

Allan MacRae: Ezekiel, Lecture 14

Now we were looking at chapters 36 and 37, and we had noticed how in the prophecies in 36 and the last half of 37 the same ideas were reiterated, but there was much more emphasis on the eschatological in chapter 37 than in 36. We noticed that there were the promises of Israelites returning to their own country, promises of material prosperity, the promise of being gathered from all the nations. We also noticed there were spiritual promises of having a new heart and of being cleansed from impurity, and so on. It's impossible, I believe, to say all of this is talking about the church and it is not talking about Israel. But there are those who will take everything in the Old Testament that gives a promise and attribute it to the church. In the original edition of the King James version you looked at the prophets and there would be a heading, a heading of punishment for Israel, Israel condemned for its sin, blessings on the church, blessings on the church, and they gave all the blessings to the church and all of the punishments to Israel, and that of course is ridiculous. There are punishments for everyone of every nation who ever disobeys God, turns away from him, and breaks his law. There is punishment and rebuke.

Israel got a great measure of it because they got greater opportunities than other nations. Archeological evidence shows that in the countries around Israel, we find evidence of the life but we don't have much of written things, so most of what we have from those regions is simply artifacts. But from these objects, from statues and little shrines and that sort of thing, you can get a considerable idea of the life of the people. If you compare them with similar things that we find in the land of Israel, you find that the moral standard of ancient Israel was way superior to that of the countries around. You'll read the terrible rebukes that God gave to the people for their sin and you might think that they were a degenerate people, a people who were constantly in the worst type of sin, but the fact is that they had a

greater opportunity than these other countries. As Jesus Christ said, “Capernaum,” he said “if the miracles that were done in you, if the messages given to you, had been given to Sodom and Gommorrah they would still be standing” (Matthew 11:23). In other words, Israel had special opportunities to know God’s will and Israel had a higher level of life undoubtedly than any of the other countries of antiquity. They received special condemnation because they did not come up to the light that they had, as of course none of us do, but it is, I think, important for us to remember that as Jesus pointed out, God is fair, God is just and the one to whom much is given from him much is required. God judges each of us in accordance with the decisions we make, with the actions we make and also in comparison with the opportunities that we have had. God is entirely just.

But when you look then at these wonderful promises for Israel, we know that God has wonderful promises for all those who know him and endeavor to follow him, and we know that God has rebuke and punishment for all those who disobey him and turn against his law. But he treats us to a considerable extent in relation to the opportunities that we have.

I have often heard people say, “Well look at this man; he claims to be a Christian and look at his life. Look at this other fellow that has no use for Christianity and yet look at the high moral level he has got.” Well in most cases you find that the man who has a high moral standard and lives a good life, but makes no expression of belief in Christ at all is the man who was brought up by Christian people and had a Christian background. He has had a greater opportunity and so I always say it is not nearly so important what level we have reached as what direction we are going, and how it relates to the opportunities that we have. And so in these promises I believe that God is speaking to a physical, material people, but that there is much in this that applies to all who follow him and try to do his will. The rebukes and the assurances of God’s condemnation of sin are not something that we should pass over and say, “Oh well, that’s talking about those Israelites and has nothing to do with me, because the Lord points out

their weaknesses and those errors and it applies to us--to us to avoid those same errors and to know that God's wrath comes upon us the same way.

So to say that wherever blessings are promised in the Old Testament it means the church is ridiculous, but is true that there is a great deal that God gives. The promise of blessing applies to all who know the Lord and who are trying to follow him. Paul says there are not all Israel that are of Israel (Romans 9:6). There is the true Israel, there are those who are merely Israel by descent, and there are those who partake in the blessing of God's promise to Israel because they are a part of the continuing witness. The olive tree figure that Paul gives the continuing root of those who follow the Lord, which certainly includes the church very definitely. As the book of Hebrews says, these great saints of the Old Testament will not receive God's blessing apart from us and, "we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses," so there is the unity of the people of God all through the ages. We enter into the spiritual blessings promised to Israel, but there is also a definite relation to a people who has preserved, as a whole, the opposition to idolatry and a great amount of loyalty to what they thought was doing the will of God.

