

The Final Battle

Gog and Magog

Revelation 20:7 And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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,

¹⁰ 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.

(Rev 20:7-10)

Epic Final Battles

Mad Max: Fury Road; *Kill Bill: Volume 1*, Showdown at the House of Blue Leaves; *Avatar*, Battle for Pandora; *Avengers: End Game*; *Gladiator*, The Death of Maximus; *Saving Private Ryan*, Defending the Bridge; *The Revenant*, Glass vs. Fitzgerald; *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi*, the Battle of Endor; *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, The Battle of Helm's Deep. These are most of one writer's top ten final

battles of all time.¹ I couldn't help but wonder, where is [The Battle of Gondor](#), the showdown between Blondie, Tuco, and Sentenza in [The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly](#), The Gunfight at the OK Corral in [Tombstone](#); the entire movie [Independence Day](#), or an old favorite, [V: The Final Battle](#)?

From movies to annual sporting championships to high stakes poker, the world understands through analogy the idea of a Final Battle. Perhaps no place is this more apparent than in the realm of religion, where it matters most. As we talked several weeks ago about [Ragnarök](#), [Shambhala](#), and [Armageddon](#), humanity has deeply engrained into its collective consciousness both the necessity and the inevitability of a final, terrible, and yet glorious conflict.

No greater final battle is known in the world of men than Armageddon, the battle that takes place at the end of Revelation 16. [Dispensationalists](#) have popularized it as the ultimate conflict between good and evil that takes place right at the end of the Great Tribulation, just prior to the then to be ushered in Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ. Strangely, in their own way of reading, there is a battle that supposedly place after this but before the eternal state, and it is virtually unheralded. [Preterists](#) have taken Armageddon to refer to the

¹ [Industrial Scripts](#), "The 10 Best Final Battles: How to Write a GREAT Final Battle," *Industrial Scripts* (March 9, 2021), <https://industrialscripts.com/final-battles/>

almost inconceivably horrific destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. when over a million Jews were slaughtered by Roman armies. But as a battle, that seems quite anticlimactic to me, even if it did mark the formal end of the old covenant temple system. Was that really “The Final Battle?”

Today, we are looking at **Revelation 20:7-10**. It describes for us **the releasing of Satan** from his prison after the 1000 years have ended. His rage is unimaginable against God and his church, and so he comes out of the abyss “**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**” (8). That’s quite terrifying and all encompassing. Yet, just three verses (8-10) are given for this mighty conflict, and only one more devoted to the final punishment the devil receives. **Or is that really all that God tells us** about this War to End All Wars?

Revelation 20:7-10—Context and Structure

We’ve been working through a series of **17 questions** that I had from **Revelation 20:1-6**. Yet, though we are finished with these verses, I have not yet asked all of my questions. This is because a couple of them cannot be answered simply by looking at those six verses. Today, we will ask and answer just one more of these: **What does it**

mean that Satan will be released? We will also need to ask a few more questions of vv. 7-10.

As we begin to answer this question, it necessitates a trip back into the context and structure of the passage, which is—now as much as ever—crucial to inspect as we try to understand what God is telling us. The end of vs. 3 said, “After that [that is after Satan is imprisoned not to deceive the nations] he must be *released* for a little while.” This is repeated in vs. 7. “And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be *released* from his prison.” Thus, vs. 3 connects to vs. 7.

Now, 7-10 is clearly its own literary unit, centering on surrounding the camp and city:

- A. Satan released from prison, v. 7
- B. Deceives the nations, v. 8a
- C. Gathers them for war like sand on seashore, v. 8b
- D. Surround camp and city, v. 9a**
- C'. Fire comes from heaven to devour them, v. 9b
- B'. The devil who deceived them, v. 10a
- A.' Thrown into the lake of fire, v. 10b²

However, *and this is the important part*, this unit is inseparably linked literarily to the end of Revelation 19, which happens to also be a final battle.

² Peter J. Leithart, *Revelation*, ed. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, vol. 2, The International Theological Commentary on the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments (London; Oxford; New York; New Delhi; Sydney: Bloomsbury; Bloomsbury T&T Clark: An Imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018), 299. Christine Smith independently sees an ABCBA pattern here. Christine Smith, “Revelation 20,” *A Little Perspective* (Dec 27, 2016), <https://www.alittleperspective.com/revelation-20-2016/>.

- A judgment of the harlot (17:1–19:6)
 - B the divine Judge (19:11–16)
 - C judgment of the beast and the false prophet (19:17–21; cf. Ezekiel 39)
 - D Satan imprisoned for 1,000 years (20:1–3)
 - D' the saints reign/judge for 1,000 years (20:4–6)
 - C' the judgment of Gog and Magog (20:7–10; cf. Ezekiel 38–39)
 - B' the divine Judge (20:11–15)
 - A' vindication of the bride (21:1–22:5; cf. 19:7–9).³
- A. Celebration in heaven, 19:1–10
 - B. Heaven opens, and rider on white horse, 19:11–16
 - C. Angel in the sun invites birds to feast on corpses, 19:17–18
 - D. The beast and kings thrown into lake of fire, 19:19–21
 - C'. Angel with chain to bind Satan, 20:1–3
 - B'. Martyrs reign for a millennium, 20:4–10
 - A'. Great white throne, 20:11–15⁴

Being linked in this way strongly hints that **they are the same battle**. But we have also seen in the broader cycles of the book, that the final battle in ch. 20 not only connects to the battle of ch. 19, but also with the final battle in ch. 16 and 14 and probably even earlier.

