

ARMAGEDDON

THEN LASTING LIFE AND HAPPINESS

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THEN WORLD PEACE FOREVER

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AS THE great international struggle continues, and its cruel devastations increase, student of prophecy are properly alert in an effort to determine as nearly as possible just what phase of the "last-days" scenes we are now witnessing; and whether or not the "Armageddon of the Scriptures is yet taking place. This makes an interesting study, and the prophecies bearing upon the subject furnish much food for thought.

What is "Armageddon? Has it begun? When and how will it end? These are questions to which all Christians might well give careful and prayerful consideration, in view of the present nation-weakening conflict which threatens to engulf the whole world in its flames.

The term "Armageddon is of Hebrew origin, and is identified geographically and historically as the Hill of Megiddo, which means the "Mount of Destruction." The word appears only once in the Bible, and that is in our text-Re 16:16. The Hill of Megiddo occupied a very strategic position in the ancient Holy Land, commanding as it did an important pass into the hill country. The general locality of Megiddo was the great battle ground of Palestine. Here many of the important battles of Old Testament history were fought. Here Gideon and his three hundred routed and defeated the Midianites; here King Saul was defeated by the Philistines; here also King Ahab, and his wife Jezebel lived, and here Jezebel finally met a horrible death.

The preponderance of Scriptural testimony indicated that the term "Armageddon is used in Revelation symbolically and is not intended primarily to identify any particular site, geographically, where the death struggle of a dying world is to take place. Babylon of the Old Testament was a location, but Babylon of Revelation is symbolic. Egypt of the Old Testament was a location, but Egypt of Revelation is symbolic. Jezebel of the Old Testament was a literal, wicked woman, but Jezebel of Revelation is a symbolic woman. Obviously, then, if we interpret the prophecies consistently, we must conclude that while Megiddo of the Old Testament was a location, yet "Armageddon of Revelation is symbolic.

Each of the symbols used in Revelation (in fact, in the entire Bible) is employed by the Lord because of thoughts that are connected with it, either by its natural characteristics or historical associations. Thus for example, a goat, being a stubborn animal, is used by God to represent those who willfully oppose His will. " sheep, on the other hand, being

docile, easily led and dependent, is used to represent those who in full submission to the divine will gladly follow the Good Shepherd.

The prophecies in which are depicted the troublous scenes with which this present evil world comes to an end employ a great variety of symbols such as storms, clouds, fire, winds, darkness, earthquakes, floods, raging seas, etc. Each of these literal things possesses characteristics which makes it serve fittingly as a symbol of one or more of the realities of the prophetic "time of trouble" that is now being experienced by the world. It is in keeping with this aptness in the use of symbols that the Lord employs the term "Armageddon; His purpose being to thus call our attention to a certain aspect of the closing scenes of the age which otherwise we might easily overlook.

It is from the historical setting of "Armageddon that we learn its symbolic meaning. "S already noted, many of the important battles of Israel were fought on or near the Hill of Megiddo. Israel was God's nation, hence the Scriptures represent the Lord as directing the issue of Israel's battles. Many nations since that ancient time have claimed and believed that God was fighting with and for them, but in the case of ancient Israel it was actually so.

God did not always give them immediate victory, because in some cases, such as with King Saul, there were important lessons for that typical people to learn that could be learned only through defeat. Often Israel transgressed God's law. For this they were punished, sometimes by the armies of their enemies. But whether in victory or in defeat, God directed the issue. This is the important factor that comes to light in connection with the battles fought at Megiddo which has not been true in connection with the battles of other nations.

The Bible is not alone in its use of the historical setting of a battle-ground to convey a certain lesson. Today we do the same thing in our use of the term "Waterloo." When we say that someone meets his Waterloo there is no thought of location but merely of a defeat which the association of the original Waterloo immediately suggest to the reader. And now we have "Pearl Harbor" which has become symbolic of a sneak-attack by an unannounced enemy.