But, unfortunately, the great bulk of Jews have turned their attention to the Talmud instead of to the scriptures. The Talmud comments on the Scripture, and then comments on the comments on the Scripture; and when you get to that point, they get off into all kinds of vague areas. The Talmud is the great collection of Jewish law that was made in the early years of the Christian Church, and you can go through it and pick out some of the most beautiful things, some of the finest defenses of loyalty to God and seeking his will. You put those all together and you say what a marvelous book out of what the rabbis wrote! Or you can go through and you can pick statements that show extreme selfishness and materialism and think that it's only forms that matter and not the truth. You put them together, as some anti-Semites have done and you can say look at this awful thing that the Jews have followed. The sad thing is that the bulk of them have put

their attention on the Talmud instead of on the scripture, but there is, of course, a considerable amount of the blessings that comes through in the Talmud, though there is an awful lot that shouldn't have. There is an awful lot of human imagination.

Student Question: (unclear)

Dr. MacRae's Response: There is a tremendous danger of that, and my personal opinion is that all the great central doctrines of the Scripture are clearly taught in the Scripture and the history of doctrine through the ages is the history largely of people trying to explain things that aren't explained in the Scripture. For example, the Scripture makes it absolutely clear that Jesus Christ is God from all eternity. Jesus Christ is a man, truly a man, fully a man and he is just as human as any of us, and he is just as much God as God the Father. Well, I think the early Christians read that and believed it, but then after a century or two you find people trying to explain it and they said, "Oh, well, it must be that he has only part of him as God and part that is man," and they made up various theories to prove that point.

Then eventually these theories were proven wrong, and when you get to the great summary of all the early arguments and discussion about the nature of Christ, you will find that great statement of Chalcedon, and mostly it consists of denying this attempt to redefine the nature of Jesus Christ and just getting back to the simple clear statement, "Jesus Christ is fully God and he is fully man."

We can't understand it all but we find it clearly in the scripture. You find human beings who try to explain so many things that aren't explained in the scriptures, and they have got into all kinds of vague areas--like free will and divine sovereignty. You take certain passages and everything is like some non-Christian try to say today. Everything is the result of forces within you; you can't help yourself; you're organized for this; and whether you go out that door or that door it's all just a part of your system and you have no choice in it. Of course, most of us think that this is utter nonsense, but then you go to the other extreme and say

you can do anything you want. Well, we know we can't because we are tremendously affected by our backgrounds, by our makeup. So you can prove we're absolutely free and you can prove that we're absolutely bound, and the fact is there's a big element of both, and the Scripture clearly teaches this. We want to find what is in the scripture and stand upon it, and to my mind that is the unique feature about Biblical Seminary: that we're not so interested in the ideas of the elders or the people who have conceived this and that or other theories and thoughts of man. We are interested in getting back to the Scripture, which is what God has given, and it is the only source that God has given.

But now we have a similar problem about what in Ezekiel is speaking about Israel and what is speaking about the Church, and you just cannot separate them from each other. The Israel of God is all who believe in God and follow him. Since the facts have been made clear that those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ consent to the Church, and a great deal of the blessings apply to the Church, but also the condemnation for error that is applied to Israel points to errors we can fall into, and many who call themselves Christians have fallen into them. And so we cannot always be sure about a particular statement and whether it is speaking of the physical people of Israel. Certainly God has preserved that through all these years not simply to cast them aside, and Paul said that "all Israel would be saved" (Romans 11:16). It seems to be rather clearly taught in these passages that there are future blessings for Israel, the nation, and future difficulties they have to pass through.

Now the present state of Israel is definitely not a religious organization, and the bulk of the people have little interest in the Bible except in the wonderful evidence of the greatness of their people in the past. As an aside, I taught a man, a young fellow in Tel Aviv, years ago and told him how I believe that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. He had been trained in the high schools in Tel Aviv to believe in the "higher criticism." He said, "You're more of a Jew than I am!" Which was interesting, because there is that antimony in Israel now of wanting the blessing

and yet the great bulk of the people wanting to forget all about the great religious teachings of the Bible. Well, these promises I don't think are being fulfilled today. They may be leading up to their fulfillment may be a start towards this, but certainly these promises look forward to something that has not yet come and in my opinion, mostly goes to what will happen in the millennium.

But now we have these promises that include these wonderful statements about cleansing from their sin, these wonderful statements of unity of God's people, and that is something we need among Christians--more unity. We need less strife about little differences among us and more unity. Not necessarily unified organization; I think that can have great problems, but unity of love for all the brethren regardless of the differences in view-point on certain issues not critical to the faith.

