

Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

Orcutt Christian Church

A Grace Driven Church for Grace Needing People!

Biblical Prophecy & End Times **Are We Heading For Armageddon?**

Revelation 16:12-16; 19:19-21

March 1, 2020

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Saturday 2/29: Clean Up: Valerie Gellene

- 1 🎵 **Jesus is coming again 753**
- 2 🎵 **Crown Him with many crowns [All] 45**
- 3 🎵 **Since I have been redeemed [All] 515**
- 4 🎵 **Doxology**
- 5 🎵 **O for a thousand tongues to sing [All] 21**
- 6 🎵 **Come Thou almighty King [All] 8**
- 7 🎵 **Find Us Faithful [Once] 456**

Revelation 16:12-16 (ESV)

12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east. 13 And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. 14 For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. 15 (“Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!”) 16 And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

Revelation 19:19-21 (ESV)

19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. **20** And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. **21** And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh. .

Did you ever think how the media would announce the end of the world:

Ladies' Home Journal:

"Lose 10 Pounds by Judgment Day with Our New Armageddon Diet!"

Fortune Magazine:

"Ten Ways You Can Profit from the Apocalypse."

Sports Illustrated:

"Game's Over!"

Armageddon!

What's in the word?

Fear – anxiety – terror – and theological misinformation.

The word itself means “hill of Megiddo.”

Megiddo was an ancient hilltop fortress overlooking the Jezreel Valley. In northern Galilee of the state of Israel, Megiddo and the Jezreel Valley is the world's most contested piece of territory.

It's known as the FIELD OF BLOOD, because over the past 4,000 years more battles have been fought there than in any one other place on earth.

Thutmose III was the sixth pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty.

Pharaoh Thutmose III lived about 500 years after Abraham.

He left to antiquity his idea that whoever controlled Megiddo controlled the world, and possession of Megiddo is worth a thousand cities.

King Saul and his two sons were killed in battle at Megiddo.

Megiddo controlled a narrow strategic stretch of road called the **Via Maris**, “the Way of the Sea,” a major international highway in the ancient world.

This road stretched from Egypt in the south to Babylon in Mesopotamia, linking the major empires and trade routes of the day.

Megiddo’s position on this highway made it a prime mercantile city. Whoever controlled Megiddo controlled access to trade all along this road.

Control of Megiddo was crucial to controlling any regional empire. Megiddo was a choke point, therefore, for the empires of the ancient world.

And, Megiddo is still a choke point for those who follow the Dispensation theory of John Nelson Darby and Cyrus Ingersoll Scofield. They believe that the land of Israel and the Jewish people have a very central role in the last days and the second coming of Jesus, and the world as we know it will end with a war fought at Megiddo.

Today, the valley is home to a patchwork quilt of farms, cities, and the Ramat David Israeli Air Force Base.

I. “**Turn Off. Tune Out. Drop Out.**”

Why do I say this?

Notice those quote marks.

It's because Darby and Scofield and their ardent followers adopted a self-imposed “**turn off, tune out, and drop out**” philosophy of life they said was found in the Bible.

Anything that happens before the Battle of Armageddon is in a parenthesis in God's prophetic plan, and is simply irrelevant.

Francis William Newman, the brother of Cardinal John Henry Newman was the exact opposite of his famous brother.

Francis Newman wrote in his book “Phases of Faith: Passages from the History of my Creed,” that even the study of medicine, mathematics, art, music, philosophy, and the sciences were useless studies in the face of the imminent return of Christ.

John MacArthur, a Dispensationalist, maintains “reclaiming the culture is a pointless, futile exercise.”

Until Dispensationalism came on the scene in the 19th century, the Christian church infused the world with the light of the gospel, and its call for the redemption of sinners and their sin-stained world.

But, think about Matthew 24, where Jesus prophesies the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the world. We know that Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD.

Jesus gives His fellow Judaeans fair warning when He tells them **Matthew 24:16 (ESV)**

16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

And, of the end of the world, He says

Matthew 24:36 (ESV)

36 “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.

Now, it is a fact that when the Roman Army approached Judea, those who understood Jesus' warning fled the city, and there was a mass exodus from Jerusalem.

The sad fact is that Dispensationalists are so focused on Israel being restored to the Land of Judea, they are misdirecting their propaganda. The Dispensationalists are not warning the Israelies about the coming holocaust, and instead encouraging them to return to reclaim the land. They are encouraging Israelies to return to what the Bible actually says will be a holocaust.

In January, the National Association of Evangelicals did a Leaders Survey which indicated that

65 percent identify with premillennial theology,

13 percent with amillennial and

4 percent with postmillennial.

17 percent responded “other.”