God Directions "Armageddon Issue

Evidently it is because God directs the issue in the final battle of the age, that "Armageddon is used as one of the symbols by which it is prophetically described. There are many other characteristics of this battle, and these are represented by other symbols, but the "Armageddon factor is a very prominent one, and to the Christian one of vital concern. It is indeed important to realize that the final outcome of the present distress of nations is not in the hands of selfish earthly rulers, but that the pattern of the world of tomorrow is that of the Kingdom of Christ. It is reassuring to know that during the next thousand years the nations are to

be governed within the framework of the Messianic Kingdom, and are not to be tyrannically subjected to the yoke of totalitarianism.

Rightful Ruler Takes Over

When Zedekiah, the last Jewish King was overthrown, God permitted the Gentiles, beginning with Babylon, to exercise dominion over the affairs of the world. The prophet then stated that this Gentile rulership would continue "until He comes whose right it is." Other prophecies indicate that this lease of power to the Gentiles was to extend over a period of 2520 years. It began in 606 B.C., hence would end in 1914 ".D.

The outbreak of the first World War in 1914 constitutes substantial proof that He whose right it is there took action against the kingdoms of this world. In Revelation 11:17,18, the transfer of earth's sovereignty, when the kingdoms of this world became the Kingdom of God, and of His Christ, is said to result, first of all, in the nations becoming angry. Here we are also told that this would take place in the day of the Lord's wrath.

Certainly the nations did become angry in 1914, and as a result of what began there, well nigh all of the hereditary rulers of Europe lost their thrones, the whole fabric of civilization was weakened. We mention these well-known facts in order to establish the point of time from which we may properly consider that "Michael," representing God, has been directing the overthrow of Satan's empire preparatory to the establishment of His own Kingdom of righteousness.

The period beginning in 1914, which is finally to culminate in the full establishment and manifestation of the Messianic Kingdom, is variously designated in the Scriptures as the "day of vengeance," the "day of the Lord," the "day of wrath," etc. {Zep 3:8 Joel 2:1 Psalms 110:5} The prophet declares that in this "day of His wrath" the Lord will "strike through kings." This indicates divine intervention in the rulership of earth. It is because the final issue of this present distressing period of transition is being divinely directed, that it is called the "day of the Lord," His "day of vengeance," etc.

Preliminary Skirmishes

Keeping in mind the particular symbolism of "Armageddon, namely, that of divine intervention and direction, it seems proper to think of the entire "time of trouble" which takes place during the day of the Lord's wrath as included in it. The climax of that trouble is referred to in Revelation 16:18 as a great "earthquake" such as was not since men were upon the earth. "n earthquake, in prophecy, symbolizes social revolution, and the indication is that man-made governments are to be overthrown in preparation for the Kingdom of the Lord.

Daniel's prophecy of the "time of trouble," like the Revelator's reference to the great "earthquake," declares it to be such as never was since there

was a nation. This indicates that the trouble of this whole period of the Lord's wrath upon the nations will crescendo to the "earthquake" phase which will be the climax of "Armageddon. Meanwhile, the preliminary skirmishes are being fought. Already, the Lord is, as the prophecies said He would do, "striking through kings" in this day of His wrath. Every phase of this day of His wrath. Every phase of this "last days" distress upon the nations has to do with the overthrow of Satan's empire. Note, for example, the prophecy of Isaiah 13:4-13. We quote:

"The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the Lord of hosts mistruth the host of the battle. They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, even the Lord, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land. Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: and they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.... Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger."

Note the manner in which the prophet links the "battle" to which the "Lord of hosts mistruth the host," with the "wrath of the Lord of hosts." Isaiah also shows that the period in which these events occur is the "day of the Lord," and explains that this "day" comes as a "destruction from the "almighty." In this prophecy the expression "travail," "shaking," "sorrows," "darkness," etc., are used, and doubtless this is one of the prophecies which guided Jesus and the apostles in their forecasts pertaining to the last days in which they, too, used these symbols. Clearly, the prophet reveals that all of these events and conditions are a part of the one great "battle" in which evil is dethroned, and the Kingdom of righteousness established in its place.

When we take this larger, more comprehensive view of all that is involved in the "Armageddon picture, then the historical background of the word takes on a more illuminating significance. While God directed the issues of the battles fought at Megiddo, the divine strategy was not always the same. In the case of the Midianites they were caused to turn on and destroy each other. In other instances God helped His people miraculously. It seems reasonable to conclude that in using "Armageddon as a symbol of the battle in which the forces of evil are defeated and the Kingdom of God established in their place, God intended that we should take note of this variety of ways He then fought

for His people, and from them glean lessons to guide us in the interpretation of the prophecies pertaining to the "last days."

