

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 153

Ezekiel 38-39, Part 2

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Episode Summary

This follow-up to Part 1 on these popular and controversial chapters focuses on the interpretation of the Gog-Magog invasion as a whole. Special attention is paid to how Rev 20:7-10 re-purposes Ezekiel 38-39 and how that re-purposing is consistent with a sound interpretation of those two chapters in their own context. The key to this consistency is recognizing the cosmic-supernatural outlook of elements in Ezekiel 38-39, particularly the description of participants and the burial of Gog and his hordes in the “Valley of the Travelers (Hebrew: ‘*oberim*)” in Ezek 39:11.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 153: Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39, Part 2. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how are you doing this week?

MH: Pretty good. Very busy, as usual. Maybe even a little bit more, but pretty good.

TS: Yeah, the last couple weeks have been pretty slammed for me. I'm ready for it to slow down a little bit. It just comes in waves, and it crushes us, but even more so with you, Mike. Now that we've got *Reversing Hermon* out there, I'm really going to try to push you to get that *Unseen Realm 2* out there. (laughter)

MH: That is a pipe dream!

TS: If there were only some way to get rid of your day job. If only there were a way for that to happen.

MH: Yeah. What can I say? That's what it would take. More realistically, I have six weeks to go on my own time in Purgatory. (laughs) My online teaching will be done until the fall again, so it'll feel like a new lease on life, believe me.

TS: Do you get any feedback from your students—that they listen to the show or anything like that?

MH: You know, there are some. Some have read *Unseen Realm*. Some have caught the podcast, or both. I've got a couple that told me they picked up *Reversing Hermon*. So yeah—that does happen.

TS: That's pretty neat.

MH: I had one email this last week that... I can remember what program he's in, but it's at Liberty. They have one class there (I think it's one that Gary Yates teaches) where they require *Unseen Realm* as a textbook. That's where his exposure came from. It's kind of nice.

TS: Are there any others that you know of that require *Unseen Realm* as a textbook?

MH: No, not required. But I don't really go around asking, either. Gary volunteered that, and I've heard from a couple students to that effect.

TS: That's pretty interesting. That's awesome. Well, Mike, I don't want to take too long because I'm interested in Part 2 here. If you don't mind, I just want to get right into it.

MH: (laughing) You're going to shuffle me along! Well, yeah we might as well jump into it.

This is Part 2, as Trey said. So please, if you have not listened to Part 1, you really need to listen to that. Part 1 dealt with who Gog is and isn't, and I'm going to assume that listeners have heard that podcast in this particular episode because it is Part 2. So I won't repeat its points or even necessarily reread parts of Ezekiel 38 and 39 that I read in that episode. We'll obviously hit a few things here in both chapters relevant to what we're going to discuss today, but the chapters are long and I'm not going to take the time to read through all of them, or even what I read through last time.

The major takeaway from Part 1, just to refresh the memory of those who did listen to it, is that Gog and his hordes are part of the "Cosmic North" motif in Old Testament theology. That is, they represent evil powers of darkness in a cosmic sense. That involves human warfare because of this linkage/relationship between the powers of darkness and humanity, but human participants are not the primary focus. You need to keep that thought in mind as we proceed today.

A few preliminary observations as we transition into Part 2. Some of this will touch on a little bit of Part 1 content. Two observations here. Number 1, the primary focus (again, just to fix it in our minds) when it comes to Ezekiel 38 and

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39 is supernatural evil. That's why it doesn't matter if Gog can be satisfactorily identified as a specific person—either in the past, present, or future—or not. Gog cannot be clearly identified, but that doesn't matter because the focus is cosmic evil—supernatural evil. It's also why it's pointless to try and impose modern warfare weapons into the chapter or modern countries into the narrative or to come up with some kind of silly reason why armies in the future will fight with weapons of the past (the pre-modern era). You see all of that when you see these chapters discussed. None of that really matters. It's all unnecessary and really pays no attention to the cosmic context of the cosmic north (*Tsaphon* or *Zaphon* idea that I talk about in *Unseen Realm*), and of course, that I talked about last time. So the humans aren't the primary point. The battle is a battle between supernatural evil and Yahweh's own people and land, and of course, ultimately him.

Secondly (and I mentioned this briefly last time), the Gog and Magog references are repurposed in Revelation 20:7-9. We're going to spend a good amount of time talking about that in this episode. So if we accept the New Testament as an inspired commentary on the Old Testament, then that repurposing is significant. In other words, we can't ignore it. We have to let the New Testament writer be our guide, so to speak, when it comes to understanding Gog and Magog. Now with all that as a backdrop, I'm going to ask three questions that I want listeners to sort of keep floating around in their head, keep oriented to.

1. How are we to read Ezekiel 38 and 39 as to its meaning?
2. How does the New Testament repurpose these chapters? We know that it does, but how does it do it?
3. Are the New Testament and Old Testament portrayals consistent with each other?

I'm going to start with a few key items in Ezekiel 38 and 39 that will help us to think about all three of these questions. In Ezekiel 38:4, God is speaking to Gog and says:

⁴And I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed in full armor, a great host, all of them with buckler and shield, wielding swords.

