

The Battle of Armageddon

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In my second year at Baylor University, I walked from my dorm, across the campus to Waco Hall. There were several thousand people packed into the auditorium. Since I was an hour early for class, I thought I would look in through the door and see what the excitement was all about.

I had to squeeze in between other students to see the platform. The music was the best I had ever heard, and the speakers were so impressive. Many students were moved and changed. The talk spread throughout the campus.

Independent churches from all over Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Mississippi had sent their ministers to one of the first of many Pre-millennial Conferences in the 1950s. This one on Baylor's campus launched a revolution among Evangelists, who would now hold to a Pre-millennial view of a soon coming Lord.

Attending the conference were great speakers as Dr. Charlie Jackson, Dr. Joe Boyd, Dr. Jack Hyles, Dr. J. Harold Smith, Lester Roloff, and many others who spoke on the Pre-millennial view of the coming of Christ. The atmosphere was electric.

Bill Harvey sang "There Waits for Me a Glad Tomorrow," and it seemed that heaven came down and filled everyone in that place. Each speaker had it down perfectly as to what would happen. They were so convincing that we students began to question our misinformed teachers. We were not told of the view in our classes at Baylor. Our professors asked us not to attend the conference.

It came out, months later, that Mrs. White, the wife of the President of Baylor University, believed like the speakers in the conference. An awakening moved across the Baylor campus. Students stood up in class and bravely asked the professors to explain things about the future Coming.

We questioned what the Waco Conference speakers pointed out about the great battle called "Armageddon" occurring in our future. They had explained that armies from all over the world would gather in the valley of Megiddo to fight against the Lord Jesus Christ and His raptured Saints.

They explained that Christians would have already been "Raptured" from off the earth in a secret fashion. The "Raptured Saints" would return seven years later with the Lord and fight in the great battle of Armageddon.

They further explained that the Lord would defeat the armies of the world and then go to Jerusalem with His Saints and sit on the Throne of David, reigning for one thousand years to bring peace to a sin-soiled, war-wrecked world.

This war was discussed in class under much heated debate. The subject was dismissed later because camps were divided, not only on campus, but over the Southland of America in Southern Baptist Churches.

Revolution had begun again over dates and manner of His Coming. Material began to be written, for no one had talked about the subject of the Second Coming on such a scale. Everyone had questions. This was not going away.

Now, you were to wear a label. Car bumper signs were sold by the thousands, saying "Are You Ready?", "This Car Has a Rapture Hatch," "In An our When You Think Not," etc. "What do you believe?" was an introductory interrogation on everyone's lips. The Scofield Bible notes became "the text book" of the fanatics. The authors who had written on the subject in the past came out of the woodwork. The forgotten Dispensationalist was respected again. The Futurist were winning the debate that had gained much headway around the beginning of the 1900s AD in England.

For thirty years I led the music in City Wide Crusades and Independent and Southern Baptist Churches that leaned towards Pre-millennial views of the Second Coming. I had learned every aspect of those views. The soon Coming of the Lord gave impetus to soul winning, and soul winning was my priority.

The churches were expected to turn in a good report of many baptized converts each year. This was the standard for a church that was used and blessed by God. My job as an evangelist was to bring in the lost and convert them with the Gospel and good news that the Lord was coming soon. "Be ready."

After I left Baylor University in 1958, I attended a Conference at the Miller Road Baptist Church in Garland, Texas where I listened to Bill Harvey sing and Dr. Tom Landers, Dr. John R. Rice, and Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. speak on the subjects of "The Rapture," "The Battle of Armageddon," and "The Millennium." Dr. Rice also spoke on the subject, "Tears in Heaven." I will never forget that Conference. The subjects were bone-chilling. They spoke of "the Coming" as something that we could not afford to go through if we missed the Rapture. We must all be ready for the Secret Rapture of the Saints which would occur seven years before the Revelation and Reign. At "the Revelation" the battle begins.