Nation Against Nation

"Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom," Jesus declared, {Mt 24:7,8} in outlining the events that were to mark the end of the age. Isaiah declares, in the passage above quoted, that at the time the Lord "mistruth to the battle," "pangs and sorrow shall take hold of them." Jesus explained that nations rising against nations and kingdoms against kingdoms, plus also famines, pestilence and earthquakes, would be the "beginning of sorrows." This phase of the trouble is not the end of "Armageddon's sorrows, but it is the beginning, hence is definitely a part of "Armageddon.

In the 38th and 39th chapters of Ezekiel we have portrayed what are doubtless the closing scenes of "Armageddon. It is that phase of the struggle in which the ancient people of God, the Jews, have such a prominent part. In the last verse of the 38th chapter, and from the 21st to the 29th verses of the 39th chapter, it is made clear that in the final phase of the struggle God will reveal himself "in the eyes of many nation." The Lord further declares, "and I will set My glory among the heathen [Gentiles], and all the heathen shall see My judgment that I have executed, and My hand that I have laid upon them. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward."

The End of Sorrows

Obviously, when the eyes of the Gentiles are opened to the mighty power of God, exercised on behalf of Israel, and the Israelites themselves recognize the true source of their deliverance from their enemies, it means that God's victory over the kingdoms of this world is complete, hence that the sorrows of "Armageddon are over. This climax of the day of the Lord's wrath will find the Israelites firmly established in their own land, and ready, under divine guidance, to become the first to fall into line with the righteous laws of the new Kingdom.

In Jeremiah 30:7, this final phase of "Armageddon is described as the time of Jacob's trouble. "But," the prophet says, "he shall be delivered out of it." In verse three of this chapter we are informed that the time of its application is when the Lord "will bring again the captivity of Israel and Judah." This is a promise of Israel's return to divine favor, and their final restoration to the Holy Land. It is at the time when this great boon to Israel is due, and actually beginning (as we have seen it manifested in the rebuilding of Palestine within the last twenty years) that the final siege of persecution comes upon them, culminating in Jacob's trouble, from which they are delivered by intervention.

Another prophecy depicting Israel's part in the final phase of "Armageddon is that of Zechariah 14:1-3. Here it is said that the Lord

will go forth to fight against Israel's enemies as He did in the days of old. We have already seen that in the days of old the Lord used various methods in fighting against Israel's enemies. Evidently the same is to be true now.

In Ezekiel's description of the attack against Israel (Ezek. chapters 38 and 39) he quotes the Lord as saying, "I will call for a sword against him throughout all My mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone."

Here are enumerated many of the methods by which the Lord fought for His people "in the days of old." "Every man's sword shall be against his brother," as with the Midianites; and besides, there will be the more spectacular demonstrations of "pestilence," "great hailstones," "fire," and "brimstone." How much of this will have a literal fulfillment remains to be seen; but of this we can be certain, that when the Lord finally delivers Israel from the dilemma into which we can even now see the paganized nations maneuvering them, there will be no doubt as to who made possible the victory.

Thus it is apparent that from the very beginning of "Armageddon to the final end, when Israel is delivered, the Lord directs the issue. In the early stages of that struggle, however, the nations themselves are not aware of what is transpiring. It is not until the very climax of the struggle that the eyes of the nations are opened, and this occurs when they behold the miraculous deliverance of Israel.

We have briefly identified the beginning and end of "Armageddon, and have seen that in this beginning and ending of sorrows, two phases of the struggle are apparent. While these two phases of "Armageddon are in one sense widely separated from each other, yet they are very definitely related. For example, as a result of nations rising against nations and kingdoms against kingdoms in the year 1914, Palestine was wrested from the Turks, and the Jews were permitted to return there under the protection of the League of Nations, and to rebuild much of that ancient land. It will be in the attempt to wrest these gains from Israel, and to annihilate them entirely from being a factor in world affairs, that God will further and decisively show His hand in delivering them.

