Arab wars of the last century, that there are many living in Israel who have been drawn from the nations, and that Israel is a prosperous country. That may seem to be the case, but it can change quickly. In this prophecy it is not about how the Jews experience life in Israel shortly before the Great Tribulation.

The sense of security that most people in Israel now experience is based on confidence in the strength of their economy and military forces. There are thousands of missiles aimed at the country and Iran is very diligently working on nuclear weapons. The current sense of security in Israel will be shattered, we learn from the prophets. When Jesus comes, Zechariah describes (14:4-5), the Mount of Olives will split in two and the Jews will flee from their enemies in the valley that will emerge. At the end of the Great Tribulation, Israel, including their new temple, will have been trampled, masses of immigrants will be living in wretched conditions, and the antichrist will have wreaked havoc among the population.

It is hard to argue that this prophecy has already been fulfilled and that the next step in the prophecy, the attack of Gog and Magog, will take place soon. When will that invasion occur? When will all the Jews who are now scattered throughout the world be back in their country? What can we find about these various questions in the Bible?

1. At the end of the years

The expression 'end of the years' is not found in the Bible. An expression we do find regularly in the Bible is 'last days'. In Peter it says:

¹⁷And it shall be in the *last days*, saith God, that I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. (Acts 2:17)

³This especially ye must know, that there shall come in the *last days* scoffers, walking after their own lusts. (2Peter 3)

Peter refers in Acts, to a prophecy from Joel. This shows that Peter sees the time in which the disciples live as the last days. This idea of the last days is also found in Paul and James.

¹Know that in the *last days there will be* hard times: (2Timothy 3)

³Your gold and silver is rusted, and the rust of it will testify against you and consume your flesh like fire. Ye have gone to lay up treasures, while these are the *last days*. (James 5)

God uses the phrase last days in the Bible to describe this in relation to earlier ones. The era between the ascension and the return can be seen as the "last days" or the end times. This is what Daniel is talking about:

⁴But you, Daniel, keep the words hidden, and seal the book until the *end time*; many shall make inquiry, and knowledge shall increase. (Daniel 12)

The expression 'end of the years' is different from 'last days'. 'The end of years' is less urgent than 'last days'. The urgency that lies in the expression 'last days' is also found in Jesus' words that He is coming 'like a thief in the night', or that 'He is coming soon'. Jesus knew that He would not return within a few years after the ascension. He wanted it to be in the DNA of the church that they live in the awareness that their place is in heaven, and that they live expecting any day could be the last, because He is coming back at a time they don't know.

The expression "end of the years" comes from *acharyth* which can be translated either as rear, end or end time. Unlike the Christians before the rapture, those who come to faith in the days of the great Tribulation, in which Gog is active, will know what is going to happen. Those who live during the Millennial Kingdom know when it began and that the era will last a thousand years.

The phrase "end of the years" shows two things. It makes clear that the invasion of Gog and Magog will take place in the last years of the earth. These are the last years of the Millennium. The other aspect shows us that the rebellion of Gog will not be completed in a few weeks or even months. "End of years" does not fit as a description of the Great Tribulation. The time required for preparation for Armageddon will not be years, but months at most. There are no more years at the end of the Tribulation. Everything will go quickly in that time. This is possible: the armies of the world can be mobilized quickly nowadays and that will be the case. This is different at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. The devil, when released from his prison, needs time. He needs to organize a worldwide rebellion and

army from nothing. Even if in that time there are many who will gladly follow him: the preparation and arming of all this will take years: 'the last years'. How many years is not mentioned in the text.

Yet the expression "last of the years" also has something unclear. There is no mention of how many years it will be and therefore also no mention of when exactly these last years will begin. The people who live during the Millennial Kingdom know when the rebellion of Gog will be finished (One thousand years after the installation of the government in Jerusalem) but they do not know when the devil will be released. Believers in those days will know that when it has been 900 years since the return of Christ, that in the next century some of the world's population will rebel against the government in Jerusalem and they know how this will end. They just don't know the exact date the rebellion will begin. They do know, based on these words, that it will take a number of years all together.

The believers who live in those days will be like Daniel. Daniel was a man of faith; he knew the prophets and the time in which he lived. This is also evident in his response:

²In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, noticed in the books the number of years over which the word of the LORD had come to the prophet Jeremiah: seventy years should pass after the destruction of Jerusalem. ³I turned my face to the Lord God, to seek him in prayer and with supplications, with fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. (Daniel 9:2-3)

Just as Daniel kept track of the seventy years Jeremiah had prophesied about, during the Millennial Kingdom the people who love God and study His Word will keep track of the calendar of the thousand years. These people will have come to great knowledge of the prophecies, although, as far as this subject is concerned, they do not need that much knowledge at all to know what is about to happen. Revelation (20) describes it clearly. However, it will be the same in those days as it was in the West until recently. I remember that in the seventies of the last century, the majority of the population was still a member of a church, but also that even then hardly anyone visited them. It will be the same in the Millennial Kingdom. They only do what is asked of them, or even less, and they don't know where their Bible is, so to speak. They fed their minds on what was offered through the atheistic liberal media and haven't studied God's Word.

There will be, and certainly in the end of the Millennial Kingdom, just like now, 'orthodox' theologians who confess with their mouths that they believe in God and that they take the Bible seriously. However with their hearts they do not, just as now often is the case. They bring many of the people to apostasy.

2. When did Israel recover from the war

The war from which Israel will have recovered is not the attack of Gog as it is described at the end of the Millennium. There will be no time for restoration after that. Nor is this necessary, for God will then replace the earth for a new one. We may even wonder if it will come to a real battle. Revelation 20 says about this:

⁹And they (the armies of Gog and Magog) came up over the breadth of the earth, and surrounded the army place of the saints and the beloved city. But fire from God came down from heaven and devoured them. (Revelation 20)

When Gog and Magog have approached Jerusalem, they do not plunder the city. Fire descends from heaven and consumes them, John describes. Zachariah also prophesies about this battle:

¹²And this will be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the nations that have fought against Jerusalem: He will cause every man's flesh, while he is *still* standing on his feet, to rot away; the eyes of all will rot away in their sockets, and the tongue of all will rot away in their mouths. (Zechariah 14)

The power of God's fire will be stronger than that of an atomic bomb.

What wars are there in the end times?

Israel will be restored from war, it says here in Ezekiel. What wars are known to us from the Bible that will take place? There are a number of them, but which ones is not described very explicitly.

Is there war in Israel at the beginning of the Tribulation?

It is not likely that there will be a war in Israel at the beginning of the Tribulation. On the contrary, it is very likely that Israel will live quite safely during the first half of the Tribulation. Revelation says:

¹And there appeared a great sign in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon was under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.²And she was pregnant and cried out in labor and in her pain to give birth.

