

# Is the Gog Magog Invasion a Failure or a Success?

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One of the most common beliefs concerning the Battle of Gog and Magog described in Ezekiel 38 and 39 is the idea that it is a completely failed invasion of Israel. If one were to survey 100 popular end time books and articles on this topic, virtually all would speak of a multi-national invasion of Israel wherein the armies will no sooner enter the land of Israel, than they will be utterly annihilated and destroyed through the agency of God's judgments. For example, consider the manner in which the run-away bestselling Left Behind series, describes the aftermath of the Gog Magog invasion:

Miraculously, not one casualty was reported in all of Israel. Otherwise Buck might have believed some mysterious malfunction had caused missile and plane to destroy each other. But witnesses reported what had been a firestorm, along with rain and hail and an earthquake, that consumed the entire offensive effort. . . . Editors and readers had their own explanations for the phenomenon, but Buck admitted, if only to himself, that he became a believer in God that day. Jewish scholars pointed out passages from the Bible that talked about God destroying Israel's enemies with a firestorm, earthquake, hail, and rain. Buck was stunned when he read Ezekiel 38 and 39 about a great enemy from the north invading Israel with the help of Persia, Libya, and Ethiopia.

Pastor Mark Hitchcock, a popular end time author, even describes Ezekiel's Battle of Gog of Magog as a war that concludes in a single day. According to Hitchcock: "This will be the "One Day War" or even the "One Hour War" when God supernaturally destroys this Russian-Islamic horde."

Is it really true that not a single casualty will be reported in Israel or that the war will only last a single day? A careful examination of the text itself will show that this is not the case whatsoever. While the armies of Gog and Magog will indeed be utterly destroyed, before their defeat, Israel itself will first suffer catastrophic losses. This time of great trouble for Israel, is in fact, described throughout many of the other biblical prophets as a time of unparalleled tribulation for Israel. That Ezekiel described the same time of chastisement as many of the other prophets is substantiated by considering how he describes the people and the land of Israel *prior* to the invasion, and how they are described *after* the battle concludes. As we will see, prior to the invasion by Gog and his

hordes, the Jewish people are portrayed as living in the land with a relative sense of ease and security, whereas, after the Gog and Magog invasion, they are described as being dispersed among the nations as prisoners of war, and returning to their land. Let us consider the prophecy.

## **Before the Invasion**

As the prophet describes the conditions that Gog, the leader of the invasion, finds the State of Israel, it is described as a land filled with people who have returned to the land, having resettled the ancient ruins, and acquired abundant material blessings. They were formerly living among the nations, but have now returned to resettle the land that was formerly a virtual wasteland for many generations. Surely, this is a perfect description of the State of Israel as it exists today. Consider Ezekiel's description, as the Lord addresses Gog, the leader of the coming invasion:

*“After many days you will be summoned; in the latter years you will come into the land that is restored from the sword, whose inhabitants have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel which had been a continual waste; but its people were brought out from the nations, and they are living securely, all of them. You will go up, you will come like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your troops, and many peoples with you.” Thus says the Lord GOD, “It will come about on that day, that thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil plan, and you will say, ‘I will go up against the land of unwalled villages. I will go against those who are at rest, that live securely, all of them living without walls and having no bars or gates, to capture spoil and to seize plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places which are now inhabited, and against the people who are gathered from the nations, who have acquired cattle and goods, who live at the center of the world.’” (Ezekiel 38:8-12)*

Some have argued that the State of Israel today cannot rightly be described as “living securely” as they are surrounded by hostile nations. However, for anyone who has been to Israel, it is clear that despite the fact that they are indeed surrounded by peoples who wish them harm, the nation as a whole, with such a well trained defense force, do in fact live securely, enjoying the sea-side nation that they've restored over the past 70 years. While Israelis are aware of the dangers of their neighborhood, few live in fear of some imminent multi-national invasion.

Because Israel is described as a nation filled with people who are essentially resting securely, if the invasion of Gog of Magog is indeed a complete failure, if Israel is entirely protected and delivered, then after the war, their condition would no doubt be described as even more stable and secure. As we will see however, this is not at all what the prophet describes.

## **Gog's Destruction**

Before we consider Ezekiel's prophetic description of Israel after the invasion however, let us first briefly consider the actual destruction of the invading armies. According to the prophet after the invasion, the Lord's anger and His fury will be unleashed against the invaders. This is accomplished through an earthquake so severe that it will be felt globally as well as an outpouring of rain, hail, fire, and brimstone:

*"It will come about on that day, when Gog comes against the land of Israel," declares the Lord GOD, "that My fury will mount up in My anger. In My zeal and in My blazing wrath I declare that on that day there will surely be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. The fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all the creeping things that creep on the earth, and all the men who are on the face of the earth will shake at My presence; the mountains also will be thrown down, the steep pathways will collapse and every wall will fall to the ground. I will call for a sword against him on all My mountains," declares the Lord GOD. "Every man's sword will be against his brother. With pestilence and with blood I will enter into judgment with him; and I will rain on him and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire and brimstone. I will magnify Myself, sanctify Myself, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations; and they will know that I am the LORD." (Ezekiel 38:18-23)*

