



THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON AND THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES

THE WRATH OF GOD

In Revelation chapter fifteen we are introduced to the last seven plagues. These plagues contain God's final judgement which is poured upon the world just before the return of Jesus to take His people home. They will be poured out upon those who have rejected Christ's love and mercy, abused His long-suffering, blasphemed His name, and persecuted His people.

As the seventh angel leaves the temple it is "filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power." "No man," literally "no one" was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled." The work of mercy has closed. The High Priest has put off His priestly robes. There is no longer a "mediator between God and men" (I Timothy 2:5). The fateful words echo through the corridors of heaven: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Revelation 22:11).

As the world stands before the heavenly tribunal without an Advocate, the wrath of God, as contained in the seven last plagues, is poured out without any mixture of mercy. Those who are unjust and filthy will receive the plagues of Revelation 16. Those who are righteous and holy will receive the promised protection of God as found in Psalm 91:1-11. Which group will you be in?

THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES

As the plagues of Revelation 16 are poured out upon the earth we find that "the men which had the mark of the beast and upon them which worshipped his image" are at once inflicted with very painful, suppurating ulcers. The fact that men are still suffering from these sores during the fifth plague is clear evidence that the plagues are poured out both successively and within a comparatively short time.

The second plague is poured out "upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man." Everything in the sea dies as a result of this plague creating a most offensive odor. In addition to this, international travel and trade would be obstructed, many would be left jobless, the food supply of many would be greatly reduced, and various diseases would undoubtedly arise.

The third plague falls upon the "rivers and fountains of waters" which are essential to meet man's requirements for drinking, cleansing, and irrigation. Unlike the previous plague, which would result in great inconvenience, economical problems, and possible sickness, this plague would produce immediate and much more serious results.

As the fourth plague is poured out, the sun becomes excessively hot and torments men and destroys

life. While man suffers great torment from this plague, the worst results will be due to the most severe drought and famine the world has ever experienced.

Under this plague men begin to blaspheme God for the torment suffered under these plagues. They now realize that it is against Him that they have been fighting. However, instead of acknowledging their guilt and repenting of their evil ways they curse and blame God for their miserable plight, thus indicating that they are altogether and unalterably opposed to Him and that their eternal destinies have been sealed.

The fifth plague is poured out "upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain." Ironically the world, which has for so long groped around in spiritual darkness, is now smitten with and intense, literal darkness, with its accompanying cold and misery. After the extreme heat of the previous plague this darkness would be all the more severe and the sores of the first plague would also be adding to their great torment.

Men are now fully aware that their sufferings are the results of their rejection of God and yet they "repented not of their deeds" but rather they continued to blaspheme the God of heaven. These men cannot repent for they have sinned the unpardonable sin. They have grieved the Holy Spirit. They have rejected God and accepted Satan as their god. Therefore, God has withdrawn His Spirit and given them over to the one whom they have chosen to serve.

We too can grieve the Holy Spirit and find ourselves among this group of poor pathetic souls when the plagues soon fall upon the world. Every time we reject the prompting of the Spirit of God our hearts become hardened, each ray of light that is rejected plunges us deeper into darkness. The Holy Spirit will lead us into light and truth or leave us in darkness and error. The decision is up to each one of us individually. "Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear His voice, Harden not your hearts..." (Hebrew 3:7-8).

In the sixth plague and Battle of Armageddon we find ourselves confronted with an event which man has for years considered to be an imminent certainty. Yet, however certain this actual battle itself may be, there has undoubtedly been as much, if not more, speculation on the events immediately surrounding this battle than on any subject in the entire word of God. We can, however, rest in the assurance that the Battle of Armageddon is just around the corner. This world is teetering on the brink of eternal annihilation and is about to be gathered "to the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Revelation 16:14). Are you ready for that day?

SPIRITS LIKE FROGS

In Revelation 16:13 John sees "three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet." We further find in verse 14 that these "unclean spirits" are in reality "spirits of devils". These repulsive spirits are seen coming out of the mouths of these religious powers and therefore are symbolic of the "doctrines of devils" which are being proclaimed by them.

Not only do the dragon, beast and false prophet proclaim devilish doctrines, they also have the power to perform miracles. Herein lives a warning for all who would base their belief on miracles, for the devils themselves can and do perform miracles. These supernatural manifestations will not only succeed in deceiving many, but are also the means by which Satan will accomplish his purpose of uniting the world behind him in his last effort to destroy God's remnant.