³And there appeared another sign in heaven. And behold, a great fiery red dragon with seven heads and ten horns. And on its heads seven diadems. ⁴And his tail swept the third part of the stars from heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman, who was about to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as she gave birth to it. ⁵And she gave birth to a Son, a male Child, who will guard all the pagan nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was snatched away to God and to His throne. ⁶And the woman fled to the wilderness, where she had a place prepared for her by God, that she might be fed there twelve hundred and sixty days.

(Revelation 12)

This dragon is the devil (Revelation 12:9). Like the antichrist, he is described with seven heads and ten horns (Revelation 13:1). That they are both described in this way is not surprising, for the antichrist receives his power from the dragon (Revelation 13:4). The woman is Israel. We recognize her, among other things, by the sun moon and stars, which Joseph saw in his dream (Genesis 37:9) What or who the child is usually leads to confusion, so we will leave it at that. Contrary to what some interpreters state, that child is not Jesus Christ. This text is a prophecy about something that will happen in the Tribulation. It is not the history of Herod's infanticide. Christ does not come until the end of the Tribulation, and He is not "snatched away" to heaven.

The dragon tries to devour the child of the woman, the text describes. When that fails, he attacks the woman and the rest of her offspring. The woman, as described in Revelation, flees to the desert. There God has prepared a place for her. That place is the land of Israel. That preparation has been going on for more than a century now. There, in the land of Israel, which God has prepared, the woman is safe for 1260 days (about 3.5 years). Those 1260 days are the first half of the Tribulation. All of this does not point to a war in which Israel is attacked at the beginning of the Tribulation.

Is there a war in the midst of the Tribulation?

Revelation (11:7-8) describes a war in Israel in the midst of the tribulation (after those 1260 days).

³And I will give power to My two witnesses, and they, clothed in sackcloth, will prophesy for *twelve hundred and sixty days*. ⁴They are the two olive trees and the two lampstands, which stand before the God of the earth. ⁵And if anyone wishes to do them harm, fire comes out of their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wishes to harm them, he must be killed in the same way. ⁶They have power to close the heavens, so that no rain will fall in the days when they prophesy. And they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to afflict the earth with all kinds of plagues, as often as they please.

⁷And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises out of the abyss will make *war* with them, and it will overcome them and kill them. ⁸And their dead bodies will lie on the street of the great city, which in a spiritual sense is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. ⁹And the people of the peoples, tribes, languages, and nations will see their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not allow their dead bodies to be laid in the grave. ¹⁰And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, and will go and celebrate and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets had so tormented those who dwell on the earth.

(Revelation 11:3-10)

Indeed, this war turns out to be in Israel (where their Lord was crucified). The Antichrist will be victorious in this, and the bodies of the saints will lie on the streets of Jerusalem. The time of this war is specifically mentioned: also 1260 days. These are the same 1260 days after the woman fled to the desert. So that is in the middle of the Tribulation and at the end of the preaching of the Two Witnesses.

Is this the war Ezekiel is talking about from which Israel will recover? Possibly in part, yes. The damage in Israel will be hard to recover from when the Antichrist, after his victory, has power in Israel in the second half of the tribulation.

The War at the End of the Tribulation

There is another war in the Tribulation. That battle is well known even to the Gentiles. It is the battle of Armageddon. Revelation speaks of it (16) as we quoted earlier:

¹³And I saw out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, come three unclean spirits, like frogs. ¹⁴For *these* are the spirits of demons, doing signs *and going out to* the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them for the *war of the great day of God Almighty*. ¹⁵See, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is he who is watchful and takes heed to his clothes, so that he will not walk around naked and people will *not see* his shame. ¹⁶And he gathered them together to the place called *Armageddon* in Hebrew.
(Revelation 16:13-14)

That battle at Armageddon will be a tremendous one. About that war of God Revelation says (19):

¹¹And I saw heaven opened, and, behold, a white horse; and he that sat on it was called faithful and true. (...) His name is: The Word of God. ¹⁴And the armies of heaven followed him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and spotless. ¹⁵And out of His mouth came a sharp sword, that He might smite the heathen nations with it. And he shall shepherd them with a rod of iron. And He enters the winepress of the wine of the grim wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶There was written on His outer garment and on His thigh this name: King of kings and Lord of lords.

¹⁷And I saw one angel standing close to the sun, and he called with a loud voice to all the birds that flew high in the sky: Come and gather yourselves together for the supper of the great God, ¹⁸to eat flesh of kings, and flesh of rulers over a thousand, and flesh of the mighty, and flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and flesh of all the free and of slaves, small and great.

¹⁹And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against him who sat on the horse, and against his army. ²⁰And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet, who had done the signs in his presence, by which he had deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and who worshipped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire, which burns with brimstone. (Revelation 19)

Unlike the invasion of Gog and Magog at the end of the Millennium, no fire descends from heaven here. The image is horrid: the corpses of the battle pile up in the valley. The birds will descend upon them, as they always do in times of war, to devour them.

There is no other battle after Armageddon that could serve as an alternative fulfillment of what God is talking about here in Ezekiel's prophecy. This war is undoubtedly the battle from which Israel is recovered, at the time when Gog will invade the land.

3. Gog invades Israel when all the Jews from around the world have returned to Israel

Gog attacks Israel, Ezekiel describes, when all the Jews are back in Israel. When will that be? When will all the Jews from all over the world have returned to Israel?

⁸After many days you (Gog) will be punished. At the end of the years you will come into a land that (...) gathered from many peoples on the mountains of Israel, which had become a permanent ruin. When they are brought out from among the nations (Ezekiel 38:8)

It says here that Israel, after being gathered from many nations, will dwell on the mountains of Israel. It does not say that the Jews will return after Gog comes. It does not seem likely that many Jews will emigrate to Israel after the attack of Gog. In the next chapter of Ezekiel, which is still about Gog and his raid, it says:

²⁷When I bring them back from the nations and gather them from the lands of their enemies, I will be sanctified by them in the sight of many heathen nations. ²⁸Then they will know that I, the LORD, am their God, because I took them into exile among the heathen nations, but also gathered them back to their land and left *none* of them there. (Ezekiel 39)

Nowadays we live in a situation where Jews are migrating to Israel from all over the world. This flow of people has been going on since the nineteenth century. Before that time, the Ottoman Empire was still strongly in power and it was forbidden for non-Muslims to buy land in this area.

This situation changed after Napoleon's invasion of Egypt (1798-1801) and the rapid decline of the power of the North African Muslim (pirate) states of the sultanates of Morocco and Tripoli, during two Barbary Wars (1801-1815). As a result of these developments, the power of the Ottoman Empire diminished rapidly. In the nineteenth century Turkey was pressured by the West to sell land to non-Muslims as well. This flow of migrants increased as a result of the growing hatred of Jews in Russia, Europe and the Arab countries. There are still millions of Jews living outside Israel today. At the time Gog invaded Israel, it says here, God had already led Israel out of exile, leaving none of them behind.

