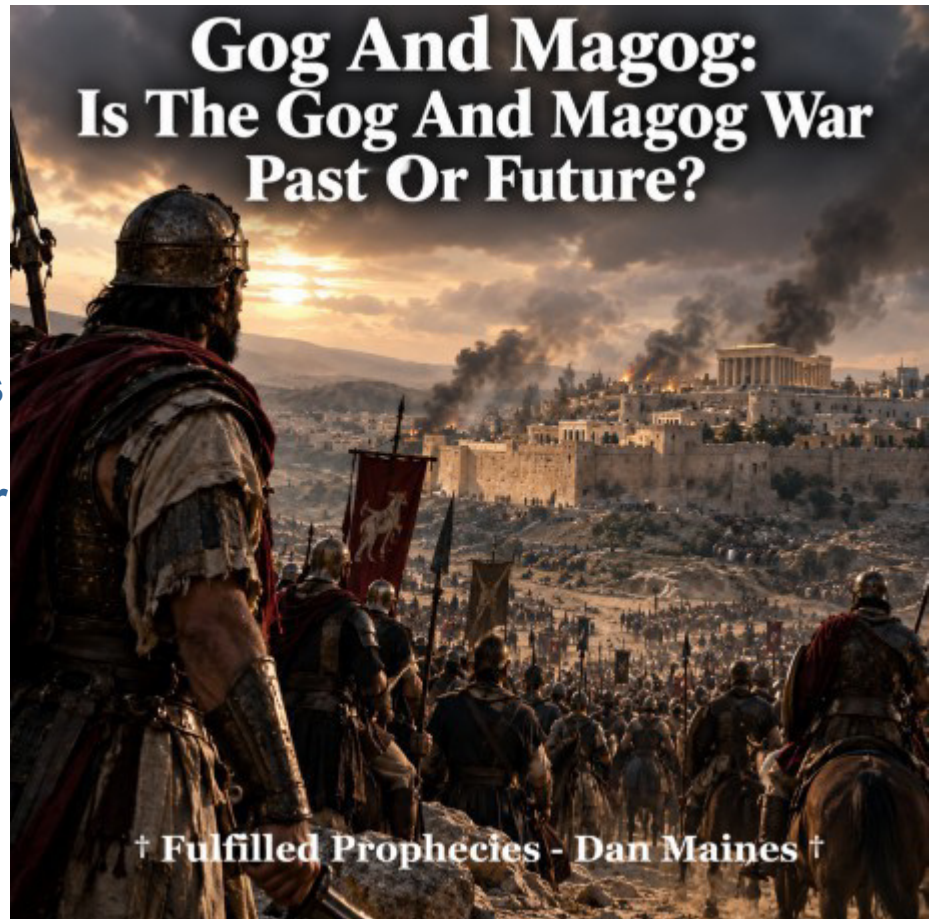


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Gog And Magog: Is The Gog And Magog War Past Or Future?



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† Gog and Magog are often presented as nations preparing for a massive war in our future, but Scripture must determine the timing and meaning of the prophecy.

† Ezekiel 38-39 introduced Gog as the leader of a coalition that would come against God's people, and Revelation 20 later used Gog and Magog imagery for the final enemies surrounding God's covenant people.

† The question isn't whether Gog and Magog appear in biblical prophecy. They clearly do. The question is whether Revelation places that conflict thousands of years beyond John's generation or within the fulfillment framework that Revelation itself repeatedly says was near.

† Revelation begins by saying its events must shortly come to pass and that the time was at hand (Revelation 1:1, 3). It closes by repeating that these things would shortly come to pass and that the time was at hand (Revelation 22:6, 10).

† We shouldn't remove Gog and Magog from those inspired time statements and place them thousands of years into the future.

† From the fulfilled perspective, Gog and Magog aren't describing a future Russian invasion, a modern Middle Eastern military alliance, or another worldwide war still waiting to happen. Revelation uses Old Testament judgment imagery to describe the final opposition against God's covenant people before the judgment connected with the end of the old covenant age.

Ezekiel 38:2-4

Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, 'This is what the Lord God says: Behold, I am against you, Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. So I will turn you around and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them magnificently dressed, a great contingent with shield and buckler, all of them wielding swords;

† Ezekiel's prophecy provides the Old Testament background necessary for understanding John's later use of Gog and Magog (Revelation 20:8).

† Gog is presented as an enemy brought into conflict under God's sovereign control. God would judge the enemy and demonstrate His holiness through that judgment (Ezekiel 38:16, 23).