Same Final Battle in the Last Four Cycles of Revelation

| Rev 20:7-10 | Rev 19:19-21 | Rev 16:16-21 | Rev 14:19-20, 10-11 |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| ⁷ And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, | ¹⁹ And I saw the beast | | |

³ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 983. We have seen another chiasm from 19:19-20:10 from Isaac Brown in a previous sermon. His structure, like one by Leithart, mostly connects the first 10 verses together, but it does not extend outward far enough to make any kind of conclusion about the sequence of ch. 19 with 20. Isaac Brown, "Revelation 19:19-20:10," *Biblical Chiasm Exchange* (Dec 21, 2016), <https://www.chiasmusxchange.com/2016/12/21/revelation-1919-2010/>.

⁴ Leithart, 249.

to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.
⁹ 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,
¹⁰ 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.

and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army.

²⁰ And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.

²¹ And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

¹⁶ And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

¹⁷ The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!"

¹⁸ And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake.

¹⁹ The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath.

²⁰ And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found.

²¹ And great hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, fell from heaven on people; and they cursed God for the plague of the hail.

¹⁹ So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

²⁰ And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia.

. . . he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

¹¹ And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

The associations are linguistic and thematic. Again, **Rev 14** (the fourth cycle) ends with the earth being “gathered” for a grape harvest which is “thrown” into the winepress of God’s wrath. This is followed by the smoke of their torment going up forever and ever. **Ch. 16** (the fifth cycle) ends with

the peoples “assembling” together at Armageddon, the angel yelling out from the throne, “It is done,” Babylon the great being made to drink the wine of the fury of God’s wrath, and every island and mountain being removed. Ch. 19 (the sixth cycle) ends with the kings of the earth “gathering” together to make war against the Warrior who treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God. This is followed by the beast and false prophet being thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. Ch. 20 (the seventh cycle followed by joy) ends with the nations “gathering” for battle against the church, but the devil is now taken and thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur with the beast and false prophet to be tormented forever. This is followed by the great Judgment of God. The point is, contrary to both Dispensationalism and Preterism, Armageddon and Gog-Magog are not two separate battles, separated either by 1000 years or at least nearly 2000 years. And so literarily and thematically, they are the very same battle.

I want to show this in more detail by looking at the idea of “gathering” or “assembling.” In Rev 16:16, it says, “And they assembled (*synēgagen*) them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.” “They” refers to “demonic spirits” who “go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them

for battle on the great day of God the Almighty” (14). Recall that we said Armageddon means, “Mt. of Assembly,” and that it is a reference not merely to Babylon in Isaiah 14, but to the supernatural creature (Helel ben-Shachar; the Nachash of Gen 3:1 and the serpent of Revelation) behind her, who said “I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on *the mount of assembly* in the far reaches of the north” (Isa 14:13).

Now, compare this with Revelation 20 which says that Satan will come to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, “Gog and Magog, to gather (*synagagein*) them for battle.” Not only is the idea of “gathering” the same, so also is the north. We see this by understanding that Gog and Magog comes from a reference in the OT from the prophet Ezekiel who says in this place, “You will come from your place out of the uttermost parts of the *north*, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great host, a mighty army” (Ezek 38:15; cf. vs. 6 and 39:2). All this demonstrates that in fact we do not have a mere 3 verses describing this Final Battle. We have multiple passages, not only on Revelation, but in the prophets as well. This is the context into which we now come to Revelation 20:7-10. We are now ready to turn to our passage.

Question 10: What does it mean that Satan will be released?

After the thousand years of binding are over, it says that Satan must be **released** for a little while. Just as the binding prevented him from deceiving the nations, so his loosing allows him once more to deceive them (**Rev 20:8**). But just as the binding did not prevent *some* from still being deceived (it was not an absolute binding), so the loosing does not allow him to deceive *everyone*, for he gathers “**the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog**” for battle, to march up and *surround the camp of the saints* (**20:8-9**).

Some have seen this deception as being universal in scope, as if Satan completely deceives everyone. Many have seen here a great apostacy. This is because they see this battle taking place at the end of the millennium when basically everyone will become a Christian. But this isn't an apostacy of Christians. It says nothing about Christians.

Logically, **if there is still a camp** of the saints, **then the saints are not deceived**. This is as our Lord spoke, “**For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect**” (**Matt 24:24; Mark 13:22**). To lead astray, **if possible**, does not mean that it is possible; rather this is way of saying that this is an incredibly strong delusion. As Paul says, “**Therefore God**

sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2Thess 2:11). The way we have looked at Revelation, not everyone becomes a Christian, nor is the entire world Christianized during the millennium. Instead, it talks about *the nations* being deceived. I think this delusion will deceive many who think they are Christians, but in fact are not.

This “loosing” of Satan could end up looking something like a **Great Tribulation** described by Dispensationalists, though it won’t be before the thousand years, and we won’t have all of the speculative specifics and newspaper hysterics that people put into that. In my opinion, we simply don’t know what exactly will happen. But we can make **educated guesses** based especially on what was going on in past judgments of God and why they came to pass.