When God says (Ezekiel 39:28) that He will leave no one behind in the nations, we may assume that this is true. All those people will be back in Israel before this text is fulfilled.

4. Do the Jews live in a state of unconcern?

The Jews dwell in a state of untroubledness, without gates, says the prophet. Cities have no walls and gates in our time. Gates and walls do not stop tanks, airplanes, and missiles. The description in the prophecy indicates that Israel had not had to defend themselves against enemies for a long time. Specifically, it means that they did not have an active army at that time. That is not the case now. Israel has one of the best armed and trained armies in the world. It has to. It has often been said that at the moment the Arabs unilaterally lay down their arms, there will be peace in the Middle East. At the moment Israel puts down their weapons, the nation would no longer exist. From the emergence of the State of Israel in 1948, there has not been a moment that the country has been able to lower its defenses. This will continue until the time Jesus returns at the end of the Tribulation.

At the end of the Millennial Peace Kingdom, Israel will be truly restored from the Diaspora, the Tribulation and the war of Armageddon. Then she will dwell safely and in peace.

5. When will Israel truly be rich?

Israel is now a prosperous country. The country is a world leader in ICT, agriculture and defense. Oil has also been found within its borders and this makes things look good for the Israeli economy. Yet the country will become much richer still. Isaiah writes about this:

¹⁰Foreigners shall rebuild your walls, and their kings shall serve you; for in My great wrath I have smitten you, but in My good pleasure I have taken care of you. ¹¹*Your gates shall be open always; day and night they shall not be shut, that they may bring the power of the heathen nations to you, and their kings may be led to you.* (Isaiah 60)

During the Millennial Kingdom, the land will overflow with wealth. Isaiah speaks of it in the same way that Ezekiel speaks of the gates of Israel being open day and night (defenses of the land are gone) and the wealth of the Gentile nations being brought to her. There is wealth: gold, silver and other riches are brought to the land for a thousand years. That is what Gog wants to plunder with his armies. What there is now to be gained in Israel in technology and even oil is not worth the trouble for Gog (who still has oil in Siberia for countless years).

All this points to Gog and Magog making its raid on Israel, at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. This image is also seen in Revelation 20.

⁷And when those thousand years have come to an end, Satan will be released from his prison.

⁸And he will go out to deceive the nations that are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and

Magog, to gather them for war. And their number is like the sand of the sea. ⁹And they came up over the breadth of the earth, and surrounded the army place of the saints and the beloved city. But fire from God came down from heaven and devoured them. (Revelation 20,21)

God's temple

Another interesting thing is the statement in Isaiah 60 that riches from the Lebanon will give prestige to the temple of God. This also points to the Millennial Peace Kingdom. That chapter of Isaiah continues:

¹²For the people and the kingdom that will not serve you will perish, and those nations will be utterly destroyed. ¹³The splendor of the Lebanon will come to you, cypress, sycamore, and pine together, *to give prominence to the place of My sanctuary*, and I will glorify the place of My feet. (Isaiah 60)

That God speaks of His sanctuary (temple) in such a positive way here indicates that this is not about the temple that will be built in the Great Tribulation.

There will be no temple in Jerusalem before the Great Tribulation. During the Great Tribulation there will be a temple in Jerusalem. This temple will be built during the Great Tribulation. (See about this another article of mine) The temple that is built in the Tribulation, is different from earlier temples in Jerusalem. The Great Tribulation takes place during the time that Jesus is still God's sanctuary, high priest and sacrificial lamb.

Israel will build a temple during the Tribulation, but it will be built by orthodox Jews who do not believe in Christ as the Messiah. There is no indication that God sees the temple of the Tribulation, which will also be trampled on by Antichrist and the Gentiles, as His sanctuary. The temple mentioned in Isaiah 60 is the Millennium Temple. This temple does represent God's sanctuary. During the Millennial Kingdom, other rules apply. The people will have to bring sacrifices again. This Millennium Temple is also extensively described in Ezekiel 40. The riches and the temple are therefore strong indications that the raid of Gog will take place at the end of the Millennial Kingdom, when Israel, after many hundreds of years of prosperity, will be overflowing with riches.

Will Gog attack Israel at the end of the Millennium?

Putting the main points in a row then, we see that: The attack of Gog and Magog takes place when the land has recovered from war, all the Jews have been led out from the Gentile nations into Israel; Israel lives in an "un-walled country" that is, without defending itself against attack, and the land is very rich. These things will never be more fulfilled for Israel than at the end of the Millennial Peace Kingdom.

When we look at it all this way, it is clear that at the end of the Millennial Kingdom, Gog will invade Israel. But, as we have already stated, there are also strong indications that Gog will invade Israel at a very different time than at the end of the Millennium. So what indications are these?

Will Gog attack Israel *before* the Millennium?

Will the attack of Gog take place before or after the Millennium? The Bible is not inconclusive on this topic. In Ezekiel, we read above, it says that God will use Gog to sanctify His Name. It may be unexpected, but this fact also says something about when Gog will invade Israel.

God sanctifies Himself through Gog (Ezekiel 38:14-16)

Starting in verse sixteen, God talks about the ultimate goal being to sanctify His Name. What does this mean for us?

¹⁴Prophesy therefore, child of man, and say to Gog, Thus says the Lord GOD: Will you not find out in that day, when my people Israel dwells unconcerned? ¹⁵You shall come out of your dwelling place, from the uttermost north, you and many nations with you, all horsemen, a great multitude and a numerous army. ¹⁶You will go up like a cloud against My people Israel to cover the land. It will happen in later time. Then I will cause you to come over My land, *so that the Gentile nations may know Me, when I am sanctified by you, Gog, before their eyes.*

Here, in verse fourteen, Israel dwells without fear. So this still seems to be about the end of the Millennium, but then suddenly there is talk about God sanctifying His Name through Gog? What is this sanctification and is it logical that this will happen at the end of the Millennium?

God's holiness

God tells Ezekiel that when He defeats Gog, it is for the purpose of the Gentile nations coming to know Him. This will happen when they see God's power and holiness. When Jesus comes back, He is not coming alone. He is coming with a heavenly army, shining like the sun.

