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Gog and Magog After the Millennium

Why Armageddon Cannot Be the Final Fulfillment of Ezekiel 38–39

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Abstract

Two major peer-reviewed premillennial studies of the timing of Ezekiel 38–39, by Ralph H. Alexander (1974) and J. Paul Tanner (1996), separately argued that the invasion of Gog finds its final fulfillment after the Millennium, in the conflict of Revelation 20:7–10. The identification of Ezekiel’s war with Armageddon has received little sustained defense in the peer-reviewed literature surveyed here. Its ablest contemporary advocate is Joel Richardson, who identifies Gog with the Antichrist, reads Ezekiel 38–39 as the final crisis of this age concluding at the return of Jesus, and treats Revelation 20 as a distinct postmillennial rebellion that borrows the names Gog and Magog as a familiar label. This paper argues that the Armageddon identification cannot be sustained. Ezekiel’s declarations of finality, the genuine covenant security of the invaded land, the prosperous world the oracle presupposes, and the invasion’s stated motive of plunder all resist an Armageddon setting, while Revelation 20 supplies the explicit names, the chronological setting, and the matching destruction by fire from heaven. The paper then proposes that Revelation 19 is a genuine typological prefiguration of the Gog pattern that does not exhaust the oracle, a category Richardson’s own hermeneutic of patterned fulfillment supplies, and one that resolves the single point on which Alexander and Tanner disagreed. Finally, the principal arguments advanced for the Armageddon placement are examined and answered, including the appeal to the Day of the Lord in Ezekiel 39:8, the claimed contrasts between the two battle accounts, and the claim that Gog’s invasion carries Israel into a new captivity.

Keywords: Ezekiel 38–39; Gog and Magog; Revelation 19; Revelation 20; Armageddon; Millennium; premillennialism; eschatology; typological prefiguration; Joel Richardson.

I

Introduction

The peer-reviewed literature on the timing of Ezekiel 38–39 is small, and it speaks with an unexpected unity. In 1974 Ralph H. Alexander published "A Fresh Look at Ezekiel 38 and 39" in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, and in 1996 the same journal published J. Paul Tanner's "Rethinking Ezekiel's Invasion by Gog."¹ The two men wrote twenty-two years apart, and Tanner engaged Alexander's article directly. Both were trained Hebraists working within premillennial evangelicalism, and both reached the same conclusion: the invasion of Gog belongs after the Millennium, where Revelation 20:7–10 places the only other occurrence of the names Gog and Magog in all of Scripture.

Their reasons deserve to be stated at the outset, because they form the foundation on which the present study builds. First, both men argued from Ezekiel's literary context. The Gog oracle stands within the sequence of restoration messages framed by the report of Jerusalem's fall in 33:21–22 and the new date formula in 40:1, a unit that promises regathering, cleansing, a new heart and Spirit, reunion under the Davidic shepherd, covenant peace, a fruitful land, and permanent divine presence. Gog appears only after these promises have been stated, attacking a people already gathered from the nations, restored from the sword, and dwelling securely.² Second, both argued that the security of the invaded land is genuine. Ezekiel 38 describes Israel as dwelling securely three times, in verses 8, 11, and 14, and Ezekiel has already defined that language in the covenant of peace of 34:25–28, where God Himself removes danger and causes His people to dwell securely with none to make them afraid. Within Ezekiel's own restoration corpus, secure dwelling is a covenant blessing supplied by God, not a political mood that an enemy manufactures.³ Third, both appealed to the oracle's declarations of finality. After Gog's defeat, God's holy name will not be profaned anymore, Israel will know her God from that day forward, and the closing verses gather up the whole restoration program: the fortunes of Jacob restored, mercy on the whole house of Israel, none left among the nations, the divine face no longer hidden, the Spirit poured out (39:7, 22, 25–29). Such statements are difficult to place early in the eschatological sequence, where further apostasy, persecution, and judgment must follow.⁴

Fourth, and above all, both treated the New Testament's own contribution as interpretive evidence of the highest order. Students of prophecy have sometimes lamented that the New Testament seems silent about an invasion of the magnitude Ezekiel describes, and the seventieth week, fraught as it is with warfare, has seemed a natural place to file it. But the premise is false. The New Testament is not silent about Gog and Magog. Revelation 20 names them explicitly:

And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. 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, 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. (Revelation 20:7–10)

Only here and in Ezekiel 38–39 do the names Gog and Magog stand together in Scripture, and John's scene matches the oracle at its most distinctive points: an innumerable host gathered against restored Israel, an assault aimed at the city of God, and destruction by fire from heaven, the very judgment Ezekiel announces when God rains on Gog's hordes "torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur" (Ezekiel 38:22) and sends "fire on Magog and on those who dwell securely in the coastlands" (39:6). Alexander stated the hermeneutical situation exactly: the explicit reference requires the identification of the two texts unless strong reasons can be mustered against it.⁵

On the strength of these arguments, both men rejected every proposed placement before, within, or at the close of Daniel's seventieth week. Alexander walked the alternatives into the dock one at a time, the Maccabean fulfillment, the invasion before the week, the midpoint placement he identified as the majority view among evangelical commentators, and the placement at the week's end, and found each one wrecked on the same rocks: the restoration context, the genuine security, and the finality of the aftermath.⁶ Tanner reached the same verdict by a different road, tracing the vocabulary of Israel's restoration from Deuteronomy 30 through the prophets and showing that the concluding paragraph of the Gog prophecy is itself a member of that restoration corpus, saturated with its terminology, so that the invasion presupposes the accomplished restoration of the messianic age.⁷ The two papers

¹ Ralph H. Alexander, "A Fresh Look at Ezekiel 38 and 39," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 17, no. 3 (September 1974): 157–169; J. Paul Tanner, "Rethinking Ezekiel's Invasion by Gog," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39, no. 1 (March 1996): 29–46.

² Alexander, "Fresh Look," 158–160; Tanner, "Rethinking," 35–40.

³ Alexander, "Fresh Look," 160; Tanner, "Rethinking," 39–40, especially their connection of Ezekiel 38 with the covenant of peace in Ezekiel 34:25–29.

⁴ Alexander, "Fresh Look," 162–163; Tanner, "Rethinking," 43–45.

⁵ Alexander, "Fresh Look," 166–167.

⁶ Alexander, "Fresh Look," 162–166.

⁷ Tanner, "Rethinking," 35–40.

differ at one point only, the significance of Revelation 19's feast imagery, and that difference will be taken up in due course. It does not touch their shared chronological conclusion.

