

Armageddon

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The word armageddon is the Greek form of the Hebrew har megiddo, which means the hill or city of Megiddo, and is a hill which is at the southern end of the plain of Esdraelon also called Jezreel. This is the great plain that intersects Palestine immediately north of Carmel. It was here that Deborah and Barak defeated the Canaanites (Judges 4:15) and that Gideon defeated the Midianites (Judges 7). Additionally, this is where King Saul died in battle against the Philistines, at the battle of Gilboa (I Samuel 31:8), and where Josiah died in battle against the Egyptians under the command of Pharaoh Necho (II Kings 23:29, 30; II Chronicles 35:22). Napoleon said that all the armies of the world could maneuver on this plain at the same time.

Our Lord spoke of the tribulation in his dialogue on the Mount of Olives, commonly called the Olivet Discourse. Matthew 24:21, 22, read, “For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.”

So here in the NIV translation the phrase great distress refers to the tribulation. Jeremiah 30:4-7 calls the tribulation “the time of Jacob’s trouble” and compares it to a female’s birth pangs. Ezekiel 20:34-38 calls the tribulation that time when Israel will “pass under the rod.” Ezekiel 22:19-22,

Zechariah 13:9 and Malachi 3:1-3 call the tribulation God’s melting pot. Isaiah 10:5, 13:5, 26:20 and Daniel 8:19 call the tribulation the indignation. In Daniel 9:20-27, the tribulation is called Daniel’s seventieth week. Here, each week is a prophetic week and each week refers to seven years which is a total of 490 years. The 490 year time span began in 445 B.C. (Nehemiah 2:1, 5, 6). And 483 years later (sixty-nine of the seventy weeks are complete), our Lord rode into Jerusalem and was hailed as the promised Son of David (Matthew 21:8, 9). This was Palm Sunday. ¹

Thus, it can be seen that after the cross one week (the seventieth week of Daniel), or seven years, still remains to the Jews. Between week sixty-nine and seventy, God has inserted the present church age. This church age exists to call out the bride of Christ, because as He is seated at the right hand of God, the God man is alone in his human portion. Thus a royal bride and royal family is being called out for Him. He, takes precedence over all, thus this interruption of history is not unusual. But the final seven years remain as Daniel’s seventieth week. This is the tribulation!

The tribulation is also the time of Satan’s recklessness, what Pastor Robert Thieme, Jr. has called the time of Satan’s desperation. This is because Satan knows doctrine and knows that his time is running out. Exacerbating the problems are two other factors:

¹This exposition of ‘Daniel’s Seventieth Week’ is based on the scholarship of Pastor Robert Thieme, Jr., Clarence Larkin and E.W. Bullinger.

1. The removal of the church age believers at the rapture of the Church, I Thessalonians 4:13-18.
2. The removal of the restraining ministry of God the Holy Spirit, II Thessalonians 2:6, 7.
²

The seven years of the tribulation will be divided in half. The first half is a period of political maneuvers by four power seats, called the kings of the north, south, east and west in the Bible. During this first half, anti Jewish sentiments will be prevalent and crime will predominate. The second half of the tribulation is characterized by Satan's attempt to destroy Palestine, Jerusalem and the Jews. To accomplish this, he causes the four power seats to converge on Jerusalem.

The Four Power Seats

Joel 1:6 introduced the prophecy of the king of the north. Daniel 11:40 also refers to the king of the north, and calls this king of the north the king of fierce countenance in Daniel 8:23. Isaiah 10:24 calls him the Assyrian, and the overflowing scourge in Isaiah 28:15. In Ezekiel 38:2 and 39:1, he is called Gog of the land of Magog. It is important not to confuse this phrase with the Gog and Magog of Revelation 20:8, which refers to all of Satan's gentile proselyte followers at the end of the millennium and their rebellion.

The kings of the east are referred to in Daniel 11:44, and are called the kings of the sun rising in Revelation 16:12.

The king of the west refers to the ruler or dictator of the revived Roman Empire.