The King James Bible translates verse 16, "and he gathered them together." This is an incorrect translation and should read, "and they [the unclean spirits] gathered them [the kings of the earth] together" as can be seen by most modern translations. This gathering is done by the "three unclean spirits" who are working under the orders of their general, Satan. He will gather all the nations of the earth together in one final effort to totally destroy God's remnant.

The place of this great final conflict is "called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon" and is believed by many Bible students to be the Plain of Esdraelon, or Valley of Megiddo in northern Palestine. This is a triangular plain about 12x18x15 miles and is located about 60 miles north of Jerusalem.

The word "Armageddon" is in all probability a compound of two Hebrew words meaning "mountain of Megiddo." Many battles have been fought at this strategic spot. It was here that king Saul fought his last battle. Joshua fought here, as did Deborah, Barak, Gideon, and even Alexander the Great. It was also here, at this very place, that Napoleon met his first major military defeat. This area has always been of strategic importance during military confrontations, but the questions arise "Why has God chosen this spot for the last battle of this earth's history?" "What is the significance of this area in relation to the events that are transpiring about us today?"

Many people today believe that the kings of the earth are already beginning to gather for this great battle. If this be so, I have but one question to ask. If the world is already beginning to gather for the sixth plague, how close must we be to the time when the first plague falls and probationary time ends for us all?

When the Lord Jesus declares "It is done" and makes that fateful pronouncement found in Revelation 22:11, which group will you be in? How is your standing before God, right now, this very instant? Are you abiding "under the shadow of the Almighty?" Can you truthfully say, "He is my refuge and my fortress: my God, in Him will I trust."? Have you truly made His Word your "shield and buckler"? If so, you have nothing to fear. (Read His promise in Psalms 91:1-11). If not, dear friend, you have everything to fear.

THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON

I am sure that most of the world is fully aware that there are events taking place in the Middle East today that will affect us tomorrow. The eyes of all the world are now upon the countries of the Middle East and it is because of one major reason--oil. Without this vital substance no nation of the world can exist today and under the sands of Saudi Arabia alone lies over 50% of all of the world's known oil deposits. Any of the big three powers (Russia, China, or the United States) that could gain control of these eastern countries could force the rest of the world into subjugation.

Could this then be the means with which God is going to allow Satan to gather the nations of the earth together? It is definitely a distinct possibility. However, I ask that as we consider this matter you keep in mind that what we are about to cover is but a *partial possibility* of the overall picture of Armageddon.

In Joel 3:9-13 the prophet portrays a picture of the final conflict before Jesus destroys the wicked (Revelation 14:18-20). In this passage we find that the "heathen" (those who have not accepted Jesus, who know not the true God) are gathered together for war, but while they are thus gathered the earth is reaped. The prophet declares that these Godless people are to "come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat." The name Jehoshaphat means literally, "Jehovah judges" and this valley has been identified by the ancient historian Eusebius as the Kidron Valley which lies just east of Jerusalem.

Now if we look in Isaiah 28:21-22 we find that when God performs His "strange work" of destroying the ungodly from off the face of the "whole earth" He refers to yet another valley, "the valley of Gibeon." This valley runs north from Jerusalem past the city of Gibeon (about 6 miles northwest of Jerusalem) and up to Megiddo. This is most significant when we keep in mind that the valley of Megiddo and the valley of Esdraelon are one and the same as the valley of Jezreel, for in Hosea 1:5 God declares that He "will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel." This valley of Jezreel, or Esdraelon, or Megiddo extends from the great seaport of Haifa on the Mediterranean, eastward to the Plateau of Megiddo, then continues eastward to the Jordan River.

If today you were to go to the city of Haifa and drive from Haifa, across the plateau of Megiddo,

to the Jordan River, you would find that the highway you travel runs through the valley of Jezreel. Then follow the highway south through the Jordan Valley and when you turn back west toward Jerusalem you will find the highway follows the valley Jehoshaphat. Once in Jerusalem, drive back north to Megiddo and you will discover that the highway follows the valley of Gideon. When you arrive at Megiddo stop and look at your odometer and you will discover that you have driven exactly 200 miles, or 1600 furlongs, through the three valleys within which the Battle of Armageddon is to be fought (Revelation 14:19-20). Is it just coincidence? It is possible, but let us consider a couple of other possibilities.

