

## TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

### 408 - The Battle Of Armageddon

#### 1. Introduction

The kingdom of the Antichrist is viewed as holding the world in a grip of evil. Bibles are destroyed and banned. Believers are persecuted and killed. The world tips toward chaos and the judgments of God begin. As the power of evil grows, and hope in the world wanes, a final conflict will decide the fate of the world as the forces of good and evil gather for battle.

#### 2. The gathering darkness

In the minds of many Bible believers there seems to be the idea that God's plans are dependent to some degree on the actions of humans. To make that more complicated, there are some who see God and Satan as equal but opposite powers competing for the control of human consciousness. I don't believe either of those things are true and the scriptures, I believe, verify that fact. God has always done exactly what he intends and has achieved the precise results that were projected. While Satan appears to have a lot of power and influence, he isn't omnipotent as God is. A simple reading of the book of Job reveals that God is quite capable of restricting the Devil's abilities as seen in limitations the Lord imposed on what Satan could do to the patriarch.

Spiritually, history is seen by some as a tug of war between good and evil. Sometimes good prevails and things go well and other times evil has the upper hand and flourishes. A surprising point that takes some off guard is the fact that evil has always had a major stake in the minds and affairs of man, and God has always worked in the background to perform his will and ultimately save us. Today the absolute simplicity of the scriptures and the story of redemption is muddied by opinion, misinterpretation and outright misrepresentation. There are notable teachers, and theologians, who know exactly what the Bible teaches but ignore it in favor of their own ideas. None of that's new. As a matter of fact, it's the oldest story in the Bible next to creation. Adam and Eve ignored God's instructions and paid a price for their decision.

In this series I've discussed topics regarding ideas of what will happen at the end of time. I've explored several phases many believe will take place and shown that the Bible really doesn't teach that. These ideas aren't only incorrect, they create problems for all of the scriptures. The Bible is a connected book from beginning to end, but those connections fall apart when we manipulate them and change their meaning.

Is God dependent on the actions of humans, or, will God wait for humans to allow evil to grow to such a point that He'll send Christ to intervene. Most important is the question - will that intervention rely on a physical engagement with Earthly forces? In this lesson we'll discuss:

- a. The Premillennial concept of Armageddon
- b. Where the term Armageddon comes from

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- c. What the scriptures say about the battle of Armageddon
- d. The weapons of war
- e. The real battle & who wins

Let's take a look at each of these

### 3. The Premillennial concept of Armageddon

We'll take a look at the proof texts used to support the idea of the battle of Armageddon but we first need to summarize the details of what the belief involves. The idea is that the world will tend toward evil by abandoning any belief in God whatsoever. Those who do believe and try to follow the Lord will be persecuted, hunted down and killed. The Bible will be banned and copies of the scriptures will be collected and destroyed. Laws will be passed that make it illegal to read the Bible, worship or even pray. This will usher in a time of darkness and oppression that has never been seen before.

The Antichrist, the charismatic politically savvy spawn of Satan, will take control of world governments establishing the New World Order. Things will seem to go well for a while but atrocities against Bible believers and suppression of individuality in favor of unquestioning loyalty to the state will slowly cause the populace to question what's going on.

A goal of the Antichrist is to destroy Israel and Jerusalem. That will be site where Christ will ascend the throne of David and reign over all nations. To prevent that, a massive coalition of military forces will begin assembling around Israel for an assault on the future throne of the Messiah. Warfare ensues. Armies push through Palestine. Forces from Russia begin to descend and the Jews see destruction looming on the horizon. Other armies from the Middle East will assemble, cross the Euphrates river and head for the Holy Land. Jerusalem, surrounded by it's enemies prepares to fight it's greatest battle.

Forces from Egypt lead the surge of the multi-country army into Palestine. The battlefield is an area in the plain of Esdraelon near the ancient city of Megiddo. As armies engage, the clouds open, Christ and his angelic warriors descend, and the forces of the Antichrist are obliterated. The smoke clears, order is restored and Christ goes to Jerusalem to establish the kingdom of prophecy where he will reign for the next millennium.

