

# GOG AND MAGOG

The third and last attack by Nebuchadnezzar had just occurred (587-586 B.C.). Solomon's temple, along with Jerusalem, lay in waste. Ezekiel is now a captive in Babylon. Through his prophetic mission, a message of future deliverance and restoration comes to the depressed exiled Judaic people (Ezekiel 34–35).

- As in many other areas of that book, the illustrations are also amazing metaphors for God's end-time people.
- At that time, when the forces of "Babylon" are oppressing God's remnant, these same messages will bring triumphant hope.

Within the context of Ezekiel's narrative, God does remind His people of what caused their captivity – but quickly reveals the reality of His kingdom and the wonderful possibility for earth's wayfarers to become forever citizens of this kingdom (chapter 36).

- The prophecy of restoring the dry bones reveals God's promise that what might appear hopeless will lead to a beautiful body of saints (ch. 37).
- Ezekiel had become a messenger of comfort and hope to these Hebrew exiles.<sup>1</sup>

**God then interjects a warning of the deepest concern.** As deliverance nears, evil powers will be activated. Their battle strategy is presented in highly symbolic language (Gog and Magog) (chs 38, 39). This is followed by a remarkable (and complex) vision of the restoration of the temple, its services and Jerusalem (chs 40–48).

- The latter is a representation of God's final church and people. It is His **prophetic assurance** that before the end there will be a **spiritually restored people and a distinct "body"** (cf. Revelation 11:5-6, 12:1, 17:14).
- Though Satan attempts to thwart God's plans, he is finally defeated.

## The Setting

Scripture suggests that at some point in the past the message of Gog was conveyed to God's people. Thus, Ezekiel's word picture is assumed to be familiar. Though there is no specific prior Biblical record of Gog or Magog – God said:

- *"Thus saith the Lord GOD [speaking to Gog]; Art thou he of whom **I have spoken in old time** by my servants the prophets of Israel, which **prophesied** in those days **many years** that I would bring thee [Gog] against them [God's people]?"* (Ezekiel 38:17).

The allusion to "**years**" in this elevated warning came under Jeremiah over a period of forty years.

Gog and its host would come out of the north country to attack God's people.

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<sup>1</sup> Moskala, Jiri; "Toward the Fulfillment of the Gog and Magog Prophecy of Ezekiel 38–39," *JATS*, 18/2 (Autumn 2007), p. 244.

- Jeremiah had warned that a nation would attack his people from the north because of rebellion (Jeremiah 6:22, 10:22, 25:9).
- Those pagan forces of Babylon were used by God to bring desolation to His apostate people.
- Restoration would come later during specific time periods.

The Old Testament uses other symbols alluding to the same **evil leader** that Ezekiel calls Gog [e.g., king of Babylon or king of Tyre (cf. Isaiah’s Lucifer – 14:12-14)].

- The terms Gog and Magog reappear in John’s apocalyptic discourse (Revelation 20:8-9). (Same evil forces – but a different application.)
- Ezekiel’s prophecies have significant parallels to Satan’s work in many of Revelation’s narratives. The imagery matrix of the *fallen star* with his *followers* in the fifth and sixth trumpets echoes the terminal hatred of Gog’s last work!