If a person were to go to any good reference book and look up the city of Haifa he would find some very intriguing information. Although not many people in the world have even heard of this city, it is nevertheless the most strategic city of the Middle East. The Bay of Acre has a man-made port large enough to hold the combined navies of the United States, Russia, Great Britain and Japan. The city itself is the center of all the railway systems in the Middle East, as well as being the center for the pipelines which bring the Arab oil to the nations of the world.

About forty miles south of Haifa lies Tel Aviv, which is the largest city in Israel. Between these two cities are found most of Israel's heavy industry, Its financial and commercial centers are here as well as the largest airport and the center of all air travel in the Middle East. The centers of communication and transportation are also located here, not to mention the largest school of science and engineering in the entire Middle East.

Is it any wonder why the entire world has its eyes on the Middle East? Anyone who could seize control of just this small section of the world would gain dominion over all of it. If the oil artery of the world was to be severed, the nations would become practically paralyzed and their armies immobilized. If such a thing as this were to be attempted by some nation, one of two things would happen. The rest of the world would either stand idly by and allow it to take place, or these other nations would gather together to battle. Which do you think it would be?

The world is "fully ripe" and the "wine press of the wrath of God" is being made ready. Is the oil shortage what Satan will use to gather the nations together? I do not know, nor do I believe anyone else does. One thing we can be sure of, however, is that Armageddon is but one battlefield in the last great war of this world. Not only will those gathered at Armageddon be destroyed, but the wicked throughout the earth will perish when the seventh plague is poured out.

These nations of the world (whoever they may be) gather together to battle (for whatever reason) and the final outcome of such a war is unavoidable. Nuclear holocaust and the entire destruction of this world. Therefore, the Lord must intervene and this He does in the seventh plague. He comes forth to claim His own and to "destroy them which destroy the earth" (Revelation 11:18-19; 16:18, 20). If the Lord Jesus did not come at this time, there would be nothing left for Him to come for.

Dear friend, as frightful and ugly as Armageddon may appear there is nevertheless a beauty to be found in it. We need to remember that the battle of Armageddon is to be fought on "that great day of God Almighty." That is the day when our Lord and Saviour will appear in the clouds of heaven to take us home. Our battles are over, the victory has been won, and we are on our way home to rest in the eternal peace, security and presence of the Son of the Living God. That, my friend, is the beauty of Armageddon.

THE SEVENTH PLAGUE

As the armies of the earth are gathered for battle a voice is heard from heaven declaring, "It is done" (Revelation 16:17). The earth goes into convulsions and there are "thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great." "And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found"

(Revelation 16:18-21; 11:18-19; 6:14). The heavens shall then depart as a scroll and the inhabitants of the earth shall lift up their eyes and behold the "Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62). And "all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him" (Revelation 1:7). Then, amongst all this commotion there falls "upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent" (Revelation 16:21).

Many centuries before the book of Revelation was written, God had declared to His servant Job: "Hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?" (Job 38:22-23). These hailstones which God shall call down upon the wicked will weigh about one hundred pounds each and shall devastate everything in their path. Imagine this world being bombarded by huge balls of ice at least ten times the size and weight of a bowling ball.

To help illustrate the severity of such a storm I would like to share with you the experience of Commodore David Porter who once encountered a hailstorm with stones weighing only about one pound each.

"Immediately we heard a sound like rumbling thunder, or ten thousand carriages rolling furiously over the pavement. The whole Bosphorus was in a foam, as though heaven's artillery had been discharged upon us and our frail machine. Our fate seemed inevitable; our umbrellas were raised to protect us, but the lumps of ice stripped them to ribbons. We fortunately had a bullock's hide in the boat, under which we crawled, and saved ourselves from further injury. One man of the three oarsmen had his hand literally smashed; another was much injured...

"Balls of ice as large as my two fists fell into the boat, some of them came with such violence as certainly to have broken an arm or leg had they struck us in those parts. One of them struck the blade of an oar, and split it. The scene lasted, maybe five minutes; but it was five minutes of the most awful feeling that I ever experienced. When it passed over, we found the surrounding hills covered with masses of ice, I cannot call it hail, the trees stripped of their leaves and limbs, and everything looking desolate...

