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The Final Rebellion

Satan Released — Gog, Magog, and the Last War

Why God Releases the Deceiver, Who Follows Him, and How It Ends

Revelation 20:7-9, *Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison* [8] *and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.* [9] *They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.*

Overview.

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V 7	Satan Released from His Prison after the Thousand Years
V 8a	He Goes Out to Deceive the Nations — Gog and Magog
V 8b	The Number — Like the Sand of the Sea
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V 9b	The End — Fire from Heaven Devours Them

Introduction.

✦ The Last Mutiny — The Bounty, 1789

On the morning of **April 28, 1789, Fletcher Christian** led a mutiny aboard **HMS Bounty in the South Pacific**. **Captain Bligh** was set adrift in a small boat with **eighteen loyal crew members**. The mutineers eventually settled on **Pitcairn Island**, where they burned the Bounty and tried to build a new society.

What happened next is one of history's most instructive social experiments. The mutineers freed from the Royal Navy's authority, thousands of miles from any law descended into violence, alcoholism, murder, and chaos within a few years.

John Adams, the sole surviving mutineer of the original group, later said: *'We thought if we were just free from Bligh's authority, we would be happy. What we found is that the problem was never Bligh. The problem was us.'*

Revelation 20:7–9 is the ultimate version of this experiment. Satan has been bound for a thousand years. Christ has been reigning visibly, personally, righteously for a millennium. The earth has experienced its best possible political environment.

Yet when Satan is released and offers rebellion multitudes follow him 'like the sand of the sea.'

The problem was never the environment. The problem was never Satan's presence. The problem is the fallen human heart. The Millennium proves it finally, completely, and permanently.

Revelation 20:7–9 is three verses that answer one of the deepest questions in all of theology.

Why, after a thousand years of perfect government under the reign of Christ, do human beings still rebel?

The answer demolishes every utopian theory, every social gospel vision, every programme that locates the root of human evil in external circumstances.

Context: Where are we?

Revelation 20:7–9 arrives as the direct sequel to the Millennial reign of **20:4–6**.

- Christ has been reigning on earth for a thousand years.
- Satan has been bound in the abyss.
- The martyrs have been raised and are reigning with Christ on thrones.
- Peace, justice, and the knowledge of God have filled the earth.

Then the thousand years expire. Satan is released.

What happens next is simultaneously the most surprising and the most theologically necessary event in the Millennium's history.

A rebellion of sand-like multitudes against the King they have watched reign in person for a thousand years.

Passage	What Precedes and Follows
Rev 20:1–3	Satan bound. The deceiver sealed in the abyss. The greatest silencing in history.
Rev 20:4–6	The Millennial reign begins. Martyrs raised. Saints on thrones. The Kingdom is established.
Rev 20:7–9	THIS PASSAGE — The final rebellion. Satan released. Sand-like multitudes. Fire from heaven.
Rev 20:10	Satan cast into the lake of fire forever. The deceiver's end.
Rev 20:11–15	The Great White Throne. Every person judged. The second death defined.

I. Satan Released — V 7

> **Revelation 20:7,** *"Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison."*

The precision of 'when the Thousand years have expired'

The phrase *'when the thousand years have expired'* uses the aorist subjunctive when they shall have been completed.

The thousand years are a precise, defined period.

When that period ends exactly, Satan is released.

This is not an approximate transition but a scheduled, divinely orchestrated event.

Satan does not escape. He is not accidentally freed by some failure of the divine prison system. He is released by the same authority that put him in takes him out, for a specific purpose, at a specific time. The release is as sovereign as the binding.

> *Why must Satan be released?*
> *The New Testament does not explicitly state the reason, but the context makes it clear.*
> *The Millennium has demonstrated something important: even under ideal conditions, unregenerate human hearts remain in rebellion.*
> *But God's justice requires more than a demonstration it requires a final, self-incriminating act of human rebellion that vindicates the Great White Throne judgments that follow. The nations who follow Satan at the end of the Millennium prove, by their own choice, that their condemnation is just.*

II. GOG AND MAGOG — V 8

> **Revelation 20:8,** *"and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea."*

Gog and Magog — The Last Alliance

The names 'Gog and Magog' come from **Ezekiel 38–39,** where Gog is the prince of Magog who leads a great coalition of nations against Israel.

The Armageddon campaign **of Revelation 19** most likely corresponds to **Ezekiel 39**.