The scholarship since 1996 has not disturbed this picture. In the very volume that carried Tanner's article, the Reformed amillennialist Meredith G. Kline argued from the opposite end of the interpretive spectrum that the battle of Har Magedon and the war of Gog and Magog are one and the same conflict at the end of the millennium.⁸ Jiří Moskala, writing from a Seventh-day Adventist typological framework in 2007, likewise placed the final fulfillment of the Gog prophecy at the Millennium's end.⁹ And the one full-length academic monograph on the relationship between Ezekiel 38–39 and Revelation, Sverre Bøe's 2001 dissertation, found that John reuses Ezekiel's Gog material extensively in both Revelation 19 and Revelation 20.¹⁰ The result is a striking asymmetry. The identification of Ezekiel's invasion with Armageddon, or with the campaign that culminates at Armageddon, has able and energetic advocates in the popular literature. Yet in the peer-reviewed literature surveyed here, the Armageddon identification has received little sustained defense, while the principal studies of the timing question treat Revelation 20 as the prophecy's final horizon.

The ablest and most influential contemporary advocate of the Armageddon identification is Joel Richardson. His case is developed in *Mideast Beast*, in a 2018 paper on the timing of Gog and Magog, and in a sustained series of video teachings, most recently a 2026 miniseries devoted specifically to the timing question.¹¹ Richardson identifies Gog as the Antichrist, reads Ezekiel 38–39 as spanning the Antichrist's final crisis and concluding at the return of Jesus, and treats Revelation 20 as a genuinely distinct rebellion after the Millennium for which John borrows the names Gog and Magog as a familiar label. He presses the position with vigor: in his words, "the easiest way to understand that these are two completely different battles separated by a thousand years is to simply read the text."¹² His case deserves an answer at full strength, and this paper undertakes to give one. The question is narrow and answerable: can Armageddon be the final fulfillment of Ezekiel 38–39?

II

Why Armageddon Cannot Be the Final Fulfillment

A. The Finality That Armageddon Cannot Supply

Ezekiel presents Gog's defeat as a terminal act of divine self-vindication. God declares, "And my holy name I will make known in the midst of my people Israel, and I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel" (39:7). He later adds, "The house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God, from that day forward" (39:22). The closing verses widen the lens: the nations understand Israel's exile in covenantal terms, the whole house of Israel is restored with none left behind, God no longer hides His face, and the Spirit is poured out (39:23–29). This is not the rhetoric of a temporary deliverance before the next cycle of rebellion. It presents the defeat of Gog as the public confirmation of a restored order that will not again be overturned.¹³

Candor requires an acknowledgment. The finality language does not sit at Armageddon as awkwardly as it sits at the earlier placements. An advocate of the Armageddon view can plausibly connect the end of the seventieth week with Israel's national turning, the public defeat of the beast, and the beginning of Messiah's reign, and this is one reason his position is stronger than the preweek and midweek proposals that Alexander dismantled. But the difficulty remains, and it is structural. Armageddon is not the last international rebellion in a sequential reading of Revelation. After the beast is defeated, after Satan is bound, and after the saints reign with Christ for a thousand years, Satan is released, deceives the nations on a vast scale, and gathers them against the beloved city. Only after that failed assault does Satan meet his irreversible judgment, the great white throne convene, and the present order give way to the new creation (Revelation 20:7–21:1). The conflict of Revelation 20, not the conflict of Revelation 19, occupies the final position in the sequence.

⁸ Meredith G. Kline, "Har Magedon: The End of the Millennium," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39, no. 2 (June 1996): 207–222.

⁹ Jiří Moskala, "Toward the Fulfillment of the Gog and Magog Prophecy of Ezekiel 38–39," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 18, no. 2 (Autumn 2007): 243–273.

¹⁰ Sverre Bøe, *Gog and Magog: Ezekiel 38–39 as Pre-text for Revelation 19,17–21 and 20,7–10*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2/135 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001). Critical scholarship has also examined the oracle's composition, especially William A. Tooman, *Gog of Magog: Reuse of Scripture and Compositional Technique in Ezekiel 38–39*, FAT 2/52 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011). The narrower observation stands: the specific premillennial timing case of Alexander and Tanner has received relatively little sustained direct engagement, and no peer-reviewed study devoted to the timing question defends the Armageddon identification.

¹¹ Joel Richardson, *Mideast Beast: The Scriptural Case for an Islamic Antichrist* (Washington, DC: WND Books, 2012); Joel Richardson, "Understanding the Timing of the Battle of Gog and Magog," 2018, <https://joelstrumpet.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Timing-of-Gog-Magog-1.pdf>; and the video teachings cited below, including the 2026 Wine Press miniseries on the timing of Gog and Magog.

¹² Joel Richardson, "End Time Talks 15: When Does the Battle of Gog Magog Happen?," Frontier Alliance International, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ToZP7xD9GUg>.

¹³ Alexander, "Fresh Look," 162–163; Tanner, "Rethinking," 43–45.

The strict Armageddon identification therefore asks the reader to place Ezekiel's terminal language at an event after which the same kind of international assault occurs again, this time under the very names Gog and Magog. An oracle that culminates in the last public vindication of God's name belongs more naturally at the last satanic assault than at an earlier assault after which the same basic rebellion recurs under the oracle's own names. After Revelation 20 there is no further deception, no later gathering against the city, and no additional attempt to seize what God has secured. That is the horizon Ezekiel's finality requires.

Richardson's own exposition quietly confirms the point. Teaching through Ezekiel 39:7, he acknowledges that the promise that God's name will not be profaned anymore poses no problem for the end-of-the-Millennium placement; his objection is only to placements early in the seventieth week, where the Antichrist's career of blasphemy still lies ahead.¹⁴ And when he turns to defend his own view against the rebellion of Revelation 20, which on his reading follows the promise of 39:7 by a thousand years, he must soften the oracle's "anymore" into a statement that holds for all intents and purposes rather than strictly.¹⁵ The postmillennial placement requires no such softening. On that reading the promise stands absolutely, because nothing follows it but the great white throne and the new creation.

