

The Book of Ezekiel, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 18: Gog and Magog: The Defeat of the Enemy

Ezekiel 38:1-39:29

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Show through the rise and overthrow of Gog that God grants His people certain and decisive victory over every massed enemy, so that no gathered host can finally stand against Him.

Establish that the central purpose of the oracle is the vindication of God's holy name, that the nations and His own people may know that He is the LORD.

Guard the class against newspaper exegesis, the identifying of Gog and Magog with modern nations and the setting of dates, by reading these chapters as a symbolic portrait of God's triumph taken up in Revelation 20:8.

Question 1

Student Question:

The LORD says to Gog, I am against you, and I will turn you about and bring you forth (38:2-4). What does it mean that God Himself draws out the enemy who comes against His people, and how does this assure us that even the assaults of the wicked serve God's purposes?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The word of the LORD comes against Gog of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, with God setting His face against him (38:2-3).

The LORD says, I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and bring you out with all your army (38:4). God Himself draws the enemy forth.

A long list of allied peoples joins Gog, Persia, Cush, Put, Gomer, and Beth-togarmah, gathered from the far reaches of the known world (38:5-6).

The sweep of nations from every direction marks this as a picture of the massed hostility of the world rather than any single identifiable army.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- We do not identify Gog, Magog, Meshech, or Tubal with any modern nation, for the names function symbolically to portray the gathered enemies of God's people.
- That God puts hooks in Gog's jaws shows His complete control even over the enemy who rages against Him.

- The gathering of peoples from every quarter pictures the totality of the world's opposition assembled for one assault.

Discussion Prompts

- Why should we not read Gog and his allies as a map of present-day nations?
- What does it mean that God Himself draws the enemy out with hooks in his jaws?
- How does the wide array of peoples shape the symbolic character of the oracle?

Question 2

Student Question:

When have you felt surrounded or outmatched by forces hostile to your faith, and how does the truth that God remains sovereign even over His enemies steady your heart?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Gog is told to be ready, to be a guard for the gathered hordes, summoned in the latter years against a land restored from war (38:7-8).

He comes up against a people gathered from many nations, now dwelling securely on the mountains that had long lain waste (38:8).

You will advance, coming like a storm, like a cloud covering the land, you and all your hordes (38:9). The imagery is vast and overwhelming.

The picture is of an enemy so great that he seems to blot out the sky, an apt image of the world's full strength turned against God's people.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The latter years language speaks of the time of God's restored people, not a datable point on a modern calendar.
- The image of a cloud covering the land conveys the seeming hopelessness of the threat, setting up the wonder of God's deliverance.
- The security of the gathered people is the very condition into which the enemy intrudes, so that their rescue is plainly God's work.

Discussion Prompts

- What does the phrase like a cloud covering the land convey about the threat?
- Why is it significant that the enemy comes against a secure and restored people?
- How should we understand the phrase in the latter years?

Question 3

Student Question:

Gog is pictured coming against a people dwelling securely, a land of unwalled villages, quiet and at peace (38:8–11). Why does the LORD allow His secure people to be threatened, and what does He intend to display through their deliverance?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

On that day an evil scheme will come into Gog's mind, to go up against the land of unwalled villages, the quiet people dwelling in security (38:10–11).

His aim is to seize spoil and carry off plunder, to turn his hand against a people gathered with goods and livestock (38:12).

Onlooking nations, Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish, ask only whether he has come to seize spoil (38:13).

Gog's motive is greed and malice, the predatory instinct of the world against the defenseless people of God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The enemy devises an evil scheme, yet even his plotting unfolds within the larger purpose of God who has summoned him.
- The targeting of an unwalled and peaceful people exposes the cruelty of the world's hostility toward the saints.
- The watching merchants reveal a world interested only in plunder, indifferent to the wrong done to God's people.

Discussion Prompts

- What does Gog's evil scheme reveal about the heart of opposition to God's people?
- Why is the helplessness of the unwalled villages emphasized?
- How does even the enemy's plotting serve the larger purpose of God?

