

Just What Do You Mean...

“ARMAGEDDON”?

Few understand the *real* meaning of this much-misused biblical term.

THE WORD *Armageddon* is familiar to just about everyone.

Statesmen, scientists and generals warn of the dire prospects of a “nuclear Armageddon” that could annihilate mankind from the face of the earth.

Many believed that World War I—and later World War II—would end with Armageddon. Some today believe that Armageddon will be the last battle between the democratic West and communist East.

But did you know that *nowhere* in the Bible—from Genesis to Revelation—is there any mention of a future “Battle of Armageddon”?

The Bible, of course, does reveal a great military confrontation to occur at the end of this age! But it is not called the Battle of Armageddon.

Hill of Megiddo

The word *Armageddon* is found only once in all the Bible—in Revelation 16:16. That scripture reads:

“And he gathered them [the kings of the earth and their armies see preceding verses] together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.”

We see here that Armageddon is

described in the Bible as a *place*, not an event. It is a place where armies *gather*. But notice that there is no mention of Armageddon being a battlefield, an actual scene of fighting.

Where is this place called Armageddon?



The word *Armageddon* is a Greek form of the Hebrew name *Har Megiddon*. It means “hill (or mountain) of Megiddo.” Megiddo is an ancient town of Palestine. It is in the modern state of Israel on the southern rim of the large flat expanse of the plain of Esdraelon (also called the valley of Jezreel).

Megiddo lies about 55 miles north of Jerusalem, and about 15 miles inland from the Mediterranean Sea.

From the huge mound of Megiddo that today marks the site of the ancient city, one enjoys a commanding view of the valley of Jezreel stretching out to the northwest far

into the distance (see photos). Jezreel is Israel’s largest and most fertile valley and is often referred to simply as *Ha’emek*, “The Valley.”

Ancient Battlefield

In ancient times, Megiddo was a city of great importance. It lay at the strategic crossing of important military and caravan routes. The Via Maris, the old coastal route linking Egypt with Damascus and the east, traversed the Jezreel Valley by Megiddo.

In view of the strategic nature of the area, it comes as no surprise that the valley of Megiddo has been the scene of famous battles since the dawn of history. It is one of history’s bloodiest battle-

fields. Some historians believe that more battles have been fought there throughout time than at any other place in the world!

Megiddo is first mentioned in the Bible in Joshua 12:12. It was one of the cities of the Canaanite kings defeated by Joshua and the Israelites at the end of the 15th century B.C.

Some two centuries later the plain by Megiddo was the site of a major engagement between the Canaanite captain Sisera and Israelite forces under Deborah and Barak (Judges 4 and 5). This ancient confrontation, which might

accurately be called a "battle of Armageddon." ended with a total rout of the Canaanites.

King Solomon fortified the city in the 10th century B.C. as a military center and chariot town (I Kings 9:15). An estimated 450 horses could be stabled there. Three centuries later, King Josiah of ancient Judah was slain in the valley of Megiddo, unintentionally, at the hands of the Egyptians (II Kings 23:29).

These battles and others mentioned both in the Bible and in secular sources gave the valley of Megiddo an infamous reputation. It became a very symbol of war itself.

Even in post-biblical times—including this century—the strategic expanse has been the scene for large-scale confrontations.

Near the end of World War I, the British general Viscount Allenby won a crucial victory over the Turks at the Battle of Megiddo on September 19, 1918. Journalist Lowell Thomas, in his book *With Allenby in the Holy Land*, refers to the engagement as the "Battle of Armageddon," while implying no biblical fulfillment of prophecy. "Allenby was a master-strategist," Lowell Thomas quotes a participant in the fighting, in reference to Megiddo's strategic location.

Seven Last Plagues

Now see what prophecy has in store for this ancient battlefield.

The book of Revelation describes



a dramatic series of catastrophic events to precede the return of Jesus Christ to this earth to restore the government of God and to bring world peace. (Request our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled At Last* for full details.)

Among these events is the sounding of seven prophetic trumpets (Rev. 8-10), symbolizing God's direct intervention in human affairs.

The seventh and last of these trumpets will announce the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to establish his rule on earth (Rev. 11:15; I Cor. 15:52; I Thess. 4:16). This trumpet will also initiate on a rebellious world a series of divine punishments known as the "seven last plagues" (Rev. 15 and 16).

These seven last plagues, designed to bring humanity to repentance, are pictured symbolically as seven vials, or small vessels holding liquids. These vials are "poured out" upon a corrupted earth by seven angels. Tragically, mankind as a whole will still refuse to repent of sin!

The sixth of these vials or plagues is described in Revelation 16:12 and introduces us to Armageddon:

"And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared."

It is important to understand the geography involved here. The Euphrates River rises in Turkey and flows southeastward for some 1,700 miles through Syria and Iraq, ultimately emptying into the Arabian or Persian Gulf.

Across this river bed will come the "kings of the east" and their armies—a prophesied communist-dominated Eurasian confederacy.