† Nothing in Ezekiel identifies Gog as modern Russia. That

identification is imposed on the text by attempting to match ancient prophetic names with modern political borders.

† Ezekiel's language belongs to the prophetic judgment vocabulary of the Old Testament, and Revelation intentionally draws from that vocabulary when describing the enemies of God's people.

Ezekiel 38:16

and you will come up against My people Israel like a cloud to cover the land. It shall come about in the last days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me when I show Myself holy through you before their eyes, Gog.

† The expression latter days doesn't automatically mean the twenty-first century. The New Testament identifies its own first-century period as the last days (Hebrews 1:1-2; Acts 2:16-17; 1 Peter 1:20; 1 John 2:18).

† Peter specifically applied Joel's last-days prophecy to what was happening at Pentecost (Acts 2:16-17).

† John didn't tell his readers that the last hour was thousands of years away. He told them, it is the last hour (1 John 2:18).

† Therefore, we can't simply read latter days in Ezekiel and assume that Ezekiel was pointing to our modern generation.

Ezekiel 39:6-8

And I will send fire upon Magog and those who inhabit the coastlands in safety; and they will know that I am the Lord. And I will make My holy name known in the midst of My people Israel; and I will not allow My holy name to be profaned anymore. But the nations will know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel. Behold, it is coming and it shall be done," declares the Lord God. "That is the day of which I have spoken.

† Fire from God is established biblical judgment language. Revelation later uses the same imagery when fire comes down and consumes the enemies surrounding God's people (Revelation 20:9).

† John's first-century readers already had Ezekiel's imagery available to them. They didn't need modern newspapers or

maps of Russia, Iran, Turkey, or Israel to understand what John was communicating.

† Revelation repeatedly takes Old Testament images and applies them within its own prophetic message. Gog and Magog should be interpreted by that same method.

† Ezekiel's prophecy supplies the pattern, enemies gather against God's people, God intervenes, the enemies are destroyed, and God's sovereignty is publicly demonstrated.

Revelation 20:7-9

When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them.

† John doesn't say that the ancient geographical nations of Ezekiel literally returned. He takes the names Gog and Magog and applies them symbolically to the gathered enemies of God's people.

† Notice the language, four corners of the earth, sand of the sea, camp of the saints, beloved city, and fire from heaven. Revelation is filled with symbolic prophetic imagery rooted in the Old Testament.

† The beloved city in this passage shouldn't automatically be identified with the modern political state of Israel. Revelation contrasts the earthly Jerusalem that rejected Christ with the heavenly Jerusalem identified with God's covenant people (Revelation 11:8; 21:2).

† This conflict follows the symbolic thousand years. A symbolic number doesn't require a literal thousand-year calendar period.

† Satan's binding began through Christ's kingdom ministry. Jesus spoke of binding the strong man (Matthew 12:28-29), casting out the ruler of this world (John 12:31), and the approaching judgment of that ruler (John 16:11).

† Revelation 20 therefore shouldn't be detached from the first-

century redemptive story and turned into a timetable beginning thousands of years after John wrote it.

Revelation 1:1-3

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, everything that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads, and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

† These verses establish the timing framework for the entire book. The things revealed to John must shortly come to pass, and the time was at hand.

† John was writing to seven actual churches in Asia (Revelation 1:4). His timing statements had meaning for those original readers.

† If Gog and Magog in Revelation 20 were still more than two thousand years away, the ordinary meaning of shortly and at hand would be lost.

† We can't accept Revelation's time statements in chapter 1 and then abandon them when we reach chapter 20.

Revelation 22:6-7

And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show His bond-servants the things which must soon take place. "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

† Revelation closes with the same urgency with which it opened. The things in the prophecy were to happen shortly.

† This statement comes after Revelation 20. Therefore, Gog and Magog are included within a book whose concluding declaration says its prophetic events must shortly come to pass.

† Jesus also said, I come quickly. The original churches weren't being given a meaningless promise whose fulfillment was actually thousands of years beyond them.

† The inspired time statements should control our interpretation of the symbols, rather than allowing our interpretation of the symbols to erase the time statements.

Revelation 22:10

And he said to me, Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.

† This statement becomes especially important when compared with Daniel.

† Daniel was told to shut up and seal his prophecy because its fulfillment wasn't yet at hand (Daniel 12:4, 9).

† John received the opposite command. He was told not to seal Revelation because the time was at hand.