So there's this notion of putting hooks into Gog's jaws and bringing him out. I mention that because we've seen language like that elsewhere in Ezekiel, specifically Ezekiel 29:3-4. To refresh your memory there, this was God speaking to the Pharaoh of Egypt. This is one of the oracles of the nations against Egypt. We read this:

³speak, and say, Thus says the Lord God:

**“Behold, I am against you,
Pharaoh king of Egypt,
the great dragon that lies
in the midst of his streams,
that says, ‘My Nile is my own;
I made it for myself.’
⁴ I will put hooks in your jaws,
and make the fish of your streams stick to your scales;
and I will draw you up out of the midst of your streams,
with all the fish of your streams
that stick to your scales.**

Listeners will remember when we talked about Ezekiel 29 (in that oracle against Pharaoh) that the point of that imagery was Leviathan—the great sea beast, the great chaos beast, the chaos metaphor of the ancient Near East (specifically ancient Canaan most particularly). We also find it in the Hebrew Bible. When will God deal with Leviathan or chaos? Well, we know the answer to that question. That question is in Isaiah 27:1. This is all backdrop that I want in the listeners' minds here.

**In that day the LORD with his hard and great and strong sword will
punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he
will slay the dragon that is in the sea.**

So Leviathan gets what's coming to him at the Day of the Lord. These are all important concepts. There's some connection between Gog and Leviathan and, of course, the Day of the Lord. So that's sort of preliminary beginning number 1.

Ezekiel 38:5-6 (the next two verses) provide a list of Gog's helpers, his compatriots from the cosmic north:

**⁵ Persia, Cush, and Put are with them, all of them with shield and
helmet; ⁶ Gomer and all his hordes; Beth-togarmah from the uttermost parts of
the north with all his hordes—many peoples are with you.**

While we noted human participants are secondary, their inclusion in the description reinforces the supernatural emphasis. You say, "How does that work?" You'll notice that Israel's enemies come from the south (Cush and Put), the east (Persia), and the west. You say, "Where's the west?" Well, back in Part 1 we talked about the geographic orientation of Gomer and Beth-togarmah and Meschech and Tubal and these place names. Some of them corresponded to

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Javan, which is the Semitic word for Greece, or the Aegean region. That would be west of where the battle is going to take place. What this means is that the imagery is therefore that Israel's enemies come from the four corners of the earth. That should sound familiar to readers of Revelation 20:8, which says that Gog and Magog will come from the four corners of the earth. Satan will go out, he will go to the four corners of the earth, he will gather Gog and Magog all to battle, with numbers like the sand of the sea (Revelation 20:8). There's a connection there. In the verse I just read, Gog and Magog are specifically mentioned. You get this idea that their helpers—all the enemies there in Revelation 20—are from the four corners of the earth. It's interesting because if we look at Ezekiel 38, that's what we've got. We've got enemies from the four corners of the earth. The connection is pretty clear.

The battle takes place (according to Ezekiel 38:8, 39:2-4) on or at the "mountains of Israel." The phrase is used elsewhere in Ezekiel as a general reference to the land of Israel or Judah. We have it in Ezekiel 6:2-3. That one, I think, is kind of noteworthy. We'll come back to that and read it. We also have Ezekiel 19:9, 33:38, 34:13-14, 36:1-4, and 37:22. That's not all the references, but just a sampling. I want to go to Ezekiel 37:22 and read that. God is the speaker:

²² And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king over them all, and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms.

So you read a verse like that, "One nation in the land on the mountains of Israel," and it's very clear that it's a phrase that's used generally for the whole land. If we go to the earlier reference that I mentioned —Ezekiel 6:

² "Son of man, set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, ³ and say, You mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God! Thus says the Lord God to the mountains and the hills, to the ravines and the valleys: Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places.

There, in the immediate context of Ezekiel, he's referring to Jerusalem and Judah. Two samples there that, again, show a little bit of variety but still consistency when it comes to this mountain language.

The chief mountain, though, in Israel—where the Lord is—is, of course, Zion. We get this language in other passages in the Old Testament. Isaiah 2:2 says:

² It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD

**shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be lifted up above the hills;
and all the nations shall flow to it...**

Isaiah 27:13 is another one:

¹³ And in that day a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

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This is an obvious reference. Jerusalem is Mount Zion. I point this out because even though we have a plural reference here ("mountains" of Israel), the Day of the Lord is still associated with one particular mountain, and that is Zion where the temple was and where the presence of God was situated. Obviously, even though there is no temple now, it is forever associated with the presence of God in the temple. That's going to come up a little bit later again. I'll just telegraph it now. If you've read *Unseen Realm*, this is important because of the whole concept of *Har Mo'ed*—the mount of assembly. *Har Mo'ed* is behind the phrase "Armageddon." So Armageddon is not a battle that takes place at Megiddo. It's a battle that takes place at and for Zion—Mount Zion, Jerusalem. There's a whole backdrop to this discussion, but I bring it up here again to get your thoughts oriented to Armageddon. If you're listening carefully now, you're thinking already, "Wait a minute. The connection of Revelation 20 with Ezekiel 38 and 39... Revelation 20 isn't Armageddon, because Revelation 20:7-9 occurs after Revelation 19, of course. And Revelation 19 is where the Lord comes back on the white horse at the battle of Armageddon to save Jerusalem, and so on and so forth. Those are two different things, two different chapters. So if the Ezekiel language is associated with Revelation 20, why is Mike saying that we need to be thinking about Armageddon, as well?" We'll return to that. I'm just planting the question in your mind because once we get there you'll see why this is relevant.