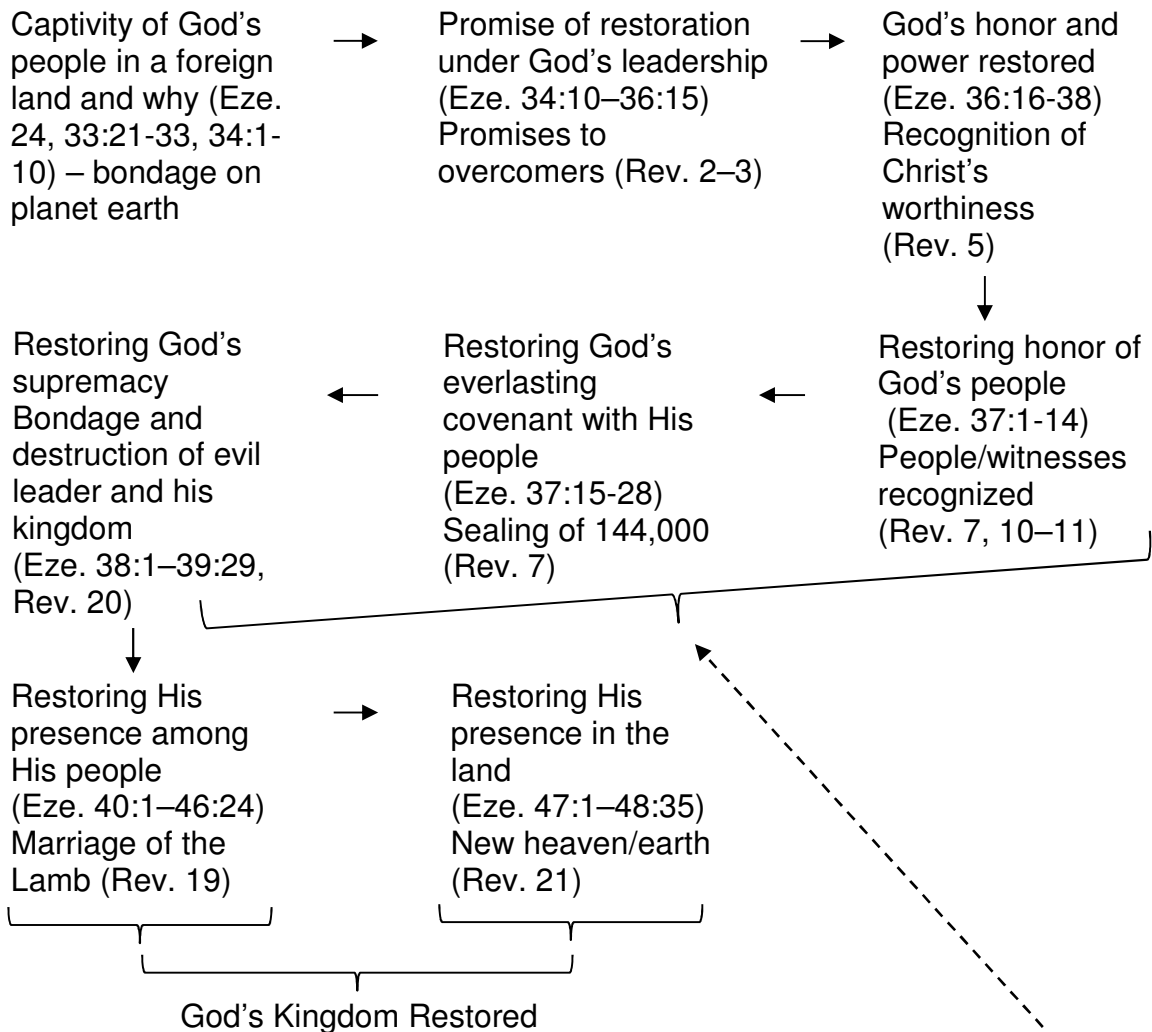
Ezekiel’s narrative can be divided in various ways. We adopt the structure noted in Daniel Block’s book for chapters 38 and 39:<sup>2</sup>

<b>The Defeat of Gog</b>	(38:2c-23)
1: The Conscription of Gog	(38:2c-9)
2: The motives of Gog	(38:10-13)
3: The Advance of Gog	(38:14-16)
4: The Judgment of Gog	(38:17-22)
Interpretive Conclusion	(38:23)
<b>The Disposal of Gog</b>	
1: The Slaughter of Gog	(39:1-29)
2: The Spoiling of Gog	(39:1-8)
3: The Burial of Gog	(39:9-10)
4: The Devouring of Gog	(39:11-16)
Interpretive Conclusion (The Final Word)	(39:17-20)
	(39:21-29)

### **Ezekiel’s Sequential Outline Reveals an End-Time Story**

A simple schematic of chapters 34–48 develops this helpful perspective, during which the evil Gog arrives (just before a time of full restoration) and is finally defeated:

<sup>2</sup> Block, Daniel I.; *The Book of Ezekiel*, vol. 1, pp. 431-432.