For example, as it regards **man’s sin**, with what we were doing in the past and are or will be doing in the future (depending on if we are seeing the unfold before our eyes or it takes another thousand years), we can say that **God still hates today what he hated in the days** before the Flood, in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the days preceding

the exile, and the past judgment of the nations. Genetic manipulation, sexual perversion, contempt for God, his Christ, and his moral law, especially as it regards the destitute and downtrodden were reasons in the past for the most severe kind of judgment. They continue to be so. But specific predictions of disasters or terrors of what it will all look like, that's out of my pay-grade. Yes, many images of Revelation could be applied, especially if passages parallel, but remember that most of those are apocalyptic rather than literal word-pictures. They work on your psyche and soul to cause you to turn to God and repent before it is too late.

Revelation 20 does not focus on anything specific like that, so I won't either. I will say that this time of tribulation sees Satan attacking the church—but only “for a little while” (vs. 3). Then, it sees the total end of the devil and the beginning of the world made new, where the spiritual kingdom of Christ finally embodies a sinless physicality and covers the new heavens and new earth in totality. Forever. But that takes us into Revelation 21-22. To find out more of what this Final Battle means, we turn first to Ezekiel 38-39 and the Gog-Magog crisis.

Gog and Magog

I have brought up in the past that the last few chapters of Revelation parallel the last few chapters of Ezekiel. They do this in roughly the same order as one another.

| Ezekiel | Revelation | Revelation | Ezekiel |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 22:31 | 16:1 | 16:1 | 22:31 |
| 24:7 | 18:24 | 17:4; 18:16 | 28:13 |
| 26:13 | 18:22 | 18:10 | 26:17 |
| 26:16 | 18:19 | 18:11, 15 | 27:36 |
| 26:17 | 18:10 | 18:12-13 | 27:12-13 |
| 26:21 | 18:21 | 18:12-13 | 27:22 |
| 27:12-13 | 18:12-13 | 18:17 | 27:27-29 |
| 27:22 | 18:12-13 | 18:18 | 27:32 |
| 27:27-29 | 18:17 | 18:19 | 26:16 |
| 27:30-34 | 18:19 | 18:19 | 27:30-34 |
| 27:30-35 | 18:19 | 18:19 | 27:30-35 |
| 27:32 | 18:18 | 18:21 | 26:21 |
| 27:36 | 18:11, 15 | 18:22 | 26:13 |
| 28:13 | 17:4; 18:16 | 18:24 | 24:7 |
| 37:10 | 20:4 | 19:6 | 43:2 |
| 37:27 | 21:3 | 19:17-18, 21 | 39:17-20 |
| 38:2 | 20:8 | 20:4 | 37:10 |
| 38:22 | 20:9, 10; 21:8 | 20:8 | 38:2 |
| 39:6 | 20:8 | 20:8 | 39:6 |
| 39:17-20 | 19:17-18, 21 | 20:9, 10; 21:8 | 38:22 |
| 40:2 | 21:10 | 21:3 | 37:27 |
| 40:3 | 21:15 | 21:10 | 40:2 |
| 40:5 | 21:15 | 21:12-13 | 48:30-35 |
| 43:2 | 19:6 | 21:15 | 40:3 |
| 47:1 | 22:1 | 21:15 | 40:5 |
| 47:12 | 22:2, 14, 19 | 22:1 | 47:1 |
| 48:30-35 | 21:12-13 | 22:2, 14, 19 | 47:12 |

A few specifics can be helpful. The saints are said to **come to life** in **Rev 20:4** and this corresponds to the **dry bones coming to life** in **Ezekiel 37:10**. Next in Revelation (**20:8**) comes the Gog-Magog prophecy. This is found in **Ezek 38:2ff**. Next, Revelation (**20:9-10**) says they march over the broad plain and surround the camp of the saints and **fire comes down** from heaven and consumes them. This has an echo in **Ezek 38:22** and **39:6** with **hailstones of fire** and sulphur falling down on the hordes of the evil army. After the battle is over, Revelation (**21:10**) turns to the new **holy city Jerusalem** coming down out of heaven. This parallels the end of Ezekiel's war and the prophet seeing a structure like **a city** (**40:2**). In Revelation it is **measured by an angel** with a rod of gold. This is precisely what happens next in **Ezekiel 40:3ff**. Revelation takes us to a **great river of life** (**22:1**) and a great **tree of life** which is precisely what Ezekiel speaks about near the end of his book (**47:1ff; 12**).

Of course, this doesn't work perfectly, and one of the reasons for this is that **Revelation is cyclical**. Thus, we are not surprised to find that the Gog-Magog passage is quoted in both the battle of Revelation 19 *and* in the battle of Revelation 20, further demonstrating that the two battles are the same battle.

| | | | |
|--------------|---|---------------|--|
| Rev 19:17-18 | “With a loud voice [the angel] called to 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, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great.’” | Ezek 39:17–20 | “Call out to every kind of bird and all the wild animals: ‘Assemble ... to the sacrifice I am preparing for you ... You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth.’” |
| Rev 20:8 | “... and [Satan] will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle ... 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.” | Ezek 38:2, 22 | “Son of man, set your face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him ... With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him, and I will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur.” |

Therefore, we need to turn to Gog-Magog to understand more about what the final battles are teaching us.