Additional Spasms of Travail

But within the framework of the "Armageddon picture, other phases of transition are prophesied, and these prophecies are now being fulfilled. Isaiah (Ch. 13:8) and St. Paul (1 Thessalonians 5:3) illustrate these phases of the struggle by calling them "pangs" or "spasms" of travail. These are fitting symbols indeed, for "Armageddon is a travail upon the nations which finally results in the birth of a new order-God's world of tomorrow.

For want of more adequate terminology we might speak of the spasms of trouble as being war, revolution, and anarchy. The prophecies indicate that the trouble is divided into three general stages, although the terms we have used do not fully describe all that is involved in "Armageddon." One of the prophecies in which the threefold nature of the "time of trouble" seems indicated is that of Daniel 2:34,35,45, where the image representing Gentile dominion is said to be (1) smitten, (2) ground to powder, and (3) blown away as chaff from the summer threshing floor.

However, to get the complete picture of all that is involved in the full overthrow of Satanic rulership as it has been represented in the kingdoms of this world, many prophecies need to be taken into consideration. The first assault against this citadel of evil, which began in 1914, resulted in the overthrow of nearly all of the hereditary rulers of the old world. These claimed to rule by divine right, and in their rulership they were either united with the Church, or else had the blessing and recognition of the Church.

This whole structure was terribly weakened as a result of the first World War. Nations there rose against nations to make an end of war and to make the world safe for democracy. But the world wasn't made safe from anything. It was made certain, however that further trouble would come, and it did come. Even before the first phase of the struggle was over, the second got under way. The revolutionary spirit seized hold upon Russia, and both the pre-1914 civil government as well as the Church's strangle hold upon the benighted people, were overthrown.

Revolution Continues

But the Russian Revolution, although probably the most outstanding in all history, was, nevertheless, but the beginning of a series of revolutions (earthquakes in divers places) that were to engulf one country after another. It was, indeed, the beginning of a revolutionary movement which today is headed up into what is now freely called a world revolution. It is a revolution in which, according to Herr Hitler, one world is struggling to overthrow another, though war in one of the means used.

Thus, on even a more gigantic scale than was true in 1914, the forces of Satan's empire are pitted against each other. Both sides, of course, hope to win, but both sides will lose. Neither side yet knows that the real world of the future is neither to be democratic nor totalitarian, but is to be the Kingdom of Christ. And this, after all, is what all right-thinking people desire. Bishop Miguel Deuteronomy Andrea of Buenos Aires, quotes President Roosevelt as saying: "The only aim worthy of mankind that can compensate for its sorrows is the speedy and world-wide establishment of the Kingdom of Christ among men, not only in word but in spirit and in fact."

The various individual revolutions have not always followed the same

pattern, except that they have represented the overthrow of the pre-1914 governments. Today, however, these varied revolutionary ideals and theories are gradually being blended in viewpoint and it is now generally recognized that the end of the war will find the governments of all nations controlled by increasing communistic influences.

In reality, therefore, what is sometimes called the second World War, is in reality also the spearhead of the world revolution phase of "Armageddon.

Religion Overthrown

In this world war-revolution by which the pre-1914 governments and ideologies are being overthrown, other important things are taking place. Religious influence in governments is now declining. Witness what has already occurred in Russia. When the spirit of revolution grips a people, they do not stop to pick and choose—they overthrow everything connected with the systems which they believe have been responsible for the evils they have suffered. So the Church in Russia was overthrown.

The Nazism of Germany is also largely pagan, and gives very little consideration to the Church. It is perhaps true, however, that Hitler would consider co-operating with the Pope in order to further his own selfish ambitions. Perhaps some temporary scheme of this kind may yet be evolved. Be that as it may, it is not difficult to see that if once Communism sweeps Europe both Catholic and Protestant religion will be virtually destroyed in all that territory. It is to this no doubt that Isaiah (Isaiah 13:13) and Jesus {Lu 21:25,26} and Peter {2Pe 3:10} refer in their references to the shaking and dissolving of the symbolic heavens—the powers of spiritual control. The pre-1914 order of things depended upon this religious control to help maintain the status quo of that civilization.