¹¹And I saw heaven opened, and, behold, a white horse; and he that sat upon it was called faithful and true. And he judged and wrought war in righteousness. ¹²And his eyes were like a flame of fire, and on his head were many diadems. He had a name, which was written down, and which no one knew but Himself. ¹³And He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is: The Word of God. ¹⁴And the armies in heaven followed Him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and spotless. (Revelation 19)

We read about this in the prophecy of Ezekiel:

²³So I will show My greatness and sanctify Me and be known before the eyes of many heathen nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD. (Ezekiel 38)

When Jesus comes, His holiness makes a great impression. What is holiness? How can it be described? New Testament believers like to point to God's love, but that is only one side of God. God is not only loving, but also just, powerful, holy, and much more. When Moses sees the burning bush in the desert and approaches it, God tells him to take off his shoes because he is standing on holy ground (Exodus 3:5). Later Moses comes with the people to that same place and then God shows Himself to them:

¹⁶And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that on the mountain there were thunderbolts, lightning, and a heavy cloud, and very strong trumpet sounds, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. ¹⁷Moses led the people out of the camp, facing God. They were at the bottom of the mountain. ¹⁸Mountain Sinai was completely shrouded in smoke, because the LORD came down there in fire. Its smoke rose up like the smoke from a furnace, and all the mountain trembled violently. ¹⁹The trumpet call gradually became very strong. Moses spoke and God answered him with a voice.

²⁰Then the LORD descended on Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. The LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses climbed up. ²¹The LORD said to Moses, Go down, warn the people! Otherwise, they will penetrate to the LORD to see Him and many of them will fall. (Exodus 19)

The mountain cordoned off because if the people, or even their cattle even touched the mountain, they would die. The holiness of God can be very frightening. His holiness makes a great impression on the people who have experienced it. The nations of the earth, when Jesus comes down and when they see what happened to Gog and Magog, will be in deep awe of God.

When does God sanctify himself through Gog?

In verse sixteen God says, "*Then I will cause you (Gog) to come over My land, so that the Gentiles may know Me, when I am sanctified by you, Gog, before their eyes.*" The question now is: Does God sanctify Himself to the Gentile nations at the end of the Millennial Peace Kingdom or does He do so at the end of the Great Tribulation?

Does God sanctify Himself to the nations at the end of the Millennial Kingdom?

To answer this question, it is important to dig a little deeper into the context of the Millennial Kingdom. What is this Millennial Kingdom and why will there be one? Is this Millennium just an appendage of a thousand years to the duration of the earth? What can be said briefly about this remarkable period?

When does the Millennium begin?

The Millennial Kingdom begins after the battle of Armageddon. Revelation 16 describes the armies of the earth gathering at Armageddon for the war of God. It is hard to imagine that the leaders of the world will be so arrogant as to send their armies to the Middle East with the intention of waging war against God Himself. Their battle, according to information we find in Zechariah (14) for example, will be against Israel. When Israel is about to perish, Christ descends from heaven and the battle is then quickly decided, resulting in a huge bloodbath.

Who will enter the Millennial Kingdom?

There will be large armies gathered on the border of Israel at the end of the great Tribulation when the battle at Armageddon has come. After the battle, few of the assembled soldiers, or perhaps even none, will have survived. However not the entire world's population have been mobilized for that battle. Those who watched the war from a distance and are still living when Jesus has come, will enter the Millennial Kingdom.

The wedding of the Lamb

The Millennial Kingdom is a special period. If we read Revelation (19-20) carefully, it appears that this period is situated between two texts about the bride (the church) of the Lamb (Christ).

Just before Christ descends, Revelation (19:7) states that the wedding of the Lamb has come. A thousand years later (after the Millennial Kingdom), when the new heaven and new earth have come, Revelation (21:2) describes the bride coming down from heaven ready for her husband. The bride descends to her husband after the wedding.

There are two parables about a wedding feast in the Gospels. Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a king who prepared a wedding for his son (Christ). He said:

²The kingdom of heaven is like unto a king that prepared a wedding for his son. ³And he sent out his slaves to call those who were invited to the wedding, but they would not come. ⁴And he sent out other slaves, saying, Tell the guests, Behold, I have prepared my meal, my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding. ⁵But they took no notice, and went away, one to his field, another to his business. ⁶The others seized his slaves, and they mistreated and killed them. ⁷And the king became wrathful, and he sent out his armies and exterminated those murderers and set fire to their city.

⁸Then he said unto his slaves, The wedding is ready, but the guests were not worthy. ⁹Then go to the crossroads and invite all whom you find to the wedding. ¹⁰And those slaves went to the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with those who were lying at the table. (Matthew 22)

What Jesus says about the people at the wedding, suggests that they are not believers. There is nothing Jesus says that shows these people who are at the wedding have repented and have been baptized. From the picture that emerges, there is no reason to believe that they know the Bible and perhaps most of them have never even heard of

Christ. Nor do people earn their entrance to the wedding by their good works. Jesus says they are bad people and good people. A similar parable is found in Luke.

¹⁶A certain man prepared a great meal and invited many to it. ¹⁷And he sent out his slave toward the time of the meal to say to the invitees, Come, for all things are now ready. ¹⁸And they all began to excuse themselves one by one. The first said to him, I have bought a field, and I must go out and look at it. I pray thee have me excused. ¹⁹And another said, I have bought five spans of oxen, and I am going out to inspect them. I pray thee have me excused. ²⁰And another said, I married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. ²¹And the slave returned and reported these things to his lord.

Then the master of the house became angry and said to his slave, Go out quickly to the streets and alleys of the city and bring in the poor and maimed and lame and blind. ²²And the slave said, Lord, it has happened as you commanded, and still there is room. ²³And the lord said to the slave, Go out to the country roads and hedges and force them to come in, that my house may be full.

²⁴For I say to you that none of those men who were invited will taste my meal. (Luke 14)

This parable speaks of the same things as those in Matthew. The Lord forces the wanderers, the poor, maimed, lame, and blind to enter. The people mentioned here are the wanderers of the earth. The prerequisite to enter is not, that they should repent: these people are *forced to enter*.

What is described here looks like the end of the great Tribulation. When Jesus returns to the earth, He sends out His angels to gather His elect (Matthew 24:30-31). The elect are not the church. The church by then is in heaven and she has already made herself ready for the wedding. These elect whom Jesus is speaking of are the believers from the Tribulation. They are described in Revelation 7 as the multitude so great that no one can count them. These people who are gathered by the angels are those who have refused the number of the beast but have not yet been killed by him (Revelation 13).

After the Tribulation a huge portion of humanity worldwide has perished in natural disasters, wars and famines. Another huge portion of people have been killed by the Antichrist because they would not accept his sign on their hand or forehead. And another part of the people will be gathered by the angels when Jesus comes. However, there are also millions who are utterly impoverished in the Tribulation. Masses of them will be homeless, poor, maimed, crippled or blind. Good and bad. These people are the brigands along the country roads and behind the hedges. Throughout the centuries there have been brigands. "Go to the corners of the streets and *force* these people to come in, for the wedding hall will be full" says God.