Rather than go through a detailed look at the two long chapters, I want to focus on something a lot of people miss. Though there is clearly some kind of human element taking place here—that should go without saying and I don’t think anyone misses that, the whole Gog-Magog thing is actually very highly supernaturally charged. This is going to show itself to be quite related to the whole Satan being loosed idea. As that loosing should suggest, this is not an ordinary war.

The first thing to point out is the language of Ezekiel 38:1-2. “The Word of the LORD [I take this to be Christ] came to me: ‘Son of man, set your face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy

against him.” First, there is no definitively known person called Gog in antiquity, though scholars have speculated. Of these, most interesting to me is the ancient associations with the giant/giant descendants: Og,⁵ Amalek,⁶ Agag,⁷ and Haman.⁸ Curiously, Gogmagog (Goemagot, Goemagog, Goëmagot and Gogmagoc) is a legendary giant in Welsh and later English mythology. The latter says that London is guarded by the two giants: Gog and Magog.⁹ In the ancient mind, when giants died, they became demons. So this already gives us a potential supernatural flavor to the battle.

⁵ Dt 3:1, 13; 4:47 LXX: Og is rendered “Gog.” The reverse happens in Ezek 38:2 where now Gog becomes Og. Some scholars believe this was simply a scribal error (cf. Heiser, *Hermon*, 172, n. 278; Tooman, 140). But others (Gressmann, 129, n. 1; Zimmerli, 300) see a figure named Gog as a “locust giant after the manner of the scorpion man in the Gilgamesh Epic” which they see explains Gog appearing in Amos 7:1 LXX (“This is what the Lord showed me: And, see! A swarm of locusts coming in the morning and see! One locust is Gog, the king.”). This in turn relates to Revelation 9 and the locusts from the Pit. Tooman discusses this in relation to Joel on p. 146.

⁶ The Amalekites were a giant tribe in Gen 14:7. The Rabbis associated the seven phrases of the prayer in 1Chr 29:11 with a different OT event: Creation, the Exodus, the sun and moon standing still, the fall of Rome, the battle of Arnon, the war of Sisera where the stars fought against him. The last two (“Thine is the kingdom, O Lord and Thou art exalted”) are the war of Amalek and Gog and Magog (Seder Zeraim, Talmud – Mas. Berachoth 58a). Most of these are supernaturally charged.

⁷ Num 24:7 LXX: Agag is rendered “his kingdom shall be higher than Gog.” Heiser writes, “The effect is to transform the prophecy of Balaam into a remote, end-times prophecy pitting Gog against the Davidic Messiah, as opposed to an Israelite king having victory over Agag in the early days of Israel’s monarchy.” Michael S. Heiser, *Reversing Hermon: Enoch, The Watchers & The Forgotten Mission of Jesus Christ* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 171.

⁸ LXX93 of Esther: Haman the Agagite is rendered Haman the “Gogite” twice (3:1 and 9:24). Cited in William A. Tooman, *Gog of Magog*, Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2. Reihe 52 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 140.

⁹ “Gogmagog (giant),” *Wikipedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gogmagog_\(giant\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gogmagog_(giant)).

Second, the names of the armies include **Magog**, **Tubal**, and **Meshech** which appear as three of the seven immediate sons of Japheth, the son of Noah (**Gen 10:2**). A fourth son, **Gomer**, appears in **vs. 6** along with **Cush** and **Put** (**5**), two of the immediate sons of Ham (**Gen 10:6**). **Sheba** and **Dedan**, two of Cush's sons (**10:7**), appear just a little later along with **Tarshish** (**Ezek 38:7**), one of the sons of Gomer (**Gen 10:4**). These are the most ancient of peoples after the Flood, and to have this many names all come from Gen 10 is no accident. Together, they come from the four corners of the ancient world (or as Rev 20 puts it, “**like the sand of the sea**”):

| Nations of the Gog-Magog Crisis of Ezekiel 38-39 | | | | | |
|--|---------|-----------------------|-------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Text | Nation | Direction from Israel | Text | Nation | Direction from Israel |
| 38:2 | Meshech | N | 38:6 | Gomer | N |
| 38:2 | Tubal | N | 38:6 | Bet Togarmah | N |
| 38:5 | Persia | E | 38:13 | Sheba | S |
| 38:5 | Cush | SW | 38:13 | Tarshish | W |
| 38:5 | Put | W | 39:6 | “The Coastland” | NW ¹⁰ |

In taking us back to this chapter, we are necessarily taken to the Tower of Babel, for it is from there that the **seventy nations** of this chapter are derived. But it was at the tower

¹⁰ Table in **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. Reihe 135 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 310.

of Babel that God put the seventy heavenly “sons of God” to be rulers or princes over the nations (Dt 32:7-8).

