

ARMAGEDDON

Everybody thinks they know what Armageddon is—even Webster’s Dictionary, but I’m finding very few people even have a clue. Amazingly, it is a buzz word that every single person in the western world has heard of, even people that don’t own a Bible think they know what Armageddon is. For sure the movies and books by that title have been completely wrong. How do I know that? The word is taken from only one place in the Bible in Revelation 16:16. That is the only place in the Bible it is mentioned. It is the English translation from the original Greek text referring to a location where the armies of “the kings of the whole world” will gather their armies together for the war of the great day of God Almighty. The really amazing thing is that there is no such place as Armageddon. It appears that what happened was a copyist error of some sort because the text says “the place which is called in Hebrew Armageddon”. The problem is that there is no Hebrew word Armageddon and there is no place we can find called Armageddon.

What happened was the original Greek text said Har Megiddo, which is two words meaning Mt. Megiddo, but it was copied as one word. In time it became known as one word, but everybody assumed John was talking about the location at the foot of the hill of the ancient city of Megiddo, which is about 60 miles northwest of Jerusalem. This great plain is known as the Plain of Esdraelon, the scene of many ancient battles. Napoleon said this was the greatest natural battlefield in the world. Nevertheless, the incorrect nonexistent Armageddon took on a life of its own. The H was dropped and the pronunciation was changed when it was translated into English, and everyone began using the word for their own purposes to refer to some cataclysmic event. Webster’s dictionary defines it as, “a final and conclusive battle between the forces of good and evil.”

Then What Does the Bible Say About Har Megiddo ?

Now that we have exposed Armageddon as a non-existent place, and not even a real word, what does Revelation 16 say about the real historical hill of Megiddo? Currently Tel Megiddo is an archeological hill, a man made mound made over thousands of years by rebuilding a town over the ruins of a conquered or destroyed town. It has at least 26 levels of occupation. From the early historical records of Thutmose III of Egypt we learn of the prominent role of this town and the strategic highway and valley it overlooks. To enter the Middle East and go

to Egypt you had to go through this valley. It was the major trade route for thousands of years. Therefore to control trade, access, and to defend the kingdom everyone wanted to conquer and occupy Megiddo for the last 4000 years. Thutmose conquered it about 3500 years ago. Megiddo has been excavated for over a century, and is considered the cradle of the archeology of Israel.

Megiddo is mentioned numerous times in the Old Testament in Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, and Zechariah. Megiddo overlooks the Valley of Jezreel, also called the Plain of Esdraelon. In fact Esdraelon is Greek for Jezreel. This valley is shaped like a triangle and separates the area of Galilee from Samaria. It stretches from Mt. Carmel on the North to Mt. Tabor on the Northeast and Jenin on the south. Important highways pass north and south, and east -west through the plain.

The context of Revelation 16 (the only place in the Bible Armageddon is mentioned) is the end-time judgments, which immediately precede the second coming of Christ. The final series of judgments are symbolized as bowls being poured out, like the bowls of God's wrath being poured out on a rebellious mankind. In Rev.16:14 the Euphrates River is dried up so the great armies from the east can enter Israel. The key to understanding why all the nations would send its armies to the Middle East is found in v. 13-14. The dragon (Satan) sends his minions to draw or gather them together for the war of the great day of God. Behind the scenes, Satan and his legions of fallen angels are enticing the armies of the world to come. We are not told exactly why each army comes, I'm sure they have their ambitious revengeful reasons, but the real reason is given in Rev.16:13-14. All these armies gather in Israel to fight this war. There is yet one more misconception. People have always thought of it as a battle, but the word used in v.14 was *polemos* in Greek for war, or a series of battles—a campaign. This goes well with the prophet Zechariah's conception of the battles throughout Israel that precede the coming of Messiah. Zechariah said "all the nations of the earth will be gathered against Jerusalem". God will defend Israel, and destroy all the nations, then "they will look on Me whom they have pierced...and they will weep bitterly over Him" meaning they will recognize Jesus as Messiah. Then in Zechariah 14 you have the details of the second coming of Christ, v.4-5, "in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives...Then the Lord will come and all His holy ones (saints) with Him." In Revelation 14:20 we are told of the extent of the carnage—180-200 miles of blood, which just happens to be the length of Israel.

Perhaps the biggest concentration of armies will be gathered in the Plain of Esdraelon at the foot of ancient Megiddo when Christ comes with His sword of judgment and wipes them all out. I take it the demonically deceived nations will converge on Israel seduced by the deluding influence of demons to fight for their own ambitious reasons, but will end up doing battle with God Himself, and that last battle will not last long, but there will be more carnage than can be imagined.

Why Megiddo ?

It is estimated over 200 battles have been fought in this area. Some of the well documented major battles that have been fought in this valley are:

Thutmose III, Deborah def. the Canaanites (Judges4), Gideon def. the Midianites, Saul lost to the Philistines, Shoshank I of Egypt captured Megiddo in 920 BC, Jehu def. Ahaziah (2 Kings9:27), good King Josiah was killed by Pharaoh Neco in 609 BC, several battles during the Maccabean revolt in 167 BC, Antioches vs. Ptolemies, the Romans fought several battles there, the Islamic conquests of 634AD, the Crusaders fought many battles here—their worst defeat was here vs. Saladin in 1187, in 1260 the Mamalukes def. the Mongols, in 1799 Napoleon def. the Ottomans, in 1918 General Allenby defeated the Turks and Germans here, and the current Israel won battles in this valley in 1948, 1967, and 1973. IT IS NO EXAGGERATION TO SAY MORE BATTLES HAVE BEEN FOUGHT IN THIS LOCATION THAN ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD. It is safe to say that the Apostle John predicted the final and bloodiest battle would occur at what is historically the BLOODIEST PLACE ON EARTH.

The War to End All Wars

World War I was given the title of the war to end all wars, but we know how that worked out. For sure the real war that will end all wars will take place on the plain at the foot of Megiddo. It will bring down the final curtain on the human drama and mankind's rebellion against God.

A little over 200 years ago, Napoleon Bonaparte stood upon a hill in northern Israel and looked out over the Plain of Esdraelon. He was frozen in deep thought surveying the expanse of land below him. Then he said something like, "Yes, this is it. This is where all the armies of the earth will gather for battle in the end. This indeed is Armageddon."

Conclusion

This prophetic vision in Revelation 16 was given to us not to satisfy our curiosity, not to apply just to the future, but it was given to us to apply now. Prophecy is given to provoke holiness and service now in light of what we know is coming in the future. What did the guys swabbing the deck of the Titanic do when they found out it was going down? Did they continue business as usual? No, they changed and they took action. 1 John 3:3 speaks of what everyone who is focused on the coming of Christ does, “everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

Let us be grateful now for the grace of God in our lives based on the wrath to come that we will avoid. Let us be grateful now that God is presently restraining evil that will have full reign on the earth then. God’s grace changes us now and makes us new people, and teaches us how to live in a world gone mad. When we consider Armageddon in the future and the availability of God’s grace now, how much more urgent is it that our friends and family come now to Christ while the offer is available?

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