



Eschatological Concurrence in religions of the World

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Article History

Received
12-01-2025

Accepted
05-02-2025

Published
10-02-2025

Abstract & Indexing

WORLD of
JOURNALS



ACADEMIA



REVIEWER
CREDITS



Abstract

The concept of the End of Times holds a central position in various world religions, including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism. Eschatological themes such as cosmic cataclysms, the appearance of messianic figures, and the ultimate destruction of the world are common across these traditions. For instance, the anticipated arrival of Elijah before Jesus Christ in Christianity parallels the Islamic belief in the coming of Imam Al-Mahdī. Similarly, the apocalyptic nations of Gog and Magog, referred to as Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj in Islamic eschatology and as Koka and Vikoka in Hinduism, are frequently mentioned in religious scriptures and scholarly interpretations. Furthermore, symbols like the cross-clad savior, towering structures, and a final, cataclysmic earthquake appear consistently in eschatological discourse.

This paper aims to explore the convergence of eschatological beliefs across different religious traditions, highlighting both their theological underpinnings and shared motifs. Through a comparative analysis of sacred texts and religious scholarship, this study sheds light on the universal aspects of apocalyptic expectations, emphasizing their historical and doctrinal significance.

Keywords:

Eschatology, End of Times, Messianic Beliefs, Gog and Magog, Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj, Koka and Vikoka, Imam Al-Mahdī, Religious Convergence, Apocalyptic Prophecies, Theological Parallels.

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Introduction

The End of Times, maybe a discussion pitting one dominant religion against another but if we look closely through the levels of depth and breadth of the eschatological scholarship of dominant religions of the world like Christianity, Islam, Judaism or Hinduism. We may find that they are heavily dependent on each other to know the unknown. This paper asserts that waiting arrival of doomsday may be one of the unifying forces of all religions of the world.

One of the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad says that at the end of times the housing and living structure will raise vertically towards the sky (skyscrapers) instead of horizontally, and men will cloth themselves like women (Musannaf ibn Abi Shaybah, Hadith: 14306). Interestingly a similar anecdote can be found in 19th century Christian works of St. Nilus of Mount Athos who saw cross dressing as an apocalyptic sign.

“When the earth will be trembled with its quake,” begins the Quranic Ayat (99:1-3) foretelling the signs of the last days on earth, “and the earth will bring forth its burdens, And the man will say, what has happened to it?” A mighty earthquake would be a signal of the coming of doomsday. A similar injunction can be found in Rev 16: 18

And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. (Rev 16: 18).

Another sign is *rapture* which is an eschatological concept held by some Christians, forming a part of evangelicalism Christianity mostly in US. It will be end of the world occurrence when all Christian believers who are alive, along with resurrected believers, will rise “in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.” The Bible states

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore, be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the son of man cometh (Matthew. 24:40-4).

Similarly, there is a hadith, which according to some interpreters is similar to Christian concept of rapture.

Then Allah would send cold wind from the side of Syria that none would survive upon the earth having a speck of good in him or faith in him but he would die, so much so that even if some amongst you were to enter the innermost part of the mountain, this wind would reach that place also and that would cause his death. (Sahih Muslim, Book 41, Number 7023)

In the Christian eschatology it is mentioned that “Elias the Tishbite shall come; the Jews shall believe; Antichrist shall persecute; Christ shall judge; the dead shall rise; the good and the wicked shall be separated; the world shall be burned and renewed”. Martin Lings in his work *The Eleventh Hour* mentions the judeo-christian hopes of an Eliatic arrival, 'Elias shall truly first come and restore all things,' before the second coming of Jesus Christ. He believes that there are several mentions of a restorer – al Mahdi in Islam, and he correlates that Mahdi of Islam to Elias of Christianity (Lings, 1987, p. 96).

According to Joel 3:12, the events of the last day or the judgment day will happen around jehoshaphat (yehoshafat in Hebrew) that is literally translated to ‘God has judged.’ Jehoshaphat is a narrow trough lying within the bounds of Temple Mount (Al Haram Al sharif) and the Mount of Olives. While in the Muslim eschatology it will be the ground around mount Arafat (Jabl Al Rahm) where everyone will be summoned on the Day of Judgment. Both religions narrate a similar happening and terrain.