† If Revelation's major prophetic events, including Gog and Magog, were thousands of years beyond John, there would be no meaningful reason for this contrast.

† Revelation 22:10 is one of the strongest biblical reasons we shouldn't push Revelation 20 into our future.

Revelation 20:10

And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

† Gog and Magog belong within Revelation's larger picture of the final defeat of God's covenant enemies.

† The passage doesn't end with Satan successfully ruling another age. It ends with his decisive judgment.

† The New Testament consistently described Satan's defeat as already underway and approaching its completion. Jesus said the ruler of this world had been judged (John 16:11), and Paul told first-century believers that God would crush Satan under their feet shortly (Romans 16:20).

† Hebrews explains that through His death Christ rendered powerless the one who had the power of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14-15).

† Gog and Magog aren't evidence that Satan must be released sometime in our future. They're part of Revelation's symbolic

presentation of the final first-century conflict and judgment.

Historical References

† Josephus described the catastrophic Jewish-Roman War of AD 66-70, including internal factions, armies surrounding Jerusalem, famine, bloodshed, fire, and the destruction of the city and temple in *The Wars of the Jews*, Books 5-7.

† Josephus' account doesn't prove the interpretation by itself. Scripture establishes the doctrine, but his history shows that the first-century generation experienced exactly the kind of enormous covenantal judgment Jesus had warned would come upon Jerusalem (Matthew 23:36-38; Luke 21:20-22).

† Tacitus also recorded the Roman campaign against Jerusalem and the destruction associated with that period in *Histories*, Book 5.

† Eusebius later connected Jerusalem's destruction with the judgment Christ had foretold and recorded the tradition that believers escaped from Jerusalem before the catastrophe in *Ecclesiastical History*, Books 3.5-3.7.

† These historical witnesses place an extraordinary period of war and judgment exactly where Jesus and the New Testament writers placed it, within that first-century generation.

How It Applies To Us Today

† We don't need to watch Russia, Iran, China, Turkey, or modern Israel trying to identify the next Gog and Magog coalition.

† We don't need to fear that Revelation 20 predicts another worldwide satanic war waiting somewhere in our future.

† We should read Revelation according to its own time statements. John said the events were near, shortly to happen, and connected with Christ's coming in judgment (Revelation 1:1, 3; 22:6-7, 10).

† Gog and Magog belong to the fulfilled judgment story, not tomorrow's newspaper headlines.

† Christ's kingdom isn't waiting for victory over Gog and Magog. Christ reigns now, and believers have already come to Mount

Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, and the city of the living God (Hebrews 12:22-23).

† Our message isn't that Christians should live frightened by another prophetic world war. Our message is that Christ fulfilled His promises, judged the old covenant world, established His everlasting kingdom, and His people now live in the reality of His accomplished victory.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Is the Gog and Magog war still future?

A: No. From the fulfilled perspective, Revelation places Gog and Magog within the prophetic events John said were shortly to happen and at hand (Revelation 1:1, 3; 20:7-9; 22:6, 10).

Q: Does Gog represent modern Russia?

A: Scripture never identifies Gog as modern Russia. Ezekiel names Gog, Magog, Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal within his prophetic setting, while Revelation later uses Gog and Magog symbolically for the enemies gathered against God's people (Ezekiel 38:2-4; Revelation 20:8-9).

Q: Why does Revelation use Gog and Magog if Ezekiel had already written about them?

A: Revelation repeatedly draws on Old Testament prophetic imagery. John uses Gog and Magog as recognizable biblical symbols of nations gathered against God's covenant people and then destroyed by God's judgment (Ezekiel 38:16; 39:6-8; Revelation 20:8-9).

Q: What about Satan being released after the thousand years?

A: The thousand years are symbolic, not a literal future millennium. Revelation's own opening and closing statements place the prophecy within events that were near and shortly to happen (Revelation 1:1-3; 22:6, 10). Satan's defeat was already underway through Christ and was approaching its decisive judgment in that first-century period (John 12:31; Romans

16:20).

Q: Should Christians be waiting for Gog and Magog today?

A: No. Christians should be living in Christ's accomplished victory and present kingdom. We've already come to Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem, and Christ's kingdom can't be shaken (Hebrews 12:22-28).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Ezekiel 38:2-4, 16; 39:6-8; Revelation 20:7-10; 1:1-3; 22:6-7, 10

† Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, Books 5-7; Tacitus, Histories, Book 5; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Books 3.5-3.7

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