

September 2
Ezekiel 37-39

Today we examine chapters 37-39 of Ezekiel's book. Here we find possibly the most well-known portion of scripture from Ezekiel: The Valley of Dry Bones. In the first 14 verses of chapter 37, God gives the prophet a vision of a valley filled with very dry bones. The bones are of a multitude of people. Scattered about and bleached white. There was no life here. Yet God commands Ezekiel to prophecy to these bones and the prophet obeys. Miraculously, the bones come together. Tendons and ligaments, flesh and skin begin to form on the bones. This is amazing. But the real miracle is not in the coming together of the bones or flesh and skin forming on the bodies. The real miracle is what happens when the Spirit of God moves and fills these lifeless bodies. They come to life.

In these few verses the words for wind, Spirit, and breath are actually all the same Hebrew word, רוּחַ, or Ruah. In these verses we see a continuation of what we learned in chapter 36. Unless God does a miracle, hearts remain hard. Unless God does a miracle by the power of His holy Spirit, there is no life.

Additionally, we see in these verses that God can bring life to even the deadest of things. Unless God puts his Spirit in you, you cannot live. But no matter how dead something or someone appears to be, there is nothing too hard for God. God can even take the dispersed people of Israel and make them whole again (37:15-23). Nothing is too hard for God.

Speaking of hard things, let's move on now to chapters 38 and 39 where we see God engaging a great enemy of God and his people: Gog. Here we see Gog invading Israel and is being defeated by God.

This portion of scripture is what we would call Apocalyptic. Now, unlike most prophetic literature, apocalyptic texts tend to be more concerned with revolution than with reformation. Apocalypses are about God moving and making things new. When you read the apocalyptic literature of Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah and John (the book of Revelation) you see the commonality of God "confronting Satan and evil, transforming the world, setting up a perfect kingdom, and live in fellowship with His people forever."

The apocalyptic nature of these chapters can make them challenging to discern and apply. One tip to always remember that most prophecies, including apocalypses have limited fulfillments that happen in the relatively near future (of the time of the prophecy) as well as complete fulfillments which tend to happen much later. Think of the prophecies concerning the coming of Jesus, the Messiah. These prophecies had limited fulfillments in men like Moses, David, etc. but they had their complete fulfillment in the coming of Jesus.

Today, I thought it would be interesting to examine one aspect of the apocalypse: the identity of Gog, God's enemy.

38:1–3 Commentators and scholars throughout the ages have suggested many possibilities, such as "1) a ruthless ruler of Lydia known as Gugu or Gyges; (2) a figure from ancient history called Gagu of the land of Sakhi, a region in northern Assyria; (3) an official title, like Pharaoh; and (4) a general term for any enemy of God's people."

While I agree with this last possibility, that Gog is probably a general term for any enemy of God's people, I found some compelling evidence on the limited fulfillment of this prophecy with an actual person in mind rather than a "generic" enemy of God and his people.

First, Ezekiel's judgments do not include Babylon outright. So, it's perceivable that Gog is a cryptogram for Babylon. "Babylon, in Scripture, is synonymous with godless government under Nimrod (Gn 10:8–10); under Nebuchadnezzar (Dn 1:1–4:37); under the "Mystery Babylon" of the last days (Rv 14:8; 17:5); and under Gog at the end of history (Rv 20:7–15)."

The name, Gog, may actually be a borrowed word from the Sumerian language which meant "darkness" (gug). This would make it a very appropriate for application to both Babylon, and Satan, as well as anything that is opposed to God and his people.

Additionally, Gog may also be an appropriate cryptic reference to Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. Notice how in verses 2, and 6 name Gog as the "chief prince of Meshech and Tubal as well as reference Gomer and Togarmah. Interestingly enough history tells us that Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar's father, who overthrew Assyria formed an alliance with Media and the Scythians in order to overthrow Ninevah in 612 B.C. This alliance between Babylon and Media was made official, or "sealed" with the marriage of a young Nebuchadnezzar to the princess of Media, Amytis. This made Nebuchadnezzar the "chief prince" of the lands that were ruled by media: Meshech, Tubal, Gomer and Togarmah (Ezk 38:2,6).

Now, I don't know about you, but I find this all terribly interesting and fascinating. I thought I would share it with you and I hope it brought some light to your reading.

This brings me to today's application, which doesn't come directly from today's text, but is a challenge for you in your bible reading.

2 Timothy 3:16 says: *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.* Notice the word ALL at the beginning of the verse. God's purposes will always be accomplished. Even through the most wicked of rulers and enemies of God. Make no mistake, Nebuchadnezzar was no friend to the people of God. But, while he desired to bring darkness to God's people, God was all about bringing light and restoration to his people.

Regardless of your current circumstance and who it is that is in a position of power over you, remember that it is God who will ultimately have the last word. He *will* make all things new and defeat his enemy and the enemy of His people.