Already we can see the wide extent to which the powers of the heavens have been shaken. The leaders of what is left of civilization see this and to a considerable extent it is the cause of the fear that is now filling their hearts. From the human standpoint, there is adequate cause for this fear. The depraved and selfish instincts of fallen and oppressed humanity, when aroused against real and fancied ills, and without any religious restraints, will inflict terrible vengeance upon the institutions which they have been led to believe responsible for their privations and sufferings.

This darkening of the symbolic sun and moon (other symbolisms denoting much the same things as the shaking of the heavens) seems to be included in the revolutionary phase of "Armageddon. The destruction of Churchianity is a natural part of the social revolution in which the people, under the leadership of those who have risen from their own ranks, seek to make an end to all the elements of the pre-1914 world order.

To follow the logical trend of the present social revolution that is

gradually engulfing the world, it is not hard to see how the attempt will be made to cast all religion into the discard. It is this trend, apparently, that will have much to do with the final assault of the northern armies of continental Europe upon Israel. Here, they may conclude, is still another religious group that will need to be liquidated before the world can be happy. It will be in this attempt that they will meet their "Waterloo."

It is true, of course that God will permit fleshly Israel to pass through some very severe trials as "Armageddon's sorrows increase. But, the prophet assures us that God will not permit them to be destroyed entirely from the earth. On this point, the promise is, "For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished." - Jer 30:11. This promise to Israel shows that God, while permitting them to suffer as a further punishment for their sins, will, nevertheless, save a remnant of them. To these, other prophecies indicate, the Messiah will be revealed, and they will be the first to enter into and receive the blessings of the new Kingdom, the Kingdom of Christ.

Then will follow the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom. Then will come a thousand years of peace. The first World War was fought under the pretext that it would make an end of war. This hope proved false. However, God is directing the battle of "Armageddon in order that out of it will come lasting peace. It will be, in all blessed reality, the end of war.

Armageddon will be the means of "rebuking" the nations, and as a result of this rebuke, they will "beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." {Mic 4:1-4} What a happy outcome of the greatest struggle of all ages.

A Pure Message

In Revelation 16:13,14, we are told of "three unclean spirits" that wield an influence in gathering the nations unto the "battle of the great day of God "almighty." The clean, or holy spirit of the Bible, is the spirit of truth as it centers in the Gospel of Christ. Its characteristics are those of love, joy, peace, mercy, patience, etc. these "unclean" or unholy spirits are therefore manifestly unholy messages-propaganda, in our modern language-under the influence of which the nations are induced to war upon each other unto death.

But following "Armageddon, when the Lord shall have destroyed all the various systems of iniquity by the fire of His jealousy, He will then "turn to the people a pure language," or message. This message, the prophet declares, will result in all calling upon the name of the Lord to "serve Him with one consent." {Zep 3:8,9} By this means love will be caused to replace selfishness as a motive power in human affairs. "nd under the administration of that Kingdom of righteousness, all mankind, the rich and the poor, will find satisfaction and joy. And these blessings will be

everlasting, because all who obey the new Kingdom will have their health restored, and will, if they "Armageddon obedient, live forever.

Moreover, even the dead are to be raised in order that they too may enjoy the life-giving blessings that no conqueror has ever been able to give to his subjects but God can and will give them. It is in the knowledge of His ability and purpose to thus restore all who lose their lives in "Armageddon that we are able to see divine love and justice in the method His wisdom has chosen to overthrow. Satan's rule over the people.

This means that the millions who lose their lives in the struggle are, from God's standpoint, merely asleep. Divine power will awaken them in the morning of the new day. They will thus have an opportunity to see the final outcome of "Armageddon; and without doubt most of them will gladly take the oath of allegiance to the King of kings and Lord of lords, who then will be the King ruling from "sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." -Ps 72:1-13

Yes, all the dead are to be raised during that thousand years of the Messianic Kingdom, So that the suffering of mankind throughout all the ages will not have been in vain. It has been a hard experience, but the lessons to be learned therefrom will yet be of inestimable value, in that they will increase appreciation for the blessings of life to be dispensed by a God of love. Through this experience all mankind will learn the terrible results of disobeying divine law. By contrast, when the Kingdom blessings are showered upon them, they will learn of the divine goodness and their hearty response will be:

"Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." -Isa 25:6-9.