The post-millennial rebellion here uses the same names but refers to a different event at a different time.

The names are being used symbolically.

'Gog and Magog' have become shorthand in the prophetic tradition for the ultimate coalition of nations against God and His people.

Just as 'Babylon' in Revelation represents more than the historical city of Babylon, 'Gog and Magog' here represents the final, universal gathering of all unregenerate humanity in its last act of rebellion.

Question	Answer
Are these the same nations as Armageddon?	No. Armageddon ends with the slaughter of the armies (19:21) and the capture of the beast and false prophet. These nations enter the Millennium many of them, evidently unsaved and rebel at its end.
Who are the Millennial population that rebels?	People born during the Millennium to surviving Tribulation believers and unbelievers. Not all who enter the Millennium are saved. Their children are born with fallen human natures and must

Question	Answer
	be regenerated like anyone else. Over a thousand years, the population of unregenerate people grows enormously.
How can people rebel after a thousand years of Christ's visible reign?	The same way Adam and Eve rebelled in a perfect environment with direct access to God. The problem is not information about God it is the unregenerate heart. Presence of the King is not the same as surrender to the King.
What does 'the four corners of the earth' indicate?	The rebellion is global and comprehensive from every part of the earth. This is not a regional uprising. It is the final, worldwide expression of unregenerate humanity's hostility to the reign of God.

'Like the sand of the sea' — The staggering scale.

The size of the rebellion *'whose number is as the sand of the sea'* is one of the most sobering details in Revelation.

After a thousand years of Christ's visible, personal, glorious reign on earth, after a millennium of justice, peace, prosperity, and the direct presence of the King of Kings, the number who follow Satan into rebellion is innumerable.

This tells us that the problem of human sin is not curable by good government, good education, good environment, or even the visible presence of God on earth.

A perfect world does not produce perfect people.

Only the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit transforms the human heart.

The sand-like number of rebels at the end of the Millennium is the final, definitive proof that salvation is entirely of grace and that every human being left to themselves is in rebellion against God.

III. The Last Battle — V 9

> **Revelation 20:9,** *"They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them."*

The camp of the saints and the beloved city.

The rebels *'surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city.'*

The *'beloved city'* is Jerusalem, the city of David, the seat of Christ's millennial reign (**Isaiah 2:3; Zechariah 14:9**).

The *'camp of the saints'* refers to the gathered community of the redeemed the saints who have been reigning with Christ now under direct attack.

The word 'camp' has military connotations a fortified encampment. This suggests that the saints and the city are intentionally besieged. The rebel army marches on the seat of Christ's government, surrounding it in what is the ultimate political revolution an attempt to overthrow the King of Kings from His own throne city.

'Fire came down from God out of Heaven'

The battle, like Armageddon, is over before it begins. There is no engagement, no siege, no prolonged resistance.

Fire comes down from God not from Christ's sword this time, not from the armies of heaven, but directly from God and devours the rebel army.

The swiftness of the destruction is theologically important. God does not negotiate with rebellion at this stage.

The Millennial Kingdom has provided a thousand years of patience, governance, and opportunity. The Great White Throne judgment that follows will provide the formal legal process.

This fire is the immediate, decisive end of the rebellion clearing the way for the final act of history.

> *The echo of **1 Kings 18 Elijah at Mount Carmel**, fire coming down from heaven to consume the sacrifice when the prophets of Baal could not produce it.*
> ***2 Kings 1** fire from heaven consuming the soldiers of **Ahaziah** who came to arrest Elijah. Fire from heaven in Scripture is consistently the symbol of divine response to rebellion against God's authority. Here it is used for the last time in history and the rebellion it extinguishes is the last.*

Application: The Millennium Proves That Only Grace Transforms

The rebellion at the end of the Millennium is not a theological curiosity it is a pastoral truth of enormous importance.

It tells us that no programme, no system, no environment, no amount of exposure to truth, no proximity to godly leadership will transform the human heart apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

This is why the church's primary mission is not political reform, social improvement, or cultural transformation however valuable those things may be as secondary goods.

The primary mission is the proclamation of the gospel that produces regeneration. Changed hearts change culture. Improved culture does not change hearts. The sand-like multitudes of **Revelation 20:8** prove it permanently.

> **John 3:7,** *"Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"*

Conclusion.

The Millennium ends not with a graduation ceremony but a battle. The most righteous government in human history concludes with the largest rebellion in human history. And it is extinguished in a sentence fire from heaven.

