

ARMAGEDDON: SORTING OUT FACT FROM FICTION

“And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.” — Revelation 16:16

John in his symbolic book of Revelation depicts the final battle between right and wrong, truth and error, as the *Battle of Armageddon*. There are many frightening portrayals of what some authors claim will happen during this prophetic event. These authors mistakenly portray Armageddon as a most dreadful time soon to come when all Christians will be swept up to heaven in an instant, while those who remain will be subjected to a period of shame and torment upon the earth, followed by an eternity of torture in a fiery hell. This misguided, popular view also holds that planet Earth will end in a fiery annihilation. It is important for Christians to sort out the facts based on Scripture rather than dramatized fiction.

When the Scriptures are studied topically and in context, they indicate something very different than these alarming predictions about the destiny of earth and its non-Christian inhabitants. The prophet Haggai declared that, at the conclusion of Armageddon, *“the desire of all nations shall come!”* (Haggai 2:7) John the Revelator stated that Armageddon will result in *“the healing of the nations.”* (Revelation 22:2) Isaiah portrayed a wonderful time of peace following Armageddon when *“none shall hurt nor destroy”* in all God’s holy mountain: for the earth shall then *“be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”* (Isaiah 11:9) Yes, prophecies indicate a final Armageddon battle, but what will follow harmonizes with the loving, all wise and just character of our Creator, *“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”* 1 Timothy 2:4

HISTORIC ARMAGEDDON BATTLES — ILLUSTRATE PROPHECY

To help in understanding the Bible prophecies concerning Armageddon, it is important to review history as it relates to the Nation of Israel. *Har-Magedon* is a Hebrew word signifying the *Mount of Destruction*. Megiddo commanded an important pass into the hill country 80 miles north of Jerusalem where Israel fought many of their historic battles. There, Gideon and his little band of 300 won the battle against the Midianites — an enemy multitude which was confounded by fear in the night darkness and which destroyed each other in the confusion. (Judges 7:19-23) There at Megiddo, King Saul disobeyed God and was defeated by the Philistines. (1 Samuel 31:1-6) At Megiddo, King Josiah disregarded God’s warning not to enter into

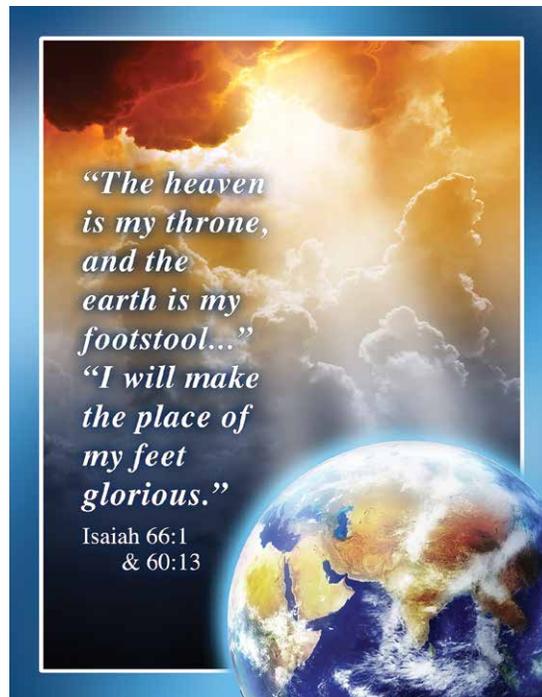
battle and was slain by Pharaoh-Necho in one of the most disastrous conflicts in the history of Israel. (2 Chronicles 35:22-25) There also, evil King Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel reigned, and it is where Jezebel met a gruesome death. 2 Kings 16:30; 9:30-37

The first historic Megiddo battle is recorded in Judges Chapters

4 and 5. The Israelites had nearly lost all of their knowledge, respect, and their love of God. To bring them back into harmony again, God chastened and humbled Israel under their Canaanite enemy, General Sisera. Having demeaned the Israelites of Northern Israel for years, Sisera started southward to the Valley of Megiddo with a mighty army containing nine hundred iron chariots. The word of the Lord then came to General Barak, a Hebrew man of faith, directing him to advance against the Canaanite army. Messengers informed Sisera that Barak was leading his army of ten thousand men toward Megiddo. Sisera, mocking the poorly armed Israelites, advanced upon Barak’s army. Miraculously, a great storm swelled the river where Sisera’s army was encamped, rendering his chariots and horsemen useless in the muddy quagmires. By divine intervention, that threat upon Israel’s army was swept away by the flood waters.

A most important lesson can be gained from these historic Megiddo events. Each momentous occurrence, where God overruled for the good of the Nation of Israel, pictures the deliverance of the world of mankind after the great Armageddon battle.