In at least four books, Hal Lindsey stated that God has foreordained that we fight a nuclear “Armageddon.”

What is the impact of the “**turn off, tune out, and drop out**” theology? Today millions of Christians sit back and watch the world disintegrate around them as they wait, and wait, and wait.

II. Where Will The Battle of Armageddon Take Place?

Dispensationalists say the end-time Battle of Armageddon will be fought at Armageddon.

Armageddon means the “hill of Megiddo,” the hilltop fortress

Hal Lindsey stated that not only has God has foreordained that America fight a nuclear, Christians should welcome it, and pray that it happens. Jimmy Bakker insists that a nuclear must be fought to bring on “the final manifestation of Jesus Christ.”

There are many, if not most, Dispensationalists who maintain that scripture foretells an end time war between the USA and the USSR.

And, the Bible is very clear there will be war.

Revelation 19:19 (ESV)

19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army.

So, Yes, such a battle is indeed coming, but it has little to do with what most people have been led to expect.

We spent several months studying the Book of Revelation.

We got half way through the book when we completed Chapter 11.

So just as a refresher, you remember that John wrote Revelation using signs and symbols and metaphors, and with pictures and poetry.

And, yes, John mentions Armageddon, but it is not about the modern nation of Israel, nor does it take place on the plains of Megiddo.

John's reference to Armageddon is instead connected to the final eschatological battle between Christ and the dragon, that day when Satan turns his full wrath upon the church, only to find himself crushed by Jesus Christ and cast into the lake of fire.

We never got into that section of Revelation which runs from chapter 12-14 and which includes the account of the woman (Israel), the dragon (Satan), the beast (the collective landdwellers), the false prophet (who promotes worship of the Satan), the 144,000 (the church), the three angels who announce God's judgment to the world, and the Son of Man, who stands triumphantly in the midst of his people on the heavenly Mount Zion.

And you remember that John wrote seven cycles that led us to see in more and more dramatic images the conflict between Satan and the church.

The cycles found in Revelation 8-11 is more intense than the seal judgments, and culminates with the return of Jesus Christ at the seventh trumpet, when the city of man—Babylon the Great—is destroyed, just as Jericho, which blocked Israel's entrance into the promised land, was destroyed in the days of Joshua.

John is setting forth what will happen to the earth and its unbelieving inhabitants when Jesus Christ comes again at the end of the age, to judge the world, raise the dead and make all things new.

No one or no thing will escape.

God's wrath against sin and unbelief will be complete.

As we turn to our text in Revelation 16:1-21, there are two main features to notice.

The **first** thing to notice is the way in which these judgments echo the judgments which came upon Egypt and the wicked Pharaoh.

The **second** thing to notice is the great intensity of these judgments which far surpasses anything we have seen in Revelation so far.

And John repeatedly makes the point that God's will is being done. But as a result of these judgments, God's will one day will be done upon the earth.

But there is something very frightening about this cycle, for once the bowls of judgment have been poured out upon the earth, God's wrath will be complete, it will extend to **all the earth** and all of its inhabitants.

This, of course, means that the return of Jesus Christ is the day of final judgment, a point which is a problem for premillennarians, who believe that the final judgment does not occur until the thousand years are over.

John says

Revelation 16:1 (ESV)

1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

The loud voice comes from the temple, indicating that everything which is about to happen will take place according to God's plans and instruction.

And remember those who have been crying out to God for justice, saying "how long O Lord?"

Their prayers are now to be answered.

The time has come for God to pour out his wrath upon all those who reject the gospel of Jesus Christ, who persecute his church, and who defile the heavens and the earth with their idolatry.

We see with the sixth bowl that Satan is going out to deceive the nations, and sends demonic forces to deceive the kings of the earth, who then assemble themselves for war with the Spiritual Israel, the church, and the Spiritual Jerusalem where the saints of God are assembled.

Now remember that **God seals those who are His** and protects them from His wrath.

But those who have taken the Mark of the Beast will find their master now powerless to protect them.

Now the mark of the beast not only fails to protect those who serve the dragon, it actually identifies them as objects of God's wrath.

And all those bearing the number of man—666—will suffer beyond measure.

God's people are protected from his wrath, while those who serve the dragon curse God, refuse to repent or give God glory, despite the ferocity of his judgment.

So deep are the effects of sin upon the human heart, so thoroughly have the beast and the false prophets deceived the world's inhabitants that they curse their creator even while his judgment is being poured out upon them.

So devoted to their master they continue to curse God and refuse to repent.

With the coming of the sixth bowl judgment, the scene in verse 12 now shifts from various judgments upon the earth and its inhabitants, to the final eschatological battle in which God will crush all of his enemies.

This the great battle of Armageddon.