The rebellion proves three things permanently: that Satan's nature is unreformable (he was imprisoned for a thousand years and the first thing he does on release is organise a rebellion), that the unregenerate human heart is unreformable by environment, and that God's patience is not weakness it is the long runway before the final, irresistible landing of justice.

✦ The Last Battle of World War II — The Philippines, 1974

On **March 9, 1974**, a Japanese soldier named **Hiroo Onoda** emerged from the jungles of **Lubang Island in the Philippines** and formally surrendered — **29 years after Japan's surrender in 1945**.

He had been fighting a war that had been over for three decades, loyal to a reality that no longer existed, unable or unwilling to believe that the conflict was finished.

His commanding officer had to personally fly to the Philippines and formally relieve him of duty before he would accept that the war was over. When he finally understood, he laid down his weapons and was treated with extraordinary dignity by the Philippine government.

The rebels of **Revelation 20:7–9** are Hiroo Onoda at infinite scale fighting against a King whose victory was secured at the cross, whose reign has been visible for a thousand years, who has offered every possible evidence of His sovereignty. And they still march. They still surround the city. They still refuse to lay down their weapons.

> *The difference is that Onoda was eventually persuaded. These rebels are not. Fire comes down. The war is finally, permanently, irrevocably over.*

The fire from heaven is not the end of mercy — it is the end of rebellion.
And after the fire, the throne.

Satan's career and character.

To understand why Satan's release produces rebellion rather than repentance, we must understand who he is.

Revelation 20:7, *'Satan will be released from his prison'*

The same being who has operated under four names throughout this chapter (dragon, ancient serpent, devil, Satan in 20:2).

His character determines his first act on release.

Characteristic	Evidence in Scripture
He is unreformable	A thousand years in the abyss does not produce repentance. His first act on release is deception and war exactly what he was doing before. Evil imprisoned is still evil. Only divine grace transforms; judgment confines but does not convert.
He is strategically brilliant	He surveys the earth, identifies the largest pool of unregenerate humanity, and mobilises them instantly. No time wasted.

	No hesitation. A thousand years of imprisonment has not diminished his tactical mind.
He targets God's people first	The army surrounds *'the camp of the saints and the beloved city'* Jerusalem. Satan has always attacked the people and city of God. His final act is his oldest instinct: surround, besiege, destroy.
He is ultimately powerless	Despite all his strategy, his deceptive brilliance, his vast army he is destroyed in a sentence. Fire from God. No battle. No contest. The contrast between his elaborate preparation and his instant annihilation is the definitive statement on the real power differential.

Then theology of Total depravity.

The sand-like multitudes of Revelation 20:8 are not an anomaly, but they are the final, empirical proof of one of the most important doctrines in Christian theology: total depravity.

Not that every person is as evil as they could be, but that every faculty of the unregenerate person mind, will, affections, conscience is affected by sin, and no human being can turn to God apart from sovereign grace.

'The Millennial Kingdom is the greatest social experiment in history. God takes away every excuse. He provides perfect government,

universal justice, physical abundance, global peace, and the visible reign of the most righteous King who has ever existed.

When He releases Satan, the sand-like multitudes revolt. This is not a political uprising about grievances. This is the naked expression of a nature that hates God not because of what God has done to it, but because of what it is.'

> *The rebellion proves that the human problem is not ignorance (they have lived under Christ's direct reign for a thousand years), not poverty (the Millennium is an age of abundance), not injustice (they have experienced perfectly just government), not Satan's influence alone (many in every age resist him without grace).*
> *The problem is the unregenerate heart, and the only solution is not better conditions but new birth.*
> **John 3:7**, *'You must be born again.'*

> **Jeremiah 17:9,** *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"*

Old Testament background: Fire from Heaven.

The phrase 'fire came down from God out of heaven' in verse 9 deliberately echoes a series of Old Testament events where God used fire from heaven as the instrument of direct, decisive judgment. Understanding the pattern illuminates the significance of this final use.