The invited guests that refused to come are rejected and their city (Babylon) is burned, but the poor and maimed, are allowed/must(!) enter. These new guests are not symbolic for the church. There is no mention anywhere in the Bible of God forcing bad people to enter the church.

[What happens after the Millennial Kingdom?](#)

But what about these good and bad people and especially those; the bad ones, who are 'forced to come in'? Do they belong to the faithful? How can we know what they will do when they will be pressured? Will these people go to the new earth after the Millennial Kingdom? And if so, will they wholeheartedly submit to God? They have never chosen for or against God. They have never, under the same circumstances as others in history, voluntarily chosen for or against Him. How can we know that they will not rebel against Him? If they do, it could result in sin and death breaking loose again on the new earth. That is why the devil is set free. To give those people the opportunity to make a choice.

[At the end of the Millennial Kingdom, will God still show Himself to be the Holy One for the world?](#)

Those living during the Millennial Kingdom are very privileged. To begin with, they have already been fortunate to have survived the great Tribulation. They never experienced war or economic adversity after the Tribulation. After a thousand years of economic prosperity, they will all be very rich and live in beautiful houses. Spiritually, they have had a thousand years to know God and understand His will.

In our time there are masses of people who do not have this privilege. Many have been seduced by false religions or the atheistic liberal philosophy of liberalism with its evolutionary myth that everything came into being from nothing. The people mentioned above did not have to experience any of that.

Isaiah describes how the peoples of the world will fear God during the Millennial Kingdom:

²And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall stand firm as the highest of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills. And all nations shall flock to it ³and many nations shall come up and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us about his ways and that we may walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Lord's word out of Jerusalem. ⁴And he shall judge between people and nations, and shall judge over mighty nations. (Isaiah 2)

Elsewhere, Isaiah says:

¹²For the people and the kingdom that will not serve you will perish, and those nations will be totally destroyed. (Isaiah 60)

The peoples of the world will *have to* serve God during the Millennial Kingdom whether they like it or not. At the end of the Millennial Kingdom, all the world knows firsthand what a life under the government of God is like. They have seen Christ come down from heaven in His holiness at the end of the Tribulation and they have lived under His government for a thousand years. In other words, the time when the Gentile nations came to know Him is then long past. Yet there are many who do not like the reign of Christ during the Millennium. David prophesies about them in the second Psalm:

¹Why do the heathen nations rage and the peoples devise what is without substance? ²The kings of the earth set themselves up and the princes conspire against the LORD and against His Anointed ³Let us tear their bands and cast their ropes from us! (Psalm 2)

What does this tell us about getting to know God's holiness?

At the end of the Millennium, the peoples of the earth will know the holiness of God very well. At the end of the Millennial Peace Kingdom, every pagan and every nation of the world knows how great and powerful God is. Why then, after the Millennial Kingdom, would God want to violently convince the world of this once again?

However, the knowledge of God's glory and His power does not lead all people to behave accordingly. After the Millennial Kingdom, many people will strive to throw off God's laws, which they experienced as rigid bonds.

If it is described that the purpose of the attack of Gog and Magog is to make God's holiness known, then this does not seem to be about the time after the Millennial Kingdom; the nations already have knowledge of this.

Does God sanctify Himself at the end of the Tribulation?

In view of all this, it is more plausible that God will show His holiness at the end of the Tribulation. At the end of the Tribulation, we saw, Christ descends in all His wrath, power and glory. About that moment Ezekiel says:

¹⁸In that day it will come to pass, in the day that Gog comes over the land of Israel, says the Lord LORD, that My wrath will rise in My nose. ¹⁹For in My after-glory, in the fire of My wrath, I have spoken:

Verily, on that day a great earthquake shall strike the land of Israel! ²⁰The fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the animals of the field, all the creeping animals that crawl on the earth, and all the people who are on the earth, will tremble before me. The mountains shall be overthrown, the mountain sides shall collapse, and all the walls shall fall to the ground. (Ezekiel 38)

Revelation also describes these things. The earthquake and the mountains are mentioned in this prophecy:

¹²And I saw when the Lamb had opened the sixth seal, and behold, there came a great earthquake, and the sun became black as a sack of hair, and the moon became like blood, ¹³and the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree sheds its unripe figs when it is

shaken by a strong wind ¹⁴And the heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up. And all the mountains and all the islands were torn from their places. ¹⁵And the kings of the earth, the great, the rich, the rulers over a thousand, the powerful, and all the slaves and free people hid in the caves and among the rocks in the mountains. ¹⁶And they said to the mountains and the rocks: Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him Who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. (Revelation 6)

Ezekiel continues:

²¹On all My mountains I will raise a sword against him, says the Lord LORD. Everyone's sword will be against his brother. ²²I will make a trial with him by pestilence and by blood. I will cause an all-washing rain, and hailstones, fire and brimstone to rain on him, on his troops, and on the many nations that are with him. (Ezekiel 38)

This sword and plague are described at the opening of the second and fourth seals of the scroll (Revelation 6:4-8). The first trumpet describes the rain of hail and blood mixed with fire (Revelation 8:7) that hail, lightning, thunderbolts are described by John at the end of the Tribulation.

¹⁹And the temple of God in heaven was opened, and the ark of His covenant became visible in His temple. And there came lightning, voices, thunders, an earthquake and great hail. (Revelation 11)

Especially the hail, if it weren't so horrific, is fascinating to read about. This is how Revelation describes it:

²¹And great hailstones, each about a talent heavy, fell down from heaven on the people. But the people blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, for the plague of the hail was very great. (Revelation 16)

A talent weighs 30 kilos. The havoc that a downpour of this magnitude will cause is enormous. God says to Job (the oldest book in the Bible):

²²Have you come to the treasures of the snow? Have you seen the treasures of the hail, ²³which I keep back for the time of distress, for the day of battle and war? (Job 38)

God has been preparing the hail for the day Jesus would return to earth for thousands of years. Whether this refers to the impact of a meteor at the north or south pole which will bring ice into the atmosphere which will be violently crushed? Who knows?

On that day, at Armageddon, God shows His power to the world when He destroys in an instant the armies of the nations, including those of Gog and Magog, who have aligned themselves with the Antichrist. About this moment Revelation says (19):

¹¹And I saw heaven opened, and, behold, a white horse; and he that sat upon it was called faithful and true. And he judged and wrought war in righteousness. ¹²And his eyes were like a flame of fire, and on his head were many diadems. He had a name, which was written down, and which no one knew but Himself. ¹³And He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is: The Word of God. ¹⁴And the armies of heaven followed Him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and spotless. ¹⁵And out of His mouth came a sharp sword, that He might smite the heathen nations with it. And he shall shepherd them with a rod of iron. And He will enter the winepress of the wine of the grim wrath of Almighty God. (Revelation 19)

Christ will make war; He will strike the heathen nations with a sharp sword; He will guard these nations with a rod of iron, and He will tread these nations as if they were grapes in a winepress.

