

Gog and Magog

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The names of Gog and Magog are both historic and symbolic. Magog, son of Japheth and grandson of Noah, is listed in the table of nations (Gen. 10:1-2; 1 Chron. 1:5). Gog was a descendant of Reuben, the eldest son of Jacob/Israel (1 Chron. 5:1-4). The only other occurrences of these names are in Ezekiel 38-39, which portrays the church's struggle against the forces of persecution, and Revelation 20:7-10, which depicts Satan's final assault against the saints.

In Ezekiel 38-39, Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, represents evil forces marshaled against God. Allies come from North (Gomer and Beth-togarmah), South (Ethiopia), East (Persia) and West (Put). Powerfully armed and prepared for battle, they converge upon Israel, covering the land like a cloud.

Some associate Gog with a specific ruler, realm, or region. Premillennialists often suggest a connection with Russia. However, considering the apocalyptic style of Ezekiel, and scarcity of any king/kingdom that might serve as a literal fulfillment, it is better to view Gog as an eschatological figure, symbolic of the forces of persecution that beset believers in the Messianic era.

Threats to the faith occur in every age and epoch, time and place. However, in Ezekiel 38, trouble arises "after many days" (v. 8) and "in the latter/last days (v. 16), when Israel is living securely, in peace and prosperity (vv. 8, 11, 14). God's people dwell at the center of the world (v. 12), not literally, but figuratively, being the center of everything that really matters.

Yielding to base barbarity, sinners endeavor to destroy the Lord's plan and purpose. Yet, even when men fight against God, opposing the truth and persecuting the church, divine providence can be observed. The Lord defends His own. Christians will be victorious over all opposition.

Like Pharaoh of old, who hardened his heart, and whose heart was hardened (Exod. 8:32; 9:12), God's purpose and Gog's purpose are one (Ezek. 38:10-12; 14-16). Why permit/provoke such an attack? So that Jehovah's name will be glorified among the nations: "They will know that I am the LORD" (Ezek. 38:23; 39:6, 28).

In Revelation 20:7-10, after the thousand years are completed, Satan will again be loosed upon the realm of mankind. Through his deceptive influence, Gog and Magog gather the nations for war against the saints and the beloved city. Yet, once again, God delivers His own. Fire falls from heaven and devours the adversary. Satan's doom is sealed; the saints' victory is assured. When will these things occur? No one knows, save the Heavenly Father (Matt. 24:36-39; Mark 13:32-37). Nonetheless, rest assured: it will get worse before it gets better. Let us, therefore, be watchful, steadfast, faithful and true (1 Cor. 15:58; 1 Thess. 5:1-11; Rev. 2:10).