

instrument to do this was not available till the 1770s. Yet early maps show evidence of a knowledge of how to do this, knowledge which was subsequently lost.

It would appear from this that the continent of Antarctica was at one time free of ice. Presumably this was in the pre-Flood age. There appear to have been dramatic changes in the earth at the time of the Flood, including the icing over of the poles. This would explain, for example, how perfectly preserved mammoths have been found frozen in Siberia, with recently eaten grass in their stomachs.

The existence of these maps is not only evidence of a different world pre-Flood, it is also evidence of a certain amount of technological development. Unless people had spread throughout the earth they would not have known about Antarctica. Unless they had developed mapping techniques they would not have been able to record what Antarctica looked like, and the knowledge would not have been preserved down the ages to be reflected in later maps. We also wonder if techniques of determining latitude and longitude were preserved from the pre-Flood age.

(To be concluded)

## Another look at Ezekiel 38

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**T**HE PURPOSE of this article is to review Ezekiel 38 from a modern perspective, re-examining interpretations that were developed in the nineteenth century when the world picture was very different from today. We will consider the chapter in the following order:

- When the events take place
- Where they take place
- Who is involved
- Why the events happen
- How they will happen.

### When the events take place

The assumption is usually made that the invasion of the land of Israel by Gog and Magog will take place *before* the coming of the Lord. However, I believe the evidence points to these events occurring *after* his return. Consider the following points:

#### 1. The order of events in Ezekiel

An invasion of the land before the coming of the Lord Jesus would not, in my view, accord with the sequence recorded more than once in Ezekiel's prophecy. In Ezekiel 37 the sequence of events is as follows. Israel:

- are regathered out of the nations (v. 21)
- become one nation and no longer two kingdoms (v. 22)
- are cleansed of their sins to become God's people (v. 23)

- have one King, the greater Son of David (v. 24)
- have an everlasting covenant established with them (v. 26)
- have God's sanctuary placed in the midst of them for ever (v. 28).

But what we have here is a detailed parallel to Ezekiel 34, except that in that chapter it is recorded that, after God has set up one shepherd and established His covenant with Israel, they then live in safety. Here Israel:

- are gathered by God out of the nations and brought into their own land (vv. 12,13)
- have God's servant David as prince among them (v. 24)
- have a covenant of peace made with them by God (v. 25)
- live in safety with no one making them afraid (v. 28).

So the sequence recorded in chapters 34 and 37 is of the establishment of the Kingdom of God and then Israel living in safety.

The nation lives in safety only after the return of the Lord Jesus and the establishment of the Kingdom, and so the situation described in Ezekiel 38, Israel living safely, refers to a time after the establishment of the Kingdom and not before.

#### 2. Dwelling safely

Following on from the previous point, the conditions described in Ezekiel 38 are vastly

different from those prevailing today, dwelling safely, without walls, bars or gates.

Thus in verse 8, where God speaks to the northern host, we read: "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*" (NIV). Similarly, in verse 11 Gog says: "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" (NIV). Then in verse 14 God says: "In that day when My people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it?"

Notice the repetition of the language here; we are supposed to take note, the words are there for a purpose. The conditions detailed here are described in 34:24-29 as those to be implemented in the Millennium after the return of the Lord Jesus.

We need also to look at what other scriptures say about dwelling safely. According to Zechariah 14:11, it occurs following the return of the Lord Jesus and the destruction of "all nations" at Jerusalem (vv. 2,3), and the establishment of the Kingdom of God (v. 9). Only after these events have taken place is the nation regarded as living safely. In Jeremiah 23:5,6 and 33:15,16 it is only after the Lord Jesus is reigning, and prosperity and justice are in the earth, that Israel is described as dwelling safely.

Thus it is only after the Lord Jesus has returned and the Kingdom of God has commenced that Israel can be described as dwelling safely. It cannot be said of Israel while they are ringed by hostile Arab nations, it cannot apply until these Arab enemies become either friends or subjects.

### 3. The spoil and prey

In itself the small State of Israel is a prize not worth grabbing by a country like Russia; it is not an especially wealthy country, it is not oil rich, nor does it have many natural resources. But once Messiah rules over Israel and the world, then its material prosperity will be evident. And if in the meantime the judgements of famine, drought and pestilence, outlined in Zechariah 14:12-19, are brought on rebellious nations, the contrast will be all the greater. This point is dealt with in more detail in the section below entitled, "[Why does Gog invade?](#)".

