

Premillennialism

The Battle Of Armageddon

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Introduction

The word “Armageddon” only appears in Revelation 16:16. It is described as the rallying-place of the Kings of the whole world, who led by the unclean spirits issuing from the mouth of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet, assemble for “the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.” The battle of Armageddon is anticipated in Revelation chapter Sixteen but is not fought until chapter Nineteen. First the stage is set for a decisive conflict between Christ and the evil powers persecuting the infant church (Rev. 16:13-16). Then the outcome of the great battle of Armageddon is described wherein the Son of God is victorious over the forces of evil (Rev. 19:11-21).

Revelation 16:13-16 ... 13 And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; 14 for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. 15 (“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”) 16 And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon. (NASB95)

Revelation 19:11-21 ... 11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. 13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. 15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” 17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, “Come, assemble for the great supper of God, 18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.” 19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. 20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which

he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. 21 And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh. (NASB95)

The Battle of Armageddon is the source of much sensational speculation. The far-fetched views and misconceptions which people have on this subject are truly amazing to consider. Much of the problem lies with the false system of Premillennialism. It teaches that a universal war will soon take place among the nations of the world, and the final, catastrophic battle of that war will occur on the plains of Megiddo in northern Palestine. The battle described in Revelation is viewed as a literal battle, a bloody holocaust such as the world has never known. It is argued that conflicts are now developing that will lead to Armageddon. It supposedly will take place after the seven years of tribulation, and just before the second advent of Christ. Does all this harmonize with the Bible? Is it Scriptural? In a word, “No.”

We Must Note The Definition Of The Word Itself

Armageddon is the combination of two Hebrew words: *har* [mountain] and *Megiddo* [a place in Manasseh]. Thus *Har-Magedon* refers to the “Mountain of Megiddo.”

- Thomas defines Ἄρμαγεδών [Harmagedōn] as of Hebrew origin, a compound of *har* [mountain, hill, hill country] and *Megiddo* [a place in Manasseh], meaning “Har-Magedon, a mountain of uncertain location” [717].
- BDAG say it refers to “Armageddon, a mythical place-name, said to be Hebrew in Rev. 16:16; it has been identified with Megiddo and Jerusalem, but its interpretation is beset with difficulties that have not yet been surmounted.”

Where exactly is Har-Magedon, the mountain of Megiddo? Actually, there is no literal Mt. Megiddo. The reference is either to the mountains that were near the town of Megiddo, or possibly to the large mound of the city itself. “The fact that the tell of Megiddo was about 70 feet high in John’s day, and was in the vicinity of Carmel Range, justifies the use of Hebrew *har*, used loosely in the Old Testament for ‘hill’ and ‘hill country.’”ⁱ

The city of Megiddo, which means “a place of troops,” was located in the Carmel Mountain range in north central Palestine, overlooking the Plain of Jezreel. This valley, also known as the Plain of Esdraelon, was some twenty miles long and six miles wide. Megiddo was situated on a major highway that linked Egypt and Mesopotamia. All major north-south traffic running through Palestine passed by Megiddo, making it a strategic military stronghold.

Megiddo has been the sight of extensive archaeological work. The first city, built at this site around 3500 B.C., was surrounded by a massive wall that was originally thirteen feet thick and later was buttressed to twice that size. A brick wall and gate dating from 1880 B.C. have also been uncovered. Thutmose III of Egypt captured the city in 1468 B.C., and held it for a brief time.ⁱⁱ

Megiddo was controlled by the Canaanites until they were defeated by the invading Israelites. Megiddo is first mentioned in the Old Testament in the account of the 31 kings conquered by

Joshua (Josh. 12:21). When the land of Canaan was divided among the twelve tribes of Israel, Megiddo was awarded to Manasseh. However, the Israelites were unable to completely drive out the native inhabitants (Josh. 17:11-12; Judg. 1:27). Nonetheless, in time the Israelites subdued and possessed the city (1 Chron. 7:28-29).