Revelation 16:13 states, "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." This verse explains the evil motivations of the various kings, north, south, east and west. The three unclean spirits are kosmokrator demons and are referred to in Daniel 10:13. These demons, at the command of Satan, possess political leaders so that Satan's plans might reach fruition.

²E. W. Bullinger Commentary on Revelation

³Pastor Robert Thieme, Jr. Revelation; from notes

⁴This exposition is extracted from the scholarship of E.W. Bullinger, Clarence Larkin, and Pastor Robert Thieme, Jr. From notes, handwritten, undated

The dragon is Satan himself. Satan himself empowers the king of the west, also called the man of sin, and referred to in II Thessalonians 2:4. Revelation 12:7-9 identifies Satan as the dragon.

The beast is referred to in Revelation 13:1, 2, where he is called the beast out of the sea. He is called the feet of the image in Daniel 2:31-45, and the little horn in Daniel 7:8, also the prince that shall come in Daniel 9:26, 27, and the god of forces in Daniel 11:38, the man of sin in II Thessalonians 2:3-10, and the scarlet beast in Revelation 17:3. He is, then, the king of the west, the ruler of the revived Roman Empire. He has ten horns in Daniel 7:7, 8, 23, 24; these horns denote his power over a ten nation entity called the revived Roman Empire. He is also the religious leader of this ten nation entity. In Revelation 17:2-12 he, the king of the west, is the seventh head or mountain. The seven heads are those nations throughout history who have attacked Israel: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome and the future king of the west, the revived Roman Empire. And as the seventh head he is the beast or little horn found in Daniel 7:8, 24, where he gains control over three horns or nations of the ten horns or nations and thus comes to rule all ten nations and form the revived Roman Empire. ³

And Revelation 13:7 says that the beast will be given permission to persecute the saints and to kill them. And he will, according to Revelation 17:14, make war on the Lamb of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who will destroy him at Armageddon.

The false prophet is described in Revelation 13:11, "And I saw another beast coming up out of the land; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon." This is the false prophet of Revelation 19:20, 20:10; he is the ruler of the Jews in the tribulation. He is also called the willful king in Daniel 11:36-40, and the idol shepherd in Zechariah 11:15-17. He comes out of the land (Palestine or Israel) while the first beast came out of the sea (the Gentile nations). This false prophet comes in the form of a lamb, i.e., he presents himself as the Messiah which he is not! That is why he is false! His two horns speak of his two false Messianic claims which are king and prophet. This second beast or false prophet is empowered by Satan and deceives by miracles and directs the Jews to worship the first beast, the king of the west, according to Revelation

13:12-18. Again, this is why he is called the false prophet; and his is the number 666. ⁴

The Abomination of Desolation

At the beginning of the tribulation, the false prophet, the ruler of the Jews in Israel makes a pact with the king of the west (the beast out of the sea). He does this in hopes of preserving his power. However, in the middle of the tribulation (the seventieth week, the last seven years of the age of Israel), the king of the west, who is possessed by Satan himself, abrogates the pact. He, the king of the west, demands that he be worshipped as God and that all Jewish forms of worship cease (Daniel 12:11). This is when the abomination of desolation, which is a statue of the king of the west, is erected in the Temple in the Holy of Holies (Revelation 13:15).

The erection of this statue is a sign to the Jewish believers of the tribulation. They are to flee to the mountains. Matthew 24:15 and 16 say, "When you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoever reads these words let him understand them) then let those who are in Judaea flee into the mountains."

Revelation 12:14 says, "And to the woman (Israel) were given two wings of a great eagle (divine protection from God), so that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is safe for a time (one year), and times (two years), and half a time (one-half a year), from the face of the serpent."

World War and the Battle of Armageddon

Daniel 11:40, reads, "And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push (make war) at him (false prophet, the ruler of the Jews): and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he (the king of the north) shall enter into the countries and shall overflow and pass over them."

We see then that the king of the southern power seat decides to attack Palestine. Simultaneously, the king of the north is moving through the Middle East on his way to engulf Africa. The king of

the north has both land armies and navies at his command. The phrase overflow and pass through seems to indicate that the king of the north moves quickly and decisively through the area. ⁵

Daniel 11:41 reads, "He (the king of the north) shall invade also into the Beautiful Land (middle east), and many countries (including Israel) shall be conquered: but these (Jewish believers) shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon."