“O the two horned King! Gog and Magog are mischievous, they come pillaging our lands, and loot and plunder, please save our tribes from them,” with the plea of destitute people starts the story of Gog and Magog. They were called Yajuj and Majuj in Quran, forewarned

about Gog, the land of Magog in Bible, discussed in length in Ezekiel; as Koka and Vikoka, two brothers in Sri Kalki Purana, and two giant statues standing outside London guildhall for hundreds of years. The domain of Gog and Magog to put in words of Will Noble has been increasingly chaotic, and "bewildering." Suffice to say that the stories and myths regarding Gog and Magog emerge from all kinds of folklore and religious sermons of various countries, religions and eras — as people, giants, countries, armies and various other entities. In any space and time of human history, people have always wanted a piece of “— or was at least scared witless by — Gog and Magog (Noble, 2016).”

From the ruthless consorts of the Anti-Christ himself, to whom the world will be beleaguered, to merely plutonium and neptunium, the identity of Gog and Magog is a real treat for readers of eschatological studies. But they have been a symbolic figure in the world’s politics as well.

“On the one side is Gog, and on the other Magog. But be careful, my Lord Mayor, when you put them back to keep them from colliding with each other, for if that happens, both Gog and Magog would be smashed to atoms and we would all have to begin all over again — and begin from the bottom of the pit.”

Winston Churchill at a speech at Guildhall London, 1951; commented about Gog and Magog’s resurrection, the two statues that had been there since 1554, and were destroyed when Hitler bombed London during World War II. After the gratitude, Churchill commented “that World politics, like the History of Gog and Magog, are very confused and much disputed”. And he went on to equate Gog and Magog to Russia and its Communists allies and US and its allied western democracies (Gilbert, 2013).

The Lord Mayor’s show describes them as the two remaining giants, descendants of thirty-three notorious daughters of the Roman Ruler Diocletian. Similar to these there are two brothers in Hindu mythology that fulfill the description of Gog and Magog, Koka and Vikoka.

Surrounded by His army and invoking many celestial weapons, Lord Kalki fought with Koka and Vikoka, these two brothers were the foremost among the demons, they were always intoxicated, and they were very expert fighters. They were like two halves of one body, exceedingly powerful, and a cause of great fear for the demigods. Their bodies were as hard as thunderbolts and thus impervious to weapons. They had been engaged in conquering all directions. When they fought together, they were so formidable that they could defeat even death personified. Surrounded by powerful soldiers, they fought with clubs in their hands. In the battle between Lord Kalki and the two brothers, Koka and Vikoka, the leaders of both armies fought fiercely (Sri Kalki Purana, Chapter twenty, Text 43-49 (Das, 2006)).

Later on, there is a description of how Lord Kalki severs the head of one brother but that re-join again with the gaze of another brother. So, on behest of Brahma, Lord Kalki unmounts and kills them both with his bare hands. Similarly, in the mythical world of London’s Lord Mayor; Brutus, the great-grandson of Aeneas came to now named Britain and took with him his best combatant Corineus, who fought and ultimately threw the leader of giant’s brood, —that were terrorizing the England long before, —from a height killing him. The giant killed was Gog Magog and the rock from where he hurled away was called Langnagog or ‘The Giants Leap’ (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica , 1998).

The description of Gog and Magog come in Bible Revelation 20: 1-10, and Ezekiel 38: 1-23, Ezekiel 39: 1-29. These two texts assert that Gog and Magog are accomplices of Satan and Antichrist who will come after a thousand-year reign of Christ, and will create anarchy and a setting for the end of times on Earth.

And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, *Gog and Magog*, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved

city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Revelation 20:7-10)⁴.

Old Russian King was used to be called Magog, Tubal is a place in Siberia, old Biblical interpretations associated Gog and Magog with Russia. “Sheba, southern Arabia. Dedan, central Arabia, although some identify it as Rhodes. Tarshish, Tartessos in Spain (Berlin, Brettler, & Fishbane, 2004)”.