B. Genuine Security and the False Peace

Ezekiel 38 describes the invaded people as those who "now dwell securely, all of them" (38:8), as "the quiet people who dwell securely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having no bars or gates" (38:11), and as "dwelling securely" once more in 38:14. Advocates of the Armageddon identification must interpret this security as counterfeit, a false calm engineered by the Antichrist's covenant, because their chronology places the invasion in a period the rest of Scripture describes as the worst crisis in Israel's history. Richardson makes the move explicitly, linking Ezekiel's unwallled villages to the covenant of Daniel 9:27 and to the deceiver of Daniel 8:25 and 11:21–24, who destroys many "while they are at ease" and comes "in a time of tranquility" (NASB).¹⁶

Ezekiel himself forecloses the move. The prophet has already defined secure dwelling within this same restoration corpus, in the covenant of peace:

I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. . . . They shall no more be a prey to the nations, nor shall the beasts of the land devour them. They shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid. (Ezekiel 34:25, 28)

The vocabulary of chapter 38 is the vocabulary of chapter 34. Secure dwelling in Ezekiel's restoration oracles is a blessing God supplies, defined by the removal of predators and the end of Israel's status as prey, and the epilogue of the Gog oracle itself uses the phrase the same way, describing the restored nation dwelling securely in their land "with none to make them afraid" (39:26). To read the identical expression in chapter 38 as an Antichrist-generated illusion is not an exegesis of Ezekiel. It is an importation, required by a chronology adopted on other grounds. Nothing in Ezekiel 38–39 hints that the security is false, that a human covenant produced it, or that the people are deceived about their condition. The invader observes real prosperity, real quiet, and real openness, and the bystander nations confirm the picture by asking about the spoil (38:13). Within the oracle's own frame of reference, the people Gog attacks are dwelling in the covenanted peace of the messianic age, which is precisely why the assault is an outrage that God answers in person.¹⁷

But suppose the false-peace reading is granted for the sake of argument. It then fails a second test: its own timeline. On the futurist sequence its advocates employ, the Antichrist's covenant with Israel opens the seventieth week. At the midpoint, three and a half years before Armageddon, he commits the abomination of desolation, violates the covenant, and begins the persecution associated with the time of Jacob's trouble (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15–21; Jeremiah 30:7). Those in Judea are commanded to flee (Matthew 24:16–20), and Jerusalem is trampled for forty-two months (Revelation 11:2). So the decisive question is not merely whether Ezekiel's peace was genuine. It is whether any peace, false or otherwise, still exists at the point where the theory locates the battle. By Armageddon the covenant has been broken for three and a half years, and the land has endured the most severe persecution of the age. Yet the theory must correlate that setting with a people at rest, dwelling securely, all of them, in unwallled villages, holding enough livestock, silver, gold, and goods to make plunder the invader's stated motive.

Richardson's answer is to stretch the oracle across the whole period. As he reads it, the prophecy opens with the thought entering Gog's mind while Israel still enjoys the apparent peace of the covenant, and it closes with Gog's destruction at the return of Jesus, so the security belongs to the beginning of the story and the judgment to its end.¹⁸

¹⁴ Joel Richardson, "End Time Talks 14: Six Reasons Gog Is the Antichrist," Frontier Alliance International, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F199jXhmIMU>.

¹⁵ Richardson, "End Time Talks 14."

¹⁶ Richardson, *Mideast Beast*, 224–225; Richardson, "The Underground," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2GsfpL8Aso>, on Daniel 8:25, 11:21, and 11:24.

¹⁷ Alexander, "Fresh Look," 160; Tanner, "Rethinking," 39–40.

¹⁸ Richardson, *Mideast Beast*, 165.

The proposal does relieve the immediate contradiction, but look at what it costs. If the security belongs to the first half of the week and the judgment to Armageddon, then Ezekiel's invasion is no longer the battle of Armageddon. It has become a several-year account of the Antichrist's entire career, with the invasion and its motive separated from the judgment by three and a half years of persecution, flight, and trampling that the oracle never mentions. Ezekiel, however, presents the scheme, the advance, and the destruction as one connected episode. The advocate of the Armageddon view therefore faces a dilemma. If Ezekiel's security stands close to the battle, his own timeline has already destroyed it. If the security is pushed back into the covenant's early years, the identification with Armageddon has been quietly traded for something much looser, and the stretching must be argued rather than assumed. The simpler reading remains Ezekiel's own. The security is the covenanted peace of the restoration era, and the invasion falls where such peace actually exists to be interrupted.

C. The World Ezekiel Describes and the World Before Armageddon

The false-peace problem is one instance of a larger comparison, because the two placements put the invasion into two very different worlds. The question of this section is simple: does the world Ezekiel describes look like the world Revelation describes on the eve of Armageddon?

Ezekiel 38 presupposes a functioning, prosperous, comparatively tranquil civilization. The target population dwells at rest in unvalled settlements, inhabits "the waste places that are now inhabited," and has "acquired livestock and goods" (38:11–12). Sheba, Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish stand outside the coalition and question the invader's purpose (38:13), which means the oracle's world contains bystander trading nations with commercial interests worth protecting. The theophany that answers the invasion likewise assumes an ordered creation: "The 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" (38:20). The catalogue may use conventional prophetic language, but its ordinary picture is a living creation shaken by the arrival of God.

Now consider the world Revelation describes before Armageddon, on the same sequential futurist reading the rival view requires. Demonic beings have tormented humanity for five months (Revelation 9:3–10). A third of mankind has been killed by the horsemen released at the Euphrates (9:15–18). Painful sores afflict the worshipers of the beast (16:2), the fresh waters have become blood (16:4), and the sun scorches men with fire (16:8–9). The second bowl bears directly on Ezekiel's catalogue: "The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea" (16:3). Under a face-value reading of both books, Ezekiel's earthquake shakes a living sea while Revelation's sea has died before the armies assemble.

No single detail settles the question, and global judgments do not require the disappearance of every herd or every functioning settlement. The cumulative portrait is nevertheless difficult. Ezekiel gives the reader a restored land whose prosperity makes it an attractive target, set in a world orderly enough to contain spectator merchants. Revelation gives the reader a world brought to the climax of divine wrath. The strict Armageddon identification requires both portraits to describe the same moment. The postmillennial placement requires no such strain. After a thousand years of messianic rule, genuine security, accumulated abundance, rebuilt and inhabited waste places, functioning commerce, and a living creation are exactly what the reader expects to find.

D. The Purpose of the Invasion

Ezekiel is emphatic about why Gog comes. The invader devises his scheme "to seize spoil and carry off plunder" (38:12). The bystander nations repeat the motive in a doubled question: "Have you come to seize spoil? Have you assembled your hosts to carry off plunder, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to seize great spoil?" (38:13). After the deliverance, Israel will "plunder those who plundered them" (39:10). The motive is not incidental. It is a structural feature of the oracle, stated in Gog's mind, echoed by the observers, and reversed in the aftermath.