Let's just keep moving. Ezekiel 38:16 situates the invasion in the "latter days." The description of the conflict uses stock expressions associated with the latter days or "that day" or "on that day." In other words, the Day of the Lord. Let's just read Ezekiel 38:17, just to give you an example. In any study in your own personal Bible study of the Day of the Lord, you're going to see language like this all over the prophets.

¹⁷ "Thus says the Lord God: Are you he of whom I spoke in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel, who in those days prophesied for years that I would bring you against them? ¹⁸ But on that day, the day that Gog shall come against the land of Israel, declares the Lord God, my wrath will be roused in my anger. ¹⁹ For in my jealousy and in my blazing wrath I declare, On that

day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. ²⁰The fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the field and all creeping things that creep on the ground, and all the people who are on the face of the earth, shall quake at my presence. And the mountains shall be thrown down, and the cliffs shall fall, and every wall shall tumble to the ground.

Any study of the Day of the Lord will inform you that this is stock vocabulary. This is a familiar description of the Day of the Lord event. Now on the page for this episode, we're going to post an article from *Anchor Bible Dictionary* on the Day of the Lord. You could read that and look up the verse references and you'll see that what I'm saying is true—that this is stock vocabulary of the Day of the Lord. Why is that important? Well, if it's stock vocabulary of the Day of the Lord and Ezekiel 38 talks about "in the latter days," then this event is associated with the Day of the Lord. You say, "Mike, what's the Day of the Lord?" Well, the Day of the Lord in Old Testament thinking is the final judgment of God when wrong is made right, when the nations that are still in rebellion (and of course their gods)... Remember our episode back on Isaiah 34 that not only do those who are hostile to Yahweh and his people get punished at the Day of the Lord, but the host of heaven also gets punished. The house is cleaned there, too. But this is a time of final judgment when the wrong is made right, the nations that are in rebellion and their gods are judged in a permanent sense, and the righteous are vindicated. In biblical thinking this is called the Day of the Lord because this is when God returns to earth to set things right. In hindsight of the New Testament, therefore, this is a reference (and this is the way it's used in the New Testament) to the Second Coming of Christ. The New Testament uses the phrase "the day of Christ" as a substitution for the Day of the Lord. This is the Second Coming. So this description in Ezekiel 38:17-20 links Gog and Magog (this incident) with the Second Coming of Jesus. What I'm doing is I'm giving you the elements to what Ezekiel 38 and 39 mean and describe. This is not a battle that occurs some years before the Second Coming. I know that's common to situate this battle at the beginning of a seven-year tribulation or at the midpoint or whatever. Some put it at the end where it ought to be because if you're looking at that eschatological system, that's when the Lord is going to return. But that is when this event becomes a factor—at the Second Coming of Christ and not before (not years before) because this is Day of the Lord language.

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Back a little bit more (getting a little bit more detail in this description), at this judgment the ones described here in Ezekiel 38 and on into chapter 39... God destroys Gog and his hordes with fiery hailstones from the sky. That's Ezekiel 38:23 and Ezekiel 39:6. Gog and his hordes are buried in the "Valley of the Travelers." I'm quoting the ESV here. It's "east of the sea" and is also called the Valley of *Hamon-gog*. That's Ezekiel 39:11 and 15. We'll have more to say about the travelers. That's actually an important part of what's going on here with Ezekiel 38 and 39, but get the picture that this event coincides with the Day of

the Lord, which the New Testament puts at the Second Coming. Gog and his hordes are defeated—destroyed by fiery hailstones from the sky. Does this sound familiar? You actually get this language in Revelation 20. You sort of expect it there because Revelation 20 references Gog and Magog, so that's not really a surprise, but I think we need to point it out explicitly. Again, this event (the Day of the Lord) is referred to as the Day of Christ in the New Testament.

With respect to the New Testament and Revelation 20, just by way of a little summary statement here... Remember that we have the enemies from the four corners of the earth in Revelation 20, they're destroyed with fire from heaven in Revelation 20. Simple enough. It's very clear that Revelation 20:7-9 is drawing on Ezekiel 38 and 39. In Revelation 20:8, Gog and Magog are mentioned explicitly. You say, "Mike, this is so obvious. Why are you making a point of it?" Because this connection with Revelation and specifically the Day of the Lord troubles people who want to associate this event with the beginning of a seven-year tribulation and a Rapture. In other words, their system gets in the way of the text. You will actually see in some writers... People say things like, "This event in Revelation 20 is a different Gog and Magog battle, not the one in Ezekiel 38. It's a second one. It's a different one." That is bogus. The only reason people are saying that is to make their system prop up. We're not about systems here. We're about the text. If we're going to do biblical theology, by definition it needs to be about the text, not a system that we've constructed and bring to the text and then have to adjust the text to fit the system. That's not what we do here. But you'll see that. Even though this seems like an obvious thing, we have to point it out because this is what certain writers will do. They'll just say it must be a different one so that their system survives.