The Ezekiel 38–39 study of Gog from the land of Magog focuses especially here:

**Directional “North” – Important Focus – A Deeper Look**

Ezekiel notes that the enemy Gog comes from the *north* (38:6, 15; 39:2).

- This immediately draws our attention to warring powers against God, since that is the location of His throne (Psalm 48:2, Isaiah 14:13, Job 37:22)!
- In the “recent” warning eras toward Israel (Isaiah) and then Judah (Jeremiah), there were two directional visions that God gave those prophets.
  1. **Jeremiah:** A kingdom from the *north*, later identified as Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 25:9; 46:6) would come against them (1:14-15, 4:6; 6:1, 22; 10:22, 13:20; 47:2; 50:3).
    - God called Nebuchadnezzar “my servant” (Jeremiah 27:6).
    - He used this northern pagan power to punish His apostate people.
    - Represented as a divinely led northern king, Nebuchadnezzar, “came from the north” to execute God’s will (direction he had to approach Palestine from)!

Babylon would later be destroyed because of its obstinate rebellion against the holiness of God. As a metaphor for its destruction at the “time of the end” (Revelation 16:19), its king, which parallels Gog, is noted as the dragon or Satan, overseeing the tripartite Babylon (Revelation 12, 14, 16, 18, 20).

2. **Isaiah** mentions Lucifer by name (Isaiah 14:12), craving the ultimate satanic objective to sit on God’s northern throne.

*“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the **sides of the north**: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High”* (Isaiah 14:12-14).

- “North” symbolizes rebellion against God – evil – in an apocalyptic setting!
- Ezekiel’s imagery suggests that Gog is a competitive “northern being” with power that God must eventually destroy.
  - Satan (once Lucifer) wanted to usurp the prerogatives of God (Isaiah). Reaction: *“Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords”* (Ezekiel 38:3-4; cf. Revelation 9:16).

This is reminiscent of the spirit of the son of perdition, the man of sin, who mimics Satan.

- *“Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God **sitteth in the temple of God**, showing himself that he is God”* (II Thessalonians 2:4).
- *“And then shall that **Wicked** be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming”* (II Thessalonians 2:8).

“The evil powers of chaos that are hostile to God reside in the north, whence they are set loose.”<sup>3</sup> In the Old Testament and in extra-Biblical traditions “the north was regarded as a place of menace and mystery.”<sup>4</sup> In the Ras Shamra Tablets, The north is the mythological home of the gods.<sup>5</sup>

Another unique precedent comes from the tribe of Dan. His encampment was situated **north** of the sanctuary. His original ensign or flag was a serpent. Later it was changed to an eagle. He was the first tribe to bring in idolatry to northern Israel (the tribes).

- Dan represented the pale horse of Revelation’s fourth seal.
- That typified a group of end-time people who want to usurp God’s authority and kill His people – along with the tribe of Ephraim (the red horse seal), which reached its hand across the tribal gulf from the west to clasp Dan’s.
- Dan and Ephraim are not among the 144,000 (Revelation 7:5-8).

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<sup>3</sup> Moskala *JATS*, p. 249.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

## Deeper Understanding from Ezekiel's War Narrative

In Ezekiel 38 God's prophecy is against Gog: "*Son of man [speaking to Ezekiel], set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him*" (Ezekiel 38:2).

- There will be an end to Gog (Satan).
- Gog, with all his host, will eventually succumb to God's judicial wrath (39:1-8).
- What Ezekiel envisages is an end-time "dual between Yahweh and Gog"<sup>6</sup> – a war between Christ and Satan.
- Contextually, it is prophesied for "the later years" (38:8) and for "the latter days" (38:16).
- Though these futuristic expressions have no specific time reference, the link to Daniel 8, 11 and 12 and Revelation 6 and 8–20 reveal the "time of the end" and the "end of time."

In its final expression:

*"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, **Gog and Magog**, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them."* (Revelation 20:7-9).

