

APOCALYPSE RISING

CHAOS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, THE FALL OF THE
WEST, AND OTHER SIGNS OF THE END TIMES

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Chosen

a division of Baker Publishing Group
Minneapolis, Minnesota

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Published by Chosen Books
11400 Hampshire Avenue South
Bloomington, Minnesota 55438
www.chosenbooks.com

Chosen Books is a division of
Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Printed in the United States of America

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2016931353

ISBN 978-0-8007-9798-0

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16 17 18 19 20 21 22 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



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Introduction

The End of the World as We Know It

But if we fail, then the whole world . . . including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age.

—Winston Churchill, June 1939

Europe was rent asunder, facing an enemy that appeared unstoppable and bent on conquest. France with her mighty armies had fallen in mere days to the armored columns of the Wehrmacht. The implacable German Führer next set his eyes on Britain and decreed: England must fall!

Attempts to appease Hitler had failed, sweeping Churchill—the one leader with the will to resist the Nazis—into power. The pugnacious Prime Minister stood before Parliament and laid down the gauntlet. “The Battle of Britain has begun,” he announced, and “upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization.” The rest, as they say, is history.

A monstrous evil that eclipses by a quantum leap that of the Third Reich is waiting in the wings to initiate the Final Battle

between the forces of good and evil. In the pages that follow we will offer fresh insight into the spreading turmoil in the Middle East and Europe—the United States will not escape—and how it paves the way for the mysterious Gog and Magog of Ezekiel.

Our expansive investigation is a journey back through time spanning more than two millennia, from vast hordes sweeping across Central Asian steppes in search of conquest to present-day geopolitical developments rocking the Middle East, Europe and beyond. We will discover how the lands of Gog and Magog play a role in momentous events in history, from the fall of Rome to the world wars of the twentieth century to the infamous events of 9/11. We will pass through lands scarred by epic battles between East and West—and which are threatened once more by a modern-day invasion from Gog and Magog. We will introduce provocative evidence regarding this question: Is the United States mentioned in the prophetic texts?

Our analysis will reveal a great pincer movement that seeks with one talon to rip apart what remains of Christendom in Europe and the United States while with another talon to rend the Middle East in search of “great spoil.” Ultimately we will see that planet Earth is facing catastrophic events of biblical proportion, including threats from space-age doomsday weapons.

Last, but by no means least, we step back to examine a critical weakness that is increasingly found in books on biblical eschatology, leaving more than a few prophecy teachers with egg on their faces. The “atomization of biblical prophecy” leads to detailed charts of end time events that leave little room for the symbolism and vivid imagery that is the hallmark of apocalyptic literature.

Regrettably, this flawed approach can lead to sensationalism and date setting as teachers and writers seek to correlate their intricate prophecy timetables with contemporary events.

The reader is invited to skip ahead and review the afterword, “The Atomization of Biblical Prophecy,” which highlights recent claims that biblical prophecies will take place on specific dates—claims that invariably have proven false.

I can still recall, as a young Bible school student, compiling a comprehensive blueprint of end time events, which included a convoluted timeline complete with supporting Scripture texts. It was truly a thing of beauty. It was also an uncritical presentation by a budding and arguably naïve theologian of the views held by the particular denomination in which I had been raised. The years and decades since have (I like to think) brought a greater appreciation for the grandeur and mystery of the biblical prophecies.

The present volume reflects this perspective, which seeks to uncover the historical roots of selected eschatological themes found in Scripture. Together we will explore the fascinating unfolding of the grand eschatological program throughout the ages.

In the Footsteps of Conquerors

The enigmatic Gog and Magog of Ezekiel have been misidentified by a generation of prophecy teachers, many of whom continue to interpret eschatological texts in the light of outdated Cold War politics. The penchant for viewing the Antichrist as a Communist dictator led to the theory that two hundred million Chinese will invade the Holy Land. The Communist Soviet Union came and went after seventy years, while the true lands of Gog and Magog have for millennia harbored enmity toward Christendom—historically Europe—as well as the land of Israel.

