

THE EARLY MONTHS OF THE TRIBULATION

TEXT: Ezekiel 37-39, Rev. 6:3-4

INTRODUCTION: In our study of the events of the end time, we began by looking at the rapture of the church, and then we moved quickly to the beginning of the tribulation period in which the antichrist would begin his rise to power as the head of a ten nation confederation.

The rise of the antichrist to power was shown to John the Apostle in the Revelation as the first of the _____ Judgments to fall upon the earth, and it was shown to him as the coming of a king upon a white horse, an imitation of the coming of the King of Kings, seven years later. One of the early acts of the antichrist will be to make a seven year _____ with the nation of Israel. We will see that the next major event of the seal judgments will also involve Israel, so we need to pause and look at ...

I. ISRAEL AND THE END TIMES

A. We should note that Israel plays a big role in end time events.

First, our Lord was referring to Israel when He answered the question “What will be the sign of the end of the age.” Jesus responded,

Matthew 24:32-35 32 “Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer *is* near. 33 So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! 34 Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

1. What is the fig tree? **Whenever the fig tree is used figuratively in the Bible, it always refers to _____.** Look at these examples

In Jeremiah 24:2-8 the fig tree is Israel and the figs the _____ of Israel.

Joel 1:6-7 6 For a nation has come up against My land, Strong, and without number; His teeth *are* the teeth of a lion, And he has the fangs of a fierce lion. 7 He has laid waste My vine, And ruined My fig tree; He has stripped it bare and thrown *it* away; Its branches are made white.

Hosea 9:10 “I found Israel Like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers As the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first season. *But* they went to Baal Peor, And separated themselves *to that* shame; They became an abomination like the thing they loved.”

In Mt. 13:6ff, the barren fig tree is _____ Israel.

2. The sign that Jesus gave is the "budding" of Israel. Budding refers to a tree coming out of a period of _____ and beginning a period of active growth again. Has there been a period of dormancy in the national life of Israel? _____!

Jesus had predicted it (Mt. 24).

_____ predicted it (Dan. 9:26).

In ____ A.D., under the leadership of the Roman General Titus, it happened. Jerusalem and the temple were conquered, burned and utterly destroyed.

It was only a matter of a brief time before Israel ceased to exist in any sense as a national entity on the world political scene.

3. Was it ever predicted that a dormant Israel would be revived? Absolutely! Ezekiel 37, the prophecy of the valley of _____.

Ezekiel 37:11-12 Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!' "Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

Ezekiel 37:21 "Then say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land;

4. And many still living have seen it happen with their own eyes.

On May 14, _____, aided by a declaration of the U.N. and the withdrawal of British forces, Israel declared its independence. As May 14 changed to May 15 at midnight, British rule ended; and Israel became known as "the nation born in a _____."

5. This was also a fulfillment of many other prophecies concerning a restoration of the nation of Israel.

Isaiah 66:7-8 7 "Before she was in labor, she gave birth; Before her pain came, She delivered a male child. 8 Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, She gave birth to her children.

Amos 9:14-15 14 I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; They shall build the waste cities and inhabit *them*; They shall plant vineyards and

drink wine from them; They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. 15 I will plant them in their land, And no longer shall they be pulled up From the land I have given them,” Says the LORD your God.

This prophecy was _____ fulfilled when the remnant returned from captivity, because the Jews were once again uprooted from their land, following the destruction by Titus. But although the _____ nations intended to utterly destroy Israel as they launched an invasion on the very day Israel was born, the tiny newborn nation won their war of independence. Now they will occupy the land until and after the return of the Messiah!

Deuteronomy 30:3-5 3 that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you. 4 If *any* of you are driven out to the farthest *parts* under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. 5 Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

Today, the Gross Domestic Product of the average person in Israel is _____ times what it is in any of Israel’s neighboring countries!

6. The _____ of the fig tree began.

The generation that saw that event is the generation Jesus says will see the end times. I believe that is us!

II. GOD SHOWED EZEKIEL THE _____ OF THE REBIRTH OF ISRAEL!

Ezekiel 4:3-6 3 Moreover take for yourself an iron plate, and set it as an iron wall between you and the city. Set your face against it, and it shall be besieged, and you shall lay siege against it. This *will be* a sign to the house of Israel. 4 “Lie also on your left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it. *According* to the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their iniquity. 5 For I have laid on you the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days; so you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. 6 And when you have completed them, lie again on your right side; then you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days. I have laid on you a day for each year.

In essence, God told Ezekiel that Israel would have to endure _____ years of chastening for the sins of the northern kingdom and another _____ years for the sins of the southern kingdom. This is a total of 430 years. So what happened 430 years after the Babylonians attacked Jerusalem and took Daniel and company captive? Well, as far as we can tell, _____!

Why not?

Leviticus 26:14-33 14 'But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, 15 and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, *but* break My covenant, 16 I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. 17 I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you. 18 'And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. ... 21 'Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more plagues, according to your sins. ... 23 'And if by these things you are not reformed by Me, but walk contrary to Me, 24 then I also will walk contrary to you, and I will punish you yet seven times for your sins. ... 27 'And after all this, if you do not obey Me, but walk contrary to Me, 28 then I also will walk contrary to you in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. ... 33 I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you...

