

**Text:** Various

**Title:** Q&A: Battle of Armageddon and Final Rebellion of Satan

**Truth:** The two events in the title are distinct future events.

**Date/Location:** Sunday August 16, 2020 at FBC

## Introduction

Regarding the matter of the sequence of future events taught in Scripture, I received the following question:

“Please differentiate between the Battle of Armageddon and the Satan's rebellion after the millennial reign of Christ. Is there a difference between these two events? When does each event happen?”

This is a common cause of confusion because the Biblical prophecies of “apocalyptic war” are very similar. When war happens, people are killed and things are destroyed. Whether the method is the trenches of World War I, or the more advanced warfare of today, or the siege of an ancient city, the results look similar. In the same way, it is easy to confuse the two battles/wars that are mentioned regarding Armageddon and the final rebellion of Satan.

We begin with the final rebellion of Satan since the timing is crystal clear.

## I. Final Rebellion of Satan, Revelation 20:7-10

- A. The timeline of the book of Revelation is *generally* chronological: not perfectly so, but generally so.
1. Chapters 1-3 concern circumstances around the time of John's writing. Chapters 4-5 concern a similar time, but are of John's heavenly vision. Chapters 6-18 detail the Tribulation with its unfolding sequence of judgments using the figures of seals, trumpets, and bowls, each associated with a new outpouring of divine judgment on the earth.
  2. Then in chapter 19, John reveals that Christ will close the tribulation by returning in glory with His people and the angels. These are future events. The Antichrist and the world's armies will gather to make war against Christ and His army, but this was to absolutely no avail. The beast will be captured along with his false prophet, and they are cast while still alive into Hell (the lake of fire). The rest of their army will be killed by the Lord Jesus Christ.
  3. Chapter 20 opens with the vision of what will happen next—that Satan will be bound for a 1000 years in the abyss or bottomless pit (Rev. 9:1-2, 11, 11:7, 17:8, 20:1, 3; see also Luke 8:31, 2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6). This

is the place of present incarceration of many demonic spirits until they are judged and sent to a different place—Hell itself.

4. Next, Christ will rule over His kingdom for 1000 years, with His saints at His side. This is reiterated throughout 20:4-6.
5. Satan will be permitted out of prison for a short leave (20:7). He will immediately go back to what he always has done, and is even doing today—deceiving the nations (8a).

Mark it, friends. Satan is deceiving the nations *right now* as he always has. How does he do that? It doesn't take much imagination to see how. I've been telling you for years here from this pulpit. Still, some of us and many of our countrymen do not get it.

- B. The evident goal of Satan's deceptive campaign will be to gather a following from those who have unwillingly lived under the rule of Christ in the latter years of the kingdom. They will carry out what was portrayed in Psalm 2 by declaring and then going to war for this principle: "We will not have this man to rule over us!" John observed in the heavenly vision what will occur next, namely that Satan will gather the nations of the earth, and particularly a human leader named Gog and his army, Magog. These names match those of history and we believe Magog was situated to the north of the middle east, around the Caspian Sea. Gog was a leader or prince of that place. See Ezekiel 38 and 39.
- C. The newly formed coalition will commence war with God's people around Jerusalem. This is the capital city of the kingdom of Christ on earth, so it is the logical place to attack to undermine the rule of Christ. But what a fool's errand it is. Delusion and rebellion combine in the hearts of the wicked and will result in their own demise. This is the first action of war that the world will have seen for 1000 years. The human condition is riddled with war, and it will take the presence of Christ and His co-ruling saints to quell that impulse for such a lengthy time.
- D. God will send fire from heaven, much like He did for Elijah in 1 Kings 18:38. This is the final stroke in the divine war against sin and sinners. It is supernatural. It requires none of the saints to risk life or limb to defend the Holy City. The victory is utterly complete and total, resulting in death for all the rebels. After this, judgment will be executed upon all those in the losing army.
- E. 20:10 describes how the Devil will be thrown into Hell, the lake of fire and brimstone. Already resident there will be at that time the beast and false prophet. The "unholy trinity" as it is called will be roommates in this

place of torment, the eternal prison-house of divine retribution for rejection of God and all that is good and right. Thus ends the final rebellion of Satan.