A radical new thesis challenges the prevailing ahistorical interpretation of these shadowy foes. Instead of appearing on

the world stage suddenly and magically, the ghosts of Gog and Magog have haunted history since the time of Ezekiel, emerging periodically from their remote lair in Asia with “great hordes” of armed horsemen, “all of them brandishing their swords” to rain down terror upon distant lands.

We trace the footsteps of these invaders of old as well as those kingdoms and empires that sought—unsuccessfully—to defeat them, foreshadowing a war of cosmic proportions at the climax of human history. We will see that the lands of Gog and Magog have historically been an indomitable and mysterious region that will one day instigate the battle at the end of the world.

The Iron Gates of Alexander

Our story begins with the legendary iron gates constructed to hold back the barbaric raiders from Gog and Magog, where we cross paths with perhaps the greatest conqueror the world has ever known. Alexander the Great set out to vanquish Persia, the ancient enemy of Greece, and from there to continue eastward until he had subjugated India. Undefeated on the battlefield, Alexander’s advance was nonetheless checked as he sought to conquer barbarians from the north. According to lore that stirred imaginations in Europe for a thousand years, he constructed immense iron gates to bar their way to the civilized world.

A Race Savage Beyond All Parallel

The malignant force from beyond Alexander’s gates waited, biding its time. It reemerged through nomadic invaders known as the Huns. Led by Attila, these primitive warriors from the Asian steppes swept largely unopposed into Europe. They forced out other peoples, setting into motion a savage chain reaction

that culminated in the sack of Rome. After a period of relative calm, the Huns initiated a determined attack on the entire Roman Empire, driven in part thanks to a scheming princess.

A Medieval Blitzkrieg

Centuries later Europe was once again the focus of a great invasion. The Mongol hordes of Genghis Khan wrought unprecedented devastation as they marched westward to Poland, Hungary and the Balkans—and south into the Middle East. The trademarks of what would become the largest contiguous empire in history included the slaughter of entire cities and the deliberate use of the bubonic plague to decimate their enemies. These nomadic predecessors of the Ottoman Turks also stormed out of central Asia—the land of Gog and Magog.

The Gates of Vienna

It is in Vienna, that sentinel on the Danube and gateway to the West, that we encounter yet another historic conqueror from Gog and Magog: Suleiman the Magnificent, greatest Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. Not once but twice, the fate of Christendom hung in the balance before the walls of Vienna as the beleaguered garrison held off the assault of the Ottoman armies, facing slaughter or enslavement and praying for a miracle. Just as it appeared all hope was lost, Polish king John III Sobieski swept down from the heights to save the day.

The Disintegrating Middle East

Moving into the present day, we examine the chaos descending upon the lands of the Bible. At root is a fierce Arabian faith

that has sought through the centuries to subjugate Jews and Christians through the command to engage in *jihad* (holy war) against the “infidel.” The Middle East is awash with Islamic factions, each more radical than the last, all determined to restore the caliphate—a worldwide Islamic state built upon the blood of Christian martyrs who are being called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice at the astounding rate of one every five minutes.

Tangled Alliances

In the midst of profound upheaval in Muslim lands of the Middle East and North Africa, a new terrorist organization has burst upon the scene, driven by a brutal fanaticism and subjecting those under its control to unparalleled levels of savagery. Gruesome decapitations have become commonplace, as if in fulfillment of the book of Revelation: “I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God” (Revelation 20:4 ESV).

Jihad by Other Means

More than three centuries after the Turkish assault upon the gates of Vienna, another great invasion from the East would threaten the Christian civilization of Europe in our day. This time the attack would come not by armies brandishing swords but by masses of refugees fleeing the ravages of armed conflict. And like the multitudes driven across the Danube by the Huns of old, these migrants—some of whom refuse to assimilate but seek to promulgate an alien ideology—are irrevocably changing the face of Europe. Even more disconcerting, we are now seeing how agents secreted among the legitimate asylum seekers

are working to destabilize the continent through senseless acts of violence.