- Sisera’s army was defeated by divine intervention, just as Satan and his minions will be defeated by Messiah — never again to oppress the people of earth.
- Gideon’s defeat of the Midianites released the people of Israel from their bondage under Midian. Thus Gideon and his little band typified our Lord and his Little Flock, who are soon to release mankind from their heavy bondage to sin and death — permanently.
- The death of King Saul and the overthrow of his kingdom by the Philistines opened the way for the reign of King David, who typified (pictured) Messiah and his reign of righteousness.
- Ahab pictured civil governments in union with false religious systems, pictured by Jezebel. She is portrayed in Revelation as the adulterous *Mother of Harlots — Babylon the Great*. *“Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.”* Revelation 2:20; 13:2; 17:5, 18:21



When we consider these battles and other momentous experiences of Israel, we are not to expect a *literal* gathering to the Hill of Megiddo. Rather we are to look for that which is symbolized by that mountain. Armageddon will be a great **global** conflict where God's truth and righteousness will prevail against the forces of evil — the great controversy between truth and error with which the Christian Age will close and the Messianic Age will be ushered in.

WHAT PRECIPITATES THE PROPHETIC ARMAGEDDON BATTLE?

Jesus told his disciples that the *end of the age* would be marked by “*great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*” (Matthew 24:3 & 21) The prophet Daniel also described this time in which we live as the *time of the end* during which “*there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation...*” (Daniel 12:1) There has always been considerable trouble somewhere in the world, so why is this time period described as one of *great tribulation*, and what causes it?

The answers to these questions hinge on two unique realities of the time in which we live. Because of 1) the great *increase in knowledge* and 2) *advancements in travel* over the past two hundred years, the world is globally connected as never before in the history of mankind. (see Daniel 12:4) These advances have brought to humanity both a blessing and a curse. For every positive advancement in technology, there have been abuses of it for evil purposes — to gain power, control and wealth by selfish, oppressive means. The most threatening use of technology has been the advent of nuclear and chemical weapons. Humankind now has the capability to totally destroy every living thing at the whim of a reckless political leader. As a consequence of the abuse of technology, the nations are bringing upon themselves the natural consequences of sin, selfishness, pride and greed.

Another unique factor of our time related to the “*increase of knowledge*” is that people throughout the world are realizing that they are under bondage, and they are demanding to break free from it. “*His lightnings enlightened the world; the earth saw, and trembled.*” (Psalm 97:4) Truly like *lightning flashes* in the midst of the gloom and perplexity, come remarkable glimpses of the great principles of truth and righteousness in contrast with great injustices, corruption and dishonesty in high places. Humanity is discovering that they are being held back from the dignity of their full potential. As a result, the frustrated, disillusioned masses, conscious of their weakness as compared to the establishment, are seething with discontent, often rising up in their desperation for equality and freedom from oppression. Thus far, there have only been brush fires of revolution and anarchy throughout the earth — but these are precursors of the final Armageddon battle — when the weak overthrow their oppressors — “*let the weak say, I am strong.*” Joel 3:10

God is on the side of the oppressed of every nation. The purpose of His righteous anger is to tear down the old system of things that He might usher in the new, righteous government under the control of Messiah. “*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.” (Zephaniah 3:8) Notice here that the anger is poured upon the kingdoms of this earth, and **not upon the people**. What happens to the people as a result of the devouring, purifying fire of Armageddon? “*For 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.*” (Zephaniah 3:9) Then the people will finally be given the opportunity to hear and speak the truth, not the erroneous doctrines and practices which have blinded them for centuries.

LIGHTNING FLASHES OF TRUTH AWAKEN GOD'S PEOPLE

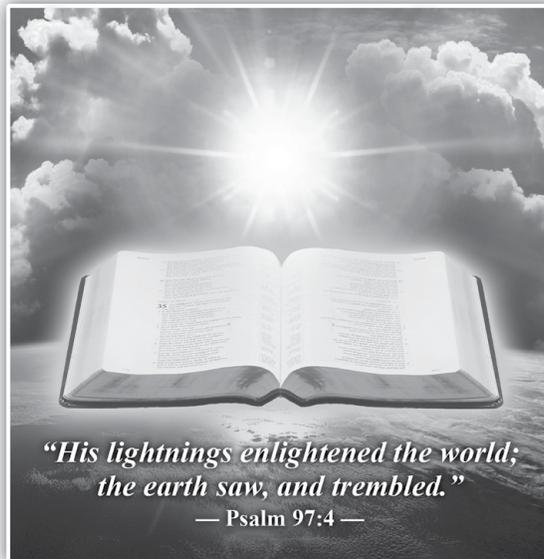
With the advent of Bible study in the 1800s, God's people began to be enlightened by these same *lightning flashes* of truth and righteousness — setting them free from the bondage of dark age errors. As has just been noted, one such error is the misunderstanding of God's wrath poured out in Armageddon — its purpose and outcome.