- F. There are two more big events after this, the first being the Great White Throne judgment described in 20:11-15. I have taken this to be the judgment of all unbelievers of all the ages, including those who died during the millennial reign of Christ.
- G. Following that, God will create a new heaven and new earth suitable for a new Jerusalem where the people of God will dwell for all eternity. There we who are Christians along with the holy angels, Tribulation saints, millennial saints, and Old Testament saints, will worship and serve the Lamb and God the Father in the fullness of the Holy Spirit forever!

## II. The Battle (War) of Armageddon Revelation 14-19

- A. Remember: All the above occurs *after* the Tribulation, at the end of the millennium up to the creation of the new heavens and earth. Review the entire timeline in your mind at this point if you need to.
- B. In reading the above texts, we did not encounter the name “Armageddon.” We must go “back in time” and “back in the Bible” to find another passage that mentions it. It is here: Revelation 16:16: Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called **Armageddon**” (NIV). This word comes from the Hebrew phrase “Har Megiddo.” “Har” means “mountain or hill” and “Megiddo” is a proper noun naming a place in Israel located around the current Tel Megiddo, or “mound” of an ancient city.

According to Britannica, it overlooks the Valley of Jezreel. “It lies about 18 miles (29 km) southeast of Haifa in northern Israel. **Megiddo's** strategic location at the crossing of two military and trade routes gave the city an importance far beyond its size.”<sup>1</sup> It is about the same distance southwest of the Sea of Galilee and about 60 miles north of Jerusalem.

Thus, it is a military action named for the place in which it occurs, like “Gettysburg” or “Antietam (Creek)” (north of Sharpsburg, MD).

“Esdraelon: the Greek form of the Hebrew Jezreel -- the name of the great plain which stretches across Central Palestine from the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea and separates the mountain ranges of Carmel and Samaria from those of Galilee; extending about 14 miles from north to south and 9 miles from east to west. It is drained by that ancient river

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/place/Megiddo>

the Kishon which flows westward to the Mediterranean. From the foot of Mount Tabor it branches out into three valleys; that on the north passing between Tabor and Little Hermon -- that on the south between Mount Gilboa and En-Gannim -- while the central portion - the Valley of Jezreel proper - runs into the Jordan Valley (which is about 1000 feet lower than Esdraelon) by Beth Shan ...

Here (1) Gideon gained his great victory over the Midianites (2) Barak defeated Sisera (3) the army of Saul was defeated by the Philistines (4) King Josiah -- while fighting in disguise against Necho King of Egypt -- was slain. This plain has been well called the battle field of Palestine. It has been a chosen place for encampment in every contest carried on in this country from the days of King Nebuchadnezzar of the Chaldeans -- in the history of whose wars with Arphaxad it is mentioned as the Great Plain of Esdraelon -- until the disastrous march of Napoleon Bonaparte from Egypt into Syria ..."<sup>2</sup>

- C. Remember that the book of Revelation is generally chronological in order. So where in the order of events does Armageddon fall? The Armageddon event is described amid the 7 bowl judgments. This is the last of three series of seven judgments (seals, trumpets, bowls). I understand these to ramp up in speed and intensity so that the first seven unfold into the second series of seven, which unfold into the third series of seven, and with increasing speed as the sequences move along. These judgments must be sometime therefore be near the end of the Tribulation.
- D. In contrast, the final rebellion of Satan is 1000 years later, near the end of the millennial kingdom. These are definitely different events, even though they have some similarities. For example, the demons gather the world together to battle (16:14) and Satan does similar (20:8)—“to gather them together to battle.”
- E. We do well to understand Armageddon as the pinnacle of a larger military action that is not just a single battle, but a campaign for the entire region. It took a significant amount of time—perhaps several years. It ends at the strategic spot Armageddon. The larger war will include much of the territory of Israel from north to south, as indicated in 14:20, with 1600 furlongs equal to about 184 miles.
- F. 16:13 speaks of the “behind the scenes” work of demonic powers to deceitful signs to convince the people to gather near to Jerusalem to take the city and, evidently, its Antichrist ruler. The residents of Jerusalem will

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<sup>2</sup> [http://ancientneareast.tripod.com/Plain\\_of\\_Esdraelon.html](http://ancientneareast.tripod.com/Plain_of_Esdraelon.html)

be saved “in the nick of time” by the Lord’s intervention (Zech 14:1-9). Imagine: a city and some believing people in it ruled by one evil power and being devastated by another. The enemy of your enemy, in this case, is not your friend.