I'm going to be a little kinder to systems toward the end of this episode because certain systems can work within what we're going to be doing here. This is not going to narrow into one system. So just a heads-up there. But we need to point these things out just to reinforce the idea that the text needs to be primary and systems are put in the background somewhere.

Let's continue on with this burial. The burial language is really important. Frankly, it's kind of interesting. In regard to this reference that Gog and his hordes get buried in the Valley of the Travelers (Ezekiel 39:11 and 15)... The Valley of Travelers is also known as the Valley of Hamon-gog. What's being described here? There's a conceptual and a geographical backdrop to what is described in these two verses that is actually quite consistent with Revelation 20. Let's think of Revelation 20 first. That might be more familiar. So let's just go there and I'll read it to you and then we'll come back to the Valley of the Travelers thing. So Revelation 20 verse 7:

⁷And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of

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the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. ⁹ 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...

So we've got Gog/Magog, four corners of the earth, and then fire from heaven. All these things are in Ezekiel 38/39. Verse 10:

¹⁰ and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

After these hordes that are surrounding Jerusalem and threatening them... After Gog and Magog and the four corners of the earth people are consumed with fire from heaven, their leader (the devil here in Revelation 20) gets thrown in the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet are. If you go back to Ezekiel 38 and 39, what happens after Gog and his hordes are defeated with fiery hailstones from the sky? They are buried in this valley—the Valley of the Travelers, east of the sea, also called the Valley of *Hamon-gog*. You say, "How in the world is that consistent?" Well, we need to divert our attention away a little bit from earth-bound literalism here and think more conceptually, think more theologically, think more abstractly about this. Gog and his hordes (buried in this Valley of the Travelers place)... the Hebrew reads יַם גִּי הַעֲבָרִים . That is literally translated "the valley of the travelers." Now I want to read through the DDD entry (Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible). There is an entry for "Travelers," believe it or not. I'm hoping this will interest listeners in what's going on behind earth-bound literalism in Ezekiel 38 and 39 because that's usually how people approach the passage. They press what Ezekiel 38 and 39 says into some earthly/literalistic scheme. There's something else going on here. Here's the DDD entry, which begins a little bit awkwardly:

The participle *Qal* plural *‘ōbērîm* [the form of the word] of the verb *‘br*, 'to pass from one side to the other' seems to have a special meaning in the context of the cult of the dead, denoting the spirits of the dead crossing the border between the land of the living and the world of the dead. It can be interpreted as a divine name in Ezek 39:11, 14...

That's going with the Hebrew numbering. What it means by "divine name" there is a place associated with divine beings. Of course, we've argued that Gog is this cosmic divine being—a symbol of cosmic evil—and the human element is secondary here.

It can be interpreted as a divine name in Ezek 39:11, 14, which may have also been preserved in the geographical name Abarim (Num 21:10–11; 27:12; 33:44, 47–48; Deut 32:49; and Jer 22:20). Its Ugaritic cognate, then, would be *ʿbrm* in *KTU*² 1.22 i:15. [MH: That's the numbering system for the cuneiform tablets from Ugarit.]

In the Ugaritic text *KTU*² 1.22 describing a necromantic session, the king invokes the spirits of the dead (→Rephaim) and celebrates a feast, probably the New Year Festival, with them. It is told that they came over traveling by horse-drawn chariots. As they are taking part in the meal served for them they are explicitly called 'those who came over'.

They are called *ʿōbērîm*. So you have Rephaim referred to as *ʿōbērîm*. Are you catching a drift now? The Rephaim are associated with the underworld. In Revelation 20 language: "the lake of fire."

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In Job 33:18 the verb *ʿbr* is used to denote the crossing of the river between life and death (FUHS 1986:1024). This represents the quite general ancient conception of a river or sea separating the world of the dead from the land of the living (cf. the Greek Styx and the Akkadian Hubur). In the Sumerian flood story Dilmun, the place of blissful afterlife, is called 'land of the crossing' (*kur-bal* *Atr* 144:260)...

The valley of the *ʿōbērîm* is located 'east of the sea' (Ezekiel 39:11), which is probably the Dead Sea. So it was part of Transjordan. This is a region which shows many traces of ancient cults of the dead, such as the megalithic monuments called dolmens and placenames referring to the dead and the netherworld, viz. Obot (→'Spirit-of-the-Dead'), Peor (cf →Baal of Peor), and Abarim (SPRONK 1986: 228–230).

I'm going to go back up to the beginning of this entry and he gives some references to the geographical place name that we now know as Transjordan: *ʿōbērîm*. Here's what Numbers 21:10-11 says:

¹⁰ **And the people of Israel set out and camped in Oboth.**

Oboth is the Hebrew word for "spirits of the dead." The "Mistress of the Ob" is the title of the medium at Endor in 1 Samuel 28. *Oboth* is, therefore, naturally associated with necromancy, the spirits of the dead, the Rephaim dead in the underworld. And *ʿōbērîm* here in the verse:

¹¹ **And they set out from Oboth and camped at Iye-abarim, in the wilderness that is opposite Moab, toward the sunrise.**

There are a few of these references that link *‘ōbērîm* with Oboth. They're very close to each other. Again, these are gateways. These are considered to be places that lead to the netherworld, the underworld—the realm of the dead where the Rephaim are. It's just that in this case it happens to be in Moab in the Transjordan. This is the place that is referred to in Ezekiel 39. So you have Gog and his hordes winding up in the bad place—the netherworld, the realm of the dead where the Rephaim are.