This takes us to the title of this Gog. He is called, “Chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.” Chief prince [*nesi’ rō’sh*] becomes *archonta Rōs* in the Greek, which could be rendered, “commander of Ros[h].” Hence, the NKJV says, “Gog ... the prince of Rosh.” Along with him coming from the “north,” this is where many get the idea that Gog is Russia and that the End Times battle will pit Moscow against Jerusalem. The problem is, there is no place called Rosh in the ancient world, and it absolutely does not stand for “Russia.” That’s just Cold War exegesis rooted in fanciful speculation.¹¹

Rosh simply means head/chief. And *nasi/archonta* means a prince or ruler. The interesting thing is that the LXX calls the supernatural princes of Greece and Persia *archontos* (Dan 10:13, 20). Archons sometimes refer to supernatural beings

¹¹ Heiser, *Hermon*, 170. Heiser did a long podcast on this as well. See Michael Heiser, “Naked Bible Podcast 152, 153 – The Gog Magog Invasion | Ezekiel 38-39,” *Youtube* (May 12, 2018), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k3YnPvBwQxk>. Transcript: <https://nakedbiblepodcast.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/NB-152-Transcript.pdf>. Heiser cites the following article as a good introduction for where the whole Russia thing originated (hint: Cold War exegesis). J. Paul Tanner, “Daniel’s ‘King of the North’: Do We Owe Russia an Apology?” *JETS* 35.3 (Sept 1992): 315-28. https://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/35/35-3/JETS_35-3_315-328_Tanner.pdf. Also Edwin Yamauchi, *Foes From the Northern Frontier* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 19-27. https://www.google.com/books/edition/_/oVj7DwAAQBAJ?gbpv=1.

in the NT as well. Therefore, it is not impossible that **Gog is somehow the supernatural power** over Meshech and Tubal, which we know are not in Russia, but Turkey, over 1000 miles from Moscow (the fact that they are in Turkey could have “giant” overtones as well, see my book on Galatians). Gog therefore very well could be a mythological or supernatural rather than human figure.

A **fourth** point is related. The passage is that after identifying Gog, God immediately says, “**I will put my hooks in your jaws**” (**Ezek 38:4**). This language only appears in **Job 41:2**, where God asks Job, “**Can you put a rope in his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook?**” Whose jaw? **Leviathan**, the Dragon, who in Revelation 20 is Satan. At the very least, the imagery is evocative of the supernatural. However, I think there is more going on.

Isaiah had predicted, “**In that day the Lord with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea**” (**Isa 27:1**). This is the final defeat of Satan being predicted. He is going to be **punished once-for-all**. That’s precisely what is happening here in this Gog-Magog battle. This is understood in a most remarkable way

by understanding that in Ezekiel, Gog is buried in “**the Valley of the Travelers**” (**Ezek 39:11**).” What’s that? It could refer to **the Valley of Hinnom**, the place where human sacrifices were offered to Molech. If so, there is a fascinating connection here to the end of ch. 19 where God makes a great supper for the birds—a supper of evil beings that they feast upon. In other words, God is sacrificing evil as a sacrificial meal where the evil one(s) are consumed forevermore, never to return again. Or, it could refer to the **passing on from this realm to the next** via the river to hell or the lake of fire, as the word “**traveler**” (*‘ōbērîm*) is the word for **crossing over to the netherworld**, either literally or through witchcraft.¹²

Add now to this a **fifth** point which is that Gog comes from **the far recesses of the north** to *assemble* around God’s people, and you can think immediately of **Isaiah 14:12** where **Lucifer** seeks to sit on the mount of *assembly* in the far reaches of the *north*. It’s all very much the same idea, except Isaiah is past and Ezekiel is talking about the future. Is it starting to make more sense that it is *Satan* who is released

¹² See Heiser’s fascinating discussion in **Michael S. Heiser**, Naked Bible Podcast Transcript: Episode 153, Ezekiel 38-39, Part 2), *Naked Bible Podcast* (April 8, 2017), 9-18, <https://nakedbiblepodcast.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/NB-153-Transcript.pdf>.

from the abyss? This seems to be no ordinary war, but one last terrible supernatural attack against God and Christ's church.

In this regard, there is a sixth point that is interesting, even if I don't think it has a much weight as some want to give to it. The ESV says, "They marched up over the broad plain of the earth..." (Rev 20:9). "Marched up" and "broad plain" seem to be theological rather than literal translations. "Broad plain" could just as easily be translated as "the breadth of the land/earth." Though it can be used of military advances,¹³ the word *anabainō* simply means "to go up, ascend." The translators have made the decision for us as to what it must mean. Why must it mean "march?"

Anabainō appears 13 times in Revelation. Virtually all of them are to/from supernatural places. John is told to "come up" to heaven (Rev 4:1). In one, an angel "ascends" (7:2). The smoke of incense of the prayers of the saints rises to God (8:4). Etc. Curiously, smoke rises from the pit of the abyss followed by demonic locusts (9:2-3); the beasts rises from the bottomless pit (11:7; 17:8). A second beast rises out of the earth (13:11). And the smoke of the torment of the

¹³ Gentry notes that to "come up" often refers to a military attack (Jdg 12:3; 1Sa 7:7; 11:1; 2Sa 5:22; 1Ki 20:1; 2Ki 16:5; 18:17; 19:23; 24:10; 2Ch 12:2, 9; 24:23; Isa 36:1; 37:24; Jer 35:11). Gentry, *Revelation* II.705.

damned rises up forever and ever (14:11). In other words, there's a lot in Revelation about things rising up from *below* the earth. What lives down there? Demons, Rephaim. And Satan has himself just been released from there.¹⁴ So could it be that rather than marching on the broad plain, the armies are rising up onto the breadth of the earth from below?