Since the military goal of the king of the north is north Africa, Egypt, he passes rapidly through Palestine. Thus, those Jews who obeyed Matthew 24:16, and fled to the mountains, remain in safety.

Daniel 11:42 reads, "He (the king of the north) will shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries (of north Africa): and the land of Egypt will not escape." He takes Egypt.

Daniel 11:43 reads, "But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans (his naval forces from the Mediterranean and the west) and the Ethiopians (his land armies driving toward central Africa) shall be at his steps." So the king of the north, also called Gog (Ezekiel 38:2), is ready to conquer Africa when God intervenes.

Revelation 16:12 says, "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." The kings of the east now enter Palestine.

Daniel 11:44 reads, "But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he (the king of the north) will go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away (to wipe out) many (the Jews in Jerusalem)."

So we have the armies of the kings of the east penetrating to Idumea (Isaiah 63), and we have the king of the south entering Palestine; and to the north, in the valley of Esdraelon, the army of the king of the west (revived Roman Empire) is descending upon Jerusalem.

So the king of the north, who is down in Africa, must reverse his line of march and return to Palestine so that he might protect his lines of supply. So with great fury he turns for Jerusalem. Remember, the king of the west seeks to protect his statue in the Holy of Holies.

⁵Pastor Robert Thieme, Jr.. Revelation; from notes taken in 1970's, undated.

Daniel 11:45 says, “And he (the king of the north) will plant the tabernacles of his palace (his army headquarters) between the seas in the glorious Holy Mountain (Zion); yet he will come to his end, and none shall help him.” So we see that he returns to Palestine and sets up headquarters on the western escarpment of Jerusalem.

Joel 2:2-9 describes the king of the north’s attack on Jerusalem. It is like the attack of the locust infestations which is devastating. The king of the north contacts great prosperity, but leaves only desolation behind, just as the locusts, and just as Satan in the original garden of Eden.

Thus we have the four power seats of the future, north, south, east and west; the armies of the entire world are descending upon Jerusalem.

Zechariah 12 relates the attack against the Jerusalem of the tribulation from the perspective of the believing Jews living and fighting in Jerusalem.

Zechariah 12:2 says, “Behold I will make Jerusalem a cup of intoxication to all the people (the four armies) round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.” Here, the Jews are depicted as a cup of strong wine; the invading armies will drink of this wine and become intoxicated. This wine is the wrath of God poured out upon these armies.

Zechariah 12:3 says, “And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people (the four armies): all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered against it.”

Zechariah 14:1 and 2 state, “Behold the day of the Lord approaches, and your wealth will be divided in the middle of you. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women raped; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity (unbelieving Jews), but the residue of the people (the believing remnant) will not be cut off from the city (they will be safe).”

Remember, Jesus Christ controls history. ⁶ He allows this to happen.

Zechariah 12:5 and 6 say, “And the governors of Judah will say in their heart, the inhabitants of Jerusalem will be my strength in the Lord of the armies (hosts) their God. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and

they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem.” These governors, then, are believers and those who stand with them are believing Jews. They stand and fight, trusting in God.

Remember, the king of the north is on the western escarpment of the city; the king of the west is on the valley of Megiddo in the plain of Esdraelon. The kings of the east are on Jehoshaphat’s valley to the east, and scripture does not relate where the kings of the south are.

Then when the world is attacking the believing Jews and all hope is lost then comes a supernatural darkness! Matthew 24:29 says, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” Isaiah 60:2, says, “For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people...”

Zechariah 12:4 says, “In that day (the day of the Lord), saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with terror, and his rider with shock: and I will open my eyes (divine favor and blessing) upon the house of Judah, and will strike every horse of the people with blindness.” Total darkness and total confusion of the four armies. No one can see, no computers work, no information is available and men begin to go mad with fear.