Notice

Revelation 16:12 (ESV)

12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east.

The Euphrates River has been a symbolic barrier to attacks from the east.

What's out there in the east?

John sees 200 million mounted troops.

Revelation 9:16 (ESV)

16 The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number.

And now the symbolic barrier of the Euphrates River is a dry river bed, and those 200 million mounted troops can march against God's people,

the church, where ever there are Christians who proclaim that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

The sixth bowl judgment depicts a massive escalation of this conflict. Recall that Israel's oppressors, Assyria and Babylon had lived beyond the Euphrates, the symbolic border of that place where Israel had been held in captivity.

But the image of the barrier imposed by the Euphrates being removed as a form of judgment is found throughout the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah.

When the Euphrates is dried up, it exposes Israel's captors to judgment themselves.

In Isaiah 41-46, we read of an invading army led by Cyrus, king of Persia, who defeats the Babylonians so that Israel is freed to return to her home in Palestine.

Isaiah says

Isaiah 44:26-28 (ESV)

26 who confirms the word of his servant and fulfills the counsel of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, 'She shall be inhabited,' and of the cities of Judah, 'They shall be built, and I will raise up their ruins'; **27** who says to the deep, 'Be dry; I will dry up your rivers'; **28** who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose'; saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'"

Note that Cyrus liberates Israel from her Babylonian captivity after God dries up the streams of Babylon—i.e., the Euphrates, so that the Persians can invade Babylon and defeat her.

Similarly, Jeremiah announces that God's judgment will come upon Babylon when God dries up her waters.

Now God symbolically dries up the water of the Euphrates to provide final deliverance for his people through the defeat of God's enemies.

With the symbolic barrier of the Euphrates removed, the enemies of God now rush to assault the church, only to find themselves totally defeated by the direct intervention of God.

Now look at Revelation 16:14.

The kings of the whole world have been deceived by the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, and are advancing on Spiritual Israel and Spiritual Jerusalem.

John is clear – this is spiritual warfare and the spirits of demons are acting like cheerleaders and PomPom girls.

And notice that the great battle occurs on the great day of God Almighty.

And notice that Jesus says

Revelation 16:15 (ESV)

15 (“Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!”)

The point is that once the barrier is removed, symbolized by the great river Euphrates, those who do the bidding of Satan gather for what they expect will be the final battle is the day when Jesus comes suddenly, like a thief.

Even as Satan deceives the kings of the earth, gathering them for what they think will be a victory over the kingdom of God, to their great chagrin, this day becomes the day of defeat.

But the kings of the earth will not repent, nor will they bow down to the Lamb.

Revelation 16:16 (ESV)

16 And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

Now while all the commentators who are Dispensationalist say this is Meggido, the reference to Armageddon, has nothing whatsoever to do with the plain of Meggido or to the war supposedly waged against the nation Israel at the end of the seven-year tribulation.

This Satanic warfare against Spiritual Israel and Spiritual Jerusalem.

And I refer you to last Lord's sermon that focused entirely on the fact that the Church is Spiritual Israel and dwells in Spiritual Jerusalem.

Armageddon is not a description of a literal military battle in which men in tanks and airplanes fight against God.

Instead, we have an apocalyptic image of the kings of the earth being gathered together by the dragon to wage war against Mount Zion, which is symbolic of the church of Jesus Christ.

John gives us this same scene from another perspective in
Revelation 19:19-21 (ESV)

19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. 20 And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. 21 And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

But, yes, the Dispensationalists are correct to think of Armageddon as the final and ultimate battle between Christ and his enemies.

But this battle has nothing to do with the plains of Meggido, the nation of Israel, or the armies of the world fighting against Christ.

John is giving us an apocalyptic vision of Satan's final assault upon the church, an assault which is crushed by Jesus Christ at his return to earth in judgment. On that day, says John, Satan and all his henchmen (the beast and the false prophet), along with the kings and nations who serve them, are thrown into the lake of fire.

This is judgment day, when God's wrath is completed.

Therefore, as God's people, who even now dwell in the spiritual Zion with Christ in our midst, we must remain ever vigilant.

We must not sleep.

We must stay awake, watching for the Lord's return.

For Jesus Christ will return like a thief and crush all his enemies and deliver his people from the whiles of Satan.

And with the saints in heaven, we cry out,

Revelation 16:7 (NASB)

7 "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

For a day is coming in which God's wrath will be poured out upon the whole world and all the enemies of Jesus Christ will receive their just desserts at the place called Armageddon.

Here's the thing.

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ and have complied with His terms of pardon, you are on the winning side.

However, if you have not complied with God's terms of pardon you are on the losing side.

You see, the choice is yours.

You don't have to stay on the losing side.

Prayer and Invitation