You're going to miss all of that if you have an earth-bound, literalistic hermeneutic in this chapter. I've read lots of books about, "How many months would it take for people using shovels and backhoes to bury X number..." That is not the point! This is cosmic theological language. This is the language of supernatural darkness. We get lost and fixated on the literalism that we're trying to impose on the text and we miss the fact that an ancient Israelite reader would have read this and gone, "Okay, they're all going to wind up in hell." (laughs) That's the reference! That's why Ezekiel 39 here actually fits very nicely with Revelation 20, because Satan goes there. We've had the description of the resurrection. Those who were not found written in the Book of Life wind up in the Lake of Fire. We've had that. The beast is there. Again, it's a consistent picture: this is where the bad ones go and this is where the good ones don't go, that sort of thing. We miss that when we're trying to over-literalize.

I would say just by way of summary here, viewing the passage in a cosmic sort of way makes the connection to Revelation 20 pretty obvious. In Ezekiel 39, Gog—a symbol of cosmic darkness—and all his hordes go down to the valley of the *‘ōbērîm*. Where else would they go? That's where they basically belong—the valley of the *‘ōbērîm*, the ones who have passed into the underworld before them, the abode of the Rephaim.

Other scholars prefer to see the references here in Ezekiel 39 to Molech imagery. There are certain reasons why they prefer that. Block, for instance, takes this view. Most of his argument is really on the fact that the Valley of Hamon-gog in Ezekiel 39 sounds in Hebrew like the Valley of Hinnom. Here they are in Hebrew: you have *gē' hamon gog* and *gē' hinnōm* (גֵּיא הַמּוֹן גּוֹג and גֵּיא-הַיְנוֹם). They sound a little bit alike, and Block says the Valley of Hamon-gog might be a play on words on the Valley of Hinnom. Of course, the Valley of Hinnom is notorious in the Old Testament for being the place of child sacrifice to Molech. This is why some scholars prefer Molech imagery. Block doesn't really spend too much time defending this. He more or less just assumes it. But the fact is, he doesn't interact at all with the Ugaritic material that the DDD entry brings up, so that's kind of a gap in Block's commentary there.

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Those who prefer Molech also do so a little bit because if Molech is behind the phrasing then the death... (Catch this thought, it's important. You don't need Molech for this, but catch this thought.) They like it because the death of Gog and

his hordes therefore becomes a sacrifice to Yahweh in reverse of the sacrifices of children at the Valley of Himmon to Molech. I would say, though, that this sacrificial aspect is valid but it can be in view without any reference to Molech at all. If you look at Ezekiel 39:17, it says:

¹⁷“As for you, son of man, thus says the Lord God: Speak to the birds of every sort and to all beasts of the field: ‘Assemble and come, gather from all around to the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you, a great sacrificial feast on the mountains of Israel...

The word there in Hebrew is *zebah*—the normal word for sacrifice. So you don't really need to specifically have Molech in view here to understand that what's going on here is, in effect, the offering of Gog and his hordes up to Yahweh as a sacrifice—kind of reversing the idolatrous pattern that would have been represented by Baal worship or any worship of any other god. Again, the imagery and language is actually there. If you don't want to see Molech and you prefer the Rephaim imagery (which I do, I think it makes a lot of sense) then you can still have the sacrificial element.

I want to say something else about this, too, before we leave the point. If you look at Ezekiel 39:17-20... I just read verse 17 there. It turns out that Yahweh is the one killing the sacrifice for his guests. And his guests are the birds and the beasts of the field. He's the one inviting (by means of the prophet) the birds of prey and the animals to the feast.

¹⁷“As for you, son of man, thus says the Lord God: Speak to the birds of every sort and to all beasts of the field: ‘Assemble and come, gather from all around to the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you...

¹⁹And you shall eat fat till you are filled, and drink blood till you are drunk, at the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you. ²⁰And you shall be filled at my table...

So this is actually imagery of Yahweh slaying Gog and his hordes as a sacrificial meal for his guests. That's what you get. Now, it's at a point like this that you'd want to return for interpretation's sake to the "hooks in the jaws" description for an added dimension. Remember, the hooks in the jaws description from Ezekiel 38:4, where Gog is described in this way, just like Leviathan imagery in other passages. Gog is described this way and that links him to Leviathan, the symbol of all that opposes God, the symbol of chaos, wickedness, evil, upheaval, and turmoil—all the forces against God. The death of Gog and his hordes is a sacrificial banquet for Yahweh and the righteous, but where does Leviathan come in? Well, in the Second Temple period, you actually have a number of texts

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that pick up this language and imagery. There are a number of Second Temple texts that have (for lack of a better way to put it) at the Day of the Lord when God returns to earth and defeats Leviathan (remember Isaiah 27:1, "in that day" the Lord is going to kill Leviathan)... The thinking was that when that happens, Leviathan is basically served up as a meal to the righteous. It sounds really weird and a little bit grotesque, but this was the idea. Using symbolic language, this is a picture of ultimate victory. God isn't going to just kill the forces of wickedness and evil and do away with them, you're going to have a barbeque out of it! (laughs) Here's the image: evil and chaos will be totally consumed in the end—totally consumed. And the way to convey that idea is this meal imagery.