Isaiah 13:6-9, compared with Luke 21:25 and 26 says, “Howl; for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore will all hands be faint, and every man’s heart will melt: and they will be afraid: pangs and sorrows will take hold of them; they will be in pain as a woman in child-bearing: they will be amazed at each other (total shock); their faces shall be as flames. Behold the day of the Lord comes, cruel both with wrath and anger, lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners on it.”

Just as the darkness of the cross provided salvation for all believers, so this darkness preserves the Jewish believers of the tribulation.

Then, unexpectedly and suddenly, from within the all encompassing supernatural darkness, there appears the only thing that can pierce such darkness is supernatural light. Zechariah 14:6 and 7 put it thusly, “On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. It will be a unique day, without daytime

⁶Pastor Robert Thieme, Jr..

or nighttime (no light whatsoever) which is a day known only to the Lord. When evening comes (that time of day at which evening would normally occur), there will be light.”

And Psalm 97:2-6 describe that day, the day of the Lord, as follows: “Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. A fire goes in front of him, and burns up his enemies round about. His lightnings light up the world: the earth saw, and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord...and all the people see His glory.”

Revelation 1:7 describes our Lord’s return: “Look, he is coming with the clouds (saints in their resurrection bodies), and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.”

So we see that as our Lord descends from the third heaven, the abode of God, everyone will see him, for His is the Light of the world. Christ himself said in John 8:12, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows (believes) me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

This supernatural light, visible to all, is the return of our Lord at the second advent. He returns to render judgment. Zechariah 14:3 says, “Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle.”

The Lord will fight and deliver! For just as Moses said at the Red Sea, “Stand and watch the deliverance of the Lord!” (Exodus 14:13) Just as the Jews were delivered at the Red Sea in Exodus 14:10-14, so will the believers of the tribulation generation be delivered. Zechariah 14:4 states, “On that day (the day of the Lord, the Second Advent) his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.” Therefore, just as the Red Sea parted so Moses and the Exodus generation could escape, so will the Mount of Olives part. The Mount of Olives is the first place that His feet will touch the earth and it will part and the believers in Jerusalem during the tribulation that are fighting against overwhelming odds will escape in the valley created by the rending asunder of the mountain.⁷

Here is the return of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, the Ancient of Days, the stone cut with-

out hands, David’s greater son, the lion of the tribe of Judah. Revelation 19:11-16 speak eloquently of His coming: “I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a

name written on him that no one but he himself knows. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is The Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

Throughout the ancient world the white horse was the symbol of conquest and victory. He is true to His word and faithful, and He will deliver His own, both believing Jews and believing Gentiles. He does this through righteous judgment, violence and death.

His judgments are correct, right, just and true! Those that are judged at this future day are unbelievers who have, without exception, had each and every chance to believe, but who have rejected Him repeatedly.

The armies that accompany Him at his return are the elect angels, the Old Testament saints, those saints who have died or martyred during the tribulation, and the saints of the church age. References to these groups are found in I Thessalonians 3:13 and Jude 14. All these saints will stand and watch. Our Lord Jesus Christ will do all the fighting and all the judging. His only weapon is the sharp sword of Revelation 19:15; this sword is His spoken word. The wine press refers to the tremendous crushing power of these words: the devastation is total and complete.

Continuing in Revelation 19:17, “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 (the first heaven - the atmosphere which surrounds the earth), Come and gather yourselves together at the supper of the great God.” This angel announces the destruction of the beast and all his allies. The angel calls those carrion birds such as vultures to prepare for a feast of dead bod-

⁷Pastor Robert Thieme, Jr. Revelation; from undated notes.

ies. Ezekiel 39, the entire chapter, and specifically verses 17-22, provide the prophet's description of this scene. There is no doubt as to the outcome of the battle in the angel's mind; indeed, he is so sure that he commands the vultures to gather before the battle takes place.

Revelation 19:19 says, "And I saw the beast (king of the west - the revived Roman Empire), 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." Here we have the culmination of the work of the three frog spirits of Revelation 16:13: They have gathered together the four power seats to do battle. Remember, these four kings and their armies have been fighting each other for control of the world and Palestine. Now, faced with the great Lamb of God, they unite with another to fight against God. They suffer what II Thessalonians 2:11 calls "strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all might be damned..." Thus, these four armies now prepare to war with God Himself; their absolute arrogance fuels their belief that they can defeat God. Psalm 2:1-3 describes their thoughts: "The heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed."