Just here, it is interesting to note that several scholars have seen the army Satan gathers composed either entirely of demons or at the very least a mixture of demons and their human possessed counterparts.¹⁵ This fits what have seen with the **Frogs**¹⁶ and the **Locusts-scorpion** hybrids, the **beast**, and so on in previous final battle scenes. Thus, someone has said, “Since Ezekiel’s time, Gog and Magog had been thought of as rulers of a mythical army. For John, the nations of Gog and Magog are an army of demons from the netherworld (cf. 9, 1-11. 16-19). Passages led from ‘the four corners of the earth’ to the realm of demons below.”¹⁷

¹⁴ Phillip G. Kayser, “The Last Rebellion: Revelation 20:7-10,” *Biblical Blueprints* (8-26-2018) https://kaysercommentary.com/Sermons/New%20Testament/Revelation/Revelation%2020/Revelation%2020_7-10.md#fnref7, has a discussion as well as others who have taken this view.

¹⁵ Bøe discusses this on 305, n. 255; 316ff.

¹⁶ On the Plague of Frogs in **Rev 16:13-14** (Armageddon) This is another way of talking about **20:8** where Satan deceives the nations and gathers together those from the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, for battle. Johnson writes, “It is a visual representation of the subtle demonic process by which the dragon, released at last from the restraint that kept him from deceiving the nations, will gather them for war.” Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb*, p. 233.

¹⁷ Gerhard A. Krodel, *Revelation*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1989), 337. Also, “Thus vv. 7-10 are to be interpreted as

Now, clearly, as I said earlier, this and the other battles are depicted as having human elements. But that goes without saying. And yet, most if not all of those are also depicted as having a supernatural, satanic element as well. In fact, this seems to be the larger point! **Satan** being released **to gather an army** against the camp of the saints is the obvious part. Now I hope you can see that **Gog-Magog** is much more than a bunch of people marching into Jerusalem to fight the War to End All Wars. **We do not fight against flesh and blood** ... But that takes us to the next part of our passage and my next question this morning.

The Camp of the Saints and the Beloved City

We've now seen that Satan is released from his prison and he goes out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth. These nations are identified with or even as Gog and Magog, which means that at the very least there is a **strong demonic component** to the actual warriors that are

follows: Satan entices the ghostly nations of the dead, and the demons, 'innumerable as the sand of the sea', from the four corners of the earth where the underworld manifests itself, in order to make war on the resurrected ones. The mythical names Gog and Magog are also quite fitting in this context, since they do not allude here to historical nations, but to the bands of Hell, similar to the armies of Abaddon which ascend from the bowels of the earth (9,1-11), or the hordes of demons in 9,13-19 (note here also the cosmic number 4). Thus at the end there comes the revelation of the unredeemed and their aims (namely the destruction of the church)." **Mathias Rissi**, *The Future of the World: An Exegetical Study of Revelation 19.11-22.15*, Studies in Biblical Theology, Second Series 23 (Napierville, IL: Allenson, 1972), 35-36. Quoted in **Bøe**, 316.

being enlisted in this final battle. Perhaps, they even come up *out of the earth* to the broad place of the earth/land. Now, this army comes from the four corners of the earth and their number is like the sand of the sea. How can one fathom how large it truly is? It is a massive, unending stream of satanic fighters enraged for one last stand. But what is their target? They surround the camp of the saints and the beloved city (**Rev 20:9**).

Now we must ask, *what is the Camp of the saints* and *what is the beloved city*? The same commentators who believe that Gog is Russia also believe that the beloved city is Jerusalem. It is difficult to find any of them commenting on the “saints” however.¹⁸ That someone would take this to be Jerusalem is *easy enough to understand*. However, it is not called “Jerusalem,” but the “*beloved city*.” This is John-speak, Revelation code. And we’ve seen something like this before. John referred to “*the holy city*” that is trampled for forty-two months (**Rev 11:2**). This language reappears in **21:2, 10; 22:19** to describe the Jerusalem *coming out of heaven*. On the other hand, he has discussed the physical Jerusalem,

¹⁸ I looked at Larkin, Bullinger, Lindsey, and MacArthur and none mentioned it.

but not at any kind of “beloved city.” Rather, he has called it “the great city that is symbolically called Sodom and Egypt, where the Lord was crucified” (Rev 11:8). It is probable that the references to Babylon and Rome also have at least Jerusalem in mind, if not also those actual cities. In other words, there is good reason to think that the beloved city is the church here.

This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that John adds that the attack is against “the camp of the saints.” The beloved city is the camp of the saints. Now, if we were to go back to something like Daniel 7 which seems always close to Revelation’s prophecies, we would see that “saints” is a term used there (Dan 7:18, 21, 22, 25, 27). Many argue that this must refer to the Jews. However, the prophecies there are nearly identical to those in Revelation, and as Beale explains, “[While] *The saints*, a term [often] used to describe the Israelites in the OT, [it] is used thirteen times in Revelation, always with reference to the church (see especially 5:8–9; 13:7–10; 14:12).” In fact, I argued that “saints” in Daniel also refers to the eschatological church, not the nation of Jews.

