



Armageddon— Then Peace on Earth

Berean Series
Bible Studies

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THE word "Armageddon" appears in the Bible once only; but as it is associated with what is termed the "Battle of the Great Day of God Almighty", we can see that it is connected with world-wide influences at the end of a dispensation, which we feel we are approaching very definitely at the present time. Let us note the context in which this word "Armageddon" is found in Revelation 16. In highly symbolical language we are told in verse 14 of powerful influences or spirits of demons working miracles, that go forth to the leaders or rulers and kings all over the world to gather them together to battle, to war, on the great day of God Almighty. Verse 15 is really a parenthesis, so verse 16 connects with verse 14—"And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." The Concordance indicates that "Armageddon" is a symbolic name for the scene of some great spiritual contest, and means "Mount of Destruction." Further, as noted in Rev. 16, Armageddon is of Hebrew origin, and is associated geographically and historically with the Hill of Megiddo.

We learn that Megiddo occupied a very strategic position in the ancient Holy Land, commanding an important pass into the hill country. The general locality of Megiddo was the great battleground of Israel. We understand that here Gideon and his 300 routed the Midianites, and King Saul was defeated here by the Philistines. So we can see the Hill of Megiddo was an important location in the ancient land of Israel.

As Armageddon has been given a symbolic meaning, it is helpful to think of other words used in a symbolic manner in general language today. For instance, when we hear of an army meeting its "Waterloo", we know the meaning is that army has been utterly defeated. It was Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo that caused significance to be attached to that particular battleground; and so it is with Armageddon. It was Israel's battleground, and to grasp its symbolic meaning in the prophecies it is necessary to see the special characteristic of all battles in which ancient Israel participated. Israel was not always victorious; sometimes God permitted His people to be defeated because they had sinned against Him and needed to be

disciplined. However, there was one outstanding characteristic of all Israel's battles which was not true, and has never been true, of the battles fought between other nations. It is that God took a hand in the battles of Israel, and overruled their victories and defeats in keeping with His own Plan of the Ages. God allowed them to be defeated on occasions, and gave them miraculous victories on other occasions to fit in with His own wonderful Plan. When we take this fact into consideration the word "Armageddon" assumes a definite significance. It indicates a struggle in which God is definitely concerned, assuring final and glorious victory for the forces of righteousness. Further, as the prophecies show, it is the last great battle of the ages, and will result in the permanent defeat of all the agencies of Satan, thus preparing the way for the full manifestation of the kingdom of Christ. This is why it is described as the "Battle of the Great Day of God Almighty." The prophecies clearly show that that battle is the one which marks the end of the present age or dispensation, when this present evil world or social order comes to an end. It is described in the Bible as "the day of God's vengeance" and as "the day of the Lord",

because it is the time when the Lord intervenes in the affairs of the world to halt their mad and downward rush into sin and destruction, and establish His long-promised kingdom.

This "day of the Lord" is referred to by the prophet Zephaniah; all God's prophets were instructed by His spirit, so what they say is not their own ideas, but what the Lord imparted by direct influence of His spirit. When the prophet says—"Thus saith the Lord"—we know it is from God Himself. Zeph. 3:8—"Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy." This is God speaking, saying He is going to assemble the kingdoms, gather the nations, to pour upon them His indignation. We notice the similarity of expression in this prophecy—"to gather the nations and assemble the kingdoms"—to that found in the text respecting the gathering to Armageddon.

How are we to understand the expressions—"to gather the nations and assemble the kingdoms"—and the gathering together to Armageddon? These may be understood as we view world conditions today in contrast with the earlier years of this century. Before the invention of aeroplanes and other modern means of transport and communication, nations were largely divided. Now all that has changed. Nations are now gathered and assembled so that events happening in one country often shake the whole world, so to speak, in an hour or two. They are assembled together today as never before. This is happening in these "last days."

Isaiah 42:13, 14 also describes these events—"The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself; . . . I will destroy and devour at once." Ever since our first parents transgressed God's law, war has been a factor in the affairs of the human race. In the days of ancient Israel other nations occasionally came in contact with divine authority and power. Various

heathen kings were compelled to acknowledge His sovereignty as a result of the miraculous manner in which He protected and delivered His people. But many long centuries have passed since the world has witnessed such manifestations of God's power, with the result that faith in Him and His authority and ability to rule the affairs of men is almost non-existent in all the council chambers of the world.

God explains this situation by saying that He has "refrained" Himself from interfering in world affairs, and has "hold-en" His peace. His people, on the other hand, have been encouraged to "wait on the Lord" until the day He no longer holds His peace, until He ceases to refrain from interfering in the affairs of men, assured that then He would "rise up to the prey", and that the whole "earth"—"this present evil world"—would be destroyed by the "fire of his jealousy." It is in this work of destroying evil and evil systems that the Lord represents Himself as going forth as a mighty man, and stirring up jealousy like a man of war. It is this which precipitates the "Battle of the Great Day of God Almighty."

