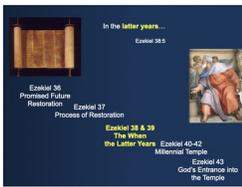


Ezekiel 38-39 The War to Begin the Consummation

Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD.. Ezekiel 38:23



In our last class, we studied how God promised to make a New Covenant with Israel when the Millennial Age began in chapter 36. This was given to those in exile in Babylon to comfort them. It promised that the Babylonian Captivity was not the end of the nation of Israel, nor its people, the Jews.

In chapter 37, God followed by giving an outline of the process that would bring about this future restoration, illustrated with the resurrection of the dry bones. Thus, Israel's future existence depended upon God keeping His promised New Covenant by resurrecting the nation.

A very natural question would be asked by those hearing and we reading Ezekiel 36 and 37...
When will this happen?

The Lord does not give a specific date, as He did when he declared that the Babylonian Captivity would last 70 years. Instead He prophesied the actions that would initiate the New Covenant.

Through a contemporary prophet of Ezekiel's, Daniel, God states that from the beginning of the captivity, 586 BC, until the fulfillment of the New Covenant will be "seventy weeks" in Daniel 9:24-27.

For the exiles, seventy weeks would not seem too long, but a close examination of Daniel reveals that the seventy weeks is really "seventy sevens" that would span hundreds of years and include several gaps within that time. I have produced a 2-part video podcast explaining this time period and it is available from my website.



Through other prophets, God would give many details of the events that would bring about the coming of the Lord and the start of the New Covenant.

Like two bookends, Ezekiel describes **the event that will start the clock ticking** and the event that will end with the coming of the Lord.

The first "bookend" is the great war of Gog-Magog (Ezekiel 38 and 39) and the other bookend is the start of the Millennium (Ezekiel 40-43) that brings the Glory of God to Israel.

I would like to take the next series of classes to look at these events.

First Book End – the Battle of Gog-Magog – Ezekiel 38 & 39

Key to understanding this first bookend is to understand the **time** when this event begins - Ezekiel 38:8, 16.

⁸After many days thou shalt be visited: **in the latter years** thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of

Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth **out of the nations**, and they **shall dwell safely all of them**.

¹⁶ And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be **in the latter days**, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes.

Remember, God had Ezekiel write these words to people in exile. People who did not just want kindly thoughts but wanted specifics. Had our Lord meant that in a few months they would have returned to live safely in Israel, He would have chosen different expressions than those in this verse.

There are three indicators of the time when the New Covenant would begin.



Latter Days
Numbers 24:14
Deuteronomy 31:29
Jeremiah 23:20; 30:24; 48:47;
49:39
Ezekiel 38:16
Daniel 2:28; 10:14
Hosea 3:5

Latter Years
Ezekiel 38:8

The End
The End of the Days
Daniel 12:13

"...after many days thou shalt be visited..." means a significantly long period of time - Ezekiel 38:8

"visited" always signifies an action by God involving His presence in Israel.

I. The **first indicator of the time** is the opening statement: “*after many days thou shalt be visited...*” This did not mean in a month or a year. Ezekiel’s first readers would have understood this meant a **significantly long** period of time.

For those who searched the Scriptures, they would know this was speaking of the prophetic future, for the word “*visited*” indicated the Messiah’s presence in Israel. This term in the Scripture always signifies a specific action by God involving His **presence** in Israel.



Latter Days
Numbers 24:14
Deuteronomy 31:29
Jeremiah 23:20; 30:24; 48:47;
49:39
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"...in the latter years..." is defined elsewhere in our English Bible as "last," "end," and "hindermost" conveying a far distant time or event - Deuteronomy 31:29

II. Ezekiel’s **second indicator of the time** was the phrase “*in the latter years*.” Notice, Ezekiel equates this with “*in the latter days*” in verse 16, describing the same period of time.

The term, “*latter*” is defined elsewhere in our Bible as “last,” “end,” and “hindermost” conveying a far distant time or event.

Moses used it this way in Deuteronomy 31 verse 29:

*For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in **the latter days**; because ye will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands.*

This term also is found in Deuteronomy 4:30; Jeremiah 30:24; 48:47; Daniel 2:28; and 10:14.

This same word is used with “last days” in Isaiah 2:2; Jeremiah 23:20; 49:39; Ezekiel 38:16; Hosea 3:5; and Micah 4:1 in our English Bible.¹

Thus, we both phrases denote the same period of time.



Caution!!!

The Church ≠ National Israel

When the latter days of the Church end.....the latter days of Israel will begin.

A careful contextual study of the Bible indicates that the concept of “*latter years/days*” often is used in an eschatological sense, speaking of the days just before the coming of the Messianic Age.

¹ Thomas Ice, “Last Days” in Tim LaHaye and Ed Hindson, editors, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Bible Prophecy*, (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2004), 195.