It is so important to see that the church is being called “**the saints**,” that I want to spend a moment thinking about other titles that the church also gets throughout the NT in this regard. We’ve done this before in Revelation, but I don’t think we can ever hear it enough. For example, the very word “**church**” (*ekklesia*) is a Greek word, but Jesus did not coin it for something brand new. Rather, it is a word used at least 75 times in the LXX (not including many in the Apocrypha), almost always referring to Israel as the *ekklesia*. Unfortunately, few if any OT English translations¹⁹ are consistent between the Testaments in terms of translation and thus rarely if ever render it as “church.” In this way, the English reading gives the impression that when Jesus uses the word that it is brand new. But all the word means is “assembly” (“The day in which you stood before the Lord out God in Horeb in the day of the *ekklesia*/assembly;” Dt 4:10) or “congregation” (“I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the *ekklesia*/congregation I will praise you;” Ps 22:22). To use this word of his church is to strongly evoke his OT church while doing it. He is linking the two together.

¹⁹ Even Brenton’s English translation of the LXX only renders it church a single time (Ps 22:22/21:23 LXX), and this is probably because Hebrews quotes it.

This is seen in many other terms also given to this NT church. For example, in Philippians, Paul calls the church the “true circumcision” (Php 3:3). In Romans, he calls the church “true Jews” (Rom 2:29) and “sons of Abraham” (4:16). The church becomes part of “the vine” in the same book (11:13-17), a title that was reserved exclusively for the nation of Israel in the OT (see Isa 5:1ff). The title “chosen people” (Col 3:12) was what God called Israel (Dt 7:6). Revelation and Peter call the church a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Rev 5:9-10; 1Pe 2:9), language used of Israel at the foot of Mt. Sinai (Ex 19:6). Peter and Paul (to the Corinthians and Ephesians) call us God’s temple (1Pe 2:5; 1Co 3:16; Eph 2:21). Paul even calls the churches in Galatia, “the Israel of God” (Gal 6:16), and Revelation has identified the church as 144,000 from the tribes of Israel (Rev 7:4-8, 14:1-3).

Should it then surprise us to discover that Paul calls the Galatians, “Jerusalem from above” (Gal 4:26)? This is the same exact language that Jesus used in the church at Philadelphia, which also happens to be the chiastic parallel to “the beloved city” in terms of verses away from the center of Rev 12:9-10. “The one who conquers, I will make him a

pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of *the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven...*” (Rev 3:12).

- A. 1:1. Things that must happen quickly (202)
- B. 1:3. Hears the words of this prophecy (200)
- C. 1:8. Alpha/Omega ... beginning/end (195)
- D. 1:17. When I saw, I fell at his feet (186)
- E. 1:19. The things which shall take place (184)
- F. 2:1. In the midst of seven lampstands (182)
- G. 2:7. the tree of life (176)
- H. 2:17. White stone, new name written (166)
- I. 2:26. He who overcomes ... will give authority (157)
- J. 3:1-2. A name ... not found your deeds complete (152-53)
- K. 3:5. Clothed in white ... book of life (149)
- L. 3:12. City of God comes down from God out of heaven (142)
- YY. 12:9. Dragon/serpent/devil/Satan thrown down who deceives world
- YY¹. 12:10. Salvation/power/kingdom/authority of God and Christ ... accuser is thrown down
- L¹. 20:9. They surround the city, fire came down from God out of heaven (146)
- K¹. 20:11-12. Great white throne ... book of life (149)
- J¹. 20:15. Anyone's name was not found in the book of life (152)
- I¹. 21:7. He who overcomes I will give these things (159)
- H¹. 21:12-14. New names written ... the city had twelve foundation stones (164-66)
- G¹. 22:2. The tree of life (181)
- F¹. 22:2. In the midst of its street (181)
- E¹. 22:6. The things which must take place (185)
- D¹. 22:8. When I heard and saw, I fell at his feet (187)
- C¹. 22:13. Alpha/Omega ... beginning/end (192)
- B¹. 22:18. Hears the words of the prophecy (197)
- A¹. 22:20. I am coming quickly (199)

But why then “**the camp?**” Now you can understand the answer. “*The camp of the saints* is an allusion to the camp of the Israelites in the desert. The church has been located in the desert in 12:6, 14, understood as the place of God’s protection during the church age, so the reference is appropriate.”²⁰ It is

²⁰ G. K. Beale and David H. Campbell, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 454.

this camp, protected by God during the millennium, that becomes the center of our passage! What kind of protection?

| God's NT People Identified as God's OT People | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| The Church | Matt 16:18 |
| True Circumcision | Php 3:3 |
| True Jews | Rom 2:29 |
| Sons of Abraham | Rom 4:16 |
| Branches in the Vine | Rom 11:13-17 |
| Chosen People | Col 3:12 |
| Kingdom of Priests/Holy Nation | 1Pe 2:9; Rev 5:9-10 |
| God's Temple | 1Pe 2:5; 1Co 3:16; Eph 2:21 |
| Israel of God | Gal 6:16 |
| Tribes of Israel | Rev 7:4-8; 14:1-3 |
| Jerusalem from Above | Gal 4:26 |
| The Camp of the Saints | Rev 20:9 |

Let's suppose for a moment that we have a **physical war** being waged against Jerusalem. It's easy enough to understand how that could happen. However, we should not forget that in such a future, Jesus is most often viewed as reigning in his resurrected body with resurrected, glorified saints from Jerusalem. This war supposedly attacks him and them. What kind of physical weapons would possibly do any good in this case? Is Satan really that stupid?