### 4. Micah 7:15,16

In these verses God says: "According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous things. The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might". So the miracles performed by God in the wilderness on Israel's behalf are an assurance that similar miracles will be seen again over a similar time span of forty years. As the context deals with Israel being used as God's weapon of war against the nations, it is reasonable to postulate that these wars will span a period of forty years.

Let us detail them. There is to be a battle at Jerusalem as revealed in Zechariah 12 and 14, in Obadiah and in Joel 3. We know from Revelation 16 that there is to be a battle with the Roman Catholic beast, the dragon and the false prophet when God will gather them to Armageddon. In Ezekiel 38 we have a battle on the mountains of Israel with the northern host. It is clear that the destruction of all those who oppose the Lord Jesus as King will not take place overnight, or in one battle, but will span a period of time, and the indications are that the Ezekiel 38 battle is the last to take place.

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### Where the events take place

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Ezekiel is quite clear as to where the northern host will be destroyed: "thou shalt come . . . against *the mountains of Israel*" (38:8); "I will . . . bring thee upon *the mountains of Israel*" (39:2); "Thou shalt fall upon *the mountains of Israel*" (v. 4). There is no mention of Judah and Jerusalem as in other end-time prophecies; the difference is very clear. Let us remind ourselves of where other battles are to take place.

In Obadiah we have the conquest of Gaza, Sinai, the West Bank, Gilead in Jordan, and southern Lebanon, by the Israelites, and then the conquest of Jerusalem by "saviours", following which "the kingdom shall be the LORD'S" (v. 21). In Zechariah 12 and 14 we see "all nations" attacking Jerusalem, their defeat by the Lord, and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. In Joel 3 we have "all nations" gathered to the valley of Jehoshaphat (v. 2), which we believe is in the proximity of Jerusalem, following which "the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk" (v. 18)—in other words, the Kingdom has been established. These are different locations from that in Ezekiel 38.

There are different nations involved in different conflicts during this forty-year period of

God's judgements. Psalm 83 lists ten Arab nations that will be involved in opposition to Israel; the modern equivalents are Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinians. Psalm 83:13, 14, Obadiah v. 18 and Zechariah 12:6 all refer to Israel as a hearth of fire amongst the wood and a torch of fire in a sheaf, or similar language, indicating that the same event is dealt with in all three prophecies. But there is no mention of Gog in these chapters, they are dealing with a different occasion from that recounted in Ezekiel 38 and 39.

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### Who is involved?

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We will now look at the different parties involved in the invasion of the Land recorded in Ezekiel 38.

#### Gog of the land of Magog

Josephus says that the Greeks called the Scythians Magog, and that Gog is an allusion to Gugu, a Scythian king mentioned in a Babylonian inscription. The Scythians inhabited the area to the north of the Black Sea, in what is now southern Russia. But probably the safest form of identification comes from 38:15: "thou shalt come from thy place out of the uttermost parts of the north" (RV).

#### Rosh

This name does not appear in the AV, but, using the NIV margin, we get the translation, "the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal" in 38:2. Bishop Lowther says Rosh in Ezekiel signifies the inhabitants of Scythia from whom the modern Russians derived their name. The Orientals called the people and the river of that area Rosh.

#### Meshech

The inhabitants of the Moshic mountains, east of the Black Sea, were called Moshi, and on the authority of Josephus we understand that the people called the Moscheni were descended from Meshech. Russia was originally called Muscovy, a name derived from Meshech; the Greek spelling for Meshech is Mosoch. Moscow is derived from Muscovy. The associations are clear.

#### Tubal

This name is very close to the name Tobolsk, a city in Russia. The Greek spelling for Tubal is Thobol, and the *sk* which is added is a common Russian suffix, which most towns of eastern

Russia and Siberia have. The similarity cannot be pure coincidence.

One point against these identifications of Meshech and Tubal is that in Ezekiel 27:13 they are listed among the many nations and peoples trading with Tyre. The remainder of those nations had easy access to Tyre either by sea or by land, but this is not true of either Moscow or Tobolsk. It is difficult to envisage in what way these remote places could have maintained a trade with Tyre in slaves and brass, etc., unless the origins of these tribes were a lot closer, in Scythia for example, prior to their migration further north.

