

Battle of Armageddon

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Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, as we reflect on the words of that song, Lord, the imagery that we have of the three Hebrew children and the fierceness of the fires, and there was that fourth, one like unto the Son of Man. Lord, the imagery that we have of Moses leading the Israelites on dry ground and, Lord, all the other testimonies that scripture gives us, that were no matter what is around us, no matter what is before us, that God, you are with us. And Lord, today as we open up your holy word, Lord, we turn to the battle of battles and, Lord, help us to see that you're not just with us, but you go before us, you lead us and we are safe and sheltered as we follow behind you. Help us, O God. You have prepared our hearts, may now we hear from your holy word. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

This morning, I want to invite you to open your Bibles to the book of Revelation, chapter 19, the last book of the Bible, almost one of the last chapters of the Bible, chapter 19 of the book of Revelation. Now, just to be transparent with you, we're going to spend the majority of our time in chapter 19, however, there are some other passages within the book of Revelation that we are going to allude to, and you may want to feel the freedom to turn to. We're going to be in chapter 16, chapter 14, and a little bit in chapter 11, but primarily today, we're going to be in chapter 19.

Now if you're a guest or visitor with us or you haven't worshiped with us in some while, I want to invite you to a journey not just through the last book of the Bible, not just through probably one of the most famous books of the Bible, but this is technically the last things that God has given us, his church. Chronologically speaking, it is the final communication that God gave us prior to his soon coming return and as we've walk through the book of Revelation, some of the things we've discovered are thus, first and foremost, the book of Revelation is not some veiled apocalyptic, you've got to have multiple degrees and some kind of hidden code to figure out, in fact, it says in the very first verse that he wants to show us these things which must shortly come to pass. And one of the things about the book of Revelation that is important is that within its 22 chapters, it contains over 200 references, inferences, or quotations from the Old Testament. And so the book of Revelation is really like taking all these puzzle pieces from the Old Testament and it's this book of Revelation that puts them in their right order. Secondly, as we walk through the book of Revelation, we've noticed that this

Apostle John, who was on the island of Patmos, who received this incredible vision, that he was an eyewitness to the wrath of God. He heard the declaration for the seals to be opened. He was commanded by God to write down everything that he saw but what's interesting, because he's a believer in Jesus just like you and I, is he never personally experienced the wrath of God. He saw it, he heard it, and he wrote it down, but he was never directly impacted by it. And today as we come to chapter 19, we come to the end of a section known as the "great tribulation," and today in verse 11 we're going to look at probably the most famous battle in the history of the world. In fact, the word Armageddon itself just has an illusion or inference to that which is of the ultimate destruction. Now let me warn you in advance, we're about to read verses 11 through 21 in chapter 19, and you're about to hear the fact that the word Armageddon is not in this passage. This is the battle of Armageddon, but it's actually in chapter 16 that the word Armageddon is used to refer to this famous battle that we have here in chapter 19 but as you're going to see, it is definitely the same entity.

Beginning of verse 11. It says,

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. 12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. 13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. 17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; 18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. 19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. 20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

Now, what we have just read is a very graphic portrayal and description of the most famous battle in the history of the world, and because there is so much, shall we say,

opinion, there are so many different perspectives, there are so many different ideologies regarding this famous battle of Armageddon, I think today would serve us well just to answer some pretty basic questions, ultimately leading us to the why this passage is so important for our lives.

Let's begin with the "when." Everybody wants to know when does Armageddon happen? Well, unfortunately today I'm not going to give you a year, but I am going to tell you when it takes place. It actually is sandwiched between two major events as disclosed and described in the book of Revelation. On the front side, chapters 6 through 19 contain a time period that Jesus Christ himself referred to as the Great Tribulation. In fact, in Matthew chapter 24, he said that this would be a time period not only of the wrath of God, but there had been no time period prior or after that could compare to these "seven years." And even though Jesus did not declare a seven-year time period, in that same passage, he alluded to Daniel chapter 9, who did so, and so Jesus is confirming this great prophecy of old, of this time period of great wrath and destruction and death literally at the hands of God. And then on the other side, chapter 20, which we'll discuss next week, this is one of those passages in the Bible that believers in Jesus Christ have been longing for for millennia. Chapter 20 describes Jesus Christ himself seated on an earthly throne and Satan bound in the bottomless pit for a thousand years. It is in between these great events that we have the famous Battle of Armageddon but I don't want you to see it as kind of an in-between event as much as I want you to see it as a culmination or a climax of what you and I know as that "Great Tribulation."