Revelation assigns the gathering of Revelation 19 a different announced purpose. The beast and the kings of the earth with their armies are "gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army" (Revelation 19:19). The text says nothing of spoil. Its stated object is direct war against the returning Christ. Silence about plunder cannot prove that no economic motive exists anywhere in the coalition, but the contrast demands attention precisely because Ezekiel repeats the plunder motive so insistently. And the plunder points backward into the restoration corpus. The wealth that attracts Gog is covenantal abundance, the showers of blessing, fruitful trees, and secure dwellings promised to the regathered people (Ezekiel 34:26–27; 36:29–30, 33–35). It exists because the promises of restoration have been realized. A land laden with the accumulated blessing of a prolonged messianic reign is a plausible object of greed. A land at the climax of the bowl judgments is not, and in any case Revelation says the kings come for a different reason.

These arguments are cumulative. Taken alone, each one leaves the defender of the Armageddon placement room to answer. Taken together, the finality of Ezekiel's aftermath, the genuineness of the security, the condition of the

world, and the purpose of the invasion converge with the names and chronology of Revelation 20 on a single conclusion. The final fulfillment of Ezekiel 38–39 belongs where John put the names: after the thousand years.

III

Armageddon as Typological Prefiguration

The case just made leaves one question standing, and it is the question every thoughtful reader of this debate eventually asks. If Ezekiel's war belongs after the Millennium, why does Revelation 19 look so much like Ezekiel 39? The resemblance is real, dense, and deliberate. An angel summons "all the birds that fly directly overhead, 'Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders'" (Revelation 19:17–18), and the summons unmistakably echoes Ezekiel's, in which the birds and beasts are gathered "to the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you, a great sacrificial feast on the mountains of Israel," to eat the flesh of the mighty and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, to be filled at God's table "with horses and charioteers, with mighty men and all kinds of warriors" (Ezekiel 39:17–20). In its specific form, a summons issued to the birds and beasts to feast on the flesh of kings and warriors at a sacrifice God Himself has prepared, the scene appears in Scripture only in these two passages. Richardson is right to insist that the correspondence is intentional, and Bøe's monograph confirms that John's use of Ezekiel here is extensive and specific rather than generic.¹⁹ A view that dismissed the resemblance would be as one-eyed as a view that let it override the names and the timestamp. The resemblance requires an explanation, and the explanation is available within recognized hermeneutical categories.

The category is typological prefiguration: a divinely ordered earlier event that genuinely embodies the pattern of a later consummating event, related to it by correspondence, escalation, and completion. The principle that a single prophecy may be realized in more than one stage is not an invention of this paper. Alexander grounded his own proposal in the standard hermeneutical textbooks of multiple fulfillment,²⁰ the wider literature of biblical typology has given the category careful definition and controls,²¹ and Moskala's 2007 study supplies a published precedent for reading Ezekiel 38–39 in exactly two stages, an anticipatory realization at the second coming and a final fulfillment after the Millennium.²² Scripture itself models the structure in this very subject area. Antiochus Epiphanes genuinely set up an abomination in the temple, a real historical enactment of Daniel's oracle, and yet Jesus, speaking two centuries later, still pointed forward to "the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel" as future (Matthew 24:15). The earlier event was not a false fulfillment, and it did not exhaust the prophecy. It prefigured the consummation.

The category also predicts something, and the prediction is confirmed by the way John distributes Ezekiel's material between his two battle scenes. Revelation 19 resembles Ezekiel without naming him: the gathered kings and armies, the horses and riders, the summoned birds, the divinely prepared feast. Revelation 20 names and identifies: Gog and Magog, the explicit timestamp, the innumerable host, the assault on the beloved city, and fire from heaven, the very mechanism of Ezekiel 38:22 and 39:6, which Revelation 19 lacks, since there the enemy is slain by the sword from the rider's mouth (19:21). The passage that carries the names also carries the matching mode of destruction. This distribution answers Richardson's proposal that John merely borrows the names in Revelation 20 as a familiar label for a recapitulated pattern.²³ A writer reaching for a mere label does not equip the label with the referent's own army, target, mechanism, and outcome, and, as Tanner observed, the interpreter who denies the identification is forced into the awkward position of holding that Ezekiel's oracle predicts one eschatological battle and merely foreshadows a second, more distant one that happens to bear its names.²⁴ If John understood Armageddon as the prefiguration and the postmillennial war as the fulfillment, this is precisely how we would expect him to write, and it is what he wrote.

The relationship between the two events is not repetition but escalation, and the escalation runs along the line Scripture itself draws. At Armageddon the defeated enemy is the beast, Satan's chief human instrument; at the last rebellion the defeated enemy is Satan himself, the master behind every instrument. Armageddon opens the messianic kingdom; the war of Gog and Magog closes the last rebellion against it. At Armageddon the beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire; after Gog and Magog the devil joins them there, and death and Hades follow

¹⁹ Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 235–283.

²⁰ Alexander, "Fresh Look," 168 and n. 8, invoking the hermeneutical literature on multiple fulfillment: A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 300, and Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970), 252 and following.

²¹ On type, antitype, correspondence, and escalation, see Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982); Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Typos Structures* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981); and G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012).

²² Moskala, "Toward the Fulfillment," 243–273.

²³ Richardson, "End Time Talks 15"; Richardson, "Ezekiel 38–39 Versus Revelation 20: NOT the Same Battle (Timing of Gog Magog)," The Wine Press, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M7mUjMa-XJ8>.

²⁴ Tanner, "Rethinking," 40–41.

(Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 14). After Armageddon a kingdom remains to be tested; after the fire falls on Gog's host nothing remains but the great white throne and the new creation.

Nor is this category one that Richardson can regard as foreign, because his own hermeneutic supplies it. In his treatment of the recurring enemies of God's people, he reads Pharaoh, Sisera, Goliath, Haman, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, and Antiochus Epiphanes as types and pre-echoes, real historical adversaries who each genuinely enacted the ancient enmity without being its final expression, all of them looking forward to the ultimate enemy at the end of the age.³⁵ That is patterned fulfillment, correspondence with escalation across multiple realizations, and it is precisely the structure proposed here. The disagreement is therefore narrower than it first appears. Both views agree that the Gog pattern is real, that it has been genuinely enacted in history before its consummation, and that Revelation 19 deliberately clothes the destruction of the beast in Ezekiel's imagery. The disagreement is over where the consummation stands, and the evidence that decides it has already been assembled: the names, the timestamp, and the finality all belong to Revelation 20. The feast points back to Ezekiel. The name and the timestamp locate the consummation.

