

Lesson #9: Apocalyptic Literature and the Battle of Armageddon

Introduction: Premillennialist teach that the battle of Armageddon will take place at the end of the Tribulation and before the Millennium, in which Christ will wage a worldwide battle with the world forces of evil and overcome them. During these last 7 years, there is a building of events which will lead to this great Battle of Battles. The development of world leaders causes this to take place. Revelation 16:13 speaks of these three influences that will drive the world to the brink of disaster.

Apocalyptic literature is not to be interpreted literally. For instance, geographical locations are used to depict a larger message. Geographical sights come to be used to signify ideas, based on events or other connections with that sight. E.g., “hell” (valley of Hinnom), “Zion” – place of spiritual rule of the Messiah, Ps 2:6, of covenant relationship, Jer 50:5, of fellowship with God, Heb 12:22 (part of Jerusalem); “Jerusalem” – e.g. Gal 4:26. We use similar language today such as “Watergate” (scandal involving abuse of power by public officials); “Waterloo” (final, crushing defeat). In Revelation, see also Babylon (14:8), Sodom and Egypt (11:8), and the Euphrates (16:12). What would a physical war in the mid-east in 2000+ have to do with avenging the blood shed by Judaism or Rome in the first century? The Scriptures must be kept in context.

Premillennialist Position:

- “Fleshly Israel will pass through a seven-year tribulation consummated in the battle of Armageddon, after which they will return to God” (Orlin L. Mankamer, *The Battle of Armageddon*, p. 58).
- “Writers of this school of uniformity consider the Beast to be the personal anti-christ of the last days and think that his army will be a literal military force, brought to the repossessed the land” (Albertus Pieters, *Studies in the Revelation of St. John*, p. 169).
- “With the United Arab and African armies neutralized by the Russian invasion, and the consequent complete annihilation of the Russian forces and their homeland, we have only two great spheres of power left to fight the final climatic battle of Armageddon: the combined forces of the Western civilization united under the Roman Dictator and the vast hordes of the Orient probably united under the Red Chinese war machine” (Hal Lindsey, “The Greatest Battle of All Time,” *The Late Great Planet Earth*, p. 162).

Questions for Discussion (Biblical Position):

Apocalyptic Language:

1. Whose “revelation” is the book of Revelation (Re. 1:1)?
2. The word “revelation” is from the Greek word “apokalupsis.” It means an uncovering, a laying bare, making naked: (Thayer). With the use of symbols, images, and visions, Jesus uncovers and reveals a message to His servants of impending persecution and ultimate triumph. This is highly symbolic writing has been termed “apocalyptic literature.” The term “apocalyptic” comes from the word “apokalypsis.” This literary style was used in times of intense trial and crisis. The Spirit chose this style in the book of revelation to dramatize the conflict between Satan and Jesus which played out in persecution of the Christians by Rome. Perhaps this symbolic language was used to protect Christians. If these prophecies had been written in literal language, the Christians who help this book could have been charged with treason.
3. When John wrote this book in about 95 AD, when did he say the prophecies would come to pass (Re. 1:1, 3; 22:6, 10)?
4. To whom was the book addressed (Re. 1:11)?
5. What was the situation of Christians at the time (Re. 1:9; 2:2, 10, 13-14; 3:9)?
6. Who was under the altar (Re. 6:9)?
7. When did Jesus say the martyr’s blood would be avenged (Re. 6:10-11)?

What was the word that reoccurs at the end of each letter to the seven churches (Re. 2:11, 17, 26; **Lesson #9:**

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The Battle of Armageddon:

“Armageddon” in Revelations 16:16 means “Mount Megiddo.” Megiddo was a physical place in northern Israel. The Bible speaks of the valley of Megiddo (2 Ch. 35:22), but there is no literal Mount Megiddo. The valley of Megiddo was a place where decisive battles took place in Old Testament history, like “the Alamo” or “Pearl Harbor” in modern times. For example, Joshua defeated the king of Megiddo in Joshua 12:21; Deborah and Barak defeated Jabin and Sisera of the Canaanites in Judges 5:19; Saul and Jonathan died in battle at the eastern extremity of the plain in 1 Samuel 31:1-6; Josiah died in battle with Pharaoh Necho in 2 Kings 23:29-30.

1. When the sixth bowl of wrath is poured out, forces were gathered for a great battle. Who led the forces into this battle (Re. 16:12-14, 16)?
2. The battle does not take place until Revelation 19:11-21. Who wins the battle?
3. The Premillennialist demands all prophecies be viewed literally, such as the “1,000-year reign,” however, he is inconsistent when viewing aspects like the “frogs” and “dragon” symbolically. Are the following to be taken literally or symbolically?
 - The waters of the Euphrates “dried up”
 - “unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth”
 - “the dragon”
 - “the beast”
 - Gather “the whole earth”
 - Place called “Armageddon”
4. What is the point of this symbolic battle?

Conclusions:

1. The whole idea of an earthly battle of “Armageddon” in the physical mid-east is built on the faulty foundation concepts of a fleshly kingdom and a yet unfulfilled land promise (Jh. 18:36-37; 2 Co. 10:3-5; Ep. 6:12).
2. Armageddon is a symbol foretelling the complete victory of the forces of right over the forces of evil. The struggle pictured in Revelation 16:12-16 is spiritual and evident from the wording used.
3. The events which follow the call of the kings to Armageddon does not mark the end of our time because there is no mention of the coming of Christ, life continues after the last plague, and people still have opportunity to blaspheme God.
4. One should not build a religious doctrine by literalizing symbolic language for such produces conflict with other clear teachings of the New Testament Scriptures.