

Ezekiel 38, 39 & The Millennium

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There is some disagreement among consistent preterists as to when the millennium ended; and some believe we are still in it. It is my personal opinion that it ended in A.D. 70. Here are some reasons why I believe this:

In the prophecies of the O.T. and throughout the N.T., the Messiah is said to reign for a time, until His enemies are completely and forever destroyed (Ps. 110:1; Matt. 22:44; 1 Cor. 15:25; Heb. 1:13; and 10:12 and 13). We know, particularly from the New Testament, that temporary reign of Christ which established His eternal reign was to last only the space of a generation, during the eschatological generation of the first century. That subjugating reign extended from Christ's ministry in the flesh to His appearance from heaven at the fall of Jerusalem. It is nowhere implied in the Bible that after Christ's Last-Days reign was consummated, there were/are to be any more prophetic conflicts to await God's people. If Rev. 20 speaks of a post-A.D. 70 rebellion, and/or if it speaks of a temporal reign of Christ which lasts longer than a generation, then it stands completely alone in the Bible.

Let us consider Eze. 38 and 39. There has been much effort on the part of many scholars to disassociate Ezekiel 38 and 39 from Revelation 20; many have said that the prophecy of Ezekiel 38 and 39 was completely fulfilled in the Maccabean era, and that Revelation 20:8 and 9 has no relation to it except that it borrows from it some symbolic literary forms. Others have said that both passages may predict no specific event at all, but show only the principle of God's ultimate triumph over evil. But I believe such interpretations are on shaky ground. While Eze. 38 and 39 may have had a typical fulfillment in an event B.C., I find it highly unlikely and unfitting, from a hermeneutical standpoint, that it does not in truth refer to an actual event, and the same event as was predicted in Rev. 20:8 and 9.

We can know that the vision of Eze. 38 and 39 is not a prophetic anomaly – a stand-alone prophecy which is independent from all, or virtually all other prophecies – from Eze. 38:17: “Thus says the Lord God to Gog: Are you he of whom I spoke in former days by the hand of My servants, the prophets of Israel, who prophesied in those days for years that I would bring you over them?” And Eze. 39:8 says, “That is the Day of which I spoke.” Accordingly, the prophecy of Eze. 38 and 39 is a reiteration of earlier prophecies (and is therefore a prophecy of the great Day of the Lord), and is not then a unique prediction of an event beyond the Biblical A.D.-70 Day of the Lord, or a prophecy which, unlike any other prophecy, has no prophetic connection to New Testament prophecy which quotes it (Rev. 20:8 and 9).

The following verses show that the fulfillment of Eze. 38 and 39 and the end of the millennium was to be the time of the eschatological establishment of Christianity: Eze. 38:16 goes on to say that God would gather the wicked over the Land for the purpose “that all the nations may know Me.” Eze. 38:23 also says, “And I make Myself known to the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the Lord.” Eze. 39:7 says, “And I will make known My holy name in the midst of My people Israel. And My holy name shall no longer be profaned. Then shall the nations know that I am the Lord.” Eze. 39:21 and 22 says, “And I bestow My glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see My judgment which I execute, and My hand which I place on them. Then shall the house of Israel know that I am the Lord their God, from that Day and beyond.” Eze. 39:29 says, “I will no longer conceal my Face from them, when I pour out My spirit on the house of Israel.” These

predictions are found in abundance throughout the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah, and in Joel. It is clear that Ezekiel here prophesied the advent of the Kingdom of Christ in A.D. 70.

The time of the conflict of Eze. 38 and 39, at the end of the millennium, is called “that Day” in Eze. 38:10,18,19; and 39:11; and “the Day” in Eze. 39:8,13, and 22. These are prophetic references to the first century Day of the Lord. Ezekiel 38:16 tells us that the prophecy in Eze. 38 and 39 was to be fulfilled “in the Last Days.” This would seem then to place the fulfillment of the prophecy of Eze. 38 and 39 and the end of the millennium together at A.D. 70.

Eze. 38 and 39 speaks of the same eschatological events as those found in the book of Revelation: earthquake, mountains removed, plague, blood, hailstones, fire, sulfur, and the enemies fed to the birds as a sacrificial feast. And in Eze. 39:9 and 10, the weapons of the enemies are transformed into constructive instruments, just as Isaiah depicted the establishment of Christianity in Isaiah 2:4. In Eze. 39:11-16, the wicked are completely destroyed and removed from the face of the Land, and the Land is cleansed; this was predicted by the other prophets and was accomplished by Christ and His church when the Land was forever cleansed of all the enemies at Christ’s glorious Presence in the end of the age. And in Eze. 39:25-29 is depicted the gathering of the elect which was predicted by Christ on the Mount of Olives and was also fulfilled in A.D. 70.

I believe the post-millennial attack of Gog and Magog in Rev. 20:8 and 9 may appropriately be understood as another depiction of the gathering of the kings to Armageddon in Rev. 16:16, and of the gathering of the beast and the ten horns in Rev. 17:16, and of the gathering of the beast and the kings of the earth in Rev. 19:19 and 20.

From the above considerations, I believe the millennium was fulfilled “shortly” after John penned the Apocalypse, at the establishment of the new Jerusalem. It is compelling to me to interpret the 1,000 years of Rev. 20 spiritually as the time from Christ’s ministry to His return at AD 70, from the beginning of the end, to the end.

It was during those years that the saints had begun reigning with Christ, and were waiting for God’s judgment to fall upon Jerusalem (Matt. 23:35 and 36; Eph. 1:3; 2:6; Col. 1:13; I Thess. 2:12; Heb. 12:28; I Peter 2:9; Rev. 5:10; 6:9-11; 18:24; 20:4 and 5). It was during that time that Satan was being bound (defeated) by Christ (Matt. 12:29; Mk. 3:27; Lk. 10:18; 11:20-22; Acts 10:38; 26:18; Jms. 4:7; I Jn. 3:8; Rev. 20:1-3). It was near the end of that time that Satan was loosed (enraged), and began deceiving the nations into making war against Christ and His Church (Ps. 2:1 and 2; Matt. 13:39; Acts 4:25-30; II Cor. 11:14; I Thess. 2:18; II Tim. 2:26; I Peter 5:8; Rev. 2:10; 12:12; 20:3 and 7-9). The nations were being devoured by fire from heaven (Matt. 3:11; Lk. 3:16; 12:49; Acts 2:19; Rev. 20:9). Judgment was taking place (Acts 17:31; II Tim. 4:1; Heb. 10:27; I Peter 1:17; 2:23; 4:17; Jms. 5:9; Rev. 20:11-15). The resurrection of the dead was taking place (Jn. 11:25; Acts 24:15; I Cor. 15:51; Phil. 3:10; Rev. 4-6, and 13; see also references above on “the saints reigning with Christ”). And at the end of that time Satan was destroyed (Rom. 16:20; Heb. 2:14; Rev. 20:10). Summarily, those were the days in which all the Scriptures were fulfilled (Dan. 9:24; Lk. 21:22; I Peter 4:7; Rev. 21:6).

Revelation 20:1-10 in this way, is seen as one vision in a presumptive and consummate series of visions, instead of as an exception to every other, or virtually every other vision in the Bible. The “1,000 years” is, I believe, symbolic of the eschatological reign of Christ of the last years of the old covenant (from about 30 AD to 70 AD). The Last Days of the Jewish nation. – the End of Days period.