#### Togarmah

The Tartar hordes that lived between the Aral and Caspian Seas used to call themselves Togarmah. Jewish writers, however, called the Turks Togarmah, and the Armenians were often called the House of Targom. Again this indicates nations to the north of Israel.

#### Gomer and his bands

Reference to the *Westminster Bible Dictionary* and other sources shows that the descendants of Gomer settled to the north of the Black Sea, and then spread southwest, settling in Cappadocia in what is now eastern Turkey, before being driven out of Asia into Eastern Europe. Some have tried to align Gomer with the nations of the EC, but I have not found any evidence for this association.

#### Persia, Ethiopia and Libya

Iran (Persia), Libya and Ethiopia are all Russian-leaning, the former two currently extremely anti-West. In considering these countries we need to be aware of Daniel 11:43, which tells us that, when the king of the north invades the Land, the Libyans and Ethiopians will be "at his steps". Notice it also says that the invaders come for treasures of gold and silver and control over the precious things of Egypt.

#### Sheba and Dedan

Past interpretations have identified Dedan as Muscat, on the Persian Gulf, and Sheba as the Yemen. In the past these countries had close associations with Britain, but the Yemen is no longer friendly to the West. However, Jeremiah 25:23 and 49:8 and Ezekiel 25:13 associate Dedan with Edom and Teman, or modern-day Jordan. Daniel 11:41 says that Edom, Moab and the

children of Ammon would escape out of the hand of the northern host; in other words, modern-day Jordan will be an ally of the northern host and not an enemy. Similarly, I believe that Sheba is unlikely to be the Yemen in southern Arabia. For example, the Sabeans (people from Sheba) who stole Job's oxen and asses in a raid would hardly have travelled across nearly a thousand miles of desert from the Yemen to northern Arabia, where Job lived. The captured beasts would almost certainly have died before they could get them home. Such considerations point to a location in northern Arabia.

The *Westminster Bible Dictionary* says that the Sabeans were closely associated with Dedan, spreading into northwestern Arabia in the eighth century B.C. about 200 years before Ezekiel's prophecy was written. Saudi Arabia, the modern equivalent, whilst currently pro-Western, would not defend Israel against an aggressor.

### Tarshish

I believe that the identification of Tarshish with Britain looks more unlikely today than when the British Empire was at its height in the second half of the nineteenth century. Perfidious Albion has broken all its promises to the Jews this century, opposing their return during the 1920s and 1930s, and trying to keep friends with oil-rich Arabs in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. This has resulted in the decline of Britain from a first-rate power to a second-rate power, and its economic, political and social decay has become a modern fulfilment of the promise to Abraham, "I will . . . curse him that curseth thee" (Gen. 12:3). It seems that only recently, under the Blair government, more friendly to Israel, have her economic fortunes revived.

But the real criterion is what Scripture says. First of all it tells us that there is not one Tarshish but two. 2 Chronicles 9:21 and 20:36 indicate that one Tarshish was in the east, for Ezion-geber is beside Eilat on the Gulf of Aqaba and had access by sea only to the east, for of course there was no Suez Canal in those days. There was also a western Tarshish, for Jonah set forth from Joppa on the Mediterranean coast of Israel to go to Tarshish (Jon. 1:3), and Ezekiel 27:12 says that Tarshish traded tin, silver, iron and lead in the markets of Tyre.

Even if the eastern Tarshish is India, as some Christadelphian writers have suggested, this is little help towards identification with Britain, for the ties of both India and Pakistan to the old

Imperial power are now tenuous, and the latter is antagonistic to Israel. Nor does the fact that the Phoenicians traded with England prove that country to be the western Tarshish, for the Phoenicians also traded with Spain, a country far richer than Britain in silver, iron, tin and lead. The *Westminster Bible Dictionary* says that Tarshish is Tartessus in southern Spain, an area that is rich in mineral wealth.

We must ask why a fleet of ships made by Solomon and operated by paid specialist seamen from Tyre was referred to as a "navy of Tarshish". It was clearly because these ships traded with Tarshish, and not that they belonged to Tarshish. So when Ezekiel 38:13 talks of "the merchants of Tarshish", is it talking about men from Tarshish or the Phoenician merchants from Tyre who traded with Tarshish? This means it would refer to modern Lebanon and Syria.