At the end of the Millennium, Satan is freed from his confinement for "a little season" (20:3) and goes out to "deceive the nations" and to "gather them for battle." The wicked, who were killed at Christ's Second Coming, are clearly raised for this final war (20:5).

- Their number is like the sands of the sea (unnumbered – huge) (cf. Ezekiel 38:15, 22).
- They come from the "four corners" of the world (cf. Isaiah 11:12, Ezekiel 7:2).

"Four" is employed as the whole world. Thus, Ezekiel's prophecy is a local metaphor, made universal by John.<sup>7</sup>

In Ezekiel these "forces" came from the north (Ezekiel 38:6, 15), whereas post-Millennium they come from earth's "four corners."

- This suggests that in the Old Testament the satanic oppression of Israel from the "north" in Ezekiel's time becomes universalized just before the final destruction of the earth.
- "Israel" then will become "the camp of the saints and the beloved city" – New Jerusalem – Christ's "bride."

This portrays complete fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy. Gog and Magog morph into a collective term for all of that great host of the wicked as they gather to make their last war against God and His people.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Block, *op. cit.*, p. 438.

<sup>7</sup> Beale, G. K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan – 1999), p. 1022).

<sup>8</sup> Moskala, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

- In Revelation Satan is depicted openly as their leader.
- He marshals those rebellious forces to the city of New Jerusalem, which had come down from heaven (later described in Revelation 21:10).
- This vast host appears to occupy the whole land of Palestine<sup>9</sup> as they surround the saints (assumed to be in the “beloved city”).
- In Ezekiel they fight against the “mountains of Israel,” here, against the saints and the New Jerusalem (cf. Ezekiel 38:12 – center of the land).

Reflecting on Revelation’s parallelism with Ezekiel:

1. King of the northern land, Gog, invades the peaceful people of Israel (38:11) (saints with New Jerusalem – at the end – Revelation 20:9).
2. He establishes a coalition with “many nations” (38:5-6) (they come from the four corners of the earth – Revelation 20:8; cf. Revelation 17:12-13).
3. His army is mighty (38:15-16) (like sand of the sea – Revelation 20:8).
4. This attack is permitted so that at the end all will know that God is indeed Lord (38:16, 23; 39:6-7, 22, 28). God is fully vindicated. Wickedness can now judicially be destroyed forever! (Revelation 20:10, 14).

*“As for you, son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say: ‘This is what the sovereign Lord says: Look, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal! I will turn you around and drag you along; I will lead you up from the remotest parts of the north and bring you against the mountains of Israel. I will knock your bow out of your left hand and make your arrows fall from your right hand. You will fall dead on the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the people who are with you. I give you as food to every kind of bird and every wild beast. You will fall dead in the open field; for I have spoken, declares the sovereign Lord. I will send fire on Magog and those who live securely in the coastlands; then they will know that I am the Lord. I will make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, the Holy One of Israel.’”* (Ezekiel 39:1-7)

- God noted that “this is the day I have decreed” (Ezekiel 39:8 – NIV). At the end, His holiness is vindicated (amazing parallel to Daniel 8:14 – *qodesh nisdaq* – H).
- This end is recapitulated in Revelation.

*“And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them”* (Revelation 20:9).

The geographic territories noted in Ezekiel are: Magog, Meshech, Tubal, Persia, Libya, Ethiopia, Gomer (Ezekiel 38:2-6). Though many literalists claim knowledge of these areas and create end-time maps, it is highly speculative and should be avoided. There is a paucity of Scriptural ties or even historical links to many of these, making any conclusion tenuous.

It is interesting, however, that there are seven nations mentioned. This symbolizes Satan’s forces as the “perfect total” of all wickedness. The end is in sight.

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas, Robert L.; *Revelation 8–22 – An Exegetical Commentary* (Moody Press, Chicago), 1995, p. 425.

## The Defeat of Wickedness

Before Gog attempts to destroy God's people in his attack, "fire descends from God and consumes them" (Revelation 20:9; cf. Ezekiel 39). This destruction is final (Malachi 4:1-3). Matthew 10:28 alludes to the totality of the end of the wicked.