This confederacy will have certain geopolitical goals motivating their military offensive. But an unperceived, behind-the-scenes influence will be the ultimate motivation underlying their actions. Notice:

Revelation 16:14 reveals that it will be *demonic spirits* that will influence "the kings of the earth and of the whole world" to gather for battle. These spirits are fallen angels who followed Lucifer (Satan) in his rebellion against God



(Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:12-17; Rev. 12:4). They will stir up this world's leaders to prepare for war. The world's armies will unknowingly become their pawns.

The God of heaven will allow these seducing demons to marshal the armies of the kings of the east and the whole world (the United Nations, too!) at Armageddon, as we earlier saw in Revelation 16:16.

But the battle will not be fought at Armageddon!

In the meantime, another great military power and its allies will be in force in the Middle East to oppose the oncoming "kings of the east."

This power is referred to in the Bible as the "beast"—a powerful union of 10 European nations or groups of nations to arise in the closing days of this world's civilizations (Rev. 17:12-14). This European power—led by a military superdictator also referred to in prophecy as the "beast"—will be the final, end-time revival of the medieval Holy Roman Empire.



ARMAGEDDON—the hill of Megiddo—lies 55 miles north of Jerusalem and overlooks the expansive Valley of Jezreel (map, lower left). Here the world's armies will gather before the prophesied final battle. From the hill-top site of the ancient city of Megiddo one enjoys a commanding view of the valley, also called the Plain of Esdraelon (center photo). Many visit the archaeological excavations at Megiddo each year (left photo). Sign at Megiddo (lower right) details the long history of the ancient site. The Kidron Valley (top photo) at Jerusalem will be the site of the climactic battle against the returning Christ.

Working with the beast will be a great miracle-working religious figure called the false prophet (Rev. 13:13-14; 16:13; 19:20; II Thess. 2:3-4). This charismatic figure will preside over a great centuries-old false religious system labelled by the Bible "BABYLON THE GREAT" (Rev. 17:5).

Earlier, the beast will have con-

quered portions of the Middle East and established a foothold there (Dan. 11:40-43). The prophet Daniel refers to the endtime beast as "the king of the north."

"But," as Daniel continues, "tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him [the beast] . . ." (Dan. 11:44). The beast will be challenged by the might of the communist East!

The result?

" . . . therefore he [the beast] shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many" (end of verse 44).

The beast and his allies will move to confront the oncoming armies of the "kings of the east." The stage will be set for a desperate battle to determine who will rule the world!

(For the answer to why the armies of the United States will not be involved, write for *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*.)

The world will stand at the brink of the most terrible battle in all of history! Were the enormous power of the world's armies actually to be

unleashed, global annihilation would be the result! *No flesh* would be saved alive (Matt. 24:22)!

Satan's goal of erasing all life from this earth would become reality!

Battle of the Great Day of God Almighty!

But no battle will be fought at Armageddon!

The seventh trumpet that set the stage for the confrontation at Megiddo also announces the Second Coming of Jesus Christ! He—Jesus Christ—will descend from heaven to the Mount of Olives at Jerusalem (Zech. 14:4; Acts 1:11-12).

Notice Revelation 11:15: "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

This world's two great military

powers—ready to fight each other for world domination—will be suddenly confronted by what they conceive to be, in their deceived minds, a common "enemy"—the returning Jesus Christ! Jesus, in Jerusalem, will proclaim *his* dominion over the world!

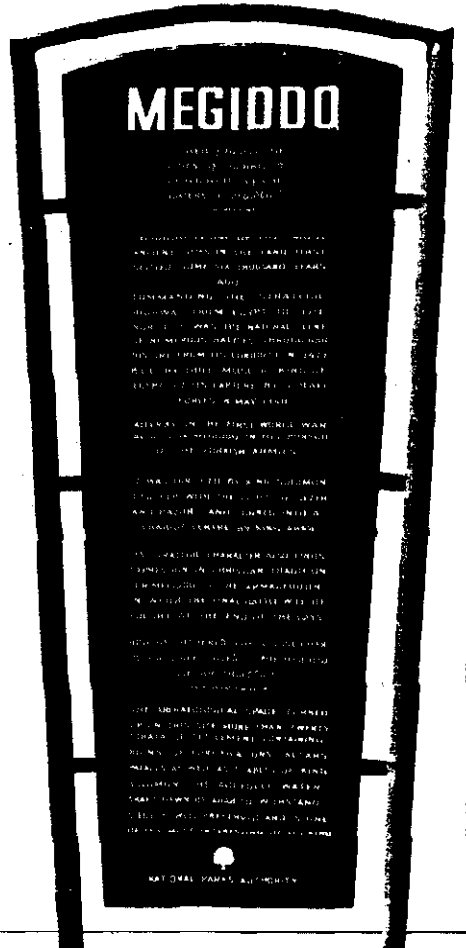
How will the assembled forces at Megiddo react?

"And the nations were angry . . ." declares Revelation 11:18. Men will not want to submit to God's rule! Instead, they will seek to destroy Jesus Christ—whom they will regard, falsely, as the Antichrist—and his angelic armies from heaven who accompany him to Jerusalem.

Instead of fighting each other, the Beast and the kings of the east will *join forces