That makes for a good story. Movies based on this belief are action packed adventures. But it's not factual, and will never happen. So, why then do so many accept it as fact and what's it really based on. The Bible seems to say that will take place, so who am I to argue with millions of believers? Let's take a look at what the Bible has to say.

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#### 4. Where the term Armageddon comes from

In order to understand some of the thinking behind the battle of Armageddon we need to understand the term itself and what it represents. Once we have that understanding we'll be in a better position to interpret what the scriptures have to say.

The term “**Armageddon**” is a compound of two words, Har-Magedon in Hebrew, which means “**mountain of Megiddo**”. The prefix “**Har**” means hill or mountain. The second part of the word contains the name Megiddo which is well known in the scriptures. Geographically the city of Megiddo was situated on a raised mound in the North central area of Palestine included in the territory of the tribe of Issachar. Megiddo isn't a mountain, nor is it situated on one. There are mountains to the North and West but Megiddo lies on a plain. This area was of strategic value to the Canaanites and others in the area as well as Israel. Solomon kept chariots at Megiddo to protect the North from attack. Around Megiddo are the plains of **Esdraelon** and **Jezreel**, all of which are associated with notable battles in the scriptures.

Megiddo itself is a name associated with a number of significant events. It was the site of the battle fought by Deborah and Barak against the army of the Canaanites as noted in the song of Deborah (**Judg 5.19**). This was the area where Gideon defeated the Midianites with a force of only 300 men (**Judg 6-7**). Ahaziah the king of Judah formed an alliance with Jehoram, or Joram, king of Israel against Jehu. As the armies met on the plain of Jezreel, Jehu killed Jehoram and Ahaziah fled in fear, but was struck in his chariot and died at Megiddo. As Pharaoh Necho marched to meet the Babylonians at Carchemish, Josiah, king of Judah went out to intercept him. Josiah was warned by God not to take this action, but he ignored the warning and received a fatal wound in the valley of Megiddo (**2 Chr 35.20-24**).

The name Megiddo as well as its strategic location and history became associated with battle, death and bloodshed. The name Megiddo would have been well known to the Jews of the first century and to anyone studying the scriptures. The appearance and reference to Megiddo in **Revelation** carries symbolic significance for this reason.

The name Har-Magedon, or Armageddon, is itself symbolic. There's no mountain of Megiddo, nor does Megiddo rest in or on the mountains. Based on that physical reality, it appears the term refers to the spiritual aspect of a coming conflict and not one that will take place on a physical plain. Armies assembling at Megiddo, or on the plains of Esdraelon and Jezreel, did so for tactical advantage. As we review the description that John provides we see this element becoming apparent in the symbolism employed.

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#### 5. What the scriptures say about the battle of Armageddon

Interpreting the coming conflict described by John we have to be careful with the details presented. The description of the armies gathered appears in **Revelation 16**, but the battle doesn't take place until chapter nineteen.

John writes, *“And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.”* (**Rev 16.12-16**).

A significant element is the pouring out of the sixth vial of God's wrath. The description is reminiscent of those given to Judah prior to the inevitable destruction from the Babylonians in 586 B.C. In Revelation we see that this is a judgment of God against the oppressive power persecuting his people. More detail follows.

John saw *“...three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”* (**Rev 16.13-14**). Frogs are unclean animals and this uncleanness comes directly from the dragon (Satan), the beast (empowered by Satan) and the false prophet. We've reviewed part of this in the discussion of the Antichrist in the last lesson. The thing to note is that while there was a physical persecution against God's people taking place, there's a spiritual component working as well.

The oppressing power and the persecution of Christians was executed by powers that had become so corrupt and morally bankrupt that they were destroying themselves. The Roman empire was riddled with every vice and evil imaginable, and this was the controlling influence in the world. This environment gave Satan fertile ground for manipulating nations associated with Rome. The result of their actions and refusal to end the persecutions brought them into condemnation before God.