Question 4**Student Question:**

Where in your life has a season of peace been disturbed by sudden opposition, and how might God use even that to make His own power and faithfulness known?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Gog will come from the remote parts of the north, a great host, a mighty army, riding upon horses (38:15). The far north marks the enemy as distant and fearsome.

You will come up against my people Israel like a cloud covering the land (38:16). The threat is again pictured as overwhelming.

Yet the LORD declares the purpose, In the latter days I will bring you against my land, that the nations may know me, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes (38:16).

God brings the enemy precisely so that, in defeating him, He may make His holiness known to all the nations.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The remote north is a symbolic direction for the dreaded enemy, not a clue for locating a modern nation on the map.
- God's stated purpose is His own vindication, that the nations may know Him through the overthrow of His foe.
- The whole assault is bent by God toward the revealing of His holiness, so that even the enemy serves His glory.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does the text picture the enemy coming from the remote north?
- What does God say is His purpose in bringing Gog against His land?
- How does the defeat of the enemy serve the making known of God's holiness?

Question 5

Student Question:

When Gog advances, the LORD declares, My wrath will be roused, and I will summon a sword against him, and I will enter into judgment with him (38:18–22). How does this scene teach the certainty and thoroughness of God's judgment against those who set themselves against His people?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The LORD asks whether Gog is not the one of whom He spoke by the prophets, a gathering long foreseen in His purpose (38:17).

When Gog comes, My wrath will be roused, and there will be a great earthquake, mountains thrown down, every wall falling, the whole creation shaken (38:18–20).

I will summon a sword against Gog, and every man's sword will be against his brother; I will rain on him torrents of rain, hailstones, fire, and sulfur (38:21–22).

So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations, that they may know that I am the LORD (38:23).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The cosmic upheaval, earthquake, fire, and confusion, signals a judgment far larger than any ordinary battle, fitting the symbolic scope of the oracle.
- God overthrows the enemy by His own hand and by turning the foe against himself, so that the victory is wholly His.
- The refrain that they may know that I am the LORD makes clear that the judgment aims at the vindication of God's name.

Discussion Prompts

- What does the cosmic upheaval tell us about the scale of this judgment?
- How does God overthrow Gog, and why is it important that the victory is His alone?
- Why does the passage end with the purpose that they may know that I am the LORD?

Question 6

Student Question:

How does the certainty of God's judgment against His enemies give you courage to stand firm rather than to compromise under pressure?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Again the LORD declares, I am against you, O Gog, and I will turn you about and drive you, bringing you against the mountains of Israel (39:1-2).

I will strike your bow from your left hand and make your arrows drop from your right, disarming the enemy utterly (39:3).

You shall fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your hordes, given as food to birds of prey and beasts of the field (39:4-5).

It is coming and it will be, declares the Lord GOD; that is the day of which I have spoken (39:8). The certainty of the word is absolute.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The disarming of Gog, his bow and arrows struck from his hands, pictures the helplessness of every enemy before God.
- The enemy falls on the mountains where he came to plunder, his assault turned into his own destruction.
- It is coming and it will be seals the certainty of God's victory, the same certainty that runs through all of Ezekiel's oracles.

Discussion Prompts

- What does the striking of Gog's weapons from his hands teach about the enemy's power before God?
- Why is it fitting that Gog falls on the very mountains he came to plunder?
- How does the phrase it is coming and it will be underscore the certainty of God's word?

Question 7

Student Question:

After the overthrow, the LORD declares, I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see my judgment, and the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God (39:21–22). Why is the vindication of God's holy name the central purpose of this whole oracle?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The people of the land will go out and burn the weapons of the fallen host, using them for fuel for seven years, needing to take no wood from the field (39:9–10).

A place is given for Gog's burial, the Valley of the Travelers, where the multitude is buried, and the place is called the Valley of Hamon-gog (39:11).

For seven months the house of Israel will bury them to cleanse the land, and men are appointed to pass through and search out every remaining bone (39:12–15).