Israel's Newfound Energy Wealth

Sowing chaos in Europe is but one tactic of the nefarious Beast: The book of Ezekiel reveals that in the last days Gog and Magog will be pulled by “hooks in [their] jaws” (38:4) to invade the Middle East. Their intention is to “plunder and loot” (38:12). The identification of the source of this great wealth has eluded commentators—until now. Astonishingly, the Jewish state has gone from energy dependence to being potentially a supplier of valuable energy sources that promise to be hotly contested by Israel's enemies. *A casus belli?*

Ships of Tarshish

In the midst of Ezekiel's prophecy about a cataclysmic invasion of Israel, we read that “the merchants of Tarshish and all her villages” (i.e., colonies) rise up to confront Gog and Magog. Tarshish was located on the southwestern coast of Spain—the very port of embarkation for Christopher Columbus as he set sail for the New World. The historical evidence extending the far-flung colonies of Tarshish to the Americas provides a link between the United States and biblical prophecy.

Have You Come to Take Great Plunder?

The connection between America and “Tarshish and her colonies” prompts a question that has eluded biblical commentators: What could be the possible role of the United

States in the end times? Two interpretations of the challenge “Have you come to take great plunder?” have polar opposite consequences for the unfolding of the biblical prophecies. The first is that the United States, weakened by internal division, is both unwilling and unable to intercede for Israel. The second is that Western Christendom—led by a resurgent America—will overcome the threat to its historic religion and culture, enabling it to stand with Israel against the Antichrist in the final battle.

The ambiguity—we suggest—is entirely by design, and intended to present 21st-century America with an opportunity to join the forces of good in the end time battle. But only if the Sleeping Giant is awakened in time.

The Doomsday Scenario

Next we turn our attention to a perplexing passage in the book of Revelation that speaks of Mystery Babylon being destroyed “in an hour.” Unimaginable until the present day, a doomsday scenario now exists whereby life as we know it could come to a screeching halt for tens of millions. The possibility is nearing for a low-yield nuclear-tipped ballistic missile to trigger a massive electromagnetic pulse (EMP) that in a millisecond could destroy a nation’s electrical grid along with virtually all electronic devices and components for an indefinite period of time. The enemies of the United States and Israel are already experimenting with EMP technology.

Solar Storm

We examine even greater threats: Earth could one day come under attack from X rays, charged particles and magnetized plasma ejected from explosions on the surface of the sun. Such

a gigantic “solar storm” could wipe out the technology and electric power grids of the entire planet. The largest of these events—X-class flares—could spew out as much energy as a billion hydrogen bombs.

But Before All These Things

Indeed, Jesus warned His disciples that “fearful events” and “great signs from heaven” would cause unprecedented devastation at the end of days. Jesus stipulated, however, that before all these things came to pass, His followers would endure great suffering. Jesus’ description of those days indicates that the legal system will be used to oppress Christians, who will be arrested, tried by the authorities and thrown into “prison.” For the first time since the days of the early Church, legal charges, onerous fines and even jail time are being levied against believers in the so-called Christian West for the “offense” of seeking to remain true to their faith. Should this sinister trend continue, it could remove the one great impediment to identifying the United States as Mystery Babylon.

The Name that Overcomes

This litany of horrors is not the stuff of fevered imagination: Each can arguably be deduced from the eschatological texts. Yet we must remember the command given to the prophet Daniel, “Seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end” (12:4) and confess that “for now we see through a glass, darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:12 κϐν). The cryptic nature of the apocalyptic genre leaves open the possibility of variant outcomes, and we have a great hope that the Light will shine through the darkness. We shall explore all this and more. Let the journey begin!

PART 1

KINGDOMS
OF GOG
AND MAGOG

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1

Out of the Far North

Chapters 38 and 39 of Ezekiel describe a great conflict at the end of the age: the battle “against Gog, of the land of Magog.” This enigmatic and difficult passage has been the subject of endless discussion and speculation among Bible scholars as to the identification of the mysterious participants.