But what if the war is not primarily physical, but spiritual. Not fake? Not fiction. Spiritual doesn't mean fake. Attacks on our minds, souls, attempts to get us to forsake God, those are not fake. Fear, deception, lies, these are not fictions. Spiritual is still literal, it just isn't physical. If this war is primarily **demonic**, then we have to realize that demons do not pick up swords and guns. Their weapons are words, thoughts, and ideas. Yes, those can and usually do end up working their way into the physical world with disastrous consequences that even end in warfare and bloodshed. But that is not first and foremost what they are.

What if we are therefore looking **not at a physical battle** cantered in Jerusalem? What if it **isn't an assault on some political headquarter** in the Old City of David, but **an attack launched against God's people** wherever they happen to be? What if it is an unprecedented **spiritual battle** taking place all over the earth simultaneously where God's saints have been in this wilderness time between the First and Second Comings? What if it is the culmination of all the hatred and malice that Satan, and the locked-up hosts of heaven, and their demonic hordes have been keeping pent up for

thousands of years? We are after all—we Christians, the reason for their doom in the first place. Would this not make sense of the parallel where **the serpent pours out water** like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood (**Rev 12:15**) and where the **dragon becomes furious** with the woman and goes off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus (**17**)? Water out of the mouth, not blood dripping off swords. Commandments and testimonies (more words), not political and national alliances.

This would also seem to help us understand the last phrase of **vs. 9**. “**But fire came down from heaven and consumed them...**” Can fire really burn Satan? Is this not a metaphor of the punishment that is coming to this creature and his satanic host of hell? Yes, it is a metaphor that reminds us of very physical judgment that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah, or upon the armies sent to Elijah to capture him (**2Kgs 1:10-14**), and in lesser ways, upon even Israel as it was ravaged by Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and Rome.

But what really matters here is how **Revelation 20:7-10** compares overall to **Ezekiel 38-39**, especially at the end.

Ezekiel dedicates 52 verses to this. Revelation has essentially three. But what it tells us about the ending is perhaps as powerful for **what it does *not* say** as for **what it does**. **What it does say** is that when this fire comes from heaven, “**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**” (10). I’m going to focus much more on this in our last installment of our look at Revelation 20. All that needs to be said here is that **Satan is punished, finally and ultimately**. Lo, his doom is sure. It is the same doom that two other supernatural foes had met at the end of ch. 19 in the parallel war-ending (19:19).

But what it **does *not* say** is also vital. Notice, there is no actual battle that takes place. This is most remarkable. Yes, Satan gathers his evil army. And yes, they come up to surround the saints. But nothing else takes place. Before they can actually strike with an assault that would do irreparable harm to God’s new covenant people, the fire comes, the army is consumed, the Devil is thrown into the lake of fire. This is precisely why their surrounding the camp is the center of our passage. For this camp is **no ordinary camp**. This is *God’s*

camp and *God's people* dwell in its tents. And he dwells with them in their midst. Therefore, what else could possibly happen? Though he may try with all his might, they may surround them around the word with his demonic host, but **Satan cannot harm them.**

We are **protected by the power of the omnipotent God.** All the songs of Revelation have continually pointed us to this most important of truths. The Lord God omnipotent reigns. And as such, the LORD Sabaoth, he fights for his people. Is it therefore a coincidence that in the inverse parallel to the fire coming down from God and consuming them that our Lord Jesus goes into the temple and cleanses it, saying, **“Zeal for Your house has consumed me” (John 2:17)?** Jesus cleanses his temple, once-for-all, by defeating the evil foe and banishing him from his camp and tabernacle. His Bride becomes pure, not just through declaration and justification, but in glory.

Beloved, **if you belong to Christ,** not even the worst imaginable scenario—the Gog and Magog conflict, which in reality is the same battle that ends in the gruesome supper for the birds, the same battle as Armageddon, in many ways the

same battle continuously depicted throughout Revelation ... **none of these can harm you**. But you must read the text properly. Throughout the book, *physical* harm is not only prophesied, but basically promised. That is so that we might be conformed into the image of the Suffering Servant who suffered for us. But final, ultimate spiritual harm? May it never be. Remember, he has just spoken about the Second Death, and that cannot do anything to God's people. Satan cannot finally and ultimately deceive those who belong to Jesus. He will protect them. He will fight for them. He has given his church keys to help not only defend, but to attack the very gates of hell so that not only will we not be harmed, but we might bring many out of that wretched place before the final doom arrives.

Therefore, whatever your fears of a **future crisis**, whatever your tormented thoughts of **our present** deeply and increasingly troubling days, whether you think we are in the End Game or not, whatever your thoughts may be, you must know that there is a place reserved for Satan and his angels, and for all those who would follow them. It is to their eternal torment. It is our eternal protection and salvation. God has

given you eternal life. Therefore, cheer one another with these words of great comfort, especially in days like these.

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