That has all sorts of ramifications, I think, for the idea of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. What is served at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb? What is the meat and the drink? There are just a number of ways that this can go and can be taken, but it's an image—a picture—of the final, ultimate victory over evil. It's not that there's going to be literal eating and all that sort of stuff. It's an image that's drawn from the Old Testament and even the wider ancient Near Eastern world about what's going to happen to evil at the end. It's going to be totally gone. It's not going to be wounded and kind of left over. It's going to be totally consumed. That's the point here.

I would ask (just as a sidebar) since this idea—this valley of the *oberim*, the Rephaim, and all this, serving up the corpses of evil metaphorically to the righteous (not only the righteous, but specifically in Ezekiel to the birds of prey and the beasts of the field—it's kind of an ultimate indignity, as well)... This idea gets picked up later in literature as the eschatological feast. If that's the case (even if it's partly the case... let's just leave it with the birds of prey and the animals here, that they consume, because that's strictly-speaking what Ezekiel says)... If that is a parallel (because they go to the realm of the dead) to Satan and his minions and everybody else that goes to the Lake of Fire in Revelation, then what does this say about the redemption of Satan?

Recently on the FB group we had this big brouhaha over angelic redemption which, of course, I don't buy. But this is one of the reasons why I don't buy universalism. You have this kind of language that defines ultimate victory in the consumption of evil. That's just putting it bluntly. It doesn't communicate the idea that evil is going to get another chance. There's nothing in Ezekiel, there's nothing in Revelation 20 that suggests that Satan, his minions, and those under his power who fight against Yahweh and his people get a second chance. They don't get regurgitated so that they can get another chance. Angelic redemption, when viewed against the context of this kind of whole burnt offering or meal offering language just doesn't make any sense. It's not even in the picture. That's the point. There are no weasel-words in the passage that you can go to and say, "Oh, they'll probably still be around and get redeemed later on." No, that just isn't there. You get the same kind of sacrificial language (the *cherem* devoted to Yahweh) of the conquest, specifically aimed at the Anakim—the giant clans and

all that. You don't get weasel-words there for some later redemption. You just don't. So this isn't the whole reason, obviously, why I don't buy angelic redemption or the redemption of Satan at some point. It's just one of the reasons I have. But I thought since we're here and we have this underworld imagery we might as well bring it up.

Now remember, as well... This gets kind of interesting and this goes into the Second Temple thinking. Who else is in the Lake of Fire with Satan? Well, it's the beast! The beast, the beast... why does that sound familiar... the beast? We always think of antichrist, but where does the beast of the book of Revelation (Revelation 13) come from? In Revelation 13:1, the beast rises out of the sea! It's Leviathan imagery. And Leviathan, the beast, the forces of chaos, the forces of everything hostile to God is what this language points to. These are important metaphors that we can't dispense with. That also winds up again in this realm of the dead. There's no opportunity for future redemption or anything else like this. Evil is devoured and done away with.

45:00 Now, a bit of a commercial here, if you'll pardon that. I discuss some of this (actually a good bit of it) in *Reversing Hermon*. There's one particular chapter—chapter 11, the one that deals with antichrist and the imagery of antichrist and how it's associated with Babylon and how that's the backdrop to "mystery Babylon." That chapter deals with a lot of this imagery. The point of origin—the reason why these things are connected (Leviathan, Babylon, this place of the dead and the Rephaim—and we know who they are)... The reason why that is important to understanding Babylon and the concept of Mystery Babylon is because of where that stuff comes from and the fact that the Apkallu (the Mesopotamian counterparts to the fallen sons of God—the Watchers) are Babylonian. Those are Babylonian good guys. All of these things go together. This is a matrix of ideas. So when Revelation is talking about the beast and mystery Babylon, there are connections back to supernatural forces of evil—the Rephaim, the Nephilim, the fallen sons of God, the Watchers. This is a matrix of ideas. There's something going on here that our understanding of these passages in Revelation will be incomplete (and in some cases go off track) if we don't factor in this material. I'm not going to get into that here. There are specifics you'll find in the book. But since we're into this subject matter, you should know that there is something of a summary of this material in the book.

I'll mention another book here. If you're interested in the whole Leviathan-as-sacrificial-meal idea of the Second Temple period, I have a book recommendation for you. It's available used, and it's a volume in the *Harvard Semitic Monograph* series. The foreign language stuff is typically in transliteration in that series, so I think you can still read it even if you don't have Hebrew. It's a book by K. William Whitney. The title is *Two Strange Beasts: Leviathan and Behemoth in the Second Temple*. These are not dinosaurs, folks. Please. They're not dinosaurs. These are important metaphors that are about cosmic darkness. It's so much more interesting! (laughs) If you just situate it in its own context,

rather than trying to defend something that Ken Hamm says... It's just so much more interesting and so much more contextually relevant. So if you're interested in this subject, I high recommend Whitney's book. It's one of the few books that collects all the material.