The second question makes it a little more interesting. Who? Who is there at this famous battle? Who participates? Who observes, etc.? Well, this is where chapter 16 comes into play a little bit. If you have the ability to turn back a few pages, in chapter 16, verses 13 through 16, it is portraying what this famous battle will look like. It is there in verse 16, where it's called the famous Armageddon but notice in verse 14, right in the middle of the verse, it says, "the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." And one of the things that we discover when you study this passage of scripture, there have been those that want to dismiss the magnitude of this great battle and say, "Well, we know it's a battle between Jesus and those that are rebellious against him, but it says the kings of the earth, the kings of the world." But did you not just read in verse 19 or chapter 19 where it says all of humanity is there? In fact, the word that we could use to describe it is everybody.

Now, I understand we're going to talk about this next week. There are some exceptions. There are some outliers. There are those that heeded Jesus's instructions in Matthew 24, and they "ran for the hills," never received the mark of the beast, and will not be there in defiance against him, but as a general rule of thumb, the kings of the earth, the rulers of the world, and those who are under their tyrannical leadership are there at what we know as this famous battle. And then we just read in chapter 19 that when Jesus comes back, he's not alone either. It says the armies of heaven are with him. Now for those of you who are not from the south, we have a word for this. It's called e'rbody body. E'rbody is there, but it's not just physical.

Turn back to chapter 19 for just a moment. I want you to look in verse 17. It says that the fowls of the air are summoned, and it says there that all of those that are defiant against Jesus, all those that rebel against him, that their flesh, the horse's flesh, that everyone and everything that is contrary to Jesus Christ is consumed by these fowls. Now don't get me wrong, there may actually be a large collection of little birds that God summons for this event, but you would have to admit that's a whole lot of birds, is it not? Did you know there is actually biblical evidence that the fowls of the air are not always literal birds? In fact, you go back to that prophet Daniel, there's a famous scene where Nebuchadnezzar, the leader of Babylon, has this dream and in his dream, he sees this giant tree, and within the tree, it is inhabited by fowls of the air, and in the interpretation that God gives Daniel, he describes those fowls as "demonic" in nature. Then we get to Mark chapter 4 and Jesus tells a very famous parable called the parable of the sower. I'm sure you're familiar with it. It's the story of a man who cast out the seed on four different types of ground. Remember the first seed, it says it lands on the ground and it says that it is no more. It doesn't bear seed. It doesn't bear root. In fact, it says the fowls of the air come and take it away. Makes sense. So the disciples, they pulled Jesus aside and they said, "Okay, time out. We need an interpretation. What does that parable really mean?" Do you know how Jesus interpreted that first scene? "And Satan came and devoured them." Jesus Christ used the term Satan as a synonym with the fowls of the air. In other words, when we talk about who is at "Armageddon," there are those that are against Jesus, there are those that have believed in Jesus, and I believe there's biblical evidence that all of the angelic hosts and even the demonic entities have gathered in this one very strategic place.

Which leads to the "where." Where literally on earth is this going to take place? Now we just saw in chapter 16, verse 16, that in the Hebrew tongue it is called Armageddon. Today in our world in a non-Hebrew tongue, there are two other descriptors for this place. It is called the Valley of Jezreel or the Valley of Megiddo. Technically speaking it is on the northern side of what you and I know as the land of Israel. Now before I show you a picture, I want you to imagine what we know as Israel, southern Syria, kind of the world that this takes place. There are two things that is in great abundance in this part of the world: mountains and rocks. Everywhere. There is not a flat piece of ground anywhere and there's rocks everywhere. You say, "Well, why is that important?" Because when you go to this famous valley that's described in the Bible, there's not a whole lot of mountains and there's not a whole lot of rocks. In fact, look at this picture. Do you know what that valley is? It is almost as if God supernaturally took a hot butter knife and just carved out the land.

Now, this is no normal valley. In fact, it's a very strategic valley. This valley, if you were to stand in the middle of it, just for the sake of illustration, just as the picture shows, I want you to imagine standing in the middle of this valley and you're faced north. If you faced north, Asia is to your east, Europe is to your west, Africa in the Middle East or to your south. You are literally standing in the crossroads of the world. In fact, there is a place they call the Highway of the Kings that really culminates in what we know as the Valley of Jezreel, Megiddo, or Armageddon. If you had the resources, if you had the means "back in the day," let's just say you lived on the continent of Africa and you wanted to go see somebody in Europe, you had to go through this valley. If you were in

Europe and you wanted to see somebody in Asia, you had to go through this valley. In other words, this was a place of great travel, great trade, and you know that when people travel and they trade that much, what are they going to do? They're going to fight, are they not? There have been more conflicts and wars and death that have taken place in this valley because of its very strategic location. It is almost as if this place is humanity's battlefield.