One view holds that the text is referring to a Russian-led invasion of the Middle East. This interpretation arose during the Cold War when the atheistic Soviet Union—of which Russia was the principal republic—was deeply involved in the Middle East. It made perfect sense in a day when Russia was supplying Israel’s hostile Arab neighbors with military equipment that was used to attack the Jewish state. One prominent advocate of this view, John F. Walvoord, stated assuredly that Ezekiel 38 and 39 “could only refer to what we know today as Russia.”¹

Then came the fall of the Soviet Union, and prophecy teachers were left without their Evil Empire. A surprising number plowed along undeterred, continuing to insist that Russia is

destined to invade Israel at the end of days. A growing number of scholars, however, realize that the Russian invasion theory rests upon scanty foundations.

The setting of Ezekiel's prophecy is an invasion of Israel by Gog and Magog at a time when the land has been restored after a long period of desolation:

After many days you will be called to arms. In future years you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. They had been brought out from the nations, and now all of them live in safety.

Ezekiel 38:8

The characterization of Israel as a land “which had long been desolate” is an apt description of the historical period between the second century and the late nineteenth century. After the Second Jewish Revolt (AD 132–136) was crushed, Jews were banned from Judea, which was renamed *Palaestina* by the victorious Romans. Although Jews were later allowed to return, by the Middle Ages the land had been impoverished by conflict and the population severely reduced.

When author Mark Twain visited the Holy Land in 1867, he described a desolate Galilee: “There is not a solitary village throughout its whole extent—not for thirty miles in either direction. There are two or three small clusters of Bedouin [nomadic Arabian] tents, but not a single permanent habitation. One may ride ten miles, hereabouts, and not see ten human beings.”²

Ezekiel prophesied that “after many days . . . in future years” (38:8) a restored land of Israel will be invaded by the armies of Gog and Magog. Mark Twain would be astonished to see Israeli Galilee today, a prosperous land teeming with bountiful agriculture and bustling cities and towns.

In like manner the visitor to modern Jerusalem with a population approaching one million would scarcely recognize Twain's description of a neglected city of some fourteen thousand impoverished residents:

Rags, wretchedness, poverty and dirt, those signs and symbols that indicate the presence of Moslem rule more surely than the crescent-flag itself, abound. Lepers, cripples, the blind, and the idiotic, assail you on every hand, and they know but one word of but one language apparently—the eternal “bucksheesh.” To see the numbers of maimed, malformed and diseased humanity that throng the holy places and obstruct the gates, one might suppose that the ancient days had come again, and that the angel of the Lord was expected to descend at any moment to stir the waters of Bethesda. Jerusalem is mournful, and dreary, and lifeless.³

We are also told that the invasion will occur at a time when the regathered Jews “live in safety” (Ezekiel 38:8). One interpretation is that the inhabitants have been lulled by a false sense of safety. The text can also refer to a high state of security in the face of threats.⁴ This would certainly describe the level of military readiness in Israel against domestic terrorist threats and hostile neighboring states. The invasion of Gog and Magog, however, will originate from distant lands.

North by Northeast

Ezekiel 38 specifies the direction of the attack: “You will come from your place in the far north, you and many nations with you, all of them riding on horses, a great horde, a mighty army” (Ezekiel 38:15). The proponents of the Russia-led invasion theory point to this verse, and indeed a line drawn straight north from Israel could scarcely avoid bisecting the largest country on the globe.

It is by no means certain that this text refers to Russia, as many references to the north in the Bible actually refer to Eastern lands. The book of Jeremiah warns repeatedly of a coming invasion by the Babylonians, which took place in 586 BC: “Raise the signal to go to Zion! Flee for safety without delay! For I am bringing disaster *from the north*, even terrible destruction” (Jeremiah 4:6, emphasis added). A quick check of maps of the Middle East in biblical times shows that Babylon was not north of Israel but rather was directly east.

Similarly, Jeremiah foretells the defeat of Pharaoh Necho II at Carchemish, which occurred in 605 BC: “Daughter Egypt will be put to shame, given into the hands of the people *of the north*” (Jeremiah 46:24, emphasis added). The Egyptian army was defeated by the neo-Babylonian army led by Nebuchadnezzar. Once again the Babylonians are depicted as coming from the north. In another passage Assyria is also described as located in “the north” even though its capital, Nineveh, lies to the east of Israel (see Zephaniah 2:13).