### The young lions

What of the young lions? Traditionally they are identified with the countries of the British Empire, but the British Empire is no more. In Ezekiel 19:2-6 the young lions are the princes of the house of Judah. Is it likely that Ezekiel would use the identical symbol with two widely different meanings? More probably the term describes the princes or rulers of Syria and Lebanon, and possibly also the leaders of Sheba, Dedan and Tarshish, that is, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

Notice too that these countries say to the northern invader, "Art thou *come* to take a spoil? . . . to take a prey?". If the word "come" requires that the speaker be actually present in the Land, or close by, then it makes application to Britain difficult, for the British have long since ceased to have any direct presence in Israel or that part of the Middle East.

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### Why does Gog invade?

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The aggressor invades the land "to take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods" (Ezek. 38:12).

The question in Ezekiel 38:13, "Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey?", is usually interpreted as indicating opposition to Gog, but I believe it could equally well be read as a welcome statement, "Are you going to invade Israel and profit from

its prosperity? Then we will join you in this and share in the plunder". This would better fit with the traditional antipathy of Arab to Jew.

The nation of Israel has made great strides since 1948. There are now about six million inhabitants (five million Jews) in a country the size of Wales. Compared to the surrounding Arab nations it is relatively rich, but surely not rich enough to be the reason for a Russian aggressor to invade, especially when there are richer countries directly on its borders that would be easier to acquire. It has no oil to speak of, and Russia has enough of its own anyway.

So why Israel? The geographical situation of Israel could make it a prize worth having, and there is an inkling of this in Ezekiel 38:12, at the end of the verse, where the RSV reads, "dwell[ing] at the centre of the earth". However, the prime motive seems to be material wealth. In Isaiah 60:1-17 and Haggai 2:6-9 the wealth and glory of the Kingdom age is outlined, and we can see the attraction that this would have.

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### How will it happen?

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Ezekiel 38:4,16 shows that the coming invasion is not simply the plan of an enemy; the Lord God will bring the armies of Gog against Israel for His own purposes. God will "turn [Gog] back", or 'about'; the word means 'to lead by enticement'. The language of verse 4 likens God's actions to the capture of a great fish, drawn by a hook in its jaws, having been enticed by the prospect of prey. This is how Gog will be enticed by God to fulfil His will. Gog freely acts according to the evil dictates of his lust for conquest, but behind everything there is the controlling hand of God.

When Gog assembles his vast hordes against the tiny nation of Israel they are described as a

storm that will burst forth suddenly, rage violently, alarm greatly and finally cease as "the Sun of righteousness" (Mal. 4:2) arises to shine forth in full power and glory. 38:16 makes it clear that God is going to use this opportunity to reveal His glory; He will be sanctified in Gog by taking vengeance on him for invading Israel. God's intervention will remove any shadow of doubt that He is the God of Israel, and that He will not tolerate any opposition to His purpose. Verse 18 tells us that God's "fury shall come up in [His] face", very likely in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the manifestation of God.

The weapons that will be used against Gog are an earthquake; the turning of every man's sword against his brother, in the same way as with the armies that attacked Judah in the time of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 20:23); pestilence; bloodshed; torrential rain, as in the valley of Jezreel when Sisera was defeated (Judg. 5:20,21); hailstones; and fire and brimstone, as with Sodom and Gomorrah.

All except the sword are non-human means of intervention, and powers He has used time and time again in the past to wreak judgement on those who will not accept Him. Even the sword is turned against its own neighbour; there is no human intervention here as in Obadiah, this is totally God's work.

### Conclusion

I have attempted to demonstrate from Scripture, and the current world situation, a different scenario from that put forward in the nineteenth century, when the political climate was very different, yet still held by many today. I think we should refocus our vision on the tension between the Arabs and the Jews over the future of Jerusalem, and cease to watch Russia quite so closely in the shorter term.

### Bush appeals for West to expand towards Baltic

President Bush called for the West to expand its borders eastwards into the old Communist world to create a continent "whole and free". He set out a vision of a free Europe, in which the frontiers of NATO and the European Union stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Russia, he said, had nothing to fear from the advance of "freedom-loving peoples" to its borders. This speech was made on Mr Bush's European tour. Next year's NATO summit in Prague should seek to announce the widest possible expansion of its membership to consolidate fledgling democracies in former Eastern bloc countries. Mr Bush went on to say that some NATO allies are wary of taking on the burden of protecting small and exposed countries of little military value, and are worried about stifling Russia's fear of "encirclement". Leaders from the likely candidates—Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia—welcomed his speech.—*Joan Brooks*