

The Mother of all Battles

When Saddam Hussein was confronted by a war to remove him from power he claimed that the battle to do so would be the 'Mother of all Battles.' He was wrong. The Mother of all Battles is the war that exists between the Prince of Peace and the Prince of Evil, between Jesus Christ and Satan. All human conflict stems from this great confrontation.

Satan's confrontational strategy has been from the first to undermine, spoil thwart and nullify the plan of almighty God in man, and then take for Himself the place of supreme authority.

The battlefield is this world, the habitation of those whom He has created in His image, the objects of his eternal favour and affection. It is this special relationship that Satan confronts. The battlefield is, by extension, the hearts, lives, influence, territory and possessions of the men that inhabit it.

The protagonists of these leaders are men, some of whom are sold out to evil and some of whom are loyal to their maker. Such men and women are the champions and the foot soldiers of either Melchizedek, the king of righteousness, or of Beelzebub, the prince of demons. Whether we like it or not, or even if we know it or not, every man, woman and child is a part of this great conflict. We ought to be able to easily see these battle lines in our world today in the spiritual, moral, physical and political turmoil of our day.

Prophetic declarations often contain but one or a few specific facts, especially if it is far off. Prophecy is given specific to the situation of the recipient, not to tantalise the curiosity of other readers. However in this instance considerable detail is available, but we still do not know all, especially after all this time when what was then current common knowledge has been forgotten.

Who is Gog?

The insurrection of Gog is the final decisive battle between these forces. But, Who or what is Gog? There are very many ideas, all with some validity. But all cannot be right: Antiochus of Syria, or the king of Persia, or of Russia. Let us learn what we can. Applying basic rules for interpreting Scripture we can discover much.

These chapters refer to times after the restoration of Israel when the enemies of God must be overthrown before His triumph is complete. Some have thought that this prophecy is directed against the Scythians who then were a warlike competing kingdom, and for a part of Ezekiel's time had overrun Syria, and had possibly even part of Palestine. Josephus, the Jewish historian writing at the time following that of Jesus in this reference drops the names Gog - Magog and replaces it with the name Scythian. Jamieson Fausset & Brown make the comment:

"Prince of *Rosh*," The Scythian Tauri people in the Crimea were so called. The ancient Araxes or Aras people also were called "Rhos." The modern Russians may have hence *assumed* their name, as Moscow and Tobolsk from Meshech and Tubal, though their *proper* ancient name was *Slavi*, or *Wends*



But this prophecy calls for a gathering together of all the enemies of Israel to make their last effort, and to be overthrown. Revelation 20:7 says that it is Satan who does

this. Satan as a Spirit works in and through people (John 13:27.) If John is speaking literally we might even identify Gog with Satan and Magog as his abode. But let's wait and see.

If we are a-millennialist we will see all this and most other end time prophecies as symbolic of the struggle between evil and good, and relate it to the eventual triumph of the Church. We will also see prophetic detail fulfilled in past history. If we are in the habit of reading Bible commentaries we will find many comments like this.

If we see the one thousand years that John describes in Revelation 20 as being a literal future period, then we will want to place the narrative of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel at the conclusion of the millennium, for that is what John does. However, because we are thinking in real time there will also be some difficulty making all the events prophesied throughout the Bible fit a nicely ordered time line. Events will happen in their allocated time These ambiguities are called a "prophetic paradox" Do not be overly concerned, because we do not have all the information just yet. Even the prophets themselves did not understand all that was conveyed through them:

Concerning . . . salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was

indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories 1 Peter 1:10&11.

Everything will become clear as history unfolds itself. This does not mean that we should not read Bible prophecy. Bible prophecy is part of God's holy word and it is there for our information and benefit.

Some prophetic paradoxes concerning the first coming of Jesus which the events resolved when they happened.

He was to come from: Bethlehem - Micah 5:2, Egypt - Hosea 1:2 and Nazareth Isaiah 11:1.

His life was cut off yet his days prolonged. Isaiah 53: 8&10.

He was David's son, yet David called Him Lord. Isaiah 9:6, Psalm 110:1.

There are four main divisions of this prophecy. (In poem like stanzas.)

1. Ezekiel 38:1-13 Gog's march.

Magog — Genesis 10:2 & 1 Chronicles 1:5.

:2&3 The prince of Rosch (See NASB) Rosch is often translated as "chief " prince. Strong's word H7218.

:6 For Gomer read Crimea. Beth Togamah read house of Armenia.

:7 "Be ready . . . as a guard" is said in irony as punishment is intended.

:11 Unwalled, unprotected villages, after 1000 years of peace.

:13 Sheba - Ethiopia, Dedan - , Grandsons of Abraham - Genesis 25:3, Tarshish - southern Spain, these are trading nations who question the motives of Gog.

2. Ezekiel 38:14-23 Gog's punishment;

:14 'Will you not know it' is said of the pending punishment.

:15 'Far north' from 'the hidden place'. Riding on horses, as Ezekiel saw it.

:19 Great earthquake. Also foretold in Joel 3:12, Revelation 16:18.

:20 This earthquake will affect all the earth, triggered by an astral disturbance Haggai 2:7.

:21 as in 2 Chronicles 20:23.

3. Ezekiel 39:1-16 Gog's ruin.

:1&2 are a repeat of some of the ideas of chapter 38.

:3 The Scythians were noted as bowmen.

:4 In places more distant to the population

:8 The task is done.

:11 Valley of the travellers. There are two possible sites. First, a valley east of Galilee and a road by which merchants and traders from Syria and countries to the east went into Egypt. Others see it as another valley east of the dead sea with similar use, the reference to Bozrah in Isaiah 34:6 and following seem to confirm a Dead Sea location. The valley will form a great pit grave.

Hammon Gog means the multitude of Gog.

4. Ezekiel 39:17-29 Israel's redemption.

a. The great sacrificial feast :17-24. This is at first a gruesome thought. In practice the loss of life will be so great that preventing the birds and animals will not be practical. It gives rise to an analogy. In ancient Israel, portions of the sacrifice in the tabernacle were eaten, some by the priests as their provision and some by the people as a celebration. In the same way the passover lamb was eaten on the exodus eve.

The birds and the beasts at the last great battle is consistent in Scripture: Isaiah 34:6 in its context, and Zephaniah 1:7 in its context. John puts this still in the future in Revelation 19:17-21, and it is to be noted that the record occurs in Revelation before the battle of Gog and not after, not as in Ezekiel. This is a paradox yet to be clarified.

b. Israel's restoration :25-29,

All of the people will be gathered and honour Him.

The Lord will honour His name and be one with His people.