We'll talk about the battle John describes in a moment, but we need to focus on the fact that God exercises power over all nations. When a people indulges in things God condemns, it not only affects the culture, it will bring a judgment against them from God. Paul told the

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Athenian philosophers that God had “*determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation*” (**Acts 17.26**) speaking of the nations of the world. When a nation completely abandons the moral principals established by God from the beginning they fall into condemnation before God and may eventually be destroyed. This is the reason why the Israelites were told to drive the inhabitants out of Canaan. The evil things the Canaanites practiced had reached a point God would no longer tolerate. God told Abraham about this as he renewed his promises to the patriarch revealing what would happen to his descendants. God stated, “*But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*” (**Gen 15.16**).

The oppressing power will be judged. God’s wrath is being poured out on the nation. Christ also adds that this will happen at a time that is unexpected as seen in his statement, “*Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*” (**Rev 16.15**). We might think this is a reference to the second coming but note the way this is stated. Christ declares that he will come as a thief. He then pronounces a blessing on the faithful who will stand fast and keep the faith. The consequence of failing in this matter is to be “*naked*” and filled with “*shame*”. From this we can see that a judgment is coming on the evil that’s taking place. That judgment will not only punish but will expose those who claim to be faithful but aren’t.

The world lies under the influence of Satan in rejecting the truth of God. The Lord will allow a nation or people to continue as long as there’s respect for laws established from the beginning. When that’s violated, as it was in the first century, those opposing God stand in condemnation before the Lord. At some point God will withdraw his blessings and allow entire nations to be punished. This is the case with the oppressive power of **Revelation** and all those who have allied with them. The only thing we need to understand is how the battle is fought and won or lost. That will become clearer as we examine the weapons of that warfare.

#### 6. The weapons of war

When we think about the Bible and conflict what comes to mind for most people are the stories of the conquest of Canaan and wars fought by Israel. In the New Testament we have images of weapons, swords, armor and other implements of the soldiers craft. Believers see themselves as spiritual warriors, and we have references concerning the struggle against the powers of darkness.

The End Times are characterized as being a period in which the forces of the world will attempt to wipe Israel out of existence. Physical armies will approach and engage the Holy Land in an effort to thwart God’s designs to establish an earthly regime with Christ on the throne of David. In the next lesson I’ll address the kingdom and the physicality of the End Times belief but

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for now we'll focus on the idea that a battle will be staged in Palestine by Satan's empowered representatives only to be defeated by Christ and his armies. But is that really what John is showing us in Revelation.

The key to understanding the nature of the conflict, the gathering of these armies and the way in which they'll be dealt with is found later in the book of Revelation. Chapter sixteen describes the world as it postures itself against God. The idea with the Premillennial doctrine is that the combined forces of the Antichrist's coalition will take it upon themselves to gather for an assault on Jerusalem. Reading the text carefully we find that isn't what will happen.

First we have the spiritual nature of the evil and corruption embodied by the sea beast, the beast from the Earth and the false prophet. We've identified the spiritual component of this as John states that Satan is empowering them. The unclean spirits, portrayed as frogs, go out to the kings of the world letting us know how widespread the corruption is. Then note what John writes concerning this as the unclean spirits disperse. John states, "***they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.***" (Rev 16.14). The influence of the unclean spirits is to instigate rebellion against God. The interesting thing to note here is that they, the unclean spirits, are gathering the kings and the whole world against God. Now we have another note that provides a critical piece of information.

John writes, "***And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.***" (Rev 16.16). The "***he***" in this case is the Lord. The one who has done the gathering of the forces of the world is therefore God. In this description there's no indication that a single army comprised of an evil confederacy has assembled for a direct attack on the physical geography of Palestine. So, if the gathering isn't done by the armies of the Antichrist but by God then how does that relate to Har-Megidon, or Armageddon.