But right in the middle of this wonderful passage of prophesy of chapters 36 and 37 we have this first half of 37 in which God gave Ezekiel a special vision. He doesn't say, "Ezekiel, I'm going to show you what's going to happen, this is what is going to happen." He often does that, but he does not do that here. It is not explicitly said that this is a picture of the future, and it certainly is not said this is a picture of what is then happening. So I think as we approach the vision we have to ask just what is the true full meaning of it? And it is entirely possible that there is more than one view of the thoughts and of the truths in the vision.

So as we look at it, we find that it started where he saw these many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry, and the Spirit of the Lord asked him, "Son of man, can these bones live?" A very good question to ask the prophet! And how would you answer? Well, he answered it in the way, I think, we should answer a lot of questions on which God has not revealed the answer in the scriptures. He said, "O sovereign Lord, you alone know." He said, in effect, "I don't know, it's beyond my having the data to deal with.

Just about the time this seminary was started, I had the occasion to go into Union Seminary in New York about a matter. I think it's one of the two times in

my life I've been in that ungodly institution, but I stepped into the bookstore there and I saw a book called *Critique of Philosophy and Religion* by a professor of philosophy at Princeton University. In the latter half of the book he tries to debunk religion and show you how, after all, there can be nothing to it except an emotion. I didn't care much for the last half of the book, but in the first half he debunked philosophy, and I thought he did an excellent job of it. And he had a marvelous picture in it. He said the philosopher, a really great outstanding philosopher, is like a man who makes a small flight in an airplane. He gets up there and sees something like the lines of railroad tracks, or the kind of houses, but in this short wonderful flight this man sees a certain aspect of the world, but there is much more that he doesn't see, or at least doesn't take in, and so he gets a partial vision of truth. Now, the writer says, for the philosopher, after he has gotten this vision of truth, to express clearly what he has seen so that somebody else can really understand, is very difficult and usually they fail in the attempt. Then he says, after he expresses it the other people who are interested have got to interpret his words, and they may or may not get the idea of what he has really presented, which itself is only a fragmentary view of one aspect of truth. And it just struck me that a brilliant philosopher can get certain aspects of truth that can be of value to us, but we're far more apt to get the truth, I believe, out of God's word, to get the insights that are worthwhile. Though the ideas of philosophers may suggest a question to us, then we can go to the Scripture and see if God has revealed the answer or if we don't know the answer.

Now he said to Ezekiel, "Can these bones live?" and Ezekiel said, "You know, God knows, maybe he'll reveal it to me, maybe he won't." And there is much in light where we can gather material together and make reasonable conclusions. There is much else on which we do not have sufficient data so we cannot make a proper conclusion because of insufficient data. We only see a small part of what we might see and in that part our attention is centered, but other things we haven't even noticed. But God is the only one who knows the answer to

all questions, and here the Lord, instead of explaining the vision to Ezekiel, says, “Prophesy to these bones, say to them ‘Dry bones, hear the word of God, this is what the sovereign God says to these bones: “I will make breath enter you and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin. I will put breath in you and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am Lord.” So I prophesied as I was commanded and as I prophesied there was a noise, a rattling sound and the bones came together, bone to bone.”

My, what a wonderful able fellow this prophet was. He could make these bones come together simply by saying certain words. Of course, I believe that here again we have God commanding him to do something and God commanding something to happen. It is God who did it, not Ezekiel in any way, but God gave Ezekiel a task, and in connection with that task, God performed a certain result.

So he heard this rattling sound and the bones came together, bone to bone, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and the skin covered them, and there you have all those corpses lying there - not just bones, but corpses.

You notice there are two stages of this prophecy, there are definitely two stages. There is the stage of bringing the bones together, putting the flesh on them and all that, and that’s the end of that stage. And the step had been made that is vital, but it’s worthless if he can’t go further. “And so he said to me, ‘Prophesy to the breath.’” How do you prophesy to a breath? What does that mean?

Well now, this word that is here translated breath is the word “*ruah*” which is used in the Old Testament hundreds of times and translated spirit in four fifths of them, and there is about a fifth of them where it is translated “breath.” There are a very few cases where the word is translated “wind.” Well isn’t that strange that one word has those various meanings? They are somewhat related meanings, and in every language there are many, many words that have a variety of meanings, and of course that is the great value of learning the original language. You see what the possibilities of interpretation are, which someone can’t see who

doesn't know the original language. You see these possibilities, and it is interesting that the word *ruah* has those possibilities, and in the New Testament the word *pneuma* has the same possibilities. From the word *pneuma* we get the term pneumatic tire. The word *pneuma* is used for air or for wind, but it is the only word used in the New Testament to mean spirit. It is exactly the same as *ruah* here in that regard. There is a similarity between spirit and wind. You don't see the wind, you don't see the breath, but you feel it and it is tremendously important. The Spirit acts; you don't see him, but it is most important in your life what the Spirit of God does. So there's a similarity between breath and spirit, and they have just the one word for both meanings, and I believe they translate it right here, - I looked at quite a number of translations and most of them translate it "breath" here - but why do you talk of breath? Why not say prophesy to the spirit, "And say to him, 'this is what the Sovereign Lord says, "Come from the four winds, come from the four directions, O Spirit, and breathe into these slaves that they live.'"

