

"THE BATTLE OF HAR MAGEDDON"

I. Introduction

- A. These two chapters are depicting the last battle, the eschatological conflict that will mark the end of this present age.
1. In Revelation 16:16, this battle is said to take place at a location called "Armageddon," which is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew phrase *Har Mageddon*, which means "mountain of gathering."
 2. This last battle is further described in Revelation 19, where Jesus appears as the rider on a white horse and strikes down the nations with the sword of his mouth, after which the birds are summoned to come and eat the flesh of the slain.
 3. The same battle is then recapitulated in Revelation 20, where at the close of the thousand years, which are symbolic of the period in between Christ's first and second comings, Satan is permitted to deceive the nations so that they assemble for war against the church.
 4. Listen to how this is described in that passage: "And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them" (Rev 20:7-9 ESV)
 5. That text in Revelation is the only other place where the names "Gog and Magog" are mentioned in the Bible.

6. This tells us that that text is a concise summary of what is being described here in Ezekiel 38-39.
- B. Ezekiel's account of the last battle comes on the heels of the great prophecies of restoration in chapters 36 and 37.
1. It also comes right before the magnificent description of the eschatological temple in chapters 40-48.
 2. As we study these two chapters this evening, we will see how they provide us with a wonderful assurance.
 3. They declare that the devastating events of 586 BC will never again be repeated.
 4. The restored Israel that was described in the previous chapters, the restored Israel finds its fulfillment in the church, will be preserved from all of her enemies by the powerful hand of God.

II. The Forces of Evil Mustered by God

- A. The name Gog is quite mysterious.
1. Though there have been a number of theories, scholars have never reached a consensus on the historical nation to which this name refers.
 2. In the end, it is generally agreed that the name is being used symbolically here, since none of the historical candidates for Gog posed a real threat to Judah in Ezekiel's time.
 3. And while some of the nations that Gog gathers for this battle can be identified, the important thing that is conveyed by this is that they come from regions on all sides of the Promised Land.
 4. Gog is what one commentator describes as the "archetypal enemy" of God's people. [Block]

5. And the seven nations that he leads against Israel are symbolic of an attempt by the whole world to crush God's covenant people forever.
 6. We can say this with confidence because this is the way "Gog and Magog" are interpreted in Revelation 20.
 7. These are the nations that Satan gathers for the last battle against God's city, the church.
- B. In Ezekiel 38:11, God's restored people are depicted as dwelling peacefully on the mountains of Israel.
1. They dwell in a land that was restored from war.
 2. They live in unwalled villages.
 3. They are a quiet people, dwelling securely.
 4. They do not need the protection of bars or gates.
 5. Their trust is not in the things that afford worldly security, but in the Lord their God.
 6. But as Gog and his allies look upon this people, they see their vulnerability and seize upon it as a prime opportunity.
 7. So they decide to assemble their vast armies and come against God's people like a cloud covering the land.
- C. Notice, however, what God says in verse 16.
1. He says to Gog, "In the latter days I will bring you against my land, that the nations may know me, when through you, O Gog, I vindicate my holiness before their eyes."
 2. Gog has his own motivations and intentions in coming against Israel.

3. But the Lord is the ultimate cause behind Gog's actions.
4. As powerful as Gog thinks he is, he is really just an instrument in the Lord's hands.
5. Gog may be fierce, but the Lord puts hooks in his jaws and leads him wherever he wants him to go.
6. In the ultimate sense, God is the one who is doing the assembling here.
7. Gog thinks he is gathering the nations to destroy the church, but in reality they are being gathered by God to meet their final doom.
8. This is what will happen at the end of this age.
9. Under the sovereign hand of God, the world will be deceived by Satan into thinking that it can join its forces and bring a final end to Christ's church.
10. But instead of the world destroying the church, the world will be wiped out by God.

III. The Forces of Evil Destroyed by God

- A. We turn now to chapter 39, where Gog's defeat is described.
 1. The thing that stands out here is that this great eschatological battle is utterly anticlimactic.
 2. It is no contest.
 3. This reminds me of a highly touted boxing match in the late 1980's, when Mike Tyson and Michael Spinks squared off to unify the heavyweight title.
 4. One of my friends and I were so excited to see this fight that we purchased tickets to see it broadcast at a local arena.

5. Both of these fighters were undefeated.
 6. This was supposed to be the fight of the ages.
 7. Well, guess how long it lasted.
 8. It was over in one and a half minutes.
 9. Michael Spinks was no match for Mike Tyson.
 10. That is a picture of what is being described here in Ezekiel 39.
 11. Gog is simply no match for God.
- B. Now remember what Gog is symbolizing in this prophecy.
1. Gog is a symbol of the world in its state of rebellion against God.
 2. It is a picture of fallen humanity as they rage and plot in vain against the Lord and his anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us."
 3. As we are told in Psalm 2, the Lord responds to all of this by laughing and holding them in derision.
 4. He laughs because those who persist in their headstrong rebellion against him are doing the most foolish thing in the universe.
 5. The terrible things that happen to Gog in this chapter are a symbol of what will eventually happen to every human being who remains apart from Christ.
 6. Everyone you know who does not know Christ will be consigned to a dreadful eternity in hell, unless they come to Christ before they die.
 7. Let this be a motivation to pray for them and to look for opportunities to point them to Christ.

- C. As God describes the fate that will come upon Gog, he declares that it is an absolute certainty.
1. He says, "Behold, it is coming and it will be brought about, declares the Lord GOD. That is the day of which I have spoken."
 2. The fact that God has spoken of this day ensures that it will come about.
 3. This reminds me of a bumper sticker that I have seen several times that says, "God said it. I believe it. That settles it."
 4. The problem with that bumper sticker is the sentence in the middle.
 5. The fact that God said it is what settles it, regardless of whether or not we believe it.
 6. There are plenty of people in the world today who do not believe that Jesus is the only way to God and that all who die apart from Jesus will be consigned to an eternity in hell.
 7. But this does not change the fact that these things are true.
- D. The oracle also declares that Gog's defeat will be utterly comprehensive.
1. It will be so extensive that their weapons will serve as fuel for seven years.
 2. There will be so many slain that it will take seven months to cleanse the land of their dead bodies.
 3. The number seven is being used symbolically here, underscoring the completeness of Gog's destruction.
 4. The other thing that is pictured so vividly is the sheer disgrace of Gog's defeat.

5. We see this in the gruesome description of the birds and beasts being summoned to come and feast upon the bodies of the slain.
 6. While this is an extremely unpleasant picture, it is conveying a very important point.
 7. It is telling us that the most shameful thing in all the world is to persist in a state of rebellion against the Lord.
- E. Chapter 39 ends with the Lord declaring that his people will dwell securely in their land with none to make them afraid.
1. While they were in a state of peace and security before Gog's downfall, now they are in a state of confirmed security.
 2. This is pointing to the security that we will experience in heaven.
 3. Even though we do not yet experience that confirmed state of peace, we can be confident that our salvation is certain.
 4. Though there are many things that threaten us in this world, the presence of a threat is not a sign of God's absence.
 5. As commentator Iain Duguid explains, "Ezekiel 38-39 reminds us that even the restored, renewed people of God can expect tribulation, not because the world is out of control but precisely because the world is in God's control; for when God's people cling to him in their darkest hour, against all odds, it brings him glory." [Duguid, 460]
 6. Those who belong to Christ are perfectly secure, even when we may not feel secure.
 7. Even if the earth gives way and the mountains are moved into the heart of the sea, we have no reason to be afraid.
 8. The nations may rage against us, but when our God utters his voice, the earth melts.

9. "The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."