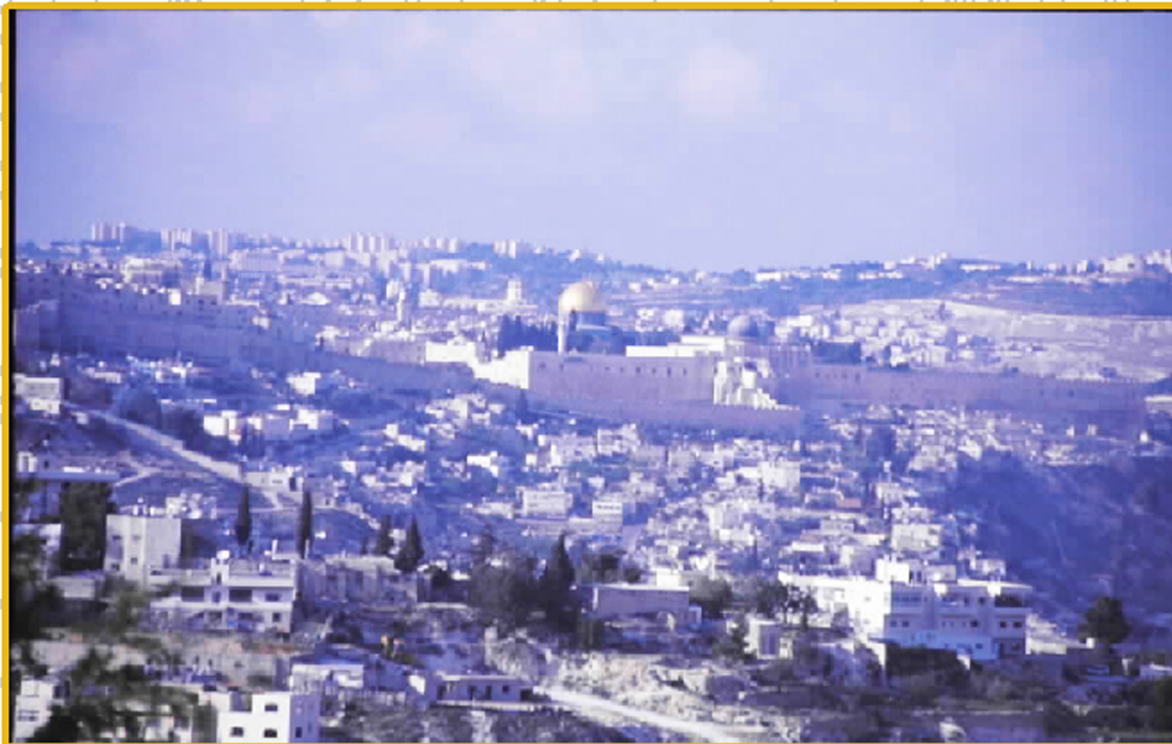


Gathering the Nations to Jerusalem



**“For I will gather all nations against
Jerusalem to battle....” (Zechariah 14:2)**

GATHERING THE NATIONS TO JERUSALEM

Many prophetic utterances in the Bible are couched in language that will admit both a spiritual and a literal application. Other numerous prophetic citations can be properly understood only along natural lines. If we fail to note these distinctions in the study of prophecy, we will lose much of the force, point, and significance of the many and varied events predicted, especially when we remember that all of the rays of divine prophecy will converge and culminate in the most historic and momentous event yet pending: *the establishment of the Kingdom of God in power and glory*. Let us not fail to grasp, at least in part, the astonishing detail and vivid portrayal of this future event as it will ultimately transpire. For the benefit of those living *today*, the great Jehovah God, the Omniscient One, caused prophecies to be written *thousands of years ago*—yea, long before many of the participating nations were even born or appeared on the earthly scene.

The whole world is to be called to the Lord's conference table, as it were, for God will gather all nations to Jerusalem. The Lord God told the Prophet Ezekiel the following:

“Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him,

“And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal:

“Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet:

“Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee.

“Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?

“Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it?

“And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army:

“And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter

days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes.”
(Ezek. 38:2,3,5,6,13-16)

Notice the time setting of this prophecy: “It shall be in the *latter days*.” Moreover, a multitude of nations will be assembled against Israel at that time: Meshech (Moscow), Tubal (Tubalesque, an old Russian name), Persia (Iran and Iraq), and other varied nations such as Ethiopia, Libya, Gomer, and Togarmah. On the other side of the issue, the powers friendly to Israel are pictured by Sheba (the United States), Dedan (France), and the merchants of Tarshish (England).

“For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem,

“I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.

“Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD.

“Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about.” (Joel 3:1,2,11,12)

The gathering of all the nations to Jerusalem will follow a “captivity” of Judah and Jerusalem, that is, *a gathering of Israelites back to their homeland*. The gathering of Jews refers primarily to a *place* rather than to a condition, for the Lord literally regathered them to their homeland. Then God said He would also gather all nations and bring them down to Israel, where He would plead for the Jew.

“Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.

“And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.” (Zech. 12:2,3,9)

“For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many.

**“... it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory.”
(Isa. 66:16,18)**

“Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.

“For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

“Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations....” (Zech. 14:1-3)

Without question, the burden of prophecy in the Old Testament predicts a future gathering of the nations of the world to Jerusalem to battle. Would anyone say that the Bible does not tell much about how this age will close? The prophecies just quoted—Ezekiel, Joel, Zechariah, and Isaiah—inform us that the Lord purposes an international conference to be held at Jerusalem. Evidently, at first, the hosts of Gog will not plan to attend, for their efforts will be in another direction. However, their endeavors will be frustrated, as the Lord declared through the Prophet Ezekiel:

**“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.”
(Ezek. 38:4)**

It is important to realize that the turning of Gog in another direction will be accomplished without interfering with the freewill moral agency of the parties involved, for the evil motivation of Gog will be to obtain a spoil of Israel’s cattle and goods.

“Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that ... things [shall] come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought:

“And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates,

“To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land.” (Ezek. 38:10-12)

The prey of the hosts of Gog will be the Jews, their hated enemies. Not only will Israel be defenseless and dwelling without

walls at that time, but also its strategic location in the navel of the earth between three continents will be considered a spoil to be seized.

What will be the purpose of convening the nations at Jerusalem? There will God plead with all nations for His “heritage Israel” (Joel 3:21). There will He sit to judge all the nations and to destroy those who come against Jerusalem. There will the heathen see God’s glory and learn that He is God. As surely as these prophecies have not yet had a fulfillment, so surely must they be fulfilled in the future.

“Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD.” (Ezek. 38:23)

Our attention now centers on how the deliverance of Israel is to be accomplished. The Prophet Zechariah tells us:

“Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.” (Zech. 14:3)

Largely because of a fear of falling into errors of the past, many of God’s dear saints have tended either (1) to *overliteralize*

some statements of the Bible that were intended to be *figurative or spiritual* lessons or (2) to *overlook or spiritualize* other specific truths that can be properly understood and grasped only in a *literal* sense. For example, do Christians realize that God predicts a *literal* plague or pestilence at the end of the present age? Hear what two of Israel's prophets predicted more than twenty-five hundred years ago:

“And I [God] will plead against him [Gog] with pestilence and with blood....” (Ezek. 38:22)

“And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.

**“And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague.”
(Zech. 14:12,15)**

The future plague is a reminder of the 185,000 Assyrians who died in one night when “the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote” them in their camp (Isa. 37:36).

Another prediction is that anarchy and confusion will play a large role in the final event at the end of the age.

“And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man’s sword shall be against his brother.” (Ezek. 38:21)

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult [confusion] from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour.” (Zech. 14:13)

“And the LORD of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him [the Assyrian, pictured figuratively as the rod of the Lord’s vengeance] according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb: and as his rod was upon the sea, so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt.” (Isa. 10:26)

The tumult or confusion that is to ensue from the hand of the Lord is very similar to the effect produced by Gideon and his band of three hundred. When they blew the trumpets, smashed the earthen pitchers so that lights shone forth, and shouted, “The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon,” such confusion broke out in the host of the Midianites that they slew one another in their haste to flee the enemy they imagined far outnumbered them.

“And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.

“And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.

“And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man’s sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Beth-shittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abel-meholah, unto Tabbath.” (Judg. 7:20-22)

One illustration likens the future battle to a rising up as in Mount Perazim, which is a reference to the account of Joshua and the hailstones that miraculously came down from heaven and destroyed the enemy host. God’s “strange act” will be His intervention in the affairs of man on behalf of His people Israel.

“For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim ... that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act.” (Isa. 28:21)

Accordingly, another miraculous event that will transpire upon the host of Gog and Magog is the manifestation of God’s indignation and anger with great hailstones.

“... and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, ... great hailstones....” (Ezek. 38:22)

“And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with ... hailstones.” (Isa. 30:30)

Other strange phenomena are to occur in nature such as signs in the heavens and upon the earth. Not only did the sun and the moon stand still back in Joshua’s day, but also the Prophet Isaiah referred to that unusual occurrence in his prophecy of the future.

“Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.

“And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.... So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day.

“And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel.” (Josh. 10:12-14)

**“For the LORD ... shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act.”
(Isa. 28:21)**

The Prophets Zechariah and Joel also predicted strange happenings in the heavens.

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark:

“But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.” (Zech. 14:6,7)

“The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.” (Joel 2:31)

“The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.