Examining Zephaniah's prophecy more closely should bring comfort to those who have been fearful. Almost all Christians believe that we are living at the end of the Christian era when God declared that “*...all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.*” Careful study of the context indicates that *fire* in this citation cannot be taken literally, for God promises that He “*will turn to the people a pure language...*” If the earth is to be literally burned up, there will be no people to learn God's truth. Logic dictates that the literal earth will remain, but the symbolic earth — corrupt social, financial, political and religious systems — will be dissolved to

make way for the reign of righteousness. “*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD...*” Isaiah 1:18

As a further confirmation that *fire* in prophecy is almost always symbolic, review 2 Peter 3:10, which reads: “*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*” If taken literally, these words contradict that “*the earth abideth forever.*” (Ecclesiastes 1:4) A literal interpretation would also present a significant problem if the literal *heavens* were to *pass away*. God declares: “*The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool,*” and “*I will make the place of my feet glorious.*” (Isaiah 66:1; 60:13) How glorious would the earth be if literally burned up? The symbolism of *fire*, here again, represents the destruction of the elements of the old earthly systems and ecclesiastical *heavens* which have been under the reign of Satan and his minions. Thus, Satan's empire will be “*burned up*” — destroyed in Armageddon.

Recall the hope of “*a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*” (2 Peter 3:13) Jesus taught us to pray: “*Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.*” (Matthew 6:9, 10) Jesus was telling us that God's Kingdom will be right here on the earth! The *new heavens* refer to the *new*



spiritual ruling power of God's Kingdom that will govern earth's *new* society. The *new earth* will not literally be a new planet but symbolically refers to a transformed society on earth which will be holy and righteous and under the administration of the *new heavens* — Christ and his Church ruling from heaven.

Another, and one of the most important *lightning flashes* is dispelling the popular, but erroneous view of the Judgment Day — that Christ will come to earth, summoning saint and sinner before him to be judged. This erroneous view paints a picture that amidst great convulsions of nature — earthquakes, opening graves, rending rocks and falling mountains — the trembling sinners will be brought from the depths of everlasting torment to hear their sins rehearsed, only to be returned to their eternal and merciless doom. According to this theory, all receive their final and unalterable sentence or reward at death, and the entire time allotted to this staggering work of judging billions is a twenty-four hour day.

How differently did the prophets and apostles regard that promised day of judgment which follows the great Armageddon battle! *“Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, the LORD reigneth.... Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the LORD, because he cometh to judge the earth. O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever.”* (1 Chronicles 16:31-34) Note here that the Judgment Day is associated with the goodness and mercy of God. For a world which has been burdened with over six thousand years of sin and death, this exclamation of the coming judgment upon the people of the earth is certainly a day to look forward to — not to fear.

Yes, the process of carrying out the first judgment sentence upon Adam and his generations has taken over six thousand years — *dying, thou shalt die.* (Genesis 2:17 - margin) But the opportunity for life in the Judgment Day, following Armageddon, will be during a thousand-year period of time. In reference to this judgment period, 2 Peter 3:8 states: *“...be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years....”* This is the same time period when Satan will be bound for a thousand years *“to deceive the nations no more.”* It is the same thousand years that Christ and his Bride, the Church, will rule over and bless the *“poor groaning creation.”* (Revelation 20:1-3; Romans 8:22, 23) On close examination, therefore, the term *judgment* (in the Greek, *krisis*) signifies a period of trial, as well as a decision based upon that trial.

Thankfully, the Apostle Paul assures us that the day of judgment will be a glorious and desirable day. *“He hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness....”* (Acts 17:31) Hence, this day of judgment will be a time of instruction in righteousness for earth's billions who have never had a fair opportunity to hear of the Word of truth and to see the plan of salvation. Selfish human institutions are to be destroyed forever as a result of the Battle of Armageddon, not the billions of good-hearted people — those who have not known and accepted Jesus in this life. The conversion of these people will be after the cleansing work of Armageddon. Then, under the benevolent reign of Christ, earth's billions will come forth from their graves and *“the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness”* — but without the fetters of selfish and oppressive powers. Isaiah 26:9

ARMAGEDDON'S GLORIOUS & EVERLASTING CONCLUSION

The Scriptures speak of a constructive conclusion to this momentous Battle of Armageddon coinciding with the collapse of Satan's *present evil world.* (2 Corinthians 4:4; Galatians 1:4) The wars, revolutions and anarchy among all nations that constitute this *great time of trouble* will illustrate the lasting lesson of fallen man's inability to govern righteously and unselfishly. Yes, humanity must learn that all governments — the best and the worst of earth's nations — are but *“kingdoms of this world,”* whose lease of power from God has now expired. But established earthly kingdoms under Satan will not give up without a fight, and hence, we see *spasms* of trouble in the earth, each one getting worse and more frequent — *“...they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth”* in childbirth. Isaiah 13:6-8