Armageddon genuinely performs the Gog pattern: hostile world powers gather against God's people and His Anointed, the scavengers are summoned before the outcome is in doubt, the host is destroyed by direct divine intervention, and the victory opens a new stage of the kingdom. That is why John reached for Ezekiel's feast, and he was right to reach for it. But when Armageddon ends, the explicitly named war of Gog and Magog still lies ahead. Satan remains to be released, the nations remain to be deceived one final time, and the beloved city will be surrounded once more. Revelation 19 is genuinely Gog-shaped. Revelation 20 is Gog's final war.

IV

Alexander and Tanner Resolved

The account just given also resolves the one point on which the two peer-reviewed studies disagreed, and it does so with materials each author supplied.

Alexander took the feast allusion with full seriousness. He proposed that Ezekiel 38–39 receives two far fulfillments: an earlier one in connection with Revelation 19, in which the invader is the beast, Satan's instrument, and a final one in Revelation 20, in which the invader is Satan himself, "the Gog," making history's last attempt on the land and people of God. The former, he wrote, in one sense prefigures the latter.³⁶ Everything of value in that proposal survives here: the deliberateness of the allusion, the beast-to-Satan escalation, the refusal to make the two Revelation passages compete, and above all the word prefigures. What does not survive is the label. Calling Revelation 19 a fulfillment in its own right puts two events under one title when only one of them carries the names, the timestamp, and the setting, and it multiplies fulfillments beyond what the evidence requires.

Tanner declined to follow Alexander, and his reason was that the imagery of divine slaughter presented as a sacrifice is a broader prophetic tradition, appearing in Isaiah 34, Zephaniah 1, and Jeremiah 46 and 50, so that an allusion to it in Revelation 19 does not by itself demand that Ezekiel 39 be spliced into the advent; the oracle has one proper fulfillment, the one John names.³⁷ The caution is sound, and the conclusion is right. But the wider tradition Tanner invokes does not fully account for what John wrote, because the specific form of the scene, the summons to the birds and beasts to eat the flesh of kings at God's prepared feast, tracks Ezekiel 39 alone among those passages, in its invitation, its menu, and its guest list, a specificity Bøe's analysis confirms.³⁸ The allusion really is Ezekielian, as Alexander saw.

Typological prefiguration preserves each man's insight while requiring neither man's overreach. With Alexander, it holds that Revelation 19 is specifically Gog-shaped and that Armageddon really enacts the pattern. With Tanner, it holds that the oracle has one proper fulfillment, located where the names and the timestamp stand. The two papers were never two camps. They were one conclusion and a labeling question, and the label that fits is the one Alexander himself reached for. The war of Gog and Magog has a prefiguration at Armageddon and its fulfillment after the Millennium, which is to say that Alexander and Tanner, read together, already contain the core of the position this paper has defended.

³⁵ Joel Richardson and Gary DeMar, "Gog & Magog: Future War or Fulfilled?," The Wine Press, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnboFMBLWN8>; see also Joel Richardson, *Understanding Patterned Fulfillment: How the Apostles Read Prophecy* (2025).

³⁶ Alexander, "Fresh Look," 166–169.

³⁷ Tanner, "Rethinking," 42–43.

³⁸ Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 235–283.

V

The Arguments for the Armageddon Placement

Richardson's case must still be heard on its own terms, and the place to begin is with what he concedes, because the concession frames everything that follows. Richardson treats the war of Revelation 20 as a real, literal, postmillennial event: Satan really released, the nations really deceived on a vast scale, a host like the sand of the sea really marching against the beloved city, fire really falling from heaven.³⁹ So do other advocates of an earlier placement.⁴⁰ The concession removes an entire class of objections at a stroke. An interpreter who affirms Revelation 20 cannot reject the postmillennial placement of Ezekiel's war on the ground that war is impossible after the age of peace, or that a population ruled by Christ for a thousand years could not be deceived, or that the nations could not turn against Jerusalem after so long a reign of righteousness. His own reading of Revelation 20 affirms every one of those things. And the concession fixes the burden of proof. Once a satanically instigated, worldwide, Jerusalem-directed war is granted at the end of the Millennium, the advocate of the Armageddon identification must explain why Ezekiel's oracle belongs to the earlier war rather than the later one, when it is the later one that actually bears Ezekiel's names. Observe what happens when he describes the war he concedes: nations deceived by Satan, gathered from the four corners of the earth, surrounding the beloved city, destroyed by fire from heaven. He is describing Ezekiel's war, wearing Ezekiel's names, and assigning it to someone else.

The arguments he advances to meet that burden deserve careful answers, and the remainder of this section gives them.

A. The Day of the Lord

Richardson reads Ezekiel 39:8, "Behold, it is coming and it will be brought about, declares the Lord GOD. That is the day of which I have spoken," as an explicit identification of Gog's judgment with the Day of the Lord, which he associates with the return of Jesus.⁴¹ The verse does not use the technical expression "day of the LORD," but let the reading be granted, for it may well be right, and the phrase "of which I have spoken" naturally gathers up the prophetic day of judgment. What the grant does not supply is a date, because the Day of the Lord is not a synonym for Armageddon.

Across the prophets, Day of the Lord material encompasses far more than the climactic battle. It includes the judgment of the nations, but also the deliverance and restoration of Israel, the pilgrimage of the nations to Zion, the fruitfulness of the land, secure dwelling, and ultimately the transition to the new creation, a span of material that stretches from the seventieth week through the entire kingdom age.⁴² Peter can even place the dissolution of the present heavens and earth within the day of the Lord (2 Peter 3:10), an event that on the premillennial scheme follows the Millennium. If the Day of the Lord is broad enough to contain the kingdom and its consummation, then locating Gog's defeat within that day is fully compatible with locating it after the thousand years. Indeed, the postmillennial placement gives the announcement of 39:8 its most natural force. The day of which God has spoken through all His prophets, the day of the final vindication of His name, arrives in its terminal fullness when the last enemy assault in history is destroyed and nothing remains but judgment and new creation. Day of the Lord language tells us the character of the event. It does not tell us its position on the timeline, and it cannot arbitrate between a battle before the Millennium and a battle after it.