Latter Days
 Numbers 24:14
 Deuteronomy 31:29
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Latter Days of the Church Age
 Pentecost to Rapture

Always remember, we must keep Israel and the Church separate as we consider such passages. This term is predominantly a reference to Israel and not the Church. Only a few passages in the Bible use this term to refer to both the Church and Israel.

For example, 1 Timothy 4, clearly speaking to the church, speaks of the apostasy just before the Rapture – a Church event – verse 1.

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

The context of Ezekiel in chapters 36-43 speaks of the Tribulation and Millennial Temple, which only involves Israel.

We see a similar usage in Daniel 9 and Deuteronomy 31:29 where the reference is to the Tribulation. Here Israel is pictured as “utterly corrupt” and “turned aside from the way,” and deserving of “Evil will befall you in the latter days.” In Jeremiah 30:24 (48:47) God indicates in a far future time, Israel will remember what they had done. The time is the Tribulation.

The fierce anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it.

Daniel uses equivalent terms “time of the end,” “end of time,” “end time,” and “end of the age” in Daniel 8:17; 12:4, 9, 13. All refer to the time of “distress,” which is the Hebrew word for “tribulation.”

Again, keep in mind that in the Old Testament, “latter days” or “end of the age” always is speaking of the time of the Tribulation for Israel, a seven year period. Occasionally in the New Testament it is speaking of the church age from Pentecost to the Rapture – a period of at least two thousand years. They are two separate and distinct periods of time.

Remember, the Church Age is the time when God is calling out a Bride (all church age believers) for His Son. When the Bride is complete and has been removed to heaven for the wedding (the Rapture). Only after the Church Age will God again will turn to Israel and fulfill His plan for her.

Based upon a study of the term “latter days” we can conclude that we are living in the last days of the church age, but we are not living in the latter days of Israel, for when the latter days of the Church end, the latter days of Israel will begin.

Latter Days
 Numbers 24:14
 Deuteronomy 31:29
 Jeremiah 23:30; 30:24; 48:47;
 49:39
 Ezekiel 38:16
 Daniel 2:28; 10:14
 Hosea 3:5

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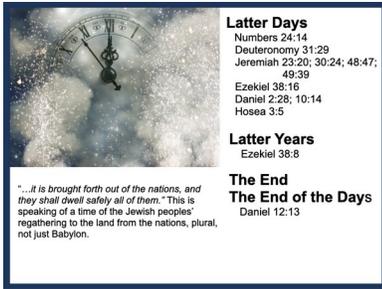
Latter Days of the Church Age
 Pentecost to Rapture

Latter Days of National Israel
 Post-Rapture to End of Tribulation

It is well to remember the use of the word “age” with respect to Israel and the Church.

Israel believed there were two “ages” of history. The first is the pre-Messianic Age, the time before the Messiah comes, and the Messianic Age, the time when He rules upon the earth.

Unknown to Israel, was the mystery of the Church and its Age. The Age we are living in.



III. The **third indicator of the time** designation used in Ezekiel 38 verse 8 is the statement:

*it is brought forth **out of the nations**, and they shall dwell safely all of them.*

This phrase speaks of a time of the Jewish people's **regathering** to the land from the nations, plural, not just Babylon.

From Ezekiel's day to 1948, the Jewish world has been scattered around the world.

With the regathering begun in 1948, we believe it has included descendants of those who once were part the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah fulfilling verse 8.

Additionally this phrase includes the idea of dwelling safely in the land. This is repeated in verse 11.

*...I will go up to the **land of unwallled villages**; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, ¹²**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, that dwell in the midst of the land.*

Ezekiel 38:11, 12

Just as in the days of Israel's Babylonian captivity when Ezekiel wrote this prophecy, God's chosen nation needs assurance that God will protect her from her enemies. Even today, Israel is not totally free from concern.

The prophet Daniel prophesied that sequential world empires would dominate Israel; these empires were: **Babylon, Mede-Persia, Greece, and Rome**.

A line of Gentile control, from Babylon up to the modern era, has been fulfilling God's judgment upon Israel that was given in Luke 21:24:



*And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all the nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, **until the times** of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

In 1948 Israel became a free nation, but it is still under the influence and pressure of Gentile nations, especially those that are Arab. Even today, world opinion and pressure limits Israel's sovereignty over its most sacred site in Jerusalem, the Temple Mount—the only place where Israel can meet with God and offer sacrifices to Him. It is under the control of a Muslim council, for Islam's Dome of the Rock sits there. The times of the Gentiles will not end until the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

Summary:

As we begin our study of Ezekiel 38 and 39 we must look for a time at least centuries after the Babylonian Captivity, where there will be a final great return of Jews from many surrounding nations, a time after the Rapture of the Church Age.



For God's chosen people in Babylon and today, Israel's exile would not last forever—there was light at the end of a long “tunnel” of time.