Sheba and Deedan according to the lampstand, –a Theo-political Australian commentator of Bible –is the region of Middle East that aligns with the merchants of Tarshish. And according to prophecy will work for the state of Israel against the impeding Russian (Gog’s) adventure. So, when in Saudi Arabia, in 2016, Northern Thunder, a joint military operation in which some twenty countries including UAE, Senegal, Jordan, Sudan, Kuwait, Bahrain, Maldives, Oman, Pakistan etc., participated; the joint effort was seen by lampstand as defiance to Russia and its under-dogs Iran and Syria.

The interpretations of Bibles’ Gog and Magog change with the ever altering geo political situation of the world. In a post 1925 Christian interpretation of Bible, Tubal became Turkey from Russia.

But not everyone is of the opinion that Gog and Magog are Russia, Paul F. Beacham, thinks that it might be a possibility that Gog and Magog might symbolically denote any Gentile nation that will rebel against Jesus Christ at the end of kingdom-age.” Beacham later added that Gog and Magog might be any nation that will be lured by Satan to work against people of God at the end of millennium. Dr Wesley Myland thought that Gog Magog will be the people among Christians deceived by Satan.

According to Alicia F. Jackson, the Christian dispensational eschatology always gave a justification for violence through biblical references and the need to equate Russia with Gog came from that.

According to Tanakh, The Jewish Study Bible, Ezekiel’s oracles against Gog, ruler from the land of Magog, are the eschatological account of Israel’s ultimate win, against the nations that will threaten Israel with the help of God.

The earlier conjunctions mentioned in the Ezekiel assert Gog as the command of different nations that will fight against the Israel, but will be eventually defeated reinforcing the notion that “Zion is an invincible fortress.”

As has been the case of Jewish and Christian interpreters, the Islamic interpretations of Gog and Magog align them as the other. Muhammad Ali believes that Gog and Magog like the difference of ‘ma’ will be the Slavic and Germanic races (Ali, 1990). Imran N Hosein goes to the extent of outlining them as the Khazaria Jews originating from 10th century Khazaria kingdom situated between the Caspian Sea and the Dead Sea (Hosein, 2009).

Coincidentally some Yiddish sources, mentions coming of Red Jews who live beyond the Sambatyan River, equating them to apocalyptic Gog and Magog, who were enclosed between some walls by Alexander the great. Further sources assert them to be from the ten lost tribes of Jews. The lost tribes according to old torah sources, went beyond the Sambatyan River thousands of years ago and are lost up till now (Voß, 2012). Interestingly, the same Khazaria that Imran N Hosein equate as Gog and Magog are called ‘the thirteenth tribe,’ by Arthur Koestler in his book by the same name. The book asserted that Khazaria was a bustling kingdom from 7th to 13th century, where his Jewish converts had a political dominance over the region. After the collapse these same Jews migrated towards Rhineland converting into Ashkenazi Jews, and forming the Yiddish Language (Koestler, 1999)

⁴ All biblical references from www.bible.com

The thirteenth Tribe was the book that started the speculations on the Khazaria equation and startled the world as well. The book asserted that the Ashkenazik Jews are descendants of Khazaria Jews, Shlomo Sand in *The invention of the Jewish People*, says that “while the Khazars scared off the Israeli historians, not one of whom has published a single paper on the subject, Koestler's Thirteenth Tribe annoyed and provoked angry responses. Hebrew readers had no access to the book itself for many years, learning about it only through the venomous denunciations (Sand, 2020, p. 238)”.

Writing in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Chronicle of Higher Education* editor Evan Goldstein states "Sand suggests that those who attacked Koestler's book did so not because it lacked merit, but because the critics were cowards and ideologues.

'No one wants to go looking under stones when venomous scorpions might be lurking beneath them, waiting to attack the self-image of the existing ethnos and its territorial ambitions.'"

The eschatological dependency of different religions on each other is evident through the case of Gog and Magog and the Wall.