If we put this in a row, the most logical explanation is that God uses Gog and Magog to teach the heathen nations His holiness. This refers to the war of Armageddon. At the end of the Great Tribulation.

Does this contradict what we saw earlier; that Gog will attack Israel when it has recovered from the war at Armageddon? Gog will do so when all the Jews are back in their land and when Israel is very rich? In short all things that seemed to point to the end of the Millennial Kingdom?

Here ends the thirty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel. The prophecy about Gog and Magog continues in the next chapter. What information do we find here that can clarify when the prophecy about Gog and Magog will be fulfilled?

Ezekiel 39

In the first few verses of chapter 38 we found arguments that Gog would invade Israel at the end of the Millennial Peace Kingdom. In chapter 39 we find a lot of information that supports the idea that Gog will invade Israel after the Tribulation.

God will reveal himself to his people (Ez. 39:1-5)

The following text speaks of God revealing Himself to the Gentile nations as the Holy One, and making Himself known to His people Israel. This idea has not been discussed in the previous chapters of Ezekiel:

¹And you, child of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord LORD: Behold, I will send for you, Gog, chief prince of Mesech and Tubal! ²I will turn you around, drag you along, cause you to come up from the uttermost north, and bring you to the mountains of Israel, ³but I will strike your bow out of your left hand, and cause your arrows to fall out of your right hand.

⁴On the mountains of Israel you will fall, you and all your troops, and the nations that are with you. I have given you for food to all kinds of birds of prey and to the beasts of the field.

⁵On the open field you shall fall, for I have spoken it, saith the Lord LORD. ⁶I will send fire into Magog and among those who inhabit the coastal lands unconcerned. Then they will know that I am the LORD. ⁷I will make My holy Name known in the midst of My people Israel, and will no longer allow My holy Name to be profaned. Then the heathen nations will know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.

What does it mean that God will show Himself as the Holy One to the Gentiles *and* make Himself known to His people? Is this at the end of the Millennium or at the end of the Tribulation?

Paul writes about the moment that God will reveal Himself to the Jews:

²⁵For I will not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery (lest ye be wise in your own eyes), that hardening has come in part upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. ²⁶And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, The Redeemer shall come out of Zion, and shall turn away the wickedness from Jacob. (Romans 11)

Paul states that when (in the midst of the Tribulation) the *fullness of the Gentiles* (the antichrist in the temple) has *entered* all Israel will be saved (saved).

Zechariah prophesied about that moment:

¹⁰But over the house of David and over the inhabitants of Jerusalem I will pour out the Spirit of grace and of prayer. They shall behold me whom they have pierced. They shall mourn over him as they mourn over an only child, and they shall bitterly lament over him as they bitterly lament over a firstborn. (Zechariah 12)

God will pour out the spirit of prayer over the inhabitants of Jerusalem during (the second half of) the Tribulation, and they (Jerusalem-Israel) will complain bitterly about Christ when He comes (three-and-a-half years later, at the end of the Tribulation). Then they will recognize that they are face to face with the firstborn of God whom they have pierced (John 19:34).

We will have to part with this wonderful subject, how God reveals Himself to His people, for the sake of scope. What matters is that this moment of which Ezekiel prophesies, is not at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. God will reveal Himself to Israel in the Great Tribulation. This idea is also confirmed by what is mentioned below about the gathering of the spoils of war that Ezekiel prophesies about in the following verses.

Collecting the spoils of war (Ez. 39:8-10)

The following verses point out what is spoken of in the collection of the spoils of war. This collecting makes more sense if it occurs after the battle at Armageddon (at the end of the Tribulation).

⁸See, it is coming and will come to pass, says the Lord LORD. This is the day of which I have spoken. ⁹The inhabitants of the cities of Israel shall go out of the city, light a fire, and burn the weapons, the small and large shields, the bows and arrows, the sticks and spears. They shall make a fire of it for seven years, ¹⁰so that they do not have to get wood from the field and do not have to cut anything from the forest, but they can make a fire of the weapons. So they shall plunder their plunderers and rob those who robbed them, says the Lord LORD.

Is the fact that the people of Israel will stoke their fires for seven years from the weapons and shields left behind by the army of Gog a detail that we can relate to? What does it tell us about the time when this will take place? Could the gathering of weapons refer to the end of the Millennial Peace Kingdom? Isaiah writes about that peace kingdom:

²It shall come to pass in the last of days, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall stand firm as the highest of the mountains, and that it shall be exalted above the hills, and that all the heathen nations shall flock to it. ³Many nations will go and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; then he will instruct us concerning his ways, and we will walk in his paths.

For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD out of Jerusalem. ⁴He will judge among the heathen nations and judge many peoples. And they will turn their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning knives. No nation shall lift up its sword against another nation. They shall no more learn war. (Isaiah 2)

During the Millennium, people will remelt their swords: aircraft carriers, missiles and machine guns into agricultural tools. By the end the war industry will have disappeared and the knowledge of the war industry will have (hopefully) disappeared entirely. Swords and spears, however, were quickly made. So this could indicate that the attack of Gog, could take place at the end of the Millennial Kingdom.

But, if this burning of the war gear of Gog were to take place after the Millennial Kingdom, then we encounter a problem. Immediately after the storming of Gog and Magog at the end of the Millennial Kingdom, the Bible describes, the coming of the new earth. It is unthinkable that this junk will remain on the new earth. So that makes it unlikely that Israel will take the weapons of Gog and Magog off the battlefield after the Millennial Kingdom to stoke their fires with.

The weapons of Gog and Magog

If the prophecy of Ezekiel does not point to the raid of Gog at the end of the Millennial Kingdom, but to the end of the Tribulation, then the shields, clubs and swords of Gog with which he invades Israel are a description of modern weaponry. The question is: how can Israel stoke their stove for seven years with machine guns, airplanes et cetera?

Anyone who has ever seen (in the media I hope) an explosion of a gun stock knows how extremely flammable firearms and ammunition are. Modern weapons have much more combustible material than clubs and spears. Contemporary armies need fuel for tanks, aircraft and missile engines, and explosives for weapons. If there are nuclear weapons among them, then the number of burning hours quickly increase to an enormous amount. In any case, Israel can suspend its steel imports for seven years because of what they gather from the battlefield.

The Tomb of Gog (Ez. 39:11-16)

From verse eleven there is talk of burying Gog and Magog. This too is an indication of the time when the attack will take place.

¹¹On that day it will come to pass that I will give Gog a place for a grave there in Israel, the valley of the travelers, which blocks travelers' way, east of the sea. There they will bury Gog and all his crowd and will call it: Valley of the crowd of Gog. ¹²The house of Israel will bury them to cleanse the land for seven months. ¹³All the people of the land shall bury. And it shall be to them for a name in the day that I glorify Myself, saith the Lord LORD.