It's very strategic but let's talk about quantity for just a moment because one of the issues that people bring up with the "Battle of Armageddon" is how can everybody, how can everybody be there? I mean, seriously, we're a global society, we're a global world, how and why and is it even feasible or possible? Well, in the book of Revelation chapter 14, it says that this valley, listen to this, is 176 miles in length. That's how long that it is. Now, there have been disputes about the square footage or square mileage, so to speak, so let me give you some parameters. On the conservative end, now I think they're being too conservative, there are some people that claim that the Valley of Armageddon is only about 100 square miles. That's it. There are others that say it's upwards of 400 square miles. But the thing you need to hear is what you see before you, it's a massive flat area but even in the surrounding areas, you can see where humanity could gather, and when you look at the world's population compared to the book of Revelation, you'll discover that Armageddon is a whole lot more feasible than a lot of people give it credit for.

Let's just take today's numbers. The world says there's about 8 billion of us, right? About 8 billion of us. If you've read Revelation chapter 6 through 19, you know what you discover? That when the seals are opened, the trumpet sounded, and the vials opened up, over half of humanity lose their life. Over half. So just for the sake of simple numbers, you're down to about four billion, correct? Well, if you're down to four billion, what that does not take into account is all the people that the Antichrist killed because they didn't take the mark, the people that died by natural attrition, death, disease, whatever it may be, and how about the number of people who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ that are caught up to be with him? It is not unfathomable to think that when we get to this "famous battle," there's only about two billion people there. You say, "Man, that's a whole lot of people." Yeah, but they could fit there. If you lined everybody up in a "military formation" as tight as it can be with the valley and its surrounding areas, easily a couple billion people could arrive. So when the Bible says that the whole world's there, the whole world is there.

So what happens? What do we see at this famous battle? Well, the first thing is we see a picture. We see a picture of everything that God has preached and proclaimed throughout what we know as the Old Testament, specifically, the book of Joel chapter 2 talks about that famous and fearful, dreadful "day of the Lord." If you're reading through the Old Testament prophets and you see the phrase "day of the Lord" or "that day," it is speaking of the judgment of God that culminates at what you and I know as the Battle of Armageddon. Now, what we just read though in chapter 19, it began with the heavens opening up, did it not? Well, in Acts chapter 1, Jesus Christ has lived, he's died on the cross, he's raised from the grave, he's taught the disciples for 40 days, he ascends to the right hand of the Father. Do you remember what the angels said? Those two angels said,

"Why do you gaze up into heaven? Do you not know that the same manner he departed, he will one day return." The Bible not only spoke that there's a day coming where the Lord will enact his vengeance, but he will do so by coming through the clouds, which is exactly with the angels projected, exactly what Revelation chapter 19 says, and then all the way back in the book of Zechariah chapter 14 it says when Jesus Christ physically shows up at this famous battle, that he descends and he lands on what we know as Mount Zion. Now Mount Zion is on the south side of the Temple Mount of Jerusalem, and please forgive my gift of sarcasm but I know you're going to be shocked that if you're on Mount Zion it is a straight shot to that valley. The path has already been carved by God himself.

So the picture that we have is that for thousands of years, God has been foretelling us that because of our rebellion, because of our rejection, there is coming a day where he will descend out of the clouds at this famous battle culminating this great tribulation. But this is a particular battle. This is not like any other one. In fact, if you're able to flip a few pages more to the left, Revelation chapter 14, verse 20. There is a description of this battle. It's probably one of the most famous descriptions of any battle in the world. You may have heard it, you may be aware of it, but you may have never seen it on the pages of scripture. In chapter 14, verse 20, it says that this battle, those that are slain, their blood will rise to the bridle of the horse. Now, one of the things the Bible does not share with us, and some of you will understand this, is we don't know how many hands this horse is. We don't know how tall this horse is. But just for the sake, listen, a very conservative illustration. I want you to imagine that the valley, which by the way the Bible says is 176 miles long, just pretend, very conservative, it's only 100 square miles. Just work with me. But it's four to five feet deep in the blood of those that were slain.

