

Ezekiel Chapters 38-39 - John Karmelich

Title: Accepting the parts of the Bible that are hard to understand!

There's an old joke that bible prophecy fans (predictions about the future) are shocked to discover there are chapters in Ezekiel other than Chapters 38 and 39! These chapters describe God orchestrating a big miracle in Israel after that nation's gathered there. Since the last chapter (37) predicted Israel becoming a country again (gathered from all nations) and their leader at that time, quoted Ezekiel to state Israel is an independent county after 2,600 years back in 1948, therefore these chapters come next on the "Israel timetable"! The chapters after 39 are about life in Israel with the Messiah (Jesus) ruling over the world.

That means these two chapters have been debated for a long time how God's going to work this out! To show how widespread this discussion is, a bible scholar friend was leading an archaeological dig in the Middle East said his diggers were discussing these chapters! The big mystery is we have no idea when this will occur! If God wanted us to know that He'd have stated it in the text! The bible teachers I read disagree on details of how this plays out! Like them, I pray for wisdom and try to describe these events the best I can. What God decided not to share is His business! So, how does any of this affect us now? This lesson is my stab at it! If I'm wrong about specific details, so be it. We're reading predictions that Ezekiel made about the future to us, so all we can do is describe it the best we can, right or wrong!

The next thing to realize from a Christian perspective, is that the church was a mystery (not mentioned) in the Old Testament. (Ephesians 5:32). Like many Evangelical Christians, I hold the view that God is focusing on the church separately than focusing on Israel. Obviously if they're back in the land there is some overlap. Still the Ezekiel Chapter 37 prediction ties to the Messiah, who Christians argue is Jesus ruling over Israel. The reason I bring this up is I suspect the church will be gone before the events told here end! For the newcomers, many Christians hold the view God will end the church age by calling to heaven those still on earth when "time's up". Remember no dates are given in these chapters! All I am doing is throwing my theories at you! That is enough background, let's discuss these two chapters:

A key point is Ezekiel names a lot of countries (using names of the 6th Century BC)! Translators work hard to figure out who he was referring to. Short version is scholars are pretty much in agreement he is talking about Russia leading an invasion along with many Middle East nations, and some located in the Northern Part of Africa and parts of Europe against Israel. Way back in Genesis 10, we got a list of the descendants of Noah as they spread out all over that world. A lot of those names came from that list. I am just saying we can have faith most scholars got it right as to who the major players are in this list of nations, with a few speculations over some of the smaller nations involved!

With the "who" issue covered; the next question is what's their plan? The short version is they launch a major attack on Israel. I was thinking, isn't that overkill? All those countries setting up say an army of say millions of soldiers against tiny Israel (in comparison)? To understand why, let's discuss a bit about whose idea this was: I wrongly thought for years this was Satan's idea. Remember his goal is to rule as long as possible over the world. Since Satan believes the bible is God's word, why would Satan desire a "wrap it up" event? Then I realized Chapter 38 says God put the idea in those country's minds, as He desires to get "the show going" with Jesus ruling from Israel. Again, the next & final 9 chapters of this book is a discussion of life WITH Jesus ruling over the world from Jerusalem. That means Chapters 38 and 39 is the transition from Israelites back in their land to the time frame of Jesus ruling! Important to keep in mind Paul taught the church was a mystery (not mentioned) in the Old Testament! That means Ezekiel's focus is on the nation of Israel as an entity in these chapters and the rest of this book!

The why fore the big war discussed in these chapters is the big question. Some have argued the reason (outside the bible) is Russia wants a warm water port. We get the "Muslim hating Jew" theory as well! A few nations such as Saudi Arabia isn't part of it but are on the sidelines to see what happens. So why wrap it up this way? Why can't Jesus just "set up shop"? I suspect one of the reasons is to prove to the Israelites living when this occurs that God truly exists and is working to protect them. Keep in mind of the fact Israel is mostly secular today. It is one reason God organizes this big "floor show"! Most of us know the "end" involves a major world war that starts as 3.5 years of peace, then turns bad for the final 3.5 years before God ends the whole thing! Some argue these two chapters are just a statement by God ending the seven-year tribulation period! I admit I ponder why God wants that big show prior to Jesus returning? I think it's to make it obvious this is THE time for that!

Chapter 38 mainly focuses on who the players were, and they will lose this war badly. Obviously, this is part of (or right before) the Revelation "bad stuff". One of the fascinating things is it mentions Israel was without walls. Most of us know they built walls around the country to prevent terrorist attacks. It's part of the end time theory that the first three and a half years the anti-Christ brings peace, which led to Israel letting their guard down (for all of us who hold a pre-tribulation view). No one knows how these details play out. We just know Ezekiel accurately predicted events up to Chapter 37. That supports the argument that Chapters 38 to 48 (all future to us) will be accurate. One of the things I like to argue is I would much rather be too literal than not literal enough in Bible predictions. (Exceptions exist: When the Psalms say God will take us under His wings, that is not to be taken literal!) My point is Ezekiel is describing a lot of nations that exist when this occurs who'll attack Israel without walls! Just saying I'd rather be too literal than not literal enough in describing bible predictions about the future!

Another issue is there's several mentions of horses. Obviously modern warfare is tanks and aircraft. It is possible Ezekiel was trying to describe 2,600 years ago what doesn't exist today! Another possibility is guidance systems get destroyed by a nuclear exchange and classic warfare makes a return. Again, it is better to be too literal than not literal enough! In short, I don't know how it will happen, but I've seen the Bible come true in so many amazing ways including the fact Israel became an independent country after about 2,600 years. Just saying if that could happen literally, so could Ezekiel Chapters 38-39.

If Chapter 38 describes a failed attack on Israel, Chapter 39 describes the clean up operation. The text states Israel spends seven months burying the enemies' bodies who died in that land. I've read theories on radioactive poisoning to simply the fact God doesn't want His land polluted. The text also mentions the Israelites can use those war weapons for fuel for seven years. We don't know why he mentions that. All we can say is if it happens exactly that way, we know God's behind it. The important point is Israel wins! If God's pro-Israel, then I want to be part of that winning team! Keep in mind, God calls us to be a witness for Him. If that means discussing horrible things that'll occur one day, we must trust God for those parts of the bible that are hard to understand!

I know I was way too light in discussing these hard chapters. As always, I encourage you to read all of the text yourself and with prayer, may God lead each of us to discover His truths and more importantly how they apply to our lives!

With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on that link on the same page! It is still a joy to study this stuff and again I'm grateful for you reading this. If you're new here, you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks for reading all this!