"Two boatmen were killed in the upper part of the village, and I have heard of broken bones in abundance... Imagine to yourself, however, the heavens suddenly frozen over, and as suddenly broken to pieces in irregular masses, of from half a pound to a pound weight, and precipitated to the earth." David Porter, *Constantinople and Its Environs, Vol. I, pp. 44-47*

Consider now, if hailstones weighing but one pound maximum could have such a devastating effect upon the landscape, and injure or even kill people, what would hailstones weighing one hundred times this do? Is it any wonder that the apostle John seeing this event and the others connected with the second coming of Jesus recorded the forlorn cry of the wicked, "hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Revelation 6:16-17). These people are fleeing in terror from the One who laid down His life for them. They have rejected the life He freely offered to them and now must suffer death and eternal separation from Him. However, there is a small group that are able to stand, and these do not run in fear; but rather lift up their heads and proclaim, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Isaiah 25:9).

Won't you determine today to be among this group? Will you not open up your heart to God and allow Him to rule in your life that you might receive the seal of the living God?

WHO CAUSES THE PLAGUES?

Before we end our consideration of the seven last plagues there are still a few questions that demand answers. Why would a loving God want to plague and torment human beings? What would

be His purpose in so doing? Is it truly God that inflicts these plagues?

In order to find answers to these questions we must turn our attention again to the events surrounding the pouring out of the first plague. We have already seen that the plagues are poured out as Jesus leaves the heavenly sanctuary at the close of the investigative judgement. The work of mercy has closed and there is no longer a "mediator between God and men." The world now stands before the heavenly tribunal without an Advocate. The Spirit of God has been withdrawn from the earth and the pronouncement has gone forth, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Revelation 22:11). Mankind has grieved the Holy Spirit. They have rejected God and accepted Satan as their god. Therefore, God has withdrawn His Spirit and given them over to the one they have chosen to serve. The world has been given over to Satanic rule and shall reap the results as Satan plunges the world into one great, final time of trouble. The same power that is exercised by God's angels when He commands, can and will be exercised by Satan's angels when God permits, which He does at this time.

In Romans 1:18-32 the apostle Paul speaks of the "wrath of God" falling upon those who have rejected or suppressed the truth, and therefore, "*God gave them up to uncleanness,*" "*He gave them up unto vile affections,*" and "*gave them over to a reprobate mind.*" Following these statements Paul then gives a dreadful list of the abominable deeds of those who have turned from God to serve Satan. So as can be seen, the "wrath of God" is a giving up of the wicked to reap from Satan the results of their rejection of God's mercy.

If we look to the word of God we will find that there are but two reasons why God plagues or inflicts mankind. The first of these is chastening, which the Lord uses to correct His people and bring them to repentance, (see Revelation 3:19; Proverbs 3:11-12; Hebrews 12:11) and the second is to deliver them from oppression. (Exodus 7:1-5; II Kings 19:6, 7, 35). Which of these two purposes are served by the first six plagues? Neither! The righteous have fully settled into the truth and have received the seal of God. The wicked have rejected the truth and have received the mark of the beast, they have grieved the Holy Spirit and can no longer respond to God's love and mercy. Each individual has made their choice and sealed their own destinies, there is no changing or repenting (Revelation 22:11). So the plagues cannot be for chastening. But do they serve to deliver God's people? Far from it, for they enrage the wicked and serve to unite them against God and His people.

As can be seen, the first six plagues do not serve to chasten nor deliver God's people, but are simply the result of God with-drawing His Spirit and leaving the rejecters of His mercy to the malice of Satan. However, the seventh plague is different. Satan, who has been in complete control of the world, has used the first six plagues to unite the impenitent in implacable hatred toward God and His people. Then, in the seventh plague Jesus declares, "It is done," Satan's rule has come to an end, and the angry multitudes are suddenly arrested as *God pours out the seventh plague and comes to deliver His people.* The hatred and malice of Satan are revealed in the first six plagues, whereas the love and mercy of God are revealed in the seventh as He comes to deliver His people and destroy Satan's kingdom of sickness, death, and terror. This is how a loving God fits into the frame work of such fearful plagues as these.

The kingdom that God desires to give to each of us is one wherein "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" (Revelation 21:4). That day will be very, very soon; but until then we can rest in the assurance that "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Hebrews 10:37).

Until that day rest in the assurance that "only with thine eyes shall thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation: There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." *Psalms 91:8-11.*