Why is this a particular battle? This isn't just the wrath of God, this is the vengeance of God. In fact, back in Deuteronomy chapter 32, it talks about that "vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." This is a famous passage, not only in scripture, but back in the year 1741, a man by the name of Jonathan Edwards preached from this text one of the most famous sermons ever in the English language called "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," and he talked about there was a day coming where God's vengeance would be poured out on those that have rejected him and have rebelled against him, and that's what Armageddon is. This isn't the seven seals of wrath. This isn't the seven trumpets of wrath. That was a warm-up to Armageddon. Armageddon is the vengeance of God. Think wrath of God to the "nth degree."

But it's also very prophetic and I don't mean the fulfillment of prophecy, but notice back in chapter 19 verse 20, it says that Satan and the false prophet and those that have rebelled with them, they are "cast into the lake of fire." Now, when you walk through the Bible, particularly the New Testament, there are different words the Bible uses to describe a place of eternal torment. The word hell is used quite a bit, in fact, twice as much as the word heaven from the mouth of Jesus himself. You have the bottomless pit, which we'll speak of next week, and then you have what we know as the "lake of fire." And there's a lot of times where we like to disseminate the differences between, but just as a, forgive the phrase, "gentleman's agreement," can we all just agree that none of them

are appealing or pleasing, and that none of them are a place you'd want to spend one moment, much less all of eternity? And the reason that it is so prophetic is because back in Matthew chapter 25, Jesus told us of this moment. See, on the Mount of Olives, just days before his crucifixion, Jesus is there with Peter, James, John, and Andrew. They're overlooking that famous Temple Mount. For two chapters in Matthew, Jesus literally pours out how the things are going to happen at the end of days. There in chapter 25, he talks about his return, this "famous Battle of Armageddon," and after it is over, we have the story of him separating the sheep from the goats. And there to the sheep he says, "Go into the kingdom that your Father has prepared for you everlasting." Then he turns to the goats and what does he say? He says, "Go to the lake of fire," listen to this statement, "prepared for the devil and his angels."

Now why is that so prophetic? Because what we see here in Revelation chapter 19 is the fulfillment of what Jesus said was instituted when Satan first rebelled against him, and here's the beautiful thing about that: according to what we just heard from Jesus' own mouth, prepared for the devil and his angels, not only is it a horrible place, an eternal place, but it's a place that was not designed for you. The lake of fire was never designed for you. Humanity, from the Garden of Eden to today, has bought the lie of the enemy that somehow, someway, we know better than God does, that we can live life better, we can make better decisions, we know how to do this thing called life better. Where does it lead us? Right where the devil ends up, in the lake of fire. And Jesus prophesied from the very beginning that this is how the story would end.

So the last question is "why"? Why do you and I have to know about the Battle of Armageddon? Why is it important to understand the distinctions and the differences? Well, there's this little verse tucked in the book of Revelation chapter 11 that oftentimes is a little bit obscure and can we be honest, gets overlooked. In the middle of all this great tribulation, I mean you've got seals being opened up, trumpets sounding off, vials being poured out, I mean it's death and carnage everywhere. In the midst of the seventh trumpet, I want you to hear what is said in Revelation 11:15. It says "the kingdoms of this world have now become the kingdoms of our dear Savior Jesus Christ." Now, that's a great statement, but can we unpack that for just a moment? That means that prior to that statement, they were not his. You do realize in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 4, it calls Satan the "God of this world," and when Jesus was in the wilderness tempted for 40 days and 40 nights, Satan offered him the kingdoms of the world if he would just bow down and worship him. Here's what's interesting: Jesus says, "Get behind me, Satan, do not tempt the Lord your God." He did not say, "How can you give me that, you don't even own them?" Jesus by default basically inferred, "Yeah, you're the God of the world and you have the right to dispense those to whomever you want." And we just read throughout the book of Revelation that one day this beast or Antichrist will control, you guessed it, the entirety of the world. But the Bible makes it very clear, seventh trumpet, there's a transfer of title. The deed is transferred. No longer does the beast or Satan control this world, but the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and the reason that this is so important is that just like the Garden of Eden, the enemy, Satan, has tempted us and he has twisted things for us to believe that somehow because he is in charge and he gives us what we want to hear and what we want to see, that maybe, just maybe, we ought to

listen to what he's selling. And guess what? There's coming a day where the entire world is not just under his thumb but under his iron fist of control. Without a shot being fired, without anything dramatic taking place, just the simple declaration of God himself, the title is now transferred and when that title is transferred, what do we discover? We have an entire valley filled to the brow of the horse with blood for those who think they still possess, own it, or could control it.