The answer to that lies in the discussion of Megiddo, the surrounding areas and what the name implied to the Hebrews and later the Jews. It was a place of slaughter, bloodshed and defeat. It was a tactical point that provided access to invading armies. The name, and the fact that God has gathered them to that place, is symbolic, not physical. We have to remember the context of the book of Revelation. A judgment was coming on an oppressive power attempting to destroy Christians, the work of God. Spiritually aligned with the power and intent of Satan, the world is brought to a point of judgment, bloodshed and defeat by God himself. There will be no escape from the judgment to come or mercy for their evil. They have been gathered by Jehovah for the purpose of rendering vengeance on them for the blood of the saints that has been spilled. Although we have a reference to the physical area of Megiddo and the plain of Esdraelon, there's no mention of Jerusalem, or a physical threat to the city. This implies once more that we're seeing a symbolic representation of a spiritual battle.



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Now we turn to **Revelation 19** for detail of the outcome of this gathering of evil against God and Christ and how that was carried out. John writes, ***“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. 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. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”*** (Rev 19.11-16).

The images depict the appearance of Christ identified as the **“word of God”** (Rev 19.13). An important key to this discussion is what follows. ***“Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations...”*** (Rev 19.15). Christ appears. He’s identified and we find that his weapon is a sharp sword that we’ll identify in a moment. Now we proceed to a description of the gathering, the battle and the outcome.

***“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. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”*** (Rev 19.19-21).

We have to remind ourselves that we’re reading a book written in signs and symbols, addresses the judgment of God against a persecuting power and the things revealed are going to come to pass in a finite amount of time. First, we know that it’s God who gathered the kings of the Earth and their armies to this place of judgment since they have given themselves to evil and therefore are at war with what is good.

Second we have the removal of the beast and false prophet who are cast into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. This might evoke images of the second coming and final judgment and there are principles that fit. We can also see that their end is to be cast into ***“a lake of fire burning with brimstone.”*** We have descriptions of Hell that fit this but we might expect to find the description to refer to ***“the”*** lake of fire not ***“a”*** lake of fire. Keep this in mind and I’ll come back to it in a moment.

Once the beast and false prophet have been dealt with their followers are killed with the

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sword of him that sat on the horse. That of course was the sword that proceeded from his mouth. That description alone let's us know that we're reading about a spiritual judgment carried out by Christ. A judgment that also has a physical component just not exactly the way the Premillennial doctrine envisions it. Having a description of those involved and their weapons we can now take a look at exactly how this battle takes place and it's result.

#### 7. The real battle & who wins

The book of Revelation was written to the seven churches of Asia to assure them that the persecutions they were undergoing would be addressed and the offending power would be dealt with for their actions. It was also a message to return to, and uphold, the purity of the doctrine they had received. The imagery in the book was of such a nature that the power and majesty of Christ and God were not so far off that their prayers were unheard and the Lord powerless to help.

The image of Christ on the white horse (**Rev 19.11**) is a symbol of power. The accompaniment of the heavenly host in the verses details the vast resources the Lord has at his disposal. The fact that Christ is seen leading this army is a symbol that he would indeed rise up against the evil and corruption that had set it's face against the church and Christ himself through their deeds.

The offending power, seen as invincible, has been collected from the entire world into a place of judgment represented by Armageddon, a place of destruction and bloodshed. While the forces of Earth have raised their hand against God by persecuting his children, they would soon find themselves receiving the judgments from the Lord. The appearance of Christ rising up against them is similar to the sign of the four horseman who represented various judgments of God. A final judgment and the ultimate power would come through Christ. In that sense we need to understand the form of that judgment and how it was and will be rendered.

From the second to the fourth centuries the Roman empire began to fragment internally. Externally various tribes and nationalities rose against them. These things slowly eroded the power and cohesiveness of the empire. At times when the persecution of Christians became extreme the Roman citizens called for an end to the practice. In the fourth century, Constantine issued a decree recognizing Christianity as a state sanctioned religion and brought an end to the persecutions at the time.