Joshua 12:21 ... 21 the king of Taanach, one; the king of Megiddo, one; (NASB95)

Joshua 17:11-12 ... 11 In Issachar and in Asher, Manasseh had Beth-shean and its towns and Ibleam and its towns, and the inhabitants of Dor and its towns, and the inhabitants of En-dor and its towns, and the inhabitants of Taanach and its towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and its towns, the third is Napheth. 12 But the sons of Manasseh could not take possession of these cities, because the Canaanites persisted in living in that land. (NASB95)

Judges 1:27 ... 27 But Manasseh did not take possession of Beth-shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; so the Canaanites persisted in living in that land. (NASB95)

1 Chronicles 7:28-29 ... 28 Their possessions and settlements were Bethel with its towns, and to the east Naaran, and to the west Gezer with its towns, and Shechem with its towns as far as Ayyah with its towns, 29 and along the borders of the sons of Manasseh, Beth-shean with its towns, Taanach with its towns, Megiddo with its towns, Dor with its towns. In these lived the sons of Joseph the son of Israel. (NASB95)

The city was included in the fifth administrative district of Solomon (1 Kings 4:12). During his reign, Megiddo was reconstructed as a military stronghold. Along with Hazor, Gezer, Lower Beth Horon, Baalath, and Tamar, Megiddo was fortified and established as a chariot city for the armies of King Solomon (1 Kings 9:15-19; 10:26-29).

1 Kings 4:12 ... 12 Baana the son of Ahilud, in Taanach and Megiddo, and all Beth-shean which is beside Zarethan below Jezreel, from Beth-shean to Abel-meholah as far as the other side of Jokmeam; (NASB95)

1 Kings 9:15-19 ... 15 Now this is the account of the forced labor which King Solomon levied to build the house of the Lord, his own house, the Millo, the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer. 16 For Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and captured Gezer and burned it with fire, and killed the Canaanites who lived in the city, and had given it as a dowry to his daughter, Solomon's wife. 17 So Solomon rebuilt Gezer and the lower Beth-horon 18 and Baalath and Tamar in the wilderness, in the land of Judah, 19 and all the storage cities which Solomon had, even the cities for his chariots and the cities for his horsemen, and all that it pleased Solomon to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land under his rule. (NASB95)

1 Kings 10:26-29 ... 26 Now Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen; and he had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. 27 The king made silver as common as stones in Jerusalem, and he made cedars as plentiful as sycamore trees that are in the lowland. 28 Also Solomon's

import of horses was from Egypt and Kue, and the king's merchants procured them from Kue for a price. 29 A chariot was imported from Egypt for 600 shekels of silver, and a horse for 150; and by the same means they exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and to the kings of the Arameans. (NASB95)

We Must Note The Symbolism Of Names & Places

Waterloo

A place can become symbolic because of some historical event with which it is associated. For example, many are familiar with the saying, "He met his Waterloo!" Waterloo was a small town in central Belgium where Napoleon was finally defeated in 1815. The expression has come to represent a disastrous defeat.

The Alamo

Consider the words "Remember the Alamo!" In that battle, a small group of men stood bravely against impossible odds. This small mission in San Antonio represents the spirit of courage and sacrifice, and is a proud part of the heritage of Texas.

Megiddo

So it is with Megiddo. Many important battles in Old Testament times were fought in and around Megiddo. It was the scene of so many decisive battles, that it came to stand for battle itself. "These low hills around Megiddo, with their outlook over the plain of Esdraelon, have witnessed perhaps a greater number of bloody encounters than have ever stained a like area of the world's surface."ⁱⁱⁱ

Over the long history of Israel, Megiddo was the scene of never-to-be forgotten conflicts. It was famous for two great victories. Here Deborah and Barak overthrew Sisera and the army of the Canaanites (Judg. 4:1-24; 5:19-21). Against overwhelming odds, Gideon and his 300 defeated the Midianites (Judg. 6:33-35; 7:1-25). It was also famous for two great disasters. Here wicked King Saul, who had been rejected by God, was defeated by the Philistines (1 Sam. 31:1-7). Later, King Josiah was killed when he tried to prevent Pharaoh-Necho of Egypt from going to the aid of Assyria (2 Kings 23:29-30; 2 Chron. 35:20-24).

Judges 4:1-24 ... 1 Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, after Ehud died. 2 And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; and the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-hagoyim. 3 The sons of Israel cried to the Lord; for he had nine hundred iron chariots, and he oppressed the sons of Israel severely for twenty years. 4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. 5 She used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment. 6 Now she sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali, and said to him, "Behold, the Lord, the God of Israel, has commanded, 'Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun. 7 'I will draw out to you Sisera,