Now let's go back to our purpose here: Ezekiel 38 and 39. We've talked about how Revelation 20:7-10 repurposes imagery from Ezekiel 38 and 39. We've got this battle at the end (Revelation 20). It's the Day of the Lord. The Lord returns and he's going to finally defeat Satan and all of evil and chaos and wickedness and they get sent to the Lake of Fire. "Gog and Magog" is used in Revelation 20. We go back to Ezekiel 38 and 39 and we find the very same themes: "at the latter days," the day of the Lord," the Day of the Lord vocabulary. This is when this battle happens. Gog is a symbol of supernatural chaos and evil. We're not denying that humans are involved in this because of the symbiosis between the unseen realm and our realm. We get that. This is what we do on this podcast. We don't look at one or the other—it's always a both/and. We understand that. But if you focus on the literalism that's earth-bound you're going to miss all this stuff. You're going to miss how Ezekiel 38 and 39 get repurposed in Revelation 20 and how it describes the final conflict when all of this is put to an end—the eschatological ultimate victory.

Having said all that, I've been holding back one thing. This repurposing is important. It's important for another reason. There's an element of the repurposing of Ezekiel 38 and 39 in the book of Revelation that, for some scholars... They will use it to argue the death of premillennial eschatology. I think that is an overstatement. What I show you in what follows here (the last few minutes of the episode here) might, for some, kill off traditional premillennialism. Again, I'm going to say that's overstated and I'll tell you why. But it doesn't kill off at all the idea of a future earthly messianic kingdom. You say, "Well isn't that the Millennium? Isn't that what premillennialism is all about?" That's the way premillennialism is talked about, but the idea of an earthly reign of the returned Christ doesn't need to be restricted to a system. With that, let's get into it.

50:00

Here's the issue: We know that Revelation 20 draws on Ezekiel 38 and 39. It should be a no-brainer by now. It mentions Gog and Magog explicitly and you've got all these parallels. You would expect John, who is writing the book of Revelation, when he gets to Revelation 20 and he mentions Gog and Magog... You'd expect him to have Ezekiel 38 and 39 in mind. That's obvious. But here's the rub: John also repurposes Ezekiel 38 and 39 in the chapter before Revelation 20 (Revelation 19), and that's the passage where Jesus comes back on a white horse to slay the beast and save Jerusalem. John repurposes Ezekiel 38 and 39 in both Revelation 19 and 20. If you're a premillennialist who's reading the book of Revelation in a linear/chronological fashion, you're thinking, "How can that be? Because chapter 19 is the Second Coming of Jesus and in the first six verses of chapter 20 we've got a Millennium and then after it's over we've got this other battle. How can they both be described using the same Old Testament

chapters?" You've got a sense of the problem. I'll explain that in a moment. I'm going to read you Revelation 19, though, so you know what this is based on. Here's Revelation 19:11-21. Our focus here is going to be on verses 17-21, but I want to read the whole thing here.

¹¹Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself.¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

This is clearly the return of Jesus!

¹⁷Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for the great supper of God,¹⁸ to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great."¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army.²⁰ And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.²¹ And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

There are only three passages in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) where a word in the root family for "bird" and for "fly" (the terms that are used in Revelation 19) appear. There's only three passages in the Septuagint where those terms appear: Deuteronomy 4:17, Proverbs 19:12, and Ezekiel 39:4. The last of these is the only one with an added lemma for "eating." So it's pretty clear that John in Revelation 19 is drawing on Ezekiel 39. So here's the question: How can John have the same passage in Ezekiel in mind for both Revelation 19 and Revelation 20? Doesn't John know that Revelation 19 has Jesus returning and then we have a thousand-year kingdom and it's only after that Millennium

that the events of Revelation 20 play out, since Revelation 20:1-6 mention the thousand years several times? Doesn't John know that? Well, the point is that maybe John doesn't know that. Maybe John isn't thinking of this chronology. Maybe his repurposing of Ezekiel 38 and 39 in both chapters indicates that both chapters describe the same event—the return of Christ and the defeat of Satan.

Many commentators who do not hold to a dispensational premillennial reading of Revelation will take this view. They believe that Revelation is not to be read in a linear/chronological fashion but that its events (the three series of the seven judgments) are to be read instead in cycles—that is, the three series describe the same seven cyclical events on earth. This is known as the "recapitulation reading" of the book of Revelation. Meredith Kline (whose article I referenced in Part 1 on *Har-Magedon*) is one of the few evangelicals to see the divine council stuff in Revelation. Kline was one who believes that this back-to-back use in Revelation 19 and 20 of Ezekiel 38 and 39 means that the two chapters describe the same event. That would, in turn, mean that there is no intervening one thousand-year period. The one-thousand-year reference just means "a long time" and applies to the period that precedes the Second Coming—the period in which we now live (the so-called Church Age). If this is the right reading, the thousand-year Millennial kingdom vanishes. That's what Kline says in his article. He refers to this as the "death of premillennial eschatology" because you collapse chapters 19 and 20 into each other. If you're dealing with the Second Coming at the Day of the Lord, then the period that precedes the Second Coming and the defeat of Satan—the period that precedes Revelation 20:7-10—is not a one-thousand-year literal Millennial kingdom. It's the period in which we now live. That makes the premillennial system implode, according to Kline. Kline is an amillennialist and he uses a lot of the Old Testament imagery that is there (it's legit—it's there) to make premillennialism collapse. If you are a premillennialist I don't want this to discourage you from reading Kline's article. It's actually really good. But this is where he winds up.