The explanation as to why the Bible speaks of people from Eastern lands coming from the north lies in the geography of the region. The biblical world has been called “the Fertile Crescent,” a boomerang-shaped swath of arable land that follows the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers up to northern Syria before continuing west and curving back down toward the Holy Land. In the middle lies the inhospitable Syrian-Arabian desert, which was virtually impassable except for camel-riding Bedouin. Travelers in olden times circumvented the desert, following instead the well-watered Fertile Crescent, where most of the trading cities of the region were located. Abraham followed this route, sojourning at Haran in northern Syria along the way.

The armies of Assyria and Babylon also marched along this route; hence the biblical references to Israel being invaded from

the north. The texts are indicating the direction of the invasion, not the place of the invader's origin.

As noted, the wording of texts in Ezekiel that refer to “the far north” has led to speculation that Russia is in view; however, a similar wording is used in Jeremiah 6:22, which speaks of the Babylonian invasion as coming from “the ends of the earth.” Even more telling, Ezekiel also refers to Beth Togarmah as coming “from the far north” (38:6). As for the geographical region of Togarmah, Mark Hitchcock states the general consensus: “Togarmah was both the name of a district and a city in the border of Tubal in eastern Cappadocia.”⁵

Cappadocia was located in what is now Turkey, a region that was in olden times known as Asia Minor. Thus, to the biblical writer “far north” referred to modern Turkey. While the Russian-led invasion theory seemed to fit the geopolitics of the Cold War, it lacks exegetical support—superficial linguistic similarities between Rosh/Russia, Meshech/Moscow notwithstanding. What, then, can be known about the mysterious invaders of the land of Israel in the end times?

Gog and Magog

The identity of Gog in Ezekiel 38 and 39 remains uncertain.⁶ A king, Gugu, who is identified with Gyges, king of Lydia, is mentioned in the Assyrian texts. Lydia was a kingdom in eastern Asia Minor, and the reign of Gyges (c. 660 BC) is also roughly contemporary with the book of Ezekiel, suggesting that the prophet was referring to the Lydian king.

The name *Magog* is not mentioned in the Assyrian literature, our primary source for the eighth and seventh centuries BC. Writing in the first century AD, Jewish historian Josephus provides our initial clue: “Magog founded the Magogians, thus named after him, but who by the Greeks are called Scythians.”⁷

The proponents of the theory identifying Gog and Magog with Russia note, correctly, that the Scythians were horse-riding nomads who originated from the steppes of southern Russia. By the time of Ezekiel in the seventh century BC, however, they had crossed the Caucasus, which straddles the Black and Caspian Seas. From there they spread into Asia Minor—modern Turkey—and projected their power to the Middle East and the Iranian Plateau, where they participated in the sack of Nineveh and the destruction of the Assyrian Empire.

In 329 BC, the Scythians were defeated by Alexander the Great and his Macedonian army at the Battle of Jaxartes. This is the Scythia that Josephus identifies as Gog and Magog: a region roughly contiguous with Turkey, extending eastward to the Central Asian Republics.

Rosh, Meshech and Tubal

Ezekiel mentions as co-conspirators of Gog and Magog the evil triumvirate of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. The Russian-led invasion theory identifies these as Russia, Moscow and Tobolsk based upon the resemblance of the names. Proponents also quote a nineteenth-century work: Gesenius' *Hebrew and English Lexicon*:

Gesenius, whose Hebrew Lexicon has never been superseded, says that “Gog” is “undoubtedly the Russians.” He declared that “Rosh” was a designation for the tribes then north of the Taurus mountains, . . . and in this name of tribe we have the first trace in history of the “Russ” or Russian nation. Gesenius also identified “Meshech” as Moscow, the capital of modern Russia in Europe. “Tubal” he identified as Tobolsk, the earliest province of Asiatic Russia to be colonized.⁸

The early editions of Gesenius, however, have been superseded by later revisions of his own work as well as standard texts

such as the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, none of which includes his oft-quoted but misinformed views about Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. Eminent Assyriologist D. J. Wiseman speaks for many in rejecting the Russian identification: “Gesenius suggested Russia, but this name is not attested in the area, and a very distant people named this early is unlikely in the context.”⁹

Fortunately, we are not dependent upon superficial and misleading phonetic similarity: There is ample historical evidence identifying “Rosh” with the Assyrian place name “Rashu” located in a region stretching across what is now northern Iran and Azerbaijan. As such, their only connection with Russia was during the nineteenth century under Alexander I and for seventy years in the twentieth century when Azerbaijan was part of the Soviet Union.