**“The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.”
(Joel 3:15,16)**

A sample of the overflowing rain or flood that occurred in Noah’s day will be another miraculous means of delivering Israel.

“... I [God] will rain upon him [Gog], and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain....” (Ezek. 38:22)

God will manifest His indignation and anger with scattering tempests and hailstones. This phenomenon is sometimes described as “a burst,” literally “a bursting of clouds, and a downpour, and hailstones.”

Another form of miraculous intervention will be fire and brimstone, which were used in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24).

“... and I will rain upon him [Gog] ... fire, and brimstone.” (Ezek. 38:22)

“Thou [that is, Ariel or Israel] shalt be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise [like that at the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai], with ... the flame of devouring fire.” (Isa. 29:6)

“And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of his arm, ... with the flame of a devouring fire....” (Isa. 30:30)

“And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.” (Joel 2:30)

“Shaking,” that is, a literal earthquake, is likewise predicted by various prophets.

“For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel;

“So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.” (Ezek. 38:19,20)

“And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

“And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the [literal] earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.

“All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up,

and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's wine-presses.

"And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited." (Zech. 14:4,5,10,11)

From these accounts, we can see that on numerous occasions in the past, God used miraculous events to champion the cause of His people Israel and to bring victory. The startling thing is that these events will reoccur in the near future to show that the *same God* who delivered the Israelites in olden times by such miraculous processes will deliver them again, *in like manner*. All of these enactments of the Lord are to take place in the fast-approaching end of this age to remind mankind of the methods used to deliver the Israelites of old: plague and pestilence, hailstones, an overflowing rain, fire and brimstone, confusion and tumult, and an earthquake.

From another standpoint, God told the Prophet Ezekiel to invite every fowl and every beast to the *great* slaughter on the mountains of Israel at the end of the age, and there fowl and beast would *eat flesh* and *drink blood*. In other words, the booty and the

wealth that will accumulate in Israel when the invading host is defeated will serve and enrich the nation of Israel for many years.

“And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood.

“Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan.

“And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you.

“Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord GOD.

“And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them.

**“So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward.”
(Ezek. 39:17-22)**

God's deliverance of Israel will be more spectacular than anything that has happened in the past—chiefly because a *multitude of simultaneous miracles* will accomplish the deliverance.

Finally, prophecy tells that God has prepared a graveyard for the vast host of Gog.

“For through the voice of the LORD shall the Assyrian be beaten down, which smote with a rod.

**“For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.”
(Isa. 30:31,33)**

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea [namely, the King's Highway]: and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call it The valley of Hamon-gog.

“And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land.

“Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them; and it shall be to them a renown the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord GOD.

“And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it: after the end of seven months shall they search.

“And the passengers that pass through the land, when any seeth a man’s bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog [the cemetery that God has arranged—and even named in advance—for the burying of the host of Gog].

“And also the name of the city shall be Hamonah [the number of the host to be buried in that cemetery is so great that it is likened to a city]. Thus shall they cleanse the land.” (Ezek. 39:11-16)

The name of the cemetery, Hamon-gog, and the name of the city, Hamonah, have a historical significance. They are intended to convey the thought that the fate of the host of Gog will be similar in many respects to what befell Haman, the archenemy of the Jews in the days of Queen Esther (Esther chapters 3-7). As Haman purposed the destruction and rapine of the Israelites, so Gog will purpose likewise. Haman wanted to destroy Mordecai and all of the other Jews in the kingdom of Ahasuerus, and Gog will intend to take a spoil, a prey. However, God, through His

omnipotent overruling providence, will turn what seems to be a hopeless situation into a great victory for His people.

Gog is pictured as a multitudinous and terrifying host that will cover the land of Israel as a cloud (Ezek. 38:16). Israel is portrayed as the hapless victim with no visible means of protection or defense. Similarly, the diabolical Haman occupied a position of great power and influence that was second to none but the king himself—or so he thought—yet he was ultimately hanged on the very gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. In other words, God so overruled matters that although Haman had purposed otherwise, he was the very instrument used to parade Mordecai about the streets of the city upon the king's horse, proclaiming and honoring his person on behalf of the king. So likewise, Gog will purpose great evil against Israel, but God will make the wrath of men to praise Him. Thus it is written concerning Gog: "... it shall be in the latter days, and I [God] will bring thee [Gog] against my land, that the heathen may know me, when *I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes*" (Ezek. 38:16). Indeed the enemy Gog will become the very instrument to honor and vindicate God's name and that of His people, and the valley of the dead in Israel will be appropriately named Hamon-gog. In awe, we realize that

not only did God foresee these events thousands of years in advance of their fulfillment, but also He predetermined the very appellation for the place of burial in Israel.

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