Now I would say that Kline's reading is certainly possible, but it could be also that John does use Ezekiel 38 and 39 to describe different events just because he wants to do that. In other words, he picks something from Ezekiel 39 to describe something at the Second Coming and then he picks something from Ezekiel 38 and 39 to describe this event after a Millennium. As a premillennialist you could argue that. "Okay, John's using Ezekiel 38 and 39 in both passages. Whoop de doo. He's using the Gog and Magog passage both times. He uses different elements of it. Big deal. We don't have to collapse the two into one unit, thus eliminating a thousand-year reign before these events happen that turns the thousand-year reign into the Church Age. We don't have to do that like the amillennialist does. We can acknowledge that John is using Ezekiel 38 and 39 in both passages and still work the system." And you can. You can do that.

I would also add, even if Kline is correct... Let's just assume Kline is correct and the thousand year references in Revelation 20 have nothing to do with a

thousand-year Millennial kingdom, it refers to the Church Age preceding the Second Coming. Let's just go with what Kline says. Guess what? That doesn't rule out a literal earthly kingdom of the messiah! Why not? Because you have one right after that: you have the New Earth. You have a kingdom on the New Earth with messiah ruling. Many a-millers want the kingdom to be the Church Age, period. That's all they're interested in. And then the New Earth talk (Revelation 21-22), "Ah, that's just talk about heaven. That's just all symbolic about heaven, wherever that is." Well, that's a *guess*. I would suggest that the talk in Revelation 21 and 22 is an earthly kingdom because that's where it is! It's on earth. It's a new Eden, it's a global Eden. I don't think that's accidental. I think that's deliberate. All of this is why I say when I get asked about eschatological systems that I don't care about the systems. Who gives a rip? I think there is recapitulation in Revelation, but I also think there's some linear chronology there, too. I don't think it has to be an either/or, I think it's a both/and. And I also think that the final New Earth is the earthly kingdom of God. We're going to get that! If that's the case, then to limit it to a thousand years makes the kingdom too small, too short, too brief. I'm interested in (and believe in) a future earthly kingdom of the reigning messiah over all the nations and we as believers reigning with him, displacing the fallen sons of God who now rule over them. That is what I think biblical eschatology describes. I don't care how it fits into a system or IF it fits into a system. I don't care about systems. If you want your system, I've just given the way it can work if you're an a-miller or a pre-miller. But personally, I just don't care about the systems. I'm interested in how the book ends. It ends on earth. I think to reclaim the nations involves events happening on earth and the kingdom on earth. That's where I'm at and that's why.

So to wrap up, what's Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38 and 39) about? It's an event associated with—and ended by—the Second Coming. It's the Day of the Lord. It's not a battle that occurs years earlier than the Second Coming. How that plays out in terms of human participants (precisely identifying which human nations and armies) is anybody's guess. That is secondary. The important point is that Gog is a Satan figure and the battle describes Satan's last gasp at robbing Yahweh of his people and his kingdom.

TS: Mike, you mentioned in *The Unseen Realm* about how Irenaeus noticed that the word "titan" added up to 666 in Greek gematria. Leviathan was a titan, so that's pretty interesting.

MH: It is. That is something that I discuss in chapter 11 in *Reversing Hermon*, as well. There are other gematric approaches to that which are worth thinking about, too.

TS: Absolutely. Mike, we might as well just cover the book of Revelation. Come on! (laughter) Just get it over with... Like pulling the band-aid off. Let's just do it!

MH: (laughing) It's just a convoluted mess.

TS: Let's just do it and get it over with. That way you can just put it behind you and move on.

MH: I'll tell you what turns me off about it is you end up spending half of every episode talking about systems.

TS: Well, can you cover it without covering the systems?

MH: Probably not, because when you say something you have to say, "You've probably heard this different thing over here and that's because you've been taught this system." Or "this might be really familiar, what you were taught in church, but your Christian neighbor doesn't believe that because you've got different systems." So you always end up talking about how the book is taught and the presumptions therein to the book. At the end of the day, everybody's guessing. I do think there is recapitulation. There really is something to that. But you can't just use that and say that nothing in the book is chronological. That's the kind of overstatement you get when people are defending hermeneutics and specific systems. You just have to muck through all of that every time you say anything about any particular passage in the book. I think it's easy to get lost in all of that.

TS: We can do a Naked Bible version of it. Sure, you can mention some systems, but...

MH: (laughing) "Naked Revelation."

TS: No? All right. Well, we'll get pieces here and there, I guess. Mike, next week it'll be our 20th Q&A show so get ready for that.

MH: That's astonishing.

TS: Yeah. All right, Mike. I just want to remind everybody that if you haven't done so and you're on Facebook, please go like the Naked Bible Facebook page or go join the Naked Bible group. Lots of great conversations and great minds in the group talking about some of the content. So please do that if you have not. With that, I just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast. God bless.