Isaiah 63:1-6 describes the short lived battle: "Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? 'It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save (the Jewish remnant of believers and any Gentile believers).' Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the wine press? 'I have trodden the wine press alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come. I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that no one gave support; so my own arm worked salvation for me, and my own wrath sustained me. I trampled the nations in my anger; in my wrath I made them drunk and poured their blood on the ground.'"

Revelation 19:20 tells the final end of the dictators: "The beast (king of the west) was taken, and with him the false prophet (dictator of Israel) that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that received the mark of the beast,

⁸E.W. Bullinger, Commentary on Revelation; page 597.

and them that worshipped his image (the abomination of desolation which is the placement of a statue of the king of the west in the Holy of Holies in the rebuilt third Temple in Jerusalem. These both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone." The armies are slain and defeated and the two dictators are cast alive into the lake of fire.

As we have already seen in Isaiah 63, so widespread is the slaughter that our Lord's garments of white are stained red with the blood of His enemies. Revelation 14:19 and 20 describe the extent of the carnage: "The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great wine press of God's wrath. They were trampled in the wine press outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1600 stadia (180 miles)." The blood runs five to six feet high for a distance of 180 miles.

Many flounder at this picture of our Lord. "And ask, in amazement, whether the author really believes it? We answer, Yes!" ⁸ For at the first advent He came in humiliation to provide salvation; then, at the tribulation, however, He will come in glory. This is stated in Psalm 45:3-6: "Gird your sword upon your side, O mighty one; clothe yourself with splendor and majesty. In your majesty ride forth victoriously in behalf of truth, humility and righteousness; let your right hand display awesome deeds. Let your sharp arrows pierce the hearts of the king's enemies; let the nations fall beneath your feet. Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom."

So the entire picture is that of judgment and vengeance. Our Lord Himself spoke of this day in Luke 19:27, where He said, "But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them, bring them here and kill them in front of me."

There are so many dead enemies of our Lord that scripture relates that it takes seven months to bury all the bodies. Ezekiel 39:12 says, "For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land."

Summary of Armageddon

The day of the Lord or the day of Jehovah or the great day of God, then, occurs in the final

days of the tribulation, which is the final seven years of the age of Israel (Daniel's seventieth week). Christ returns to fulfill the promises to Israel made in the Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic and New Covenants to Israel. The location of this last great battle is in Palestine, specifically in Armageddon (valley of Megiddo), the Jeshoshaphat valley, Edom (Idumea) and the city of Jerusalem.

Because of demon possession and empowerment by Satan himself, the four power seats of the future descend with their armies upon Jerusalem. And these four power seats are called the kings of the north, the south, the east and the west in the Bible.

Then the second advent of Christ occurs; He destroys the invading armies who unite to make war with Him. The two beasts (the dictator of the revived Roman Empire, also called the king of the west; and the false prophet, the dictator of Israel) are cast alive into the lake of fire for eternity. Then Satan himself is bound and thrown into the abyss, and the great white throne judgment takes place.

Our Lord rules on the earth for 1000 years, which time is called the millennium.

Is the tribulation close? The Bible states that there is no prophecy that must be fulfilled before the rapture of the church takes place. However, this has been true since the death of the apostles. “. . . no one knows the day or the hour . . .” (Mark 13:32) Thus no accurate forecast may be made or supported. Remember the church will not go through the tribulation; the rapture of the church precedes the tribulation.

Who is the beast? Who is the false prophet? Again, no one knows for sure. Their identities cannot be stated. Also, many world leaders in the past have been marked as the beast and the Anti-Christ, including Napoleon, Hitler, the Pope and Mussolini.

Finally, for the church age believer God has a plan (Ephesians 3:20). As we have just seen, He is faithful and true. He is faithful to His promises and true to fulfill His warnings of judgment.