In the last few decades medical science has advanced to the point where they are able to put breath into you, into anywhere. They can take a body from which the spirit has departed and they can make that body breathe and they can keep it breathing, keep the heart beating for years, but if the spirit is gone, what on earth is the value? What purpose is there to it? The person in that condition feels nothing, has no thought; I would say that the spirit is gone! And if it's a Christian and the spirit has gone to be with the Lord, what is the point of keeping that body breathing? And so I don't think here that the thing was that something you call breath came into these corpses, for "they stood up on their feet, a vast host". It was in my opinion the "spirit" that animated these corpses.

Incidentally this same word, the New Testament word *pneuma*, is translated "spirit" a hundred times, at least dozens of times, in the New Testament but there are just one, two or three, very, very few cases in which the word is translated as "wind," and one of them is in the book of John. I was puzzled for

years over that. “The wind blows where it wishes, and thou knowest not whence it comes from or where it goes. So is every man that is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:8). The word translated “spirit” there is the same word translated “wind” before and I thought, “How out of date!” The book of John seems to be out of date when you say no one knows where the wind comes from or where it goes. We’ve got all our weather stations and we know exactly where the wind comes from and we can trace its course across the country. Why would God make an unscientific statement like that in the scriptures? God knows all the facts of science; he doesn’t teach them to us, that’s not the purpose of the scriptures, but when he touches on them you can be sure he touches on them truly.

There was a great man, a friend of mine, now deceased, a great man and a fine scholar, a very earnest Christian, but sometimes rather stubborn on his particular views of things. I said to him that this word can just as well be translated spirit. Why shouldn’t it be, “The Spirit works where he chooses, and you don’t know where the Spirit comes from or where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” The same word translated “spirit” was translated “wind” before. And he rather scornfully rejected my suggestion, and I did not at that time pursue it further. I thought, well that man is older than I, and probably wiser than I.

Then a few years later I picked up a Bible dictionary and found in it an article on spirit. His name was signed at the end of it, and in the article, to my surprise he referred to this passage and he said this would be better translated, “The Spirit performs his work where he chooses,” and I saw that after he had thought it over he had seen that on that particular point in the selection between the two possibilities, the one that I chose was better than the one that the translators of the authorized version had taken. Even though he never admitted it to me that my insight had been correct in that place, I believe that this simply emphasizes the great benefit of the language, that it shows you what the possibilities are in cases where there is more than one possibility. And in most

sentences in any language there are various possibilities of interpretation, but the possibilities of interpretation in the Greek or the Hebrew are apt to be different than the possibilities in our English, which also has various possibilities.

I believe that there are these 2 stages to the bones coming to life in chapter 37: there is the formation of the body, the bringing together of the chemical elements and of the various natural things, but that for it to be a real person there must be the spirit there and the spirit is the gift of God.

Now, I don't like to speak critically of trudcianism, because I know there is at least one on our faculty who thinks that trudcianism is correct rather than creationism or preexistence, but personally I find trudcianism utterly impossible for me to accept. The idea of trudcianism is that when people perform a certain physical act which results in the production of the physical body, at that same instant there is produced a spirit, a human spirit. I believe that as in this case in Ezekiel, the spirit is a gift of God and that God puts with the body such spirit as he chooses but when does he do it? Here in Ezekiel there are two distinct actions, and I don't have any reason to think they must occur at the same time. I don't think man can force God to provide a human spirit. I think that God does this at such time as he chooses and he has not revealed to us, as far as I can see in the Scripture, what that time is. But do not lay too much weight on what I say here because, as I say, there are others who differ from me. It is one of the matters God has not clearly revealed, but I feel that the evidence that I see leads me to a certain definite conclusion.

Then God makes this second act. Ezekiel prophesies as God commanded him and most of the translations say "breath" entered them, but I believe that the word here, as in that case in John, should be "spirit entered them, they came to life and stood on their feet, a vast host" (Ezek 37:10).

