

Armageddon

04/27/2014

Hymns: 1 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
Psalm 2

27 To God Be the Glory 31 Victory in Jesus

Armageddon. What does that word mean to you?

A Google Internet search of the word *Armageddon* turns up nearly **nine million** matches. You'll be happy to know that today we're **not** going to investigate each of them.

Can anyone guess what appears at the top of Google's list? It's a reference to the 1998 movie entitled *Armageddon* that depicts an **end-of-the-world scenario** where the earth is threatened by an asteroid the size of Texas heading on a collision-course with our planet **in** just eighteen days.

Also, high on the Internet search list are these definitions from Webster's Dictionary:

1. the site or time of a **final** and conclusive **battle** between the forces of **good and evil**
2. usually **vast decisive conflict** or confrontation

And from a **Bible answers** website called *Got Questions* we have this description:

Today, the Jezreel Valley is a green fertile plain, covered with fields of wheat, cotton, sunflowers and corn, as well as great grazing tracts for multitudes of sheep and cattle. Because of its location in the same valley as Megiddo, Jezreel is considered to be a likely spot for the future battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16-21). In fact, the Valley of Megiddo is also called the Valley of Jezreel.

Armageddon is located in northern Israel just below Nazareth of Galilee and stretches from the shores of the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan river. It's about 200 miles long and ten miles wide.

There's a similar word that's also used in this context. It's the the word *apocalypse*. Does anyone know the meaning of that term? We don't want to confuse the two. *Apocalypse* is a transliteration of a Greek word that simply means *unveiling* or *laying bare*. It appears in Revelation 1:1 and is translated *Revelation*. Here's the verse:

[1] The Revelation [apocalypse] of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; ...

Review

The last time we got together, we studied another battle. That one was won by Gideon through the power of the Lord. Israel was under the **judgment** of the Lord. The Lord unleashed **wave after wave** of **invasion** by **innumerable** Midianites. After **seven years** of **famine, destruction, and sorrow**, Gideon was **chosen by God** to lead the Israelites to **defeat the invading armies**.

The Lord reduced his troop count to just 300 men – making them hopelessly outnumbered. They approached the invading armies from **above** the Valley of Jezreel at night with **lights** in pitchers and **trumpets**. Together they **broke the pitchers** to reveal the lights, blew their trumpets, and **shouted** “The **sword of the Lord** and of Gideon.” Then the Lord had the **enemy soldiers kill each other**.

That study sparked the topic for today since Gideon's battle took place in the same area where the Battle of Armageddon will take place. As we proceed with this study, try to keep alert to the symbols from the battle of Gideon and see how they might correlate with what we learn about the coming battle.

The War

Let's get started by looking at how Billy Graham described this great battle to come:

The Bible plainly forecasts the coming of yet another great war. It will be a war to eclipse anything the world has ever seen. It will embrace most of the nations of the world; and its focal point will be in the Middle East, where the armies of the world will some day deploy themselves, centering at Mount Megiddo. This great war has been called the battle of Armageddon. In the midst of this terrifying war that could destroy civilization the Lord Jesus Christ will return to this earth in glory and power to judge the nations of the world and set up His own glorious kingdom.

The scripture speaks of both a war and a final battle. This final battle culminates a **seven-year** period of trouble called the Tribulation. The Prophet Jeremiah speaks of that time.

In Jeremiah chapter 30, verses 1 through 11, the Bible says that the Lord will bring the nation of Israel back to the Promised Land. It says that the Lord will judge the nations and destroy them. It also says that the Lord will judge and punish His people for turning from Him but will not destroy them.

*Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even **the time of Jacob's trouble**; but he shall be saved out of it (Jeremiah 30:7).*

There is a **terrible time** coming on the earth when **God will judge** his people Israel and the nations that defy him. You may recall that the Lord changed the devious Jacob's name to the more beloved name *Israel*. It's interesting to note, as in this reference, He chooses the name *Jacob* when He refers to His wayward people.

Daniel chapter 9 reveals exactly when the Messiah would be killed. (We celebrated His death and resurrection last Sunday.) Daniel then gives the timing associated with this future time of trouble called the Tribulation. The one-world leader, called the Antichrist, will come on the scene and make a peace covenant with Israel for **seven years**. In the middle of that time, he will stop the Jews from their worship. This will usher in the three-and-a-half-year period known as the Great Tribulation.

From Matthew 24:8, we learn that the first half of this tribulation period is called the “beginning of sorrows:”

*[7] For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be **famines**, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.*

*[8] All these are the **beginning of sorrows**.*

Then Matthew 24 goes on to describe the second half called the Great Tribulation:

[15] When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place [he is called the Beast and Antichrist], ...

[16] Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:...

*[21] For then shall be **great tribulation**, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, **no, nor ever shall be**.*

[22] And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

With that background, we'll now embark on a whirlwind tour of the highlights of these events found in the Book of Revelation which describes the 19 cataclysmic judgments **that** the Lord will pour out on the inhabitants of the earth during this time. They're called:

- Seal judgments,
- Trumpet judgments,
- Vial (or Bowl) judgments.