The judgment of God against this power followed a similar pattern that we can see in God's actions against Israel and Judah. The Lord issued prophecies against Babylon, Assyria and Egypt. Each of these contained comparable elements. The status of the nations degraded as others saw the evil and atrocities they committed. Their internal economy and social structures



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weakened and collapsed. Trade was affected as well as their military power. Over time their enemies gained an upper hand and eventually each of these powers were conquered and faded from the world stage. Assyria, Babylon, Israel and Judah are all examples of the physical aspects of God's judgment against nations when they become evil and abandon, the principles of morality in the case of pagan gentile powers, and the rise of evil and neglect of God's laws on the part of the children of Israel.

The persecuting power of Rome would erode, collapse internally and eventually be overthrown by their enemies. We can regard these developments simply as the flow of history but behind the scenes God is withholding blessings and bringing destruction on them. All of this took place at the hand of God and in the book of Revelation is represented by the power of God rising against them.

On the other hand the judgment was spiritual. The weapon wielded by Christ, that which proceeds from his mouth, is the word that was spoken and recorded. The word that was preached in the world, hated by governments and suppressed by rulers. But as Christ told the Jews, it was the word he spoke that would judge them (**John 12.48**). The gathering by God of these evil nations to the place of Armageddon represents their condemnation and destruction, physically and spiritually. Once one has given themselves to evil, or when a nation engages in and embraces corruption abominable to God, they're destined to the fires of judgment and destruction, judged by the word of God, Christ.

The seven churches of Asia were made aware of the fact that God was not physically seen or audible, but he was present, and knew of their circumstances and the actions of those against them. Christ provides comfort for them in letting them know of the vengeance to come, but he also makes them equally aware of their need to remain, or return, to faithful service, or they too would be judged. Christians suffering through those times could rest assured that the victory belonged to Christ and they would be saved through death if they remained faithful. The battle of Armageddon, the collection of evil into a place of judgment by God himself and the execution of that judgment against them was enacted and fulfilled during the time specified at the opening of Revelation. Nations today should realize that God is not distant, nor is he unaware of the things done in opposition to him. Solomon writes, "***Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.***" (**Prov 14.34**).

#### 8. Conclusions

The battle of Armageddon is a symbolic description of God's action against an evil nation. Some important things to note from this lesson are:

- a. Armageddon is a name synonymous with bloodshed, battle and destruction

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- b. Nations were gathered by God to Armageddon to receive his judgment
- c. The oppressing power of Rome was judged physically & spiritually by God
- e. Images in Revelation denote God's power and Christ's majesty
- f. The weapon destroying evil at Armageddon was the word of God
- g. Christians can rest assured that God is not far and is greater than the world
- h. There won't be a future battle for Jerusalem in the future
- i. Christ will not be engaging armies physically to prove his supremacy
- j. The battle of Armageddon took place in a finite period of time as stated in Revelation
- k. All nations and individuals are subject to God's judgment and condemnation
- l. God will save the faithful even through death

The battle of Armageddon, in the finite time specified in the early part of Revelation by the phrase "*shortly come to pass*" was the gathering, by God, of those practicing evil to a place of judgment and destruction. That vengeance and destruction was fulfilled. The warning for all of us is that we too can be gathered together and held in condemnation by God and will suffer the negative consequences for our actions. Whether we look for physical components of God's judgments or not, the end result and fate of evil is eternal damnation and separation from God. In that sense Armageddon denotes the final judgment on all sin of all time and is a spiritual battle that God has won, and will always win.

## **9. Next**

The battle of Armageddon is a reflection of a misunderstanding at the very heart of Premillennial doctrine. The idea that Christ was unable to establish his kingdom and restore Israel is incorrect. The establishment of the church as a substitute for what should have been is a misinterpretation of the nature of Christ's kingdom. In the next lesson we'll discuss these ideas as we explore **The Kingdom & The Thousand Year Reign**.