So we have this picture that God gave Ezekiel, from which I believe certain definite lessons can be drawn as to the nature of humanity and God's dealing with humanity, but as you go on, you find that he is giving this to some extent as an

illustration. He says, “Say, ‘This is what the sovereign Lord God says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them. I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you my people will all know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up’” (Ezek. 37:13). “I will put my spirit in you and you will live and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken and that I have done this.” No human action, no human vision, but God has done this, and you notice that this is not reestablishing a nation in unbelief because he is going to put his spirit in them and he will settle them in their land.

Student Question: What does “the four winds” represent?

Dr. MacRae’s response: That is a matter for interpretation, and no one can be dogmatic on that. God’s Spirit is active; it is the Holy Spirit that informs everything. For “the four winds,” better to say the four directions, “Come from the four directions, O Spirit.” The Holy Spirit must breathe into them, yes, it must be action of the Holy Spirit to produce a physical result, but we are told not only that the Holy Spirit will produce a physical result, but the Holy Spirit will enter into their spirit, which the Holy Spirit has brought to them and the Holy Spirit will lead them.

Student Question: Does the expression “the four winds” add more to our understanding of what God is doing?

Dr. MacRae’s response: Yes I would think that the four XXXXX adds (spiritual likeness to the physical likeness) in this case. I believe that it gives a picture of the resurrection that God is going to perform for all who truly believe on him. There is this marvelous picture here of the resurrection that he will give us, but I think there is also in it the meaning of a new life for the people of Israel. I think God has purposes for Israel that as Paul says, “Has God cast off Israel? God forbid”. He has purposes for the physical nation of Israel but the purpose has as its central most important thing that he will bring them eventually to salvation through Christ. So we cannot understand all the details of this, there is much that

will be perfectly clear to us eventually, but we can gather certain elements of truth as we look at it now.

We have here then a definite prediction, I believe, of a future regathering of Israel with God's Spirit leading them and being within them. We also have a picture in it of resurrection as it comes to those who are lost in sin and are born again through Christ. We have the allegorical picture of the new life God gives but we also have, I believe, the physical promise of resurrection that will come to all of us who believe in Christ. I think all that is in this vision. A picture like this can often have various aspects to it.

Student Question: Can we say that the specifics that we read of the prophecies of Ezekiel that apply to Israel turning to God also apply to other nations at other times?

Dr. MacRae's response: I think that is definitely part of it, yes. I think that the same principles apply to God's people across the ages, but in the future prophecies, some of the specifics apply to Israel as a physical nation but others of them, or perhaps some of the same ones, apply to all who belong to the Israel of God, regardless of their background, of their human descent, those who are members of the true Israel as Paul speaks about it in the New Testament.

Well, this is a wonderful picture here and one of which the meaning is not immediately apparent when you get into it. I believe personally this word breath is an unfortunate translation in these places. Not too unfortunate, but it's not simply blowing air into the corpses that is meant; it is making them living beings with a real living spirit not just automatons.

Now I asked you for today to look at one word, chapter 49, chap 38, "Son of man, set your face against Gog of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, prophesy against it." And I asked you to look up the proper names mentioned either in the text or in the margin. The reason I said in the margin is because many Bibles, instead of saying the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal will say the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, and so I wanted you to

look up Rosh as well as Meshech and Tubal, Gog and Magog. There were five names there. We find that some of these names are used in the table of nations in Genesis 10 and are definitely shown to be peoples that were in existence at a very early time.

We also pour light on these names when we look to ancient records. Unfortunately ancient records preserve only a small part of what was written, only a small part of what was known was written down in the first place. I don't know where you would have to go today to learn about the different parts of a harness used in connection with a horse drawing a buggy, or the difference between a buggy and a surrey, and the different types of those which were very commonly used when I was a boy. Everybody knew these terms but who would bother to explain them, because everybody knew them! And today, aside from perhaps a few devotees of racetracks, and even they would know only a comparatively small number of these terms, they've just disappeared! And things that are common to people, they don't bother to write down as a rule. Of course, we have universities in which people are paid to gather all the different facts they can, all different sorts of matters, so there is a great deal more written down today than there was in the day when writing was much less common and when they did not have the same organization to preserve things.