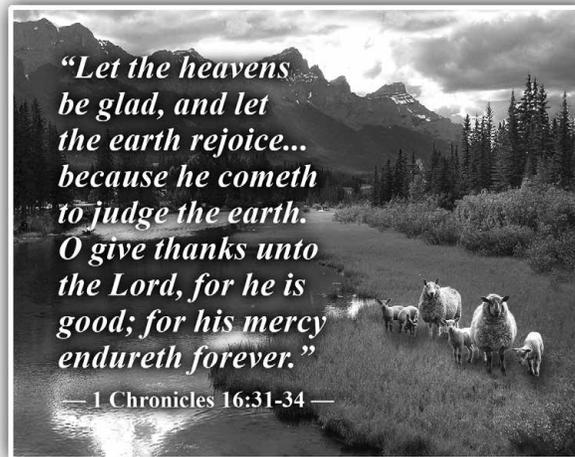
We thank Jehovah God that, although trouble is an unavoidable reality of the end of this age, Jesus' prophecy assures us that *“those days will be limited because of the elect.”* (Matthew 24:22, *Holman Christian Standard Bible*) Christ and his Church ruling from heaven shall intervene on behalf of the *“poor groaning creation”* and will put an end to the trouble: *“And he gathered them together into a place called... Armageddon. ...and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven... saying, It is done.”* Revelation 16:16, 17

Although most Christians emphasize the trouble that is going to happen as a result of God's wrath, we prefer to emphasize the glorious outcome — that in due time, *all the families of the earth will be blessed!* (Genesis 22:18) Yes, a grand and beautiful outcome is prophesied, for upon the ashes of Armageddon, Messiah's kingdom will

be established with full power and glory throughout heaven and earth. This is the silver lining to the storm clouds of trouble looming over the earth at this time. *“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain 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.”* Isaiah 2:2

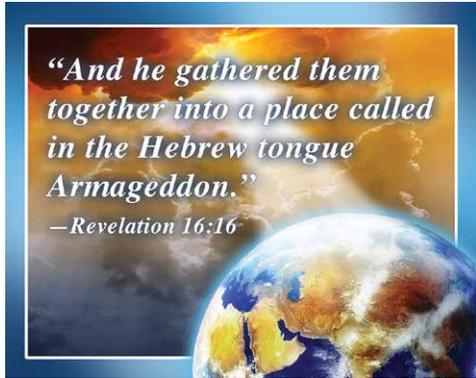
God's wonderful plan will bring down imposing governments, corrupt financial and corporate institutions, hypocritical religious systems, and selfish political and social elements. This leveling destructive work will prepare the way for the righteous reign of Christ and his Church. *“Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord.”* Ezekiel 38:23

We are not to expect the interposition of the Lord's power to stop the Armageddon battle until the nations of earth shall have been greatly humbled to the dust and the people call upon the Lord in their desperation. With this hard lesson of humility, people will indeed desire to turn to God for deliverance. Then, under the benevolent rulership of Messiah, God's intelligent creation will also desire to live in harmony with Him — ready to learn righteousness. As terrible as this trouble is expected to be, it is comforting to know its lessons will be so severe as to make no repetition of them necessary. The great Armageddon battle will truly be *the war to end all wars!* *“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.”* Zephaniah 2:3



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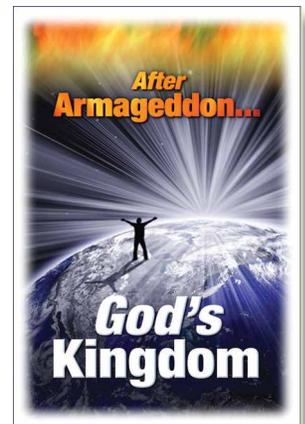
AFTER ARMAGEDDON... GOD'S KINGDOM!

Trouble throughout the world is gathering momentum — news sources describe events almost daily as *apocalyptic* and *catastrophic*. It seems that people of every nation are in expectation of the Biblical *Armageddon!* Students who trust in God's Word, turn to Him to seek answers. They find that when the Bible is studied topically, there is no need to fear the wrath of God to come upon the earth, for He promised that He would make the coming storm a calm. Then, He will make the earth, His footstool, glorious! (Psalm 107:29; Isaiah 66:1, 60:13) Just a few of the topics covered in this booklet are:

- ❖ Gathering to Armageddon — Trouble As Never Before
- ❖ Four Universal World Empires & the Removal of Earth's Kings
- ❖ Many Incredible Prophetic Signs of the End of the Age
- ❖ Hope Beyond Armageddon — the New Heavens and Earth
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