- G. The Lord will return as described in Revelation 19:11-16 and will win the battle as described in 19:17-21. Then, just like in point I.F. above, there is a large judgment. God will gather and judge the nations (Joel 3:2, 12; Matthew 25:31-46; Isaiah 66:16; Jer. 25:31; Zeph. 3:8). In fact, the entire Tribulation is an event in which God is judging the nations of the world. After His victory at Armageddon, He will finally sentence the evil-doing nations to their punishment.
- H. The exact timing of the beginning of the Armageddon campaign is debated. There is extensive Biblical revelation on various aspects of the situation, including the invasion by a northern confederacy, the invasion by the armies of the beast, and the entrance of the armies of the Lord Jesus Christ. In all of it, Jerusalem and Israel find themselves at the center of the action. The times will be very difficult for them. As for the opening event with this northern army, the major views as to the timing are as follows (following Pentecost’s numbering, pages 340-358):
1. Before the Tribulation. This is off the Table as far as we are concerned because of the entire timeline of future events and imminency of the rapture.
  2. The end of the Tribulation. This is point of time I favor for the decisive ending battle of the campaign—but *not for the beginning of it*. It is easy to get turned around in the study of this because Pentecost denies that the end of the Tribulation is feasible—but he is speaking about the first invasion of the campaign, not the final battle.
  3. Some believe that this invasion takes place at the beginning of the millennium. That is impossible because by then, the Lord’s presence will bring an end to all such warfare. This view is too late.
  4. Others believe that the invasion beginning the campaign takes place at the end of the millennium. The arrangement of the book of Revelation makes this impossible in my view. This view is also too late, and it confuses this battle with the final rebellion of Satan that we addressed earlier.
  5. Some believe that the invasion happens in the middle of the 70<sup>th</sup> week, that is, the mid-point of the Tribulation. This is the best view for the

*start* of the Armageddon campaign. But remember, the end of it is not until the Lord returns at the end of the Tribulation.

- I. Pentecost well summarizes the situation: “As we survey the whole campaign of Armageddon we observe a number of results: (1) The armies of the South are destroyed in campaign; (2) the armies of the northern confederacy are smitten by the Lord; (3) the armies of the West and the east are slain by the Lord at the second advent; (4) the Beast and the False Prophet are cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20); (5) unbelievers have been purged as a result of these invasions (Zech. 13:9); (7) Satan is bound (Rev. 20:2). Thus the Lord destroys every hostile force that would challenge His right to rule as Messiah over the earth.”<sup>3</sup>

## Conclusion

There are two different events: a huge rebellion against God at the end of the Tribulation, and another huge rebellion against God at the end of the millennium.

Both are demonically influenced. Both involve large military battles against God in the region of Israel. But one is clearly after the 1000 years kingdom and one is clearly before. The timeline of the book of Revelation makes this clear.

Stepping back a few feet and looking at the overall situation, these events tell us that humanity is, without God’s intervention, in a hopeless state. The best we can come up with is wars and rumors of wars, persecution, hatred, and debased behavior. The little periods of peace that we enjoy are unsteady and fragile. Then after a utopian, golden age called the kingdom of Christ, many humans will *still* wish to fight off God’s righteous and perfect rule to form their own Babel-like kingdom once again. No wonder that God must judge these ones with eternal punishment, because they will never stop rebelling and causing problems for the world. No amount of kindly reform or education or observation of perfect Messianic government will change their hearts.

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<sup>3</sup> Pentecost. *Things to Come*, p. 358.