Someone may ask, Why is this great Armageddon trouble to come upon the world; why is it really necessary? Why doesn't God restrict evil doers, and allow the world to have peace and happiness today? Or in other words, Why doesn't God establish peace on earth as was promised at the birth of Jesus? When a question of this kind is presented, we realise that for God to establish peace, or force peace upon humanity in its present state, would certainly mean better conditions on earth; but it would still be a dying world. Could there really be genuine peace in the hearts of mankind while any of the human family were dying? No, there could not! As for happiness, it would not be possible while loved ones were growing old and passing away in death, to the land of the enemy. So if God established peace on the earth now, and allowed the present order of things to continue as it is, this peace would be in the midst of a dying human family, as it has been over the past six thousand years. That would not be lasting peace and happiness for humanity at all.

So we see that God's plan allows the trouble of Armageddon to bring down the present evil world fully and completely; and this is the only lasting and satisfactory solution that would bring praise and honour to God's name. Let us remember that Armageddon is not Doomsday to the world, as some people not acquainted with God's plan may assume. It will seem like Doomsday to the uninformed while it lasts, no doubt, but the outcome will be glorious.

Many of the prophecies describing the passing of the present social structure on earth are summed up in Isa. 24:19, 20. This is what Isaiah says under the inspiration of God's spirit—"The earth is utterly broken down; the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again." It will not rise again in similar form to that which is existing now. The earthly order of society, man's social order, shall "reel to and fro." After the fall of this present evil world there is to be a new order established. The Lord has said distinctly—"I make all things new"—Rev. 21:5.

From Nahum 1:7, 6 and 9 we also read —“The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble: and he knoweth them that trust in him. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. What do ye imagine against the Lord? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time.” God will not have a repetition of what has happened from the Garden of Eden to the present time. Mankind has been in rebellion for six thousand years. One experience of the results of disobedience will be enough for all to learn the needed lesson, and be assured also of God’s great love in redeeming them through the sacrifice of our dear Saviour.

So the Battle of the Great Day of God Almighty prepares mankind for the new age and the great work of restitution. Though “weeping may endure for a night”, with thick clouds of trouble and darkness, the work of destruction will be of short duration. Then joy will come “in the morning”—Psa. 30:5. “The Sun of righteousness will arise with healing in his wings”—Mal. 4:2—with blessings for

all the obedient of mankind. The present social structure will be removed "like a cottage" to clear the way for the new building that God intends—the "new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness"—2 Pet. 3:13.

Isaiah tells us of the new order that follows, in chapter 65:17-19 and from verse 21—"For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." God is going to forget about the old order; it is good that God will forget the waywardness of past human behaviour. Verse 18—"But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." We know that Israel will have a leading part in the new order; that is why Israel and Jerusalem are brought into the prophecies so frequently. We can see that Israel is still being threatened now, which is also fulfilling Scripture, but God will deliver Israel also out of its "Jacob's trouble" and show the world that Israel is His special nation. "And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying."

This is a promise from God. "And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and another inhabit: they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands."

"As the days of a tree" are the days of God's people Israel. Trees are very long-lived. We have heard that some of the olive trees are still living on the Mount of Olives from the time of our Lord's first advent. That is a picture of lasting life; and it is a very lovely thought. "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." In other words, when Israel as a people respond and give their hearts to the Lord He will supply all their needs. This is also an indication of what will happen to every nation which falls into line with the new laws then operating throughout the whole world. "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain (kingdom), saith the Lord"—Isa. 65:25.

We notice very clearly in this prophecy from Isaiah that there is to be a new heaven as well as a new earth; thus we have described the new spiritual order of the kingdom. Both the heavenly and earthly phases of God's kingdom are revealed in the beautiful language of Isa. 2: 2-4—"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain (kingdom) of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it", or acknowledge that this kingdom is of God. "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." There we have the two phases of the kingdom described—Zion picturing the heavenly kingdom and Jerusalem representing the earthly kingdom. Zion well illustrates the spiritual phase of the kingdom from whence the Deliverer comes, and Jerusalem will be the great centre of God's new order on earth.

“And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” That is a very lovely assurance; wars will be finished forever, because the spirit of the Lord will be abroad in the earth, in contrast with the spirit of the Adversary, as we have it today.