The troops of Gog will be utterly destroyed. It will be through this great defeat of Gog hordes that the Lord will glorify Himself before all men and nations. As the prophet continues, he reveals that the fire of God's judgment is not limited to the invading armies, but also falls on the nations. All "those who inhabit the coastlands in safety" will also experience the fire of God's judgment in that day:

*"You will fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who are with you; I will give you as food to every kind of predatory bird and beast of the field. You will fall on the open field; for it is*

*I who have spoken,” declares the Lord GOD. And I will send fire upon Magog and those who inhabit the coastlands in safety; and they will know that I am the LORD. (Ezekiel 39:4-6)*

It is important to take note that the Lord here does not judge only a few nations, but “all nations” are described as seeing and experiencing the heavy judgments laid upon them by the Lord: “*And I will set My glory among the nations; and all the nations will see My judgment which I have executed and My hand which I have laid on them*” (Ezekiel 39:21).

Having now considered the conditions of the land of Israel prior to the invasion, as well as the great judgments of God that occur at that time, let us turn to consider the condition of Israel after all of the dust has settled.

### **After the Invasion**

Now we come to the final portion of the prophecy, where those who claim that the invasion is an utter failure run into an insurmountable difficulty. For instead of a more secure and stable nation, we find the people of Israel portrayed as being in exile among the nations:

*“And the house of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God from that day onward. The nations will know that the house of Israel went into exile for their iniquity because they acted treacherously against Me, and I hid My face from them; so I gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and all of them fell by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I dealt with them, and I hid My face from them.” (Ezekiel 39:22-24)*

Now, some may be tempted to argue that the references here to exile refer to Israel’s history, but the verses that follow make this an impossibility for several reasons. Let’s read the passage and then break down why this exile is yet future.

*Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name. They will forget their disgrace and all their treachery which they perpetrated against Me, when they live securely on their own land with no one to make them afraid. When I bring them back from the peoples and gather them from the lands of their enemies, then I shall be sanctified through them in the sight of the many nations. Then they will*

*know that I am the LORD their God because I made them go into exile among the nations, and then gathered them again to their own land; and I will leave none of them there any longer. I will not hide My face from them any longer, for I will have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,” declares the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 39:25-29)*

There are a few important points made in this passage that we must not overlook. First, the phrase, “Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob,” as it appears in the NASB is a phrase that translators have wrestled with. The KJV for instance translates this as, “Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob.” The meaning of the phrase in Hebrew seems to indicate a blessing of Israel, a restoration of her “fortunes” that is integrally connected to her people restored from “captivity” to the land. Second, in using the term, “Now,” the Lord made it clear that the restoration from captivity occurs after the judgment on Gog, his hordes, and the nations. This is not a historical exile. Third, it is not until after this time that Israel truly repents of their rebellion, which they specifically engaged in when they previously lived, “securely on their own land.” The language here is clearly intended to mirror the conditions of Israel prior to the invasion. Thus the conditions of Israel living in true security is to be contrasted with the conditions of a false sense of security that are described at the onset of the passage. Fourth, it must be noted that the people of Israel are not merely portrayed as being in exile among the gentile nations, but specifically as, “captives” in “the land of their enemies.” These are prisoners of war. Fifth, after this deliverance from captivity, there is a massive revival and turning to the Lord. This is precisely what so many other prophecies describe as occurring at the time when Jesus the Messiah returns (cf. Zech 12:10; Matt 24:30; Rom. 11:25-27; Rev. 1:7).

In summary then, we see that before the invasion, the Jewish people are repeatedly described as living with a sense of security, at rest in the land of Israel. After the Gog of Magog invasion however, at least a large percentage of the Jewish people are described as living as prisoners of war, in the land of their enemies. Therefore, the claim that the Gog of Magog invasion is a complete failure is seen to stand in direct conflict with the Scriptural testimony. How can it be said that Israel lives securely before, suffers no losses, but is then seen as being returned as prisoners of war from the surrounding nations, the land of their enemies? The logic of the popular position simply cannot be reconciled with the text.

## **Implications**

There are a few clear and crucial implications of this that we must not ignore. First, if the invasion of Gog and Magog concludes with Israel captive among the surrounding nations, a global earthquake, a turning of the Jewish people and the nations to the Lord, the Lord pouring out His Spirit on His people, then there is only one time when this could be referring to. It clearly takes place at the return of Jesus. This is when the Scriptures clearly state that all of these things take place. Second, if Gog is destroyed when Christ returns, then it also stands to reason that Gog is in fact, none other than the Antichrist himself. All of the prophets speak of the same general events. While they each use different pictures and approach the story from different angles, they all tell a very similar story. There is no need to complicate the Biblical narrative by creating multiple end time invaders, invasions, and overly-confusing and complicated timelines. ***Third, and most importantly, if this is true, then the popular idea that the entire Islamic world is about to be wiped out is seen to be little more than wishful thinking, which is only lulling an already sleepy Church back to sleep. Now is the time to rise to meet this final challenge!***