According to encyclopedia Britannica Gog and Magog are linked with the traditions relating to the Alexander's Gate, the lore continues that Alexander the Great, used his power to incarcerate these uncouth and vicious nations till the end of time.

Similar is the legend perceived through readings of Quran that mentions a certain Dhul Qarnain who built a wall against Gog and Magog, although initially Dhul Qarnain in Islamic scholarship was also considered Alexander the Great but later in-depth studies found him to be King Cyrus of Persia.

The reason for such earlier interpretations could be a Syriac influences, namely the Christian liturgical texts of seventh century AD like Apocalypse of Pseudo Methodius, which was written in Syria by a Christian monk of a Monophysite community at Singara, near Mosul. The treatise was an attempt to remind his fellow Christians, that the rise of Muslims (sons of Ishmael, his words), will be over in the same manner they came, abruptly. And Muslims are not the apocalyptic “unclean nations” which are to come before the end of times and second coming of Jesus.

The actual forerunners before the End of Days will be Gog and Magog who will lead other ‘unclean nations,’ and march on to trample the whole world from North. But will be annihilated in an instant by one of the God's commanders (Apoc. 13.17-21).

It was mentioned in this Syriac text that the Alexander of Macedon while conquering the lands towards East, confronted these unclean nations. The habits and lifestyle of Gog and Magog were hideous, ugly and foul in looks, and eaters of unclean animals, corpses, and aborted fetuses. Disgusted, Alexander decided to stop them from fouling the earth in general and the Holy Land in particular. Alexander pushed them all into the inescapable lands beyond the North, and prayed God to pull up mountains over them, which was answered. He later fixed a huge bronze gate in the leftover gaps, so that the Gog and Magog are engaged till the doomsday (Apoc. 8.3-10).

The gate or wall of Alexander that kept the mischievous Gog and Magog in their place, remained a part of majority scholarship on this subject, being taken from Christian Scholarship and assimilated into Islamic works on Gog and Magog.

Similar is the case of Sallam al-Tardjuman, a language genius of Samara, he was ordered by Abbasi Caliph AlWathiq to search for the barrier of the two horned one. Sallam, studies suggest was a Khazari Jew, which would have enabled him to study the wall that contained the Gog and Magog at the other side. Sallam's description of Alexander's wall shows a resemblance with the Syriac texts of especially Pseudo Methodius. Sallam even travelled towards Central Asia, and discovered an iron wall “in the Caucasus, in the steppes north of the Tianshan Mountains and in the Tarim Basin. (Van Donzel & Schmidt, 2009)”

Surah Kahf of Al Quran also mentions Dhul Qarnain, a mighty leader, who enclosed the foul and mischievous Gog and Magog behind a copper-iron alloy wall. For the initial Muslim Scholarship like Sallam Ad Tarjuman's, Dhul Qarnain was believed to be Alexander of Macedonia. But the interpretation has changed.

Early Muslim scholarship attributed the wall of Gog and Magog to Alexander of Macedonia, but this changed by emerging researches of Indian Islamic scholars like Maulana Muhammad Ali, Abul Kalam Azad that suggested that the Dhul Qarnain of Surah AlKahf is the Persian King. Later a study conducted by Karl F. Geldner asserted that Dhul Qarnain was an honorary title used to praise Cyrus the great. It was later ascertained by Maulana Maudodi as well.

Majid Daneshgar (2020) suggests that accepting Dhul qarnain as a Persian leader is "Persian-shi'tizing of Quran (p. 77)" and Muslim's answer to who was Dhul Qarnain depends upon their racial/sectarian prejudices. His claim itself falls flat on its face as he himself mentions scholars like Ali, Azad, and Maudodi –pioneers of Islamic scholarship of Dhul Qarnain is Cyrus. And all three of them were Sunnis. And Cyrus the great was a king, more than a century before the advent of Shiite Islam and his dominion was far greater than what Iran is today.

Taking the majority view that Dhul qarnain was the Achaemenid-Persian king Cyrus the great.

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