

The LORD Is There

Session 14. The Enemy from the North

Between the resurrection of the bones and the coming of the temple, the book stages one last invasion, and God ends it without Israel lifting a sword.

What We Found

We started with placement rather than with Gog. Chapter 37 promised resurrection, reunion, an everlasting covenant and God dwelling with his people for ever; chapters 40 onward will show the temple and the river. Right between them, Ezekiel puts an attack. That is not clumsy editing. It is the answer to the question a rescued people always ask eventually, which is whether the peace will hold.

We tracked the verbs. God turns Gog about and puts hooks in his jaws and brings him up. God fights with earthquake, confusion, flooding rain, hailstones, fire. Israel's army never appears; the people are described as living in unwalled villages, without bars or gates. Their safety was never a function of their fortifications, which is the same thing the shepherd chapter told us weeks ago.

We took on the two strongest objections honestly. The popular one maps Gog onto modern nations by the sound of the words, which does not survive contact with the languages, and which Augustine was already warning readers off in the fifth century. The serious one says Ezekiel predicted a literal invasion that never came. We answered from genre and from the New Testament: the coalition is assembled from every compass point rather than from one border, and John himself takes Gog and Magog as the name for the last assault of all the nations, defeated by fire from heaven.

Then we found where the whole oracle was going. After the coalition and the hailstones and the seven months of burial, the last thing God says is this: I will not hide my face any more from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel. We put that beside Joel's promise of the Spirit poured out on all flesh and Peter standing up at Pentecost to say that this is that. The last enemy chapter in Ezekiel ends with an open face and a poured-out Spirit.

Voices of the Church

St. Augustine, d. 430

Augustine takes up Gog and Magog precisely to stop his readers pinning the names on a particular nation. They are not, he argues, some tribe on the edge of the map; the names stand for the nations of the whole earth in whom the devil is at work, and the assault they mount is the last, permitted, and brief.

The City of God, Book XX, chapter 11. Summary of his teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. If someone sends you a video identifying Gog with a country on the news, this is your answer, and it is sixteen hundred years old.

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, d. c. 202

Irenaeus expects the Church's history to end not in a smooth ascent but in a final apostasy and a concentrated assault, permitted for a limited time. He is equally insistent that the outcome is never in doubt, because the victory belongs to Christ.

Against Heresies, Book V (chapters 25-30). Summary of his teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. Real trial, limited time, certain outcome. That is the shape of Ezekiel 38 and 39, and it is the shape the Church still expects.

Bl. Julian of Norwich, d. c. 1416

He said not: Thou shalt not be tempested, thou shalt not be travailed, thou shalt not be afflicted; but He said: Thou shalt not be overcome.

Revelations of Divine Love (Long Text), chapter 68.

For the group. Ezekiel does not promise the restored people that nothing will come at them. He tells them who fights when it does.

Live It This Week

Practices

1. Once this week, when the news gets loud, stop and read Ezekiel 39:29 slowly instead of scrolling further. Let the last sentence of the oracle be the last thing you read on the subject that day.
2. Name one wall you have built that was meant to be God's job. Say it out loud in prayer and ask, once, to be able to live without it.
3. Pray for one nation currently in the news by name, every day this week. The oracle ends with the nations knowing God, not with their annihilation.
4. Memorize this week's verse and say it whenever you catch yourself doom-scrolling.

Scripture Memory

Ezekiel 39:29

"And I will not hide my face any more from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, says the Lord GOD."

Ezekiel 39:29

Ready Response

Someone sends you a video: 'Ezekiel names Russia. The war in the news is in the Bible. This is the end.' What do you say?

The word behind 'Rosh' is the ordinary Hebrew word for chief, which is why our Bibles read 'chief prince'; the Moscow and Tobolsk connections are sound-alikes, and those cities are named far too late for it to work.

Augustine was already telling Christians not to pin these names on one nation in the fifth century. This is not a new caution.

What the Church actually teaches about the end is a shape and not a timetable: a final trial, and a victory that belongs to God rather than to any nation or army (CCC 675, 677).

And the oracle itself does not end with a battlefield. It ends with God saying he will never hide his face again.

Go Further in the Catechism

- **CCC 675.** the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many
- **CCC 677.** the kingdom comes by God's victory over the final unleashing of evil
- **CCC 676.** the messianic hope cannot be realized within history, including in secularized forms
- **CCC 2853.** the victory over the prince of this world was won at the Cross

Before next session. Read Ezekiel 40:1-4 and 43:1-12 before we meet again.