Today, we have time only to cover a few highlights.

Revelation 6

*[12] And I beheld when he had opened the sixth **seal**, and, lo, there was a **great earthquake**; and the **sun became black** ..., and the **moon became as blood**;*

*[13] And the **stars of heaven fell unto the earth**, ...*

*[14] And the **heaven departed as a scroll** when it is rolled together; and **every mountain and island were moved out of their places**.*

Revelation chapter 9 describes two **hellish** trumpet judgments as demons, formerly bound, are released to **wreck havoc** on the godless inhabitants of the earth. It refers to an army of two hundred million under their control, that will annihilate **one third** of the remaining population of the earth with:

- Fire
- Smoke
- Brimstone

*[20] And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues **yet repented not** of the works of their hands, that they should **not** worship*

*devils, and
idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood:
which neither can
see,
nor hear,
nor walk:*

*[21] Neither repented they of their
murders, nor of their
sorceries, nor of their
fornication, nor of their
thefts.*

Does this sound familiar? Just as Pharaoh of Egypt hardened his heart in the face of God's escalating judgments, so to the nations of this time will harden their hearts and **defy** the living and true God.

Revelation 14

*[14] And I looked, and **behold** a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having **on** his head a golden crown, and **in** his hand a sharp sickle.*

*[19] And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great **winepress of the wrath of God.***

*[20] ... and **blood came out** ..., even **unto the horse bridles**, by the space of [200 miles].*

Revelation 16

*[12] And the sixth angel poured out his **vial** upon the **great river Euphrates**; and the water thereof **was dried up**,*

This will leave an unrestricted path for invading armies from the east.

*[16] And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue **Armageddon.***

Revelation 19

*[11] And I saw heaven opened, and behold **a white horse**; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth*

judge and

make war.

*[12] His eyes were as a flame of fire, and **on** his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.*

*[13] And he was clothed with **a vesture dipped in blood**: and his name is called **The Word of God.***

[14] *And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.*

Will there be animals in heaven? Apparently so.

[15] *And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations:*

Notice he defeats the nations with the sword of His word.

and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

[16] *And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

[17] *And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;*

[18] *That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.*

[19] *And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.*

[20] *And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.*

So there we have it. The coming Battle of Armageddon, won by the Lord, that ushers in the thousand-year reign of Christ.

Now, let's quickly look at the symbols in Gideon's battle and see how they might relate to the battle we just reviewed:

1. Where was the battle of Gideon held? Valley of Jezreel: also called Armageddon
2. How long were the Israelites under the judgment before Gideon's victory? Seven years
3. Who was present in each story? Gideon encountered the pre-incarnate Christ. While He was first referred to as the *angel of the Lord*, Gideon soon realized that it was the Lord (Jesus Christ) Himself.
4. What did Israel's judgment during those seven years include? Invasion, famine, trouble, and sorrow
5. How large was the invading army? Innumerable and overwhelming
6. What was broken? A pitcher – Our bodies are called **vessels** of clay in II Corinthians 4:7. Jesus referred to His body broken for you I Corinthians 11:24. In Psalm 2:9 we heard read today that “thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”
7. What was inside? A light – Jesus is the **light** John 8:12. And beyond that, He *the light* will appear suddenly from above – just as in the story of Gideon.
8. What instrument was blown? A trumpet – Revelation 1:10 describes Jesus as having a voice like trumpet.

9. What sparked the victory? A shout
10. What battle instrument was used? In both cases, it was the sword of the Lord which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12).

Was the Battle of Gideon a foreshadowing of the Battle of Armageddon? While the correlations are many and to me compelling, I'll leave that decision up to you. At the very least, it's interesting and enlightening.

Today, Iran threatens to annihilate Israel and is busy developing nuclear technology seemingly to that end. Most recently, Russia is on the march – methodically working to regain satellite countries that it lost over twenty years ago with the fall of the Soviet Union. We don't know when, but we do know Armageddon is coming.

The good news is those of us who know the Lord can rest assured that we will **not** face God's wrath. In I Thessalonians 5:9 the Bible says speaking of Christians:

“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,”

Jesus Christ is our Savior, not our opponent. We believe Christians will be taken home to be with their Lord before any of this happens. While we will be spared from the wrath of this time of tribulation and great battle, we still face personal struggles **of** all sorts that come with living in a fallen world.

Application

In my younger years, it was my privilege to know a pastor who was a missionary to the Jarai people in Vietnam for seventeen years during the Vietnam War. Before he left into that fearsome battleground of the '60s and '70s, he asked the Lord for a verse of scripture to take with him. Here's the verse he claimed:

Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. (Isaiah 8:13)

There is none greater than the Lord. He is above and before all things. He is the one upon whom we can depend. With the Lord on our side, we need not fear any battle. With the power of His word, He defeats the enemy. The Apostle Paul put it this way:

...If God be for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31)
The answer of course is no one.

Benediction

*Now unto the King eternal,
immortal,
invisible,
the only wise God,
be honour and glory*

for ever and ever. Amen. (I Timothy 1:17)

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