The main things we know about those times are from those particular rulers had access to good types of writing materials. In Egypt the people had papyrus for writing and the papyrus they would write on disappeared within a few years. I think our librarian said that unless something vital is done, most of the books that have been published since 1840, something like that, when they began using much more acid in papers, all the books since that time, unless something is done, are going to simply disintegrate and disappear. So it is important to try and do something to preserve them and of course now we are putting more of them onto other media so we will have them preserved even if all the books deteriorate. But the writing material in ancient times, most of it simply disappeared; it deteriorated,

and so what we have left is some nations that didn't have access to that sort of thing who wrote on clay tablets which have lasted. But those were mostly particular records of the kings or matters like that. It is very fragmentary, what we know from those ancient times, compared to what we know of more recent days.

But we do find that the names Meshech and Tubal occur on records from the kings of Assyria that were written on clay tablets, and we have references there to Meshech and Tubal and Ionia. Anybody who has studied classical Greek history knows, the eastern Greeks were called Ionians, and these are peoples to the north of Israel. You go north from Israel, past Beirut, past Tripoli and you come up to the north of what is now Turkey. Then you turn west in Turkey and you have a large area which we today call Asia Minor. It was Asia in ancient times, and then we extended the name Asia to the whole continent, so we have come to call this part of it Asia Minor.

That large area of Asia Minor was one of the greatest cultural districts of the world in the early days of the Christian church. Most of Paul's churches and John's seven churches in the book of Revelation were there. That area was conquered by the Turks over 500 years ago and the traces of the earlier civilization have, to a very large extent disappeared in that area. And in that area we know that the Assyrians fought a people called the people of Meshech and the people of Tubal, which are all mentioned in their records. And so Meshech and Tubal would certainly have a relationship to that area north of the land of Israel, north and somewhat west. There are these references in the Assyrian records and some references later by the Greek writer Herodotus who traveled the extent of this region and wrote up what he found, and he referred to these peoples there. Well, these then are peoples definitely known in antiquity.

Most of our translations say Gog was chief prince of these areas, then some of them say the prince of Rosh instead of the chief prince, and anybody who knows some Hebrew knows that the word *rosh* means "head" and from it comes the word *reshit* which means "beginning," used in the first verse of Genesis, the

first word of genesis. And so the word *Rosh* can mean “beginning” or “head,” and so they translated it to chief prince. But it so happens that the order of the words is not what you would expect in the Hebrew and, consequently, the “chief prince” is an unusual translation because of the order of the words. The prince of Rosh would seem to be a more natural translation of it. We have an occasional reference to Rosh as a proper name in the Old Testament but no such evidence do we have of Meshech and Tubal, of a group of people who were active during many centuries in ancient times. So we have a difficulty there, whether to make it prince of Rosh or chief prince is something on which a person has to make their own decision and I’m not sure there is evidence on which to make this decision.

But Meshech and Tubal refer to peoples in Asia Minor who were a very active, warlike people and who required a tremendous lot of fighting on the part of the Assyrians before they finally were able to conquer them. There are those who say Rosh means Russia and Meshech means Moscow and Tubal means “Tabals.” The great trouble with that is that Tabals is a small, comparatively unimportant town, and why should there be a reference to that here and particularly when we have Meshech and Tubal clearly as a people there in ancient times. I would feel that it is most likely that here Ezekiel is looking forward to the distant future coming after the pictures of the millennium that we have in chapters 36 and 37, and that he is looking forward to the future and he refers to these peoples who were to the north of Israel, though somewhat west. Does it refer to people who will have a similar name at a future time, or are they figuratively used to represent others who will exist at this later time?

Gog we have no evidence who it might be. It is evidently a man’s name, for there was a king of Lydia in those times in Asia Minor, but it is unlikely that is what is involved here. I would think it is a reference to some powerful leader who is predicted in the distant future. The land of Magog is unknown; it is to the north, and it may very well be that it will prove to be Russia--the people that much further north--or it could even refer to the area from which they were and which is

today Turkey.

The Turks of course are a very warlike people; they are Muslims and we know what other Muslims are doing now in Lebanon. So I would say, and I feel we can positively say here, Ezekiel is looking forward to things to happen after chapters 36 and 37, and so this attack of Gog and Magog here described would seem to me to be quite definitely something after the millennium rather than before it. And I believe there is a mistake, that most present students of prophecy say, that this is a great battle to occur before the return of Christ. But the only place later on that we have Gog and Magog referred to in the bible is Revelation 20 where it describes the millennium and then describes the great uprising at the end of it with Gog and Magog as the leaders of it. And so I believe that, and there are others who have definitely expressed this idea, that this is looking forward to some events to happen after the millennium, which is described in chapters 36 and 37.

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