

Article of the Month
November, 2022

Gog and Magog

INTRODUCTION

These fascinating words appear only twice in Scripture -- once in Ezekiel, and once in Revelation. In the two places, they are used as a part of prophetic events separated by nearly a thousand years. But it is likely that their meaning remains the same. The words have intrigued students of prophecy for many years, and the term needs a good clear interpretation.

ETYMOLOGY & SYMBOLOGY

When we seek to find the actual meanings of the words, we learn that there is not always scholarly agreement on the matter. However, it is likely that "Gog" means "mountain," and "Magog" means "great mountain." If so, we need to find the implications of those meanings.

In prophecy, a mountain symbolizes a kingdom. Kingdoms, of course, come in different sizes and powers. Jesus shows a succession of relatively small kingdoms in Matthew 24:7 when he indicates the length of the Gospel Age by showing polities replacing other polities for century after century. But a "mountain" can also be universal in size -- more like a huge empire. When Jesus refers to Satan's world-wide empire in Matthew 17:20, 21:21, and Mark 11:23, he shows that faith in the prayer for God's world-wide Kingdom will, indeed, result in Satan's universal "mountain" being cast into the raging waves of the trouble at the end of the Gospel Age. God's world-wide kingdom is also symbolized when God says that "Nothing shall hurt nor destroy in all My Holy Mountain." (Isaiah 11:9) One very great mountain will replace another. "Thy Kingdom come!"

THE VISIBLE & INVISIBLE PARTS OF KINGDOMS

In Daniel, Chapter 10, verses 13 and 20, we find an interesting lesson about the kingdoms (mountains) of Persia and Greece. Gabriel was sent to give information to Daniel, but this great and mighty angel, Gabriel, was delayed by the "Prince of Persia." If, indeed, the Prince of Persia were simply a human king, there is no way that he could delay a mighty angel! But this "Prince of Persia" was apparently the mighty power of a strong, unseen, fallen angel. Gabriel had to call upon Michael, the Archangel, in order to get away from this powerful "Prince of Persia." Gabriel (verse 20) was also yet scheduled to deal with the unseen spirit power behind the Kingdom of Greece.

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What do we learn from this? Kingdoms (mountains) are more than they appear to be! They apparently are governed not only by their human rulers, but by what we can call "the power behind the throne" -- spirit beings who actually control the destinies of earthly kingdoms. Even Israel had an unseen spiritual power behind the scenes. Daniel 12:1 shows that THAT power is the GOOD angel -- our Lord Jesus ("Michael"), "the great prince who stands over the sons of your (Daniel's) people (Israel)."

The lesson is this: "Mountains" (kingdoms) are composed of their visible (human) components, but also have GREATER and invisible powers in the spirit realm directing their affairs. These invisible powers are, depending upon the kingdom, good or bad spirit beings.

Consequently, "Gog and Magog" (Mountain and Great Mountain) begins to have meaning. The term is telling us that we are dealing with an earthly visible kingdom ("mountain" -- Gog) with a greater "spirit" power (Magog) behind it. We have seen strong Scriptural support for this concept, and that support now gives us confidence that "Gog and Magog" symbolizes a very mighty structure of humanity being led by a very mighty structure of spirit beings. This IS the prophetic meaning behind BOTH uses of "Gog and Magog" in the Bible -- Ezekiel and Revelation.

THE INVADERS AND THE INVADED

There is little or no reason to think that Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38 is any different from Gog and Magog in Revelation 20. In each case, the symbolism is of (1) an earthly visible kingdom with (2) an invisible spirit force behind it. HOWEVER, the earthly kingdoms, and the spirit rulers behind them, ARE NOT THE SAME in the two prophecies. Things will have changed dramatically in the intervening thousand years.

In Ezekiel 38, Gog and Magog are THE INVADERS against God's people (Israel). In Revelation 20, Gog and Magog ARE God's people and the spiritual New Jerusalem which governs them. In Revelation 20, Gog and Magog are the ones BEING INVADED.

The Invaders

WHO is it that invades Israel for the battle which concludes the old world? If we rely on Ezekiel's description, we will get this answer wrong! For clarity, we must additionally rely on the testimony of Zechariah 14 which is a parallel description of the same event.

Zechariah 14:2 shows that it is the totality of Satan's universal empire (ALL nations) that comprises "Gog." Zechariah says, "I will gather ALL THE NATIONS against Jerusalem to battle..."

We cannot escape this description. It is ALL THE NATIONS. In other words, it is the totality of the political, social, economic, and religious world which Jesus called "this mountain" -- Satan's mountain. As Paul says, Satan is "the god of this world." (II

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Corinthians 4:4) Those doing "battle" against Israel constitute the UNIVERSAL "Gog" -- the ONE BIG EMPIRE of Satan (with him and his fallen angels behind it all -- "Magog").

Consequently, we can easily be misled when Ezekiel 38 SPECIFIES certain peoples which come down to invade Israel. Why the difference between Ezekiel and Zechariah? The difference is easily explained. ALL THE WORLD is gathered in agreement against Jerusalem, but ONLY A SPECIFIED group of ethnicities actually GO TO ISRAEL to battle. The whole world invades Israel as represented in a small group of invaders. But the totality of those in support of the action is (openly or covertly) the entire world.