the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his many troops to the river Kishon, and I will give him into your hand.' ” 8 Then Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go.” 9 She said, “I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the honor shall not be yours on the journey that you are about to take, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hands of a woman.” Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh. 10 Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali together to Kedesh, and ten thousand men went up with him; Deborah also went up with him. 11 Now Heber the Kenite had separated himself from the Kenites, from the sons of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent as far away as the oak in Zaanannim, which is near Kedesh. 12 Then they told Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor. 13 Sisera called together all his chariots, nine hundred iron chariots, and all the people who were with him, from Harosheth-hagoyim to the river Kishon. 14 Deborah said to Barak, “Arise! For this is the day in which the Lord has given Sisera into your hands; behold, the Lord has gone out before you.” So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him. 15 The Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot. 16 But Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth-hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not even one was left. 17 Now Sisera fled away on foot to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite, for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. 18 Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, “Turn aside, my master, turn aside to me! Do not be afraid.” And he turned aside to her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug. 19 He said to her, “Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty.” So she opened a bottle of milk and gave him a drink; then she covered him. 20 He said to her, “Stand in the doorway of the tent, and it shall be if anyone comes and inquires of you, and says, ‘Is there anyone here?’ that you shall say, ‘No.’ ” 21 But Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and seized a hammer in her hand, and went secretly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went through into the ground; for he was sound asleep and exhausted. So he died. 22 And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him and said to him, “Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking.” And he entered with her, and behold Sisera was lying dead with the tent peg in his temple. 23 So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the sons of Israel. 24 The hand of the sons of Israel pressed heavier and heavier upon Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin the king of Canaan. (NASB95)

Judges 5:19-21 ... 19 “The kings came and fought; Then fought the kings of Canaan At Taanach near the waters of Megiddo; They took no plunder in silver. 20 “The stars fought from heaven, From their courses they fought against Sisera. 21 “The torrent of Kishon swept them away, The ancient torrent, the torrent Kishon. O my soul, march on with strength. (NASB95)

Judges 6:33-35 ... 33 Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the sons of the east assembled themselves; and they crossed over and camped in the valley of Jezreel. 34 So the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon; and he blew a trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called together to follow him. 35 He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, and they also were called together to follow him; and he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they came up to meet them. (NASB95)

Judges 7:1-25 ... 1 Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him, rose early and camped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley. 2 The Lord said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, for Israel would become boastful, saying, 'My own power has delivered me.' 3 "Now therefore come, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead.' " So 22,000 people returned, but 10,000 remained. 4 Then the Lord said to Gideon, "The people are still too many; bring them down to the water and I will test them for you there. Therefore it shall be that he of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go with you; but everyone of whom I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go." 5 So he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, "You shall separate everyone who laps the water with his tongue as a dog laps, as well as everyone who kneels to drink." 6 Now the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was 300 men; but all the rest of the people knelt to drink water. 7 The Lord said to Gideon, "I will deliver you with the 300 men who lapped and will give the Midianites into your hands; so let all the other people go, each man to his home." 8 So the 300 men took the people's provisions and their trumpets into their hands. And Gideon sent all the other men of Israel, each to his tent, but retained the 300 men; and the camp of Midian was below him in the valley. 9 Now the same night it came about that the Lord said to him, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hands. 10 "But if you are afraid to go down, go with Purah your servant down to the camp, 11 and you will hear what they say; and afterward your hands will be strengthened that you may go down against the camp." So he went with Purah his servant down to the outposts of the army that was in the camp. 12 Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore. 13 When Gideon came, behold, a man was relating a dream to his friend. And he said, "Behold, I had a dream; a loaf of barley bread was tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down so that the tent lay flat." 14 His friend replied, "This is nothing less than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has given Midian and all the camp into his hand." 15 When Gideon heard the account of the dream and its interpretation, he bowed in worship. He returned to the camp of Israel and said, "Arise, for the Lord has given the camp of Midian into your hands." 16 He divided the 300 men into three companies, and he put trumpets and empty pitchers into the hands of all of them, with torches inside the pitchers. 17 He said to them, "Look at me and do likewise. And behold, when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. 18 "When I and all who are with me blow the trumpet, then you also blow the trumpets all around the camp and say, 'For the Lord and for Gideon.' " 19 So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands. 20 When the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing, and cried, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" 21 Each stood in his place around the camp; and all the army ran, crying out as they fled. 22 When they blew 300 trumpets, the Lord set the sword of one against another even throughout the

whole army; and the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the edge of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath. 23 The men of Israel were summoned from Naphtali and Asher and all Manasseh, and they pursued Midian. 24 Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, "Come down against Midian and take the waters before them, as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan." So all the men of Ephraim were summoned and they took the waters as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan. 25 They captured the two leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, and they killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and they killed Zeeb at the wine press of Zeeb, while they pursued Midian; and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon from across the Jordan. (NASB95)