OT Event	Connection to Revelation 20:9
Sodom and Gomorrah Genesis 19:24, *'The LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah'*	The first great act of divine judgment by fire. Two cities of comprehensive wickedness destroyed in an instant. The pattern: fire from heaven = irreversible divine verdict on organised sin.
Elijah at Mount Carmel. **1 Kings 18:38,** *'Fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice'*	Fire authenticates the true God against false worship. The prophets of Baal's god could not produce fire; the LORD's fire was instant and total. At Armageddon, the false prophet called fire from heaven at the final rebellion, the true God answers with fire.
Fire on the troops of Ahaziah. **2 Kings 1:10–12**, *'Fire came down from heaven and consumed him'*	Twice, fire from heaven destroyed military units sent to arrest Elijah. Divine fire protecting the servant of God against the king's forces. Here, fire from heaven protects the saints and the beloved city against the last army.
Ezekiel 38:22, *'I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone'*	God's prophecy against Gog using fire as the instrument of final judgment on the ultimate coalition against Israel. **Revelation 20:9** is this prophecy's ultimate fulfilment.

Application: The Patience of God is not passivity, but it has a terminal point.

For a thousand years, God patiently governed a world that contained unregenerate people who did not love Him.

He provided justice, abundance, and His own personal presence.

He allowed the gospel to be proclaimed by the saints who reigned as priests.

He gave every possible opportunity for repentance.

And when that patience reached its appointed end fire.

Instant. Total. Final.

God's patience is not uncertainty.

It is not weakness.

It is the long runway of grace before the irresistible landing of justice.

2 Peter 3:9-10, *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat."*

Every day of the Millennium was a day of that longsuffering. Every year was an extension of the opportunity to repent. And then fire.

Application: The Gospel is the Only answer to the Rebellion in every human heart.

The final rebellion is the magnified version of what happens in every unregenerate heart.

The heart that does not yield to Christ is the heart that, given the opportunity, will always choose rebellion.

The sand-like multitude is not made up of extraordinary villains it is made up of ordinary people who simply never received the regenerating grace of God.

This is why evangelism is the most urgent and most practical response to the theology of **Revelation 20:7–9**.

Every person you know who does not know Christ is, at their core, capable of joining that army. Not because they are monsters but because they are unregenerate.

The gospel that produces the new birth is the only thing that changes that not better education, not improved circumstances, not cultural pressure, not moral instruction alone.

New birth.

The Spirit of God working through the word of God.

Three Questions Before you leave!

1. **Does the final rebellion change how you view the urgency of evangelism?**

   The sand-like multitudes of **V 8** are people who had every possible advantage. A thousand years of perfect government, the visible reign of Christ, the absence of Satanic deception and still rebelled when given the chance.

   Every person you know who does not know Christ is one step away from joining that number, not because they are uniquely evil but because the unregenerate heart is what it is.

   The gospel is the only intervention that changes the trajectory.

   Are you sharing it?

2. **Does the theology of total depravity comfort or trouble you?**

   It should do both.

   It troubles us because it tells us the truth about the human condition including our own before grace.

   It comforts us because it makes grace entirely necessary and entirely gracious.

   If you are in Christ, you are in Christ not because you were better than the sand-like multitudes but because God in His sovereign grace opened your eyes and drew you to Himself. The same grace that saved you is the grace you offer the world in the gospel.

3. **Is your confidence in Christ or in the environment?**

The Millennium will prove that even the best environment cannot produce faith without the Spirit.

The reverse is also true: the worst environment cannot extinguish faith produced by the Spirit.

Your faith does not ultimately depend on your circumstances favourable or hostile. It depends on the sovereign work of God in your heart. That work cannot be undone by any rebellion, any fire, any army like the sand of the sea.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Question	Insights
Is the Gog and Magog of Revelation 20 the same as Ezekiel 38–39?	No! They are different events at different points in the prophetic calendar, separated by at least a thousand years. Ezekiel 39 most likely corresponds to Armageddon (Rev 19); Revelation 20:8 uses the same names to describe the final post-millennial rebellion. The names have become symbolic of the last great coalition against God.
Where do the Millennial rebels come from if the Tribulation survivors entered the Millennium?	From their children, and their children's children, across a thousand years. Not everyone born in the Millennium is regenerate. People born to Millennial survivors still have fallen human natures and must receive the gospel by grace through faith. Over a thousand years, the population of unregenerate people

Question	Insights
	grows to an enormous number hence 'like the sand of the sea.'
Why does God allow the rebellion rather than preventing it?	Theologically, it serves two purposes. 1. It vindicates the Great White Throne judgments those condemned were not victims of circumstance but active rebels who chose Satan even after a millennium of evidence against him. 2. It establishes permanently that the human problem is radical and internal not environmental.