Any connection between Tubal and the Russian city of Tobolsk must be regarded as specious. Tobolsk was founded in AD 1587, when Siberia was colonized by the Russian empire, and is thus a latecomer on the stage of human history. On firmer footing is the view expressed by T. C. Mitchell that Meshech and Tubal are correctly associated with “the people referred to as Tabal and Musku in the Assyrian inscriptions and Tibareroi and Moschoi in Herodotus, in both of which sources these names are closely associated.”¹⁰

As to their geographic location, the Assyrian cuneiform texts clearly locate Tabal and Musku in central and eastern Anatolia (the Asian landmass of modern Turkey).

One may thus wholeheartedly concur with Joseph Blenkinsopp, who, noting the persistence of the unfounded Russia-led Gog and Magog invasion theory, states, “So it is still necessary to repeat that *ro’sh meshrech* has nothing to do, etymologically or otherwise, with Russia and Moscow.”¹¹

We are starting to discern a pattern: The outlines of a geographic region that corresponds to the biblical references to Gog

and Magog are beginning to emerge. This area includes Anatolia and northern Iran and stretches eastward to encompass other Turkic peoples of Central Asia. Let us now examine what can be said about the other four participants in the great end time battle of Gog and Magog.

The Allies of Gog

Ezekiel mentions the confederates of Gog and Magog: “Persia, Cush and Put will be with them, all with shields and helmets, also Gomer with all its troops, and Beth Togarmah from the far north with all its troops—the many nations with you” (Ezekiel 38:5–6). There is general consensus regarding the first three of the remaining allies of Gog and Magog. *Persia* was the name of Iran until 1959, when the government of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi changed it to Iran. *Cush* was another name for the Nubian kingdom of Ethiopia and is so identified in numerous translations. *Put* was one of the sons of Ham (see Genesis 10:6) who according to Josephus founded Libya.¹²

As for the final ally, *Gomer*, proponents of a Russian-led invasion are at pains to connect it to the Soviet Union. Hal Lindsey popularized the view that it refers to East Germany: “The conclusion is that Gomer and its hordes are part of the vast area of modern Eastern Europe which is totally behind the Iron Curtain. This includes East Germany and the Slovak countries.”¹³ As part of the now defunct Soviet-allied Warsaw Pact, this identification seemed to fit the picture of a Russian-led invasion of the Middle East.

Lindsey cites the aforementioned discredited view of Gesenius, who stands alone among linguists with his novel identifications of Gog and its allies. One searches critical and exegetical commentaries in vain for support of the view that Gomer is East Germany. The scholarly consensus is summarized by Walther Eichrodt:

[The people of Gomer are] referred to by the Assyrians as Gimirrai, and by the Greeks as Cimmerians. They emerge in the eighth century as conquerors of Urartu (Armenia) in Asia Minor and then as invaders of the territory of the Phrygians and Lydians.¹⁴

Once again we see a connection to Anatolia: The Cimmerians occupied the southern shores of the Black Sea in what is now eastern Turkey. As we have already seen, Beth Togarmah occupied central Asia Minor—the same geographic region where Meshech, Tubal and Gomer are located.

Thus the available evidence suggests that the primary participants in the future invasion of Israel hail from the region encompassed by Turkey, northern Iran and the southernmost Central Asian Republics. Some expand this confederacy to include the neighboring Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China based upon its ethnic and religious ties with Turkey and Central Asia. Support also comes from confederates in the general area of Libya and Ethiopia in North Africa.

We shall see presently how these archenemies of all that is good will not appear suddenly, as it were, out of thin air. Rather, they have been with us all along. But first we will examine another passage in Revelation that is often misinterpreted by commentators who envision yet another battle to complicate events at the end of time—this one involving a fantastical army of two hundred million soldiers advancing from the East.