1 Samuel 31:1-7 ... 1 Now the Philistines were fighting against Israel, and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines and fell slain on Mount Gilboa. 2 The Philistines overtook Saul and his sons; and the Philistines killed Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchi-shua the sons of Saul. 3 The battle went heavily against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was badly wounded by the archers. 4 Then Saul said to his armor bearer, "Draw your sword and pierce me through with it, otherwise these uncircumcised will come and pierce me through and make sport of me." But his armor bearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. So Saul took his sword and fell on it. 5 When his armor bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died with him. 6 Thus Saul died with his three sons, his armor bearer, and all his men on that day together. 7 When the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley, with those who were beyond the Jordan, saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned the cities and fled; then the Philistines came and lived in them. (NASB95)

2 Kings 23:29-30 ... 29 In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. And King Josiah went to meet him, and when Pharaoh Neco saw him he killed him at Megiddo. 30 His servants drove his body in a chariot from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb. Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah and anointed him and made him king in place of his father. (NASB95)

2 Chronicles 35:20-24 ... 20 After all this, when Josiah had set the temple in order, Neco king of Egypt came up to make war at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah went out to engage him. 21 But Neco sent messengers to him, saying, "What have we to do with each other, O King of Judah? I am not coming against you today but against the house with which I am at war, and God has ordered me to hurry. Stop for your own sake from interfering with God who is with me, so that He will not destroy you." 22 However, Josiah would not turn away from him, but disguised himself in order to make war with him; nor did he listen to the words of Neco from the mouth of God, but came to make war on the plain of Megiddo. 23 The archers shot King Josiah, and the king said to his servants, "Take me away, for I am badly wounded." 24 So his servants took him out of the chariot and carried him in the second chariot which he had, and brought him to Jerusalem where he died and was buried in the tombs of his fathers. All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. (NASB95)

In the Jewish mind, Megiddo was a place of great slaughter and represented God's terrible judgment upon the wicked. Thomas says Armageddon refers to "a mountain of uncertain

location.” BDAG say Armageddon refers to “a mythical place-name, said to be Hebrew in Rev. 16:16; it has been identified with Megiddo and Jerusalem, but its interpretation is beset with difficulties that have not yet been surmounted.” Similarly, Joseph Henry Thayer describes Armageddon as the “proper name of an imaginary place.” Over time Armageddon has become a poetic expression for terrible and decisive conflict. It represents the place where those who oppose Christ will be destroyed with a slaughter like those who defied God’s will in ancient days.

We Must Note Its Significance In The Book Of Revelation

What is the message of Revelation when it speaks of the battle of Armageddon? This book was written during a time of severe and widespread persecution. Christianity appeared to be on the brink of extinction. This was an hour of desperate need. John wrote in order to reassure disciples that the forces of evil would be completely overthrown and the cause of Christ would triumph victorious. The Book of Revelation is a message of victory.

- Thomas defines νικᾶω [nikaō] as derived from *nikē* [victory], meaning “conquer, prevail” [3528].
- BDAG say it means to “(1) to win in the face of obstacles, be victor, conquer, overcome, prevail; (2) to overcome someone, vanquish, overcome;(3) to surpass in ability, outstrip, excel.”

The Greek word *nikaō* occurs a total of 28x in the NT, of which 17 are found in the Book of Revelation (Luke 11:22; John 16:33; Rom. 3:4; 12:21 [2x]; 1 John 2:13, 14; 4:4 [2x]; 5:5; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21 [2x]; 5:5; 6:2 [2x]; 11:7; 12:11; 13:7; 15:2; 17:14; 21:7).

Luke 11:22 ... 22 “But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his plunder. (NASB95)

John 16:33 ... 33 “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” (NASB95)

Romans 3:4 ... 4 May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, “That You may be justified in Your words, And prevail when You are judged.” (NASB95)

Romans 12:21 ... 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (NASB95)

1 John 2:13 ... 13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. (NASB95)

1 John 2:14 ... 14 I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. (NASB95)

1 John 4:4 ... 4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. (NASB95)

1 John 5:4 ... 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. (NASB95)

1 John 5:5 ... 5 Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (NASB95)

Revelation 2:7 ... 7 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.' (NASB95)

Revelation 2:11 ... 11 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.' (NASB95)

Revelation 2:17 ... 17 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.' (NASB95)

Revelation 2:26 ... 26 'He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; (NASB95)

Revelation 3:5 ... 5 'He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. (NASB95)

Revelation 3:12 ... 12 'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. (NASB95)

Revelation 3:21 ... 21 'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. (NASB95)

Revelation 5:5 ... 5 and one of the elders said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals." (NASB95)

Revelation 6:2 ... 2 I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. (NASB95)

Revelation 11:7 ... 7 When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. (NASB95)

Revelation 12:11 ... 11 “And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. (NASB95)

Revelation 13:7 ... 7 It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. (NASB95)

Revelation 15:2 ... 2 And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God. (NASB95)

Revelation 17:14 ... 14 “These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.” (NASB95)

Revelation 21:7 ... 7 “He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. (NASB95)

John wrote concerning things that would “shortly come to pass” (Rev. 1:1; 22:6). Those who take a futuristic and literal interpretation of Revelation fail to grasp the true message of the book. No interpretation of the book as a whole or this battle in particular can have any significance unless it has application to those first century saints to whom the book was addressed.