B. Scope, Location, and Fire

Richardson also urges several contrasts between the two texts. Ezekiel's coalition is regional, drawn from Anatolia, Persia, Cush, and Put, while Revelation 20's host comes from "the four corners of the earth." Ezekiel's armies fall "on the mountains of Israel" and in "the open field" (39:4–5), while Revelation 20's host surrounds "the camp of the saints and the beloved city." And Revelation 20's armies are consumed by fire, which he presses to mean that nothing remains, whereas Ezekiel's dead are eaten by birds and buried for seven months, so the aftermaths cannot describe the same event.⁴³

The scope objection is answered by the Old Testament's own use of the disputed phrase, and the precedent deserves to be seen in full, because it describes the same basic map as Ezekiel's:

³⁹ Richardson, "Understanding the Timing," and "End Time Talks 15," where Revelation 20 is described as exactly what it says it is, a brief failed attack by Satan at the end of the Millennium.

⁴⁰ Nathan E. Jones, "Timing Gog and Magog," Lamb & Lion Ministries, <https://christinprophecy.org/articles/timing-gog-magog/>. Jones offers an extensive list of objections to the postmillennial identification while affirming the reality of the Revelation 20 conflict.

⁴¹ Richardson, "End Time Talks 14."

⁴² For the breadth of the Day of the Lord theme across judgment, restoration, kingdom pilgrimage, and consummation, see "A Day of the Lord Theme Study, Part 1," Bible Prophecy Talk, <https://bibleprophecytalk.com/a-day-of-the-lord-theme-study-part-1-intro/>.

⁴³ Richardson, "End Time Talks 15"; Richardson, "Ezekiel 38–39 Versus Revelation 20: NOT the Same Battle."

In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. (Isaiah 11:11–12)

Isaiah names the lands in verse 11, a roster concentrated in the Near Eastern and Mediterranean horizon and overlapping Ezekiel's at several points, Cush and the coastlands among them. Verse 12 then summarizes that same named dispersion as extending to "the four corners of the earth." In prophetic usage, the phrase expresses comprehensiveness of direction, not a cartographic census, and a compass-spanning roster of Near Eastern nations is exactly what it can describe. Ezekiel's own coalition spans the compass in the same way: the leading bloc descends from the uttermost north, Persia lies east, Cush south, and Put west.³⁴ John may broaden Ezekiel's picture, and Bøe concludes that he does,³⁵ but the idiom by itself cannot establish that the armies are different. Nor is the objection available to Richardson without cost, since his own view requires "the four corners of the earth" in Revelation 20 to describe a literal muster of the whole world's nations against Jerusalem a thousand years into the reign of Christ, which is to say, his reading of the phrase concedes its compatibility with everything else his position denies.

The location objection dissolves on inspection. An army that marches "up over the broad plain of the earth" and surrounds the beloved city has necessarily entered the land, and the mountains of Israel, as Richardson himself insists, is an idiom for the land of Israel as a whole, which most certainly includes the approaches to Jerusalem. Ezekiel's own scene is not confined to a single ridge: the dead fall on the mountains and in the open field (39:4–5), the burial occupies a valley (39:11), and the fire of judgment reaches Magog and the coastlands (39:6). Revelation 20:7–10 is a synopsis of four verses. It cannot reasonably be expected to reproduce the burial, the weapons, the feast, and every geographic detail of a two-chapter oracle, and omission is not contradiction.

The consumed-by-fire objection is answered from inside Ezekiel. Richardson's premise is that "consumed" means nothing remains, no bodies for birds, nothing to bury.³⁶ But Ezekiel's own oracle combines torrential rain, hailstones, "fire and sulfur" (38:22), and fire sent on Magog itself (39:6) with bodies on the mountains, a seven-month burial, and a sacrificial feast for the birds and beasts (39:4–5, 11–20). Whatever divine fire entails in these battle scenes, Ezekiel does not treat fiery destruction and physical remains as mutually exclusive, and the Greek verb John uses for the fire's consuming work is regularly employed for destruction without implying annihilation of remains.³⁷ An objection that would disqualify Revelation 20 as the fulfillment of Ezekiel would, applied consistently, disqualify Ezekiel as the fulfillment of Ezekiel.

C. The Captivity Argument

Richardson argues that Ezekiel's invasion, unlike the instantly incinerated assault of Revelation 20, is initially successful, indeed terribly so. Gog covers the land like a cloud (38:9, 16). And the oracle's epilogue, Ezekiel 39:21–29, describes Israel going into captivity, falling by the sword, and being regathered "from the peoples . . . from their enemies' lands" (39:27), with the Spirit poured out at the end. He concludes that the invasion carries much of Israel into a brief exile, that the regathering and conversion of 39:25–29 follow the battle, and that this sequence matches the return of Jesus, when Israel looks on the one they have pierced (Zechariah 12:10) and all Israel is saved (Romans 11:26). Placed at the end of the Millennium, he argues, the same sequence becomes unthinkable: it would mean Israel is overrun, exiled, unconverted, and without the Spirit throughout a thousand years of Messiah's personal reign, which would make Jesus "an impotent, incompetent failure as a king and as a Messiah."³⁸

The answer begins where the oracle itself begins, because the captivity language of the epilogue has a context, and the context decides what it means. Ezekiel 38–39 is not a freestanding prophecy. It is the capstone of a single block of messages that came to Ezekiel in one night, the night before a fugitive from Jerusalem reached the exiles with the news: "The city has been struck down" (33:21–22). The block was born, in other words, at the very moment Israel's captivity became final, and it was written to travel with Israel into that captivity. Its first task was to explain the disaster. The opening messages confront the survivors' sin and announce that the land will be made "a desolation and a waste . . . because of all their abominations that they have committed" (33:28–29), and the explanation is given in full just before the restoration promises crest:

Son of man, when the house of Israel lived in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds. . . . So I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood that they had shed in the land, for the idols with which they had defiled it. I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries. In accordance with their ways and their deeds I judged them. (Ezekiel 36:17–19)

³⁴ Alexander, "Fresh Look," 167–168; Tanner, "Rethinking," 43.

³⁵ Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 235–283.

³⁶ Richardson, "End Time Talks 15."

³⁷ Alexander, "Fresh Look," 168, answering the devoured-versus-buried objection.

³⁸ Richardson, "If This Is True . . . Then Jesus Failed for Over 1,000 Years (Timing of Gog Magog)," The Wine Press, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJ5yN9LbDY8>; Richardson, "Ezekiel 38–39 Versus Revelation 20: NOT the Same Battle."

The scattering, the block insists, was not the defeat of Israel's God. It was His judgment, and it created a problem only He could resolve: His name now stood profaned among the nations, who looked at the exiles and drew exactly the wrong conclusion (36:20–21). So God promises to act, "not for your sake, O house of Israel . . . but for the sake of my holy name," and to vindicate that name in the sight of the world: "And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes" (36:22–23). The restoration chapters then unfold the reversal, the shepherd, the new heart, the reunited nation, the covenant of peace, and the Gog oracle caps the block, with God announcing the vindication in nearly the same words, this time through the invader's destruction: "In the latter days I will bring you against my land, that the nations may know me, when through you, O Gog, I vindicate my holiness before their eyes" (38:16).