This HUGE SATANIC KINGDOM (the world as a whole) is represented in the one word, "Gog." They lose. And their remains (all traces of Satan's old governing systems) get purposely exterminated during the symbolic "seven months" of burying the bones of the old order. (Ezekiel 39:11-16) This cleansing apparently happens before the literally-dead are awakened in the general resurrection of mankind. By the end of the 210 years (seven months) of the cleansing process, the existing ("alive") generations will have been prepared to welcome their ancestors to a relatively cleaned-up environment.

The Invaded

When, however, we see a re-appearance of the term "Gog and Magog" in Revelation 20:8, "Gog and Magog" has retained its symbolic MEANING. But the Kingdom (mountain) represented by "Gog," and the spiritual rulership (great mountain) of that Kingdom, "Magog," HAVE BOTH CHANGED. In Ezekiel, "Gog" was Satan's visible earthly kingdom, and "Magog" was the invisible Satan and his fallen-angel co-conspirators. In Revelation, "Gog" is the new Kingdom of God (all of humanity) which has been turned over by Jesus to his Father. (I Corinthians 15:28) "Magog" (as always) represents the invisible spiritual rulership over the visible Kingdom. In THIS case, Magog is God and His Christ with its spiritual servants of angels. Satan decides to "invade" this new Gog and Magog! He wants to take over what he has lost. It all used to belong to him.

Looking at the specific details of the grammar of Revelation 20:8 is very helpful. Verse 7 shows that after the Millennial Reign is complete, the Satanic influence will be allowed to manifest itself once more so that the faith of perfected humanity can be tested for its eternal existence. Then verse 8 continues the description: The Satanic influence will

Come out [of powerlessness] to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them [the nations, peoples, or "Gog"] is like the sand of the sea.

Note how easily this verse reads if we don't force pre-conceived ideas into it --

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(1) Satanic influences (deceptions), which had been forced into absolute powerlessness during the thousand years, are released with permission to attempt deception. God allows this because He wants to test faith -- not obedience (which the Millennium -- Christ's Kingdom -- had already tested).

(2) Note the clear grammar showing toward whom deception is aimed. The Lord wants it ABUNDANTLY CLEAR and without misunderstanding that this deception is aimed at:

- the nations (ethnicities -- all mankind), i.e.,
- those peoples all over the face of the earth, i.e.,
- Gog and (Gog's rulers) Magog.

(3) It is THOSE three descriptions OF THE SAME THING that are to be the Satanic focus. Please notice the Satanic gall! He actually tries once more, just as he did in the days prior to the flood, to deceive even the SPIRIT BEINGS ("Magog")! He did it once! In his warped mind, he can surely do it again!

(4) The objective of the deceptions (from the Satanic viewpoint) is to "gather them together for the war." Well, there WON'T BE ANY WAR! The devil WANTS there to be one. And, in the sense that some will align themselves with the devilish deception, the deceived ones will be READY for a war. But, as verse 9 explains, as their forces go into formation for attack, they are stopped dead in their tracks -- devoured by fire from above. There will be no war! There will be only termination of the adversaries. No one else will be harmed.

(5) Please do not miss the lovely descriptive ending of verse 8. The vast number "under attack" (the nations, those who are everywhere on the earth, Gog & Magog) is "**like the SAND OF THE SEA.**" We are not unfamiliar with this phrase. We have followed it since the days of Abraham in Genesis 22:17. The phrase is synonymous with the earthly "seed of Abraham" -- the whole restored world of mankind. This gives added emphasis to the identity of nations (ethnicities), world-wide dwellers, and Gog. They are ALL the earthly Seed ("sand of the sea") of Abraham which has been blessed with perfection by the spiritual Seed of Abraham (Jesus and his Church -- the "stars of heaven" seed). And Satan desires to attack the whole concept!

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The entire "Gog & Magog" incident of the "Little Season" of Revelation 20 concludes with verses 9 and 10. The deceivers come up on the "breadth of the earth" -- the entire planet. Thus they "surround" (totally challenge) the "camp the saints."

Understanding of "the camp of the saints (holy ones)" is reliant on Old Testament Tabernacle terminologies. The "camp" was the dwelling-place of all Israel -- all who were IN COVENANT RELATIONSHIP with God. The "camp" was the dwelling area for the entire nation under God's Law. Here, in Revelation, the camp is representative of the dwelling of the entire world under the New Covenant. God's rulership of Israel was symbolized by the Tabernacle itself which was placed in the middle of the camp. The "camp" in 20:9 represents all who dwell perfectly in the New Covenant relationship with God. The "Beloved City" is the New Jerusalem, the unseen spiritual rulership of all the earth -- which (as the new "Magog") is one of the targets of the Satanic deception!

Verse 9 devours the INDIVIDUALS involved (including the personal Satan). Verse 10 shows that the symbolic Devil (civil power) joins the Beast and the False Prophet (the religious entities) which went into oblivion (Second Death or Lake of Fire) a thousand years earlier -- at the time of the first Gog and Magog. (Revelation 19:20)

Note that Revelation 16:13 mentions the three symbolic entities (Beast, Dragon, and False Prophet) which must meet their doom in the "lake of fire." Beast and False Prophet end up there at the close of the Gospel Age Harvest (19:20). The Dragon (or devil, representing civil power) is the subject of Chapter 20. He JOINS the other two symbolic entities in the "lake of fire" a thousand years later at the close of the "Little Season." The new Gog and Magog prosper forever thereafter.

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