Revelation 1:1 ... 1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, (NASB95)

Revelation 22:6 ... 6 And he said to me, “These words are faithful and true”; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place. (NASB95)

Revelation is an apocalyptic book, filled with signs, visions, and highly symbolic language. Any interpretation that seeks to literalize its images is doomed to absolute failure. This is the cardinal sin of the Premillennialists. Those who would view Armageddon literally are very selective in their approach. The context speaks of three frogs, a great red dragon, a sea beast, and an earth beast. If one expects a literal battle, he should expect the army to be headed by three frogs. Both figures are symbolic; neither is literal. There is no reason for making one literal and the other symbolic. If the battle is literal, why not the other symbols as well?

The context speaks of God pouring out his wrath upon the evil forces that opposed the early church. The first angel poured out his bowl on the earth and men were afflicted with grievous sores. The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and the waters turned to blood and everything died. The third angel poured out his bowl upon the rivers and streams, with similar effect. The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it scorched men with fire. The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast; the kingdom was darkened, and men gnawed their tongues in pain. The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the Euphrates and it dried up; the way was now prepared for the enemies of the north to make war against the empire. At

this point, an interlude occurs in Rev. 16:13-16. The forces of evil gathered together to fight against God at the place called “Har-Magedon.” Then finally, the seventh angel poured out his bowl on the air. As a result there was thunder, lightning, earthquakes and hailstones. Then a voice proclaimed, “It is done!”

What is the Biblical meaning? There is a fundamental message that is being set forth: Even though all the forces of evil might be gathered together as one in their conflict against God, they will be overwhelmed by His decisive and unrelenting judgment. Early Christians were being persecuted by the Roman Empire. The book of Revelation affirms that Christ would come to the aid of his people. Armageddon thus is a vivid symbolic representation of Christ’s victory over the forces of evil. The cause of righteousness would triumph over the beast, the false prophet, and their allies. The idolatrous religion and godless government of Rome would fall, but Christianity would continue to grow and prosper. This message of victory is not only the overriding theme of Revelation, but is also echoed in Daniel’s prophecy (Dan. 2:31-45).

Daniel 2:31-45 ... 31 “You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. 32 “The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, 33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. 34 “You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. 35 “Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. 36 “This was the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king. 37 “You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; 38 and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold. 39 “After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth. 40 “Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. 41 “In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. 42 “As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. 43 “And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery. 44 “In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. 45 “Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.” (NASB95)

By using the figure of Armageddon, the apostle John does not refer to any particular locality. Ultimately, Armageddon cannot be located on the maps of the earth; its geographical location is unimportant. In the Book of Revelation, the battle of Armageddon represents the decisive conflict between good and evil. It symbolizes occasions when righteousness and evil are engaged in deadly combat. However strong the forces of darkness may appear, and however hopeless the righteous may feel, God will ultimately win the victory! How comforting this message must have been to those early Christians who were suffering under the heavy-handed Roman Empire. The whole thrust of the Apocalypse is to assure the saints of this victory, and to exhort them to avoid compromising with error.

Conclusion

Let us never forget that we are at war with Satan and his forces (Eph. 6:11-17). We must fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 1:18; 6:12), offering a militant defense of the truth (Jude 3). Rome was the evil force when John wrote Revelation, but the principle is timeless. God and his cause will be victorious in the end! The battle will be fierce, the foe is frightening, but victory is ours if we will only remain faithful (1 John 5:4; Rev. 2:10). Ultimately all wickedness and evil will be overthrown by the great power of the Almighty God (Rev. 20:10-15).

Ephesians 6:11-17 ... 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (NASB95)

1 Timothy 1:18 ... 18 This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, (NASB95)

1 Timothy 6:12 ... 12 Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (NASB95)

Jude 3 ... 3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. (NASB95)

1 John 5:4 ... 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. (NASB95)

Revelation 20:10-15 ... 10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be

tormented day and night forever and ever. 11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (NASB95)

ⁱ *The New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J. D. Douglas, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), s.v. "Har-Magedon."

ⁱⁱ *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, ed. Merrill F. Unger & R.K. Harrison, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988). s.v. "Megiddo."

ⁱⁱⁱ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1915 ed., s.v. "Har-Magedon."