¹⁴And they shall set apart men who continually travel through the land with the travelers, and bury those who are left behind in the land to cleanse the land. After seven months have passed, they must go out to investigate. ¹⁵And if the travelers pass through the land and anyone sees a human bone, he must put a mark by it, until the gravediggers have buried it in the Valley of the crowd of Gog. ¹⁶And Hamona is also the name of a city. Thus they shall cleanse the land.

Here we run into the same problem that we had with the seven years of raising the weapons of Gog and Magog. About the raid of Gog it says in Revelation (20):

⁹And they (the armies of Gog and Magog) came up over the breadth of the earth, and surrounded the army place of the saints and the beloved city. But fire from God came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where also the beast and the false prophet already are. And they will be tormented day and night for all eternity.

¹¹And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it. Before him the earth and the heavens fled, so that there was no place for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God. And the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged according to what was written in the books, according to their works. ¹³And the sea gave the dead that were in it. Likewise death and the realm of death gave the dead that were in them, and they were judged, each according to his works. ¹⁴And death and the kingdom of death were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵And if anyone was found not to be inscribed in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

¹And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. And the sea was no more. (Revelation 20:9-15,21:1)

Revelation (20) describes that when Gog has surrounded Jerusalem, fire from God comes down and the devil is thrown into the lake of fire and immediately after that the judgment will take place before God's throne. In the preparation for the judgment it says, all those who have died rise from the dead to be judged. Immediately after the judgment there is the new heaven and the new earth. What would be the point of burying the corpses of Gog, if the graves were to be reopened immediately afterwards?

All this seems to indicate that the attack of Gog will not take place after the Millennial Kingdom, but at the end of the Great Tribulation. This tomb (monument) of Gog in the "Valley of the multitude of Gog" will remind the descendants of Gog and the whole world, for the next thousand years of the action at Armageddon and how it ended.

However, the warning will not be of much help: people will soon forget the events surrounding the Second Coming, just as earlier humanity forgot the events surrounding the Flood and Israel forgot about what led to the exodus from Egypt. The wickedness of Gog will strike again as soon as the devil is released.

Israel and the Gentile Nations (Ez. 39:21-29)

This last part of Ezekiel's prophecy also points to the judgment of God during the Great Tribulation; that is, *before* the Millennial Kingdom.

²¹I will show my glory among the heathen nations. All the heathen nations will see My judgment that I have felled, and My hand that I have laid on them. ²²Then those who are of the house of Israel will know that I, the LORD, am their God, from that day and after.

²³Then the Gentile nations will know that those who are of the house of Israel have gone into exile because of their iniquity. Because they were unfaithful to Me, I hid My face from them and gave them into the hand of their adversaries, so that they all fell by the sword. In accordance with their iniquity and their transgressions, I dealt with them and hid My face from them.

²⁵Therefore, saith the Lord LORD, I will now bring a reversal in the captivity of Jacob, I will have mercy on all the house of Israel, and I will take it up for My holy name. ²⁶They will have to bear their shame, and all their breach of faith, which they committed against Me when they lived carefree in their land and there was no one to frighten them.

²⁷When I bring them back from the nations and gather them from the lands of their enemies, I will be sanctified by them in the sight of many heathen nations. ²⁸Then they will know that I, the LORD, am their God, because I led them into exile among the heathen nations, but also gathered them back into their land and left none of them there.

²⁹I will hide My face from them no more, when I have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel, says the Lord LORD.

Here the same aspects are described that were mentioned earlier. Again it is about how God will reveal His holiness to the gentiles and how He will reveal Himself to His people Israel. It is about how God will reveal Himself to His people, we saw this earlier in the text of Zechariah:

¹⁰But over the house of David and over the inhabitants of Jerusalem I will pour out the Spirit of grace and of prayer. They will look on me, whom they have pierced. They will mourn over him as they mourn over an only child, and they will bitterly lament over him as they bitterly lament over a firstborn. (Zechariah 12:10)

Regarding sanctification to the Gentile nations, Zechariah says.

¹⁶It will come to pass that all the remnant of all the heathen nations that have gone up against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to bow down before the King, the LORD of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. (Zechariah 14:16)

The Gentiles will have to serve God obligatory after the Tribulation. So all this points to the fact that God will be sanctified by the Gentile nations before the Millennial Kingdom begins.

When is the Ezekiel war?

The question at the heart of this essay is whether Ezekiel 38 places the war at the beginning or at the end of the Great Tribulation, or at the end of the Millennial Kingdom.

From verse 1-16 of chapter 38, everything seemed to indicate that Gog would invade Israel at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. And from verse 16 to the end of chapter 39, everything pointed to Gog doing so at the end of the great Tribulation. How is this possible? Is this a contradiction?

This seems contradictory if we were to assume that prophecy has a singular message. However it isn't always that way. To a practiced Bible reader, this is not unusual. As humans we would like to hear from God: does Gog come before the tribulation or after it, or will he come after the Millennial Kingdom? We would also like it if the prophecy would describe the relationship between Gog and the Antichrist.

The experienced reader knows that God often does not give his prophecies in this way. Prophecies cannot be read like the newspaper of the future. This also means that we, who study the prophecies, must do this very carefully. We must also be very careful that the image that arises first in our minds or that seems most logical, blocks or dominates our thinking.

An example where several things seem to be intermingled in one prophecy is found in Psalm 22. Seemingly, this Psalm is about David, who wrote it. But without announcing it, the text suddenly moves on to a meaning beyond that.

¹A psalm of David to sing to. Of the doe, which is hunted early. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? I groan, but mine help is far. ²My God, I cry in the day, and thou answerest not: neither will I be silent by night. ³But thou art holy, thou that dwellest among the praises of Israel. ⁴Our fathers hoped in thee; and when they hoped, thou didst help them out; ⁵To thee they cried, and were saved; they hoped in thee, and were not put to shame.

The Psalm begins with 'my' (singular) God (why have you forsaken *me*). Then it talks about 'our' (plural) fathers who hoped in God, as if David did not write the Psalm alone. After this, the Psalm continues in singular which can refer to either David or Christ:

⁶But I am a worm, and not a man: a scorn of men, and a scorn of the people. ⁷All they that see me mock me; they put out their tongues, and shake their heads: ⁸He complains unto the Lord, that he should help him and save him, because he hath pleasure in him. ⁹For thou hast brought me out of the mother's womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother's breast: ¹⁰I have been cast upon thee since I was born; thou art my God from the time of my mother's womb.