The reason this is so important goes back to the beginning of the message. Who's there? Everybody. Not just at the current time but the armies of heaven, that's those that have believed on the Lord Jesus for not just days and years but millennia, and the reason this is so important because there's coming a day where the biggest battle in the history of the world will take place and you have a decision to make, which side are you going to be on? You don't have the option of just buying a ticket and some popcorn and watching. You're either on the side of victory or on the side of defeat. You're either with the King of kings and the Lord of lords or you're with the one who's bound in the bottomless pit and the lake of fire for all eternity. The reason this information is so important is because your eternity is either on one side of the battle or the other. The question is, which side are you on?

Let's pray with our heads bowed, our eyes closed. Today as we gather in this place, you may be here literally, you may be here virtually, but maybe today as we study an event that is so in the future and so dramatic, maybe today's that day though that the Spirit of God took the Word of God and did a spiritual surgical procedure upon your heart and maybe today is that day where you realized that you're on the wrong side. Maybe today's the day where you realized that you've spent a life rejecting and rebelling against Jesus Christ. And maybe today you're saying, "Oh, but God, is there any chance I could end up on the right side?" Well, the Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. That means, yes, whoever you are and wherever you are, if you call on Jesus to save you, he'll forgive you of your sins, he will save your soul and, yes, at the passage we read today, you will "be on the right side." You say, "Well, what does it mean to call on the name of the Lord?" Well, can I tell you what it doesn't mean? It doesn't mean to "get religion." It doesn't mean to become a Baptist. It doesn't mean to never miss church again or to do more good than you do bad. To call in the name of the Lord means to admit that you've got a sin problem that only Jesus can fix. And maybe today you're that person. Can I encourage you to cry out? It's not about repeating words or phrases that I or somebody else might use. It's not about reading a script. This is about your heart's cry where you confess to God that you have sinned and that Jesus is the only one that can save you. If you're here today and you're that one who needs to cry out, can I encourage you to do so? Maybe your heart's cry would go a little something like this. "God, today it is time that I confess to you what you already know about me, I've got a sin problem. I have rebelled against you. I have rejected you. God, I have been places I had no business being. I have done things I had no business doing. God, you know I have spoken words and I have had thoughts that are completely in rebellion to you. And God, I believe I believe what your word says. It says, the wages of my sin is death. But God, it also says but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. God, today I believe, I believe there's nothing I can do to fix my sin problem, there's nothing anybody around me

can do, it is only Jesus Christ himself who can forgive and save me. So today, God, I want you to know I believe. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he came on my behalf. He lived a sinless life on my behalf. God, today I believe that when he allowed himself to be hung upon a cross that he was bearing the pain and the punishment of my sin. God, today I believe that three days later when he walked out of the grave, he didn't just gain victory over death, he made it possible for my sin to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God today, I don't have the answers to all the world's problems, I don't have the answers to the struggles and the deficiencies of this old world but there's one thing I know, I've got a sin problem that only Jesus can solve. So the best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me. I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed, our eyes still closed, you might be that person today who cried out to Jesus. In a moment, I'm going to pray for us. We're going to stand and sing together and I want to invite you wherever you're seated just to step out and to step down here to the front. I'll be here. We'll have others here. In fact, we have a room set aside to give you the time and attention that you need and you deserve. Maybe today, you're like this young man who came before us. He was already a believer in Jesus but he needed to walk through the ordinance of baptism to show on the outside the reality of the inside. Maybe you're that person today who needs to have that conversation or maybe you're like folks we meet each and every week who say this is my church home, this is my family of faith. Whatever the conversation, it would just be an honor to have it. But maybe today you say, "Pastor, I'm just walking through some things. I've just got a rough road behind me and in front of me." Maybe today you just need to be prayed with or prayed for. Whatever is going on and however the Lord is moving, we just want to be a part of it.

Lord Jesus, as we come to this time of decision, God, thank you that in spite of our rebellious nature, in spite of our depraved heart, Lord, there is so much biblical evidence that you have not given up on us. The Bible says that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us and so, God, today I pray that somehow, as only you can do, you would drown out all the voices that are opposed to your word, and it would only be your Holy Spirit speaking through your word that we would respond to this day. Whatever it may be, may we simply respond. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

If you would stand with me as Bruce leads us. Whatever decision, we'll be right here at the front.