To accomplish this great transformation in the spiritual and earthly control of earth's affairs we see clearly from the Scriptures there must be an Armageddon of world-wide dimensions. Even the isles of the sea will be affected. Every part of the world will be transformed, because God's kingdom will take over every part of this planet. So we see Armageddon is absolutely essential. It can be likened to the words Jesus spoke to His disciples—it was absolutely essential that He die and go to heaven. The disciples thought it was dreadful to think Jesus had to die; but His death brought about the great salvation God had provided, through the gift of His dear Son. When the wrath of Armageddon is past, the new kingdom will provide for the blessing of all man-

kind. Then people will not die at all; they won't even get sick, because the spirit of the Lord will promote restoring and healing of all the willing and obedient of mankind. So it is very comforting to find, in the various promises of the Bible, that when the destructive work of Armageddon has accomplished the pulling down of the old order, there is also described the up-building work of the new order, with lasting life and peace for all.

In the prophecy of Zeph. 1:14-18 we have described again the "great day of the Lord", and it is recorded that the Lord will make a "speedy riddance" of all things out of accord with His designs for His new order. With God's new order established following the passing of the present order of society, as already quoted from Zeph. 3:8, we read in verse 9—"Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent." This is surely a wonderful message, giving assurance to all who accept the Lord's Word that world peace will follow the Armageddon experience, based upon the pure language of truth which will enable all the obedient to serve the Lord wholeheartedly in spirit and truth.

Haggai 2:6, 7 gives us the same thought, based on the signature of the Lord Himself—"For thus saith the Lord of hosts: Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come." This is symbolic language. The "heavens" are the ecclesiastical heavens, and the "earth" is the earthly order of society. The "sea" is the restless masses of humanity. Men's hearts will fail them more and more as the present systems of earth disintegrate. But there will be no conflict when the "desire of all nations" comes. That is absolutely true! When mankind are able to appreciate what God has provided for them they will rejoice that His plan is in operation. Satan will be bound that he deceives the nations no more, and the blessings of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. When the Lord makes all things new, all people of all nations will have their desires fulfilled, not temporarily, but for all time.

Turning to Psalm 72, it is very evident that the spirit of the Lord guided the writing of this Psalm. We have here des-

cribed in poetic language the blessings which mankind will experience—worldwide peace that will follow the necessary Armageddon experiences. Verses 1 and 2 read—“Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king’s son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment.” Some people think of the Judgment Day as being Doomsday, but Isa. 26:9 gives us the true picture of God’s judgments, when we read—“When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the earth will learn righteousness.” The people will learn righteousness very truly then; they will know that by learning righteousness they will be fully blessed. The words of Acts 17:31 are in full agreement—“God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”

Verse 3 of Psalm 72 states—“The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.” Micah 4:3 tells us about this same time—“And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they

shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Psalm 72:4, 5—"He shall judge the poor of the people . . . They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations." The sun and moon will endure forever, and that is what is implied here. We have the same truth presented in Isa. 11:9—"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Psalm 72:6 reads—"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth." This speaks of refreshing and blessing. See also Isa. 25:6-9. Psalm 72:7 continues—"In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." This means real and lasting peace in the hearts and minds of the people, as also expressed in Isa. 9:7—"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and

upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

Psalm 72:8 tells us—"He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." We have this world-wide dominion by Christ also pictured in Psalm 2:8, where Jehovah is speaking through the Psalmist, and says to Christ on Zion's hill—"Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." We see here the extent of Christ's wonderful kingdom; the whole globe will belong to the Lord.

From Psalm 22:27, 28 we read—"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is governor among the nations." He will rule supreme in His kingdom of peace, having complete control over every part of this planet. Psalm 98 also has a very lovely message which tells us about the administration of Christ under the direction of our great Heavenly Father—"O sing unto Jehovah a new song; for he hath done

marvellous things; his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory." Here we have our Lord Jesus, the great risen Christ, as Jehovah's right hand and holy arm. Prophetically, He has gotten the victory for Jehovah. See all this Psalm 98.

Many of the prophets tell us we are living in the last days of this dispensation, when Armageddon will wipe away this present order. But it will not wipe away those things worthy to remain. Those things which "cannot be shaken" shall remain, as stated in Heb. 12:27, 28. There is a text in Zeph. 2:3 which is wonderful advice to all people in this end of the present dispensation—"Seek ye the Lord all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger." The Lord's people particularly should not be involved in any of the strife in this present evil world.

Of particular interest is the fact that numerous kings and queens have lost their thrones since the First World War. Before this time there were dozens of kings and queens; now there are very few indeed.

Mankind has tried monarchies, dictatorships and democracies, but no government can bring in the happy day. Only Christ's kingdom can solve earth's problems, and only Armageddon can prepare the way for that wonderful kingdom. We thank God that His Plan will provide the lasting solution for all earth's ills. In the meantime God is keeping His own people, refining them, in preparation to be associated with Christ in the work of administering the kingdom for the blessing of all the families of the earth, to the praise of God.

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