After this, the focus turns more and more to Christ:

¹¹Be not far from me, for fear is near, and there is no helper. ¹²Big ferns have surrounded me, strong bulls have surrounded me: ¹³their mouths they open against me, like a roaring and tearing lion. ¹⁴I am poured out like water, all my bones have separated from one; my heart is in my body like molten wax. ¹⁵My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue clings to my palate; and thou layst me down in the dust of death.

Those who know the gospel recognize that what is described below refers to the crucifixion. It is difficult to see the following as a description of the life of David, but simply as that of Christ on the cross, who was surrounded by the dogs (pagans):

¹⁶For dogs have compassed me about, and a rottenness of evildoers hath compassed me about; they have pierced my hands and my feet. ¹⁷I can count all my bones, and they behold it, and look upon me with lust. ¹⁸They divide my garments among themselves, and cast lots upon my clothing. ¹⁹But thou, Lord, be not far off, my strength; make haste to help me.

The 'beasts' surround Christ, He is poured out like water, His death; His bones are (dislocated by hanging), His thirst, His death; the lot that was cast upon His clothing and so on.

²¹Save me from the sword, and mine alone from the power of the dogs. ²¹Give me out of the mouth of the lion, and save me from the unicorn. ²²I will preach thy name unto my brethren: I will praise thee in the congregation. ²³Praise the Lord, ye that fear him: to him be praise for all the seed of Israel. (Psalm 22)

If we were to read the Psalm as the emotional expressions of David struggling with his feeling that God had abandoned him, we would not understand the details of the text. If we understand that the Psalm is partly prophetic, then the question may arise: why is it written there interchangeably? Is it about the moment of Christ's birth (Thou art my God from the mother's womb (no one can say this but Jesus))? Is it about the moment that God lays Christ down in the dust of death? Is it about David's sighing that their ancestors were expecting miracles from God?

Prophecies can often be like this. This is also the case with the prophecies about Gog and Magog. The text goes from a prophecy about one moment in the future, to several events at different times in the future. In the beginning it is about the role of Gog after the Millennial Kingdom and then it is about Gog during the Great Tribulation. Only the context shows us the way.

Why this mix up, I have often wondered. Why does God prophesy so firmly about the role of Gog and Magog and about his appearance at the end of the Millennial Kingdom and then continue with his role during the Great Tribulation?

One explanation that is satisfactory to me is that God is explicitly warning Gog (Russia) and the people who follow him. He is warning those who are planning to rebel at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. God does this by pointing them to their previous similar actions at Armageddon, at the end of the Tribulation.

God does not do this to save Gog himself, but to save the people he wants to drag along into his rebellion. For Gog himself there is no hope: it is God Himself who 'puts the hooks in his jaws' to drag him to his destination in Israel. Gog has already hated God for a long time when the devil takes possession of him after being temporarily released from his prison. It will be up to the people to resist him. The people in the Millennial Kingdom will grow unimaginably old (Isaiah 65:20). There is a possibility that some will still live who actually remember Armageddon. They will know how unwise it was for the nations of the world to allow themselves to be tempted at the end of the Tribulation, as described in Revelation (16). The peoples of the world and the nations mentioned in this prophecy are warned against Gog.

God is warning them in a way that could hardly be any clearer. The children of Gog will be ashamed because the knowledge that could have saved their parents before they went to their graves in Israel was right in front of them in the Bible. God will point out to them in the Millennial Kingdom that it has been prophesied about their people that they will make that mistake again. There is even a terrifying memorial in Israel; Gog's grave that reminds them of the consequences of Gog's military raid at the end of the Tribulation, when Jesus returned.

Unfortunately, many will not learn from it. There will always be leaders who, in spite of everything, manage to tempt the people into apostasy. Thus, there will be many from Gog, led by the devil, who will again make this colossal mistake and attack Israel again. Hopefully, there will also be many who, as a result of the terrifying example and prophecies about Gog in these texts, will not do so. Let's hope that they know what's going on and make the right choice. They will look at the monument in the valley of Gog, and stay away from rebelling against God.

[The Ezekiel war *before* the Tribulation](#)

We stated at the beginning of this study that there are interpreters who see Gog and Magog (the Ezekiel war) as the beginning of the great Tribulation.

This idea that Gog is gathering his armies against Israel before the Tribulation has begun, is difficult to trace to the texts we have seen here. In each case we saw how Gog and Magog were active at two times in the future; not three. The Ezekiel Wars are huge wars. I know of no texts in the Bible that describe that such a war will occur at the beginning of the Tribulation.

The Tribulation begins when the white horse of the Antichrist subdues the world (Revelation 6). This will have a military element; the rider receives a bow and goes out to conquer. There will be a huge number of deaths in the beginning of the Tribulation due to disasters, but there is no mention of an attack on Israel by Gog and Magog in the beginning of the Tribulation.

Israel, we have seen in the image of Revelation (12) is seen as the woman fleeing to the desert. Israel will even live there quite safely during the first half of the Tribulation. Only after 1260 days will the Antichrist take Jerusalem (Revelation 11). Whether Gog and Magog will also play a role here cannot be deduced from the prophecy; Russia is already present in the Middle East **and** is no friend of Israel. Chances are that in the middle of the Tribulation they will support the Antichrist in his attack on Jerusalem. What **matters** now is our understanding of the prophecy of Ezekiel (38-39). There is no indication of a battle of Gog and Magog in the beginning of the Tribulation.

Where does the idea that Gog and Magog will attack Israel in the runup to the Tribulation come from? Possibly this idea comes from Jesus saying in Matthew:

⁶You will hear of wars and rumors of wars; beware, be not alarmed, for all these things must come to pass, but it is not yet the end. ⁷For one people will rise up against another people, and one kingdom against another kingdom; and there will be famines and infectious diseases and earthquakes in various places. ⁸But all these things are only the beginning of woe. (Matthew 24)

This image of contractions is elaborated by quite a few interpreters. The contractions which precede the birth not only increase in intensity, but they also follow each other faster and faster. This idea is used by interpreters to teach that there will be an increase of natural disasters, famines, diseases and wars, which will end in the great Tribulation. This is undoubtedly what Jesus meant as well. However, anyone who has experienced childbirth knows that in between the contractions, there are always moments of rest. This is probably what Paul is referring to when he writes:

²For you know very well that the day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night. ³For when they shall say, There is peace and safety, then sudden destruction shall come upon them, as the travail of a pregnant woman, and they shall by no means escape it. (1Thessalonians 5)

The great Tribulation does not begin with a great (Ezekiel) war. The Tribulation begins at a time when the world least expects it and when people will say there is peace and security.

Paul then says, in the words with which we will conclude this study of Gog and Magog:

⁴But you, brothers, are not in darkness, so that that day would overtake you like a thief. ⁵You are all children of light and children of day. We are neither of the night nor of darkness. ⁶Let us not therefore sleep, as others sleep, but let us be watchful and sober. (1Thessalonians 5)