The sheer scale of the burning and burying portrays the totality of the enemy's defeat and the cleansing of the land from his presence.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The seven years of fuel and seven months of burial are symbolic of completeness, picturing a defeat so total it takes vast time to clear away.
- The careful cleansing of the land shows that God removes every trace of the enemy from among His people.
- These vivid details serve the theme of total victory rather than supplying literal logistics for a future modern war.

Discussion Prompts

- What do the seven years and seven months suggest about the completeness of the defeat?
- Why is the cleansing of the land given such emphasis?
- How should we read these vivid details in light of the oracle's symbolic purpose?

Question 8

Student Question:

In what ways does your own deliverance from trouble move you to give God the glory and to make His name known rather than crediting your own strength?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The LORD calls the birds and beasts to a great sacrificial feast on the mountains, to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the fallen (39:17–18).

They shall eat the flesh of the mighty and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, gorging themselves at God's table (39:18–19).

At my table you shall be filled with horses and charioteers, with mighty men and all men of war, declares the Lord GOD (39:20).

The grim feast portrays the utter ruin of the proud host, their might become carrion for the scavengers of the field.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The sacrificial feast imagery turns the enemy's slaughter into a vivid sign of God's complete and public judgment.
- This same scene is echoed in Revelation, where the birds are summoned to the supper of God after the enemy is overthrown.
- The proud princes of the earth are reduced to carrion, a sober warning of where hostility to God finally leads.

Discussion Prompts

- What does the sacrificial feast portray about the fate of the enemy?
- How does this scene connect to the imagery taken up in Revelation?
- What warning does the ruin of the proud host hold for all who oppose God?

Question 9

Student Question:

Many have tried to read Gog, Magog, Meshech, and Tubal as a coded map of present-day nations and to use these chapters as a timetable for a coming Middle Eastern war, fixing dates and reading the newspaper into the prophecy. Working carefully through the sweeping and symbolic character of this oracle, the remote northern enemy, the gathered hordes from the corners of the earth, the cosmic upheaval, and the way Revelation 20:8 takes up Gog and Magog as a symbol of the world's massed hostility crushed by God, explain why we read these chapters as a portrait of God's certain victory over every foe of His people rather than as a geopolitical forecast. Why is such sensationalist end-times speculation and date-setting both unfaithful to the text and harmful to the faith, and what is the abiding message God means His people to carry away?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed (39:21). The defeat of Gog displays God's glory to all.

The house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God, from that day forward (39:22). His own people are confirmed in the knowledge of Him.

The nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt treacherously with God (39:23).

God dealt with them according to their uncleanness, hiding His face from them, yet now He acts to vindicate His name (39:24).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The central purpose of the whole oracle is the vindication of God's holy name before the nations and His people.
- Even the earlier exile is here interpreted as God's just dealing, so that His justice and His mercy are both made known.
- The defeat of the enemy serves not the glory of Israel but the glory of God, whose name is hallowed in the sight of all.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is the vindication of God's name the central aim of this oracle?
- How does God use even the past exile to teach the nations about His justice?
- What does it mean that the victory serves God's glory rather than His people's pride?

Question 10

Student Question:

Having studied the rise and ruin of Gog, how will the certainty of God's decisive victory over every enemy, the vindication of His holy name, and the security of His people shape the way you face hostility, resist fear, and rest in the LORD who reigns?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

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 (39:25).

When God has gathered them from the peoples and is sanctified through them in the sight of many nations, then they shall know that He is the LORD (39:27-28).

I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD (39:29).

The oracle that began with a terrible enemy closes with mercy, gathering, and the outpouring of God's Spirit upon His secure and forgiven people.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The outpouring of God's Spirit links this chapter to the promise of chapter 37 and finds its fullness in the gift of the Spirit to God's people in Christ.
- The security of God's people rests not in their own strength but in His mercy, His jealousy for His name, and His abiding presence.
- We read the whole oracle as the assurance that God will overthrow every foe and dwell among a forgiven people by His Spirit, not as a forecast of dated geopolitical events.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the outpouring of God's Spirit connect this oracle to chapter 37 and to the church?
- On what does the true security of God's people rest?
- What is the abiding message God means His people to carry away from the defeat of Gog?