Israel was in captivity to _____ for 70 years, then, as God had revealed to Isaiah, King Cyrus of Persia offered to let the Jews return to their land to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem. Sadly, only a small number, called the _____, returned. They departed in 536 B.C. The rest of the Jews were content in their new lands, now a part of the Persian empire. In other words, they reverted to their disobedience, _____ to go back to the land God had given them.

Here is how the numbers work out. Of the 430 years of chastisement the Lord had decreed, 70 had been served in the Babylonian Captivity, leaving _____ years remaining. When the vast majority refused to return to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, the 360 remaining years were multiplied by _____ according to Lev. 26. $360 \times 7 = 2,520$ biblical years (360 days per year). When we convert this to our calendar years of 365.25 days per year, we get 2,483.8 years. This means that 2,483.8 years after the end of the captivity in 536 B.C., God's chastening of Israel for the sins of the two kingdoms and the hard heartedness of the Jews in captivity would be complete.

What is that date? _____! From the date of the decree by Cyrus, the date is exactly May 15, 1948!

The significance of this is that it gives us confidence that the reestablishment of Israel as a nation in 1948 is the return to the land prophesied in Scripture and constitutes the "budding of the fig tree" spoken of by our Lord.

HERE ARE THE EARLY EVENTS OF THE END TIME:

A. Israel is in the land, restored to their place by the Almighty.

- B. The _____ is raptured. Believers suddenly disappear from the earth.
- C. Antichrist begins his rise to power. He makes a covenant of protection with Israel, guaranteeing their borders, sovereignty, and peaceful existence.
- D. Israel gladly trusts in their _____. So ...

III. GOD DECLARES WAR

- A. This is the _____ of the Seal Judgments, the coming of the red horse.

Revelation 6:3-4 3 When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see." 4 Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that *people* should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.

- B. I believe this is the _____ of Gog and Magog described in Ezekiel 38 & 39.
- C. A description of the war

1. The primary nations involved in Ezekiel 38:1-5

Magog - "land of Georgia," the same republic from which _____ originated

Prince of Rosh - Rosh is the ancient name from which the modern name Russia is derived

Meshech is the name from which _____ comes

Tubal gave rise to the name Tobolsk

(Moscow and Tobolsk are the two primary cities of western and eastern Russia respectively.)

Their leader's _____ or title is Gog

_____ is modern day Persia

Ethiopia

2. The motivation (Ezekiel 38:8-17)

From the attackers perspective:

For Russia, Israel is dwelling safely and unsuspectingly in its new covenant with the head of the ten nation confederacy. They look like easy pickings for _____ the vast resources of the land.

For the other countries, all _____, the issue is a hatred for the Jews and a desire to control Jerusalem and especially the temple mount, which is the third most sacred site in the Muslim world.

It is interesting to note that there are already rapidly increasing commercial and _____ alliances between Russia and Iran. Russia has been increasing its sales of arms, submarines, and nuclear technology to Iran and Libya.

From God's perspective:

God actually opens the door for these alliances in order to draw these pagans to make war on Israel.

His purpose is to supernaturally destroy them so that the _____ will recognize His power and the hearts of the _____ will turn back to Him.

3. The battle plan

The nations descend on Israel like a cloud, quickly engulfing the land.

The _____ at this point, keeps his treaty with Israel and comes with his army to defend the land. He directs his forces south toward the Ethiopian and Libyan troops and seems to be able to handle them. But he is troubled by the _____ troops, coming with such force from Russia. (Dan. 11:40-45)

Then _____ steps in. (Ezekiel 38:18-23)

sends a great _____

mass confusion of the troops resulting in destruction by "friendly fire"

rain and large _____

great floods

_____ and brimstone

4. The results of the battle of Gog and Magog

All attacking armies _____.

God sends attacks back on the _____ of the invaders.

It takes 7 _____ to bury the dead and 7 _____ to burn the abandoned weapons of war.

The defeat of Russia and Iran leaves a power vacuum in that part of the world which the antichrist will exploit. The defeat of Iran would leave _____ as the major military power in the Middle East. It is easy to see how an alliance with the antichrist could lead to the rapid rebuilding of the ancient city of _____ as the commercial center of the antichrist's empire.

The Jews turn away from their predominate _____ and begin again to worship God, and many Gentile nations recognize that God delivered Israel (Ezekiel 38:23), opening the door of receptivity to the special _____ bearers the Lord has sent and which we shall consider in a future lesson.

CONCLUSION: Time and again throughout the tribulation, we shall see the antichrist and the rebellious people of this world arrange their forces and resources like pieces on a _____ in the most elaborately planned strategies intended to ensnare the Almighty God in an inescapable trap.

But each time Jehovah God reaches down and makes His move, He triple jumps the opposition and lands in the King's row and says to the devil and his men, "_____."

Crown Him with many crowns
 The Lamb upon the throne
 Hark How the heav'nly anthem drowns
 All music but its own!
 Awake, my soul And sing
 Of Him Who died for thee
 And hail Him as thy matchless King
 Thru all eternity