I determined in that Conference that I would gather every verse in the Bible on the subject and spend the rest of my life warning people of the awful impending judgment that was soon to occur before the Coming of the Lord. That was the year 1959, over forty-two years ago.

The verses I used from Zechariah 14:1-21; Jeremiah 3:14-18; 46: 1, 17, 28, and Ezekiel 14:21-23 were written over 2,500 years ago. I began to realize that this was odd, that for almost 2,000 years, Christians should look for the “Soon Return, Rapture and Revelation” of the Lord – and it never happened in all their generations.

I did not want to foolishly believe something for my generation that was not going to happen. So, I started my private study of the subject. First of all, did the Bible teach that a battle would occur in the valley of Megiddo? I looked through my notes on the subject. The most quoted and famous passage was Revelation 16:14-16. John described it graphically. “They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs and they go out to the kings of the whole world to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed. Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.”

I discovered in the foot-notes in my Bible the fact that Armageddon should be translated “mount of Megiddo.” That would not be a valley as I had been told. I also noticed that the kings of the earth would assemble at Armageddon, the mount. However, they would not fight there. They assembled at (H)armageddon to make war on Jerusalem (16:16), many miles away.

The book of Revelation makes no mention of a war in the valley of Megiddo. In fact, I could never find the words, “Battle of Armageddon” in my Bible. Zechariah 14:2 was another verse that speakers used: “I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it.” All of this seemed to have a familiar ring to it. However, none of the verses fit conference speakers’ conclusions.

It was later that I read the account of Josephus, the first-century historian who told of “a great day of God Almighty (16:14) in 70 AD, when the Roman forces from all nations assembled at Har-megedon to make war on Jerusalem (16:16).

Neither the Bible nor Josephus described a battle taking place at Har-megedon, the mount, or the valley adjoining it. Both accounts say that the armies assembled there to fight against Jerusalem, many miles away. Josephus was a Jewish General who was defeated in the first battle of the Jewish-Roman war in 67 AD. Because of many good things about Josephus, the Ruler of Rome commissioned him to become a historian for the Roman Empire and to give detailed information on the activities of Titus and his Roman Army as they waged war against the rebellious Jews. This account covered three and one-half years of battle, until Jerusalem was completely destroyed to the ground. Not one stone of the Temple sat upon another stone.

Josephus had recorded how Titus, the Roman General and son of the Emperor, led his troops out of Egypt, north along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, bypassing the region of Jerusalem, and how he came to the vicinity of Caesarea, bordering Mount Megiddo. Titus and his famous Roman tenth legion waited there for other troops to

arrive from beyond the Euphrates River to the northeast and from Rome to the northwest. Once the troops were assembled at Har-megeddon, Titus gave instructions and they marched against the city of Jerusalem.

Just like the prophecies foretold, the battle happened at Jerusalem, not Har-megeddon. The kings of the earth (made up of nations with Titus) assembled at Mount Megiddo and made plans for a swift and brief battle against Jerusalem. Between Vespasian and his son, Titus, it took three and one-half years to complete this end to Jerusalem. This agreed with the prophecies of Zecharian 14, Revelation 16, Matthew 24, Luke 21, and Mark 13. The prophecies were fulfilled. Should we look for another fulfillment of judgment on Israel?

The Battle of Armageddon is not something for us to look for in our future. It belongs to the past with all the other events that brought an end to Judaism, Jerusalem, and all related prophecies.

In 30 AD, Jews foolishly believed that the time had come for them to throw off the Roman yoke and become a Kingdom of Prophecy. However, like Moses of old, miscalculation without God, proved disastrous.

On his way to the cross, Jesus said to weeping women, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children.” Jesus knew the righteous judgment and extensive destruction that was to come upon them, their children, and the city. It occurred in a span of 40 years from the time He spoke those words –AD 70.

From the earliest days, generations were taught inaccurately that the battle of Armageddon would occur in their lifetime. Yet, Armageddon belongs to the closing days of the first century. This fulfilled Jesus’ prophecies in Matthew 23:34-39 concerning the fate of national Israel which occurred in that generation.

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