## An Eschatological View

In Matthew's discourse (ch 24), Christ interjects into that apocalyptic narrative an allusion to a deceptive leader – a New Testament "Gog."

### Generic

- Take heed that no man deceive you (vs 4)
- Many false prophets shall arise and deceive (vs 11)

### Specific

- For many shall come saying, "I am Christ" (vs 5)
- "If anyone says here is Christ, don't believe it" (vs 23)
- Even if he shows miracles (vs 24)
- If anyone says he is in the desert or secret chambers, don't believe it (vs 25)

Christ's flow of concern repeatedly interrupts His apocalyptic narrative, suggesting that a satanic ruse **will become** a reality during those end-time events. This serves to contrast the true nature of His return – like lightning, with much drama. It also highlights what Paul later was inspired to note:

*"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (II Corinthians 11:14).*

It is in this context that expositor White noted:

"As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ. The church has long professed to look to the Saviour's advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will make it appear that Christ has come. In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. Revelation 1:13-15. The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld. The shout of triumph rings out upon the air: 'Christ has come! Christ has come!' The people prostrate themselves in adoration before him, while he lifts up his hands and pronounces a blessing upon them, as Christ blessed His disciples when He was upon the earth. His voice is soft and subdued, yet full of melody. In gentle, compassionate tones he presents some of the same gracious, heavenly truths which the Saviour uttered; he heals the diseases of the people, and then, in his assumed character of Christ, he claims to have changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and commands all to hallow the day which he has blessed. He declares that those who persist in keeping holy the seventh day are blaspheming his name by refusing to listen to his angels sent to them with light and truth. This is the strong, almost overmastering delusion.

Like the Samaritans who were deceived by Simon Magus, the multitudes, from the least to the greatest, give heed to these sorceries, saying: This is 'the great power of God.' Acts 8:10."<sup>10</sup>

The association of Satan and his host, warring against God's people, just prior to the Second Coming, must be viewed as the final fulfillment of Gog's hatred seen in Ezekiel and described without that name in many prophecies.

In John's narrative Satan's last efforts to deceive and conquer are presented:

1. The fifth trumpet reveals Satan's deceptive hatred toward all earth's inhabitants – especially his own non-sealed followers. The hostility brings suicidal-type mental anguish (Revelation 9:10).
2. The sixth trumpet reveals that that hatred expands to bring terrible murderous harm to his followers (Revelation 9:13, 21).
3. God's people do not need to "enter into battle," then, because Satan's minions turn against each other (Revelation 17:16-18; cf. Ezekiel 38:21b) (Time of Jacob's Trouble).
4. Support for Satan's coalition of leaders (Babylon) ceases, depicted as the River Euphrates drying up (Revelation 16:12).

## **Conclusion**

What do we understand about Gog from Ezekiel 38–39?

1. He is an end-time evil leader over a massive alliance (Ezekiel 38:2-6).
2. This alliance seeks to invade or harm God's people in the "latter days" (Ezekiel 38:8, 16) (especially when spiritual restoration accelerates).
3. He and his minions initially do bring harm to God's people (Ezekiel 38:4, 8; 39:2; Revelation 6:4, 12:17, 13:7, 17:6).
4. God, in turn, brings pestilence, flood, torrential rain, hailstones, fire and brimstone against that coalition (Ezekiel 38:18-22; Revelation 16:12, 14; 16:18, 20; cf. Isaiah 2:20-21, 13:6-13).

Associated with the Second Coming, we note in Revelation 19:17-18 a similar "banquet" picture as in Ezekiel 39:17-20, describing the horrible end to Satan and his followers.

- God assures the defeat of all wicked opposition (19:20-21).
- In that context and with encouraging contrast is the wedding supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7).

The weight of evidence suggests that Ezekiel's (and Revelation's) Gog is Satan and his "location" is in a symbolic northern land called Magog. He develops a confederacy that works to harm and defeat God's people – "Israel." God intervenes, bringing them to an utter end.

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<sup>10</sup> White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 624.