Read in that setting, the epilogue is doing something the original audience would have recognized instantly. Here is the text on which everything depends:

And I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them. The house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God, from that day forward. And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt so treacherously with me that I hid my face from them and gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they all fell by the sword. I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their transgressions, and hid my face from them. (Ezekiel 39:21–24)

This is the block's opening theme, returned to at its close. The subject of verse 23 is not Israel's experience but the nations' understanding: "the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity." The captivity in view is the one the entire block exists to explain, the Babylonian catastrophe whose report launched the night's messages, and the explanation repeats 36:17–19 almost point for point: treachery answering to defiled ways and deeds, "according to their uncleanness and their transgressions" answering to "in accordance with their ways and their deeds I judged them," the people given into the hand of their adversaries answering to the scattering among the nations. When Gog is destroyed, the record is finally set straight before the whole world. The exile happened because God judged His own people, and the God who scattered them is the God who has now gathered them and crushed the last army ever to touch them.

The verbs of verses 23 and 24 look backward, and the translators saw the seam: the English Standard Version sets the closing verses under their own heading at verse 25, and the New King James begins a new section at verse 21. Verses 25 through 29 then rehearse the restoration program of chapters 34 through 37 in summary form, the fortunes of Jacob restored, the whole house regathered with none left behind, the face no longer hidden, the Spirit poured out. Daniel Block's analysis, on which Tanner draws, reaches the same conclusion: 39:21–29 is a carefully structured epilogue to the Gog oracle, addressed to a people already restored to covenant relationship, summing up the theology of the restoration corpus rather than narrating a new exile.³⁹ The epilogue explains Israel's former captivity. It does not report a fresh one caused by Gog.

Richardson's reading, by contrast, must find a new conquest and a new exile inside the oracle, and the oracle does not contain them. In the battle account, Gog is summoned, advances like a cloud, and is destroyed by earthquake, panic, pestilence, and fire (38:18–23; 39:1–6). Nowhere does Ezekiel narrate the capture of Jerusalem, the defeat of Israel's army, the taking of prisoners, or the deportation of a single Israelite. The invader falls "on the mountains of Israel" and "in the open field" (39:4–5), and the only outcome the oracle assigns him is to become a sacrifice on God's table (39:17–20). The conquest and the captivity enter the reconstruction from other books, through Richardson's synchronization of Ezekiel with Zechariah 14:2, where Jerusalem is captured and half the city goes into exile, and Luke 21:24, where many fall by the sword and are led captive among the nations. But those texts describe the crisis of the seventieth week on any futurist reading, and importing their events into Ezekiel assumes the very identification in dispute. Judged by what Ezekiel actually narrates, the invasion of Gog and the assault of Revelation 20 end identically: a vast host enters the land and is destroyed by God before accomplishing anything.

The oracle's own front end confirms this reading. Ezekiel 38:8 describes the land Gog enters as "the land that is restored from war, the land whose people were gathered from many peoples upon the mountains of Israel," its people brought out from the peoples and dwelling securely, all of them. On the oracle's own telling, the regathering is behind the invasion, already accomplished, and it is described in the same restoration vocabulary that saturates 39:27–29.⁴⁰ Richardson's reading therefore requires the oracle to contain two regatherings, a provisional one before the invasion, which he identifies with the modern state, and the real one after it, though the text uses the same restoration terminology for both and never signals that the first gathering is a lesser or unconverted one. His reading likewise requires the secure dwelling of 38:8, 11, and 14 to be the complacency of a covenant-breaking people ripe for chastisement, while the identical phrase in the epilogue, dwelling securely "with none to make them afraid" (39:26), describes the blessed condition of the fully restored nation. One phrase, one oracle, two opposite meanings, assigned

³⁹ Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). See also Tanner, "Rethinking," 43–45.

⁴⁰ Tanner, "Rethinking," 35–40, on the restoration vocabulary shared by Ezekiel 38:8 and 39:25–29.

as the theory requires. The simpler reading takes Ezekiel's vocabulary at its established value throughout: the people Gog attacks are the restored covenant nation of chapters 34 through 37, their security is the covenant of peace in operation, and the epilogue is the retrospective that seals the restoration story with Gog's defeat as its public vindication.

There remains the charge of the impotent Messiah, and it recoils on the position that makes it. The charge assumes that the postmillennial placement leaves Israel overrun, exiled, and unconverted under Messiah's reign. Strip the captivity from the invasion, as Ezekiel's own text does, and nothing of the kind follows: on the postmillennial reading nothing is permitted to Gog except an approach and an annihilation, and Israel's national turning, the mourning of Zechariah 12, and the outpouring of the Spirit stand exactly where Richardson puts them, at the return of Jesus, before the Millennium, which is why the people Gog later attacks are already restored, secure, and indwelt. Once the captivity is removed, all that remains of the objection is the rebellion itself: how could the nations rise at all after a thousand years of Christ's visible reign? But that is not an objection to a placement of Ezekiel. It is an objection to Revelation 20, which states the rebellion outright, and Richardson affirms Revelation 20 as literal history written in advance. He is right to affirm it, and right, when defending it, to describe the rebellion as a brief and abysmal failure that displays the King's supremacy rather than diminishing it. In saying so he has answered his own objection. The postmillennial placement asks nothing of Christ's honor that Richardson's placement does not also ask. The epilogue does not delay Israel's salvation until after Gog. It celebrates, from the vantage point of Gog's destruction, a salvation that the invasion presupposed all along.

D. The Identification of Gog with the Beast

One argument remains, and it stands beneath all the others. Richardson's chronology is generated by an identification. Gog is the Antichrist, the Antichrist's final war concludes at the return of Jesus, and Ezekiel's oracle must therefore end at Armageddon. The identification is important to his theory as a whole, and it can be tested, because both books describe the personal fate of their invader, and they describe different fates.

Ezekiel's Gog falls in the land and stays in it. God addresses him directly: "You shall fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your hordes and the peoples who are with you. I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured" (39:4). After the feast comes the grave: "there Gog and all his multitude will be buried," in a valley thereafter named for the event (39:11). The beast of Revelation 19 receives the opposite treatment. He is not slain with his armies but captured, and with the false prophet "thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur" (Revelation 19:20), where the reader finds the pair still confined a thousand years later (20:10). One invader is killed, devoured, and buried in Israel. The other leaves no corpse in the land at all, because he leaves the battlefield alive.

The contrast must be stated with care, because Alexander weighed a version of it and judged it answerable. Gog, he argued, functions collectively in these chapters for the whole invading horde, so that by ordinary Hebrew apposition the burial of "Gog and all his multitude" is the burial of the multitude, which is what the valley's name records: Hamon-gog, the multitude of Gog.⁴¹ Let the collective reading be granted, for the decisive evidence does not lie on Ezekiel's side of the comparison at all. It lies in Revelation 19 itself, in the way John distributes Ezekiel's borrowed scene among his own characters.

First among the commonalities Richardson tabulates between Gog and the Antichrist is that both are devoured by the birds and the beasts at the great feast of God.⁴² Revelation says otherwise. John divides the defeated into two parties with deliberate syntax: the two who are captured and "thrown alive" into the lake, and "the rest" who are slain, "and all the birds were gorged with their flesh" (19:20–21). The carrion fate Ezekiel assigns to Gog together with his host, John assigns to the beast's forces while expressly withholding it from the beast. The one figure the identification most needs among the bodies at the feast is the one figure John removes from the field alive. That distribution is expected on the reading defended in section III, where Armageddon enacts the Gog pattern without exhausting it, and the leader's divergent fate marks the enactment as an enactment. It is difficult to explain on the theory that Revelation 19 is Ezekiel 39 retold, with the protagonist's fate reversed in the retelling.

Richardson has offered a harmonization: the Antichrist is physically killed at the return of Jesus, his corpse is exposed and dishonorably buried, and what enters the lake of fire alive is his conscious spirit, a reconstruction supported from Daniel 7:11, 2 Thessalonians 2:8, and the taunt against the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14.⁴³ The proposal faces three difficulties inside Revelation's own text. It empties "alive" of its contrastive force, since John opposes the two thrown alive to the rest who were slain, and on the ordinary biblical view the souls of the slain persist consciously

⁴¹ Alexander, "Fresh Look," 165–166. The Hebrew apposition point is supported at 166 n. 5 by Ronald J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 17, and Gesenius' *Hebrew Grammar*, ed. A. E. Cowley and E. Kautzsch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 425.

⁴² Joel Richardson, "Ezekiel 38, 39 The Battle of Gog and Magog," Joel's Trumpet, May 19, 2009, <https://joelstrumpet.com/gogandmagog/>, where the shared feast stands first among the enumerated commonalities between Gog and the Antichrist; the identification is developed at length in Richardson, *Mideast Beast*.

⁴³ Richardson, *Mideast Beast*, 230–233.

as well, so the stated contrast would distinguish nothing. It proves too little, since the same fate belongs equally to the false prophet, for whom the Daniel, Thessalonians, and Isaiah material supplies no parallel narrative. And it substitutes the intermediate state for the final one, assigning the beast the ordinary sequence of death, disembodiment, and Hades at the very point where John's wording marks the pair as exceptional; Revelation holds Hades and the lake of fire firmly apart, since Hades itself is at last "thrown into the lake of fire" (20:14).

Whatever is made of those difficulties, the sequel is not in dispute, because Richardson affirms it. The beast enters the lake before the Millennium begins, and when the war actually named Gog and Magog arrives, John pauses to remind the reader that the devil is thrown into the lake "where the beast and the false prophet were" (20:10). Expounding that verse, Richardson observes the same fact, noting that the beast and the false prophet are already in the lake of fire "because that happened a thousand years previous," and that the Revelation 20 conflict does not involve the same individuals.⁴⁴ The identification therefore requires the Antichrist to be a thousand years absent from the only battle in Scripture that bears Gog's name, while an unnamed allusion is made to establish his identity with Gog at a battle that does not. This is the asymmetry of section III met again from the side of identity. The explicit name is allowed to designate someone other than the Antichrist, but the implicit imagery is said to require that the Antichrist be Gog. Once the name may be reused without personal identity, as Richardson's own reading of Revelation 20 grants, the imagery cannot demand what the name does not.

The conclusion bears directly on the question of this paper. The identification of Gog with the beast supplied the bridge from Ezekiel to Armageddon, and the personal fates will not carry it. Gog falls with his host and is buried with his multitude in the land. The beast is parted from his host, withheld from the birds, and confined alive in the lake of fire from Armageddon onward, which is why he cannot appear at the one war that carries Ezekiel's names. Set the identification aside, and nothing remains to hold the oracle at Armageddon against the pull of the names, the timestamp, and the finality.

VI

Conclusion

Can Armageddon be the final fulfillment of Ezekiel 38–39? The evidence answers no, and it answers from every direction the question can be approached. Ezekiel's oracle presupposes a restored, genuinely secure, prosperous, and plunderable world that the seventieth week's own timeline has destroyed by the time Armageddon arrives, and the oracle's aftermath speaks the language of a vindication after which nothing is ever overturned again. Revelation 20 carries the names, the chronology, the matching fire, and the finality, and the war it describes is one that the advocates of the Armageddon identification already affirm as real, which leaves their identification bearing a burden of proof it cannot meet. The arguments advanced to meet that burden do not carry. The Day of the Lord announcement of Ezekiel 39:8 describes the character of Gog's judgment, not its position on the timeline. The claimed contrasts of scope, location, and fire dissolve against the Old Testament's own use of the four-corners idiom and against Ezekiel's own combination of fire and remains. And the captivity argument rests on a conquest Ezekiel never narrates and an epilogue that looks backward, while the charge of an impotent Messiah falls with equal weight on the rebellion of Revelation 20 that its advocates themselves affirm.

And Richardson is right about one large thing. Revelation 19 deliberately applies Ezekiel's feast to the destruction of the beast, because Armageddon genuinely enacts the pattern of Gog: the nations gathered against God's people, the scavengers summoned, the host destroyed by God alone. Where the identification errs is in mistaking the enactment for the exhaustion. The pattern's consummation comes where John names it, when the master follows his instruments into judgment, when the last deception ends in fire from heaven, and when the God of Israel vindicates His holy name in the sight of all nations, permanently. Armageddon is the prefiguration. The war of Gog and Magog is fought, and finished, when the thousand years have ended, and it was placed there all along by the only verse in Scripture that ever put the names on a map of time.

⁴⁴ Richardson, "Ezekiel 38–39 Versus Revelation 20: NOT the Same Battle," where he observes that the beast and the false prophet entered the lake of fire a thousand years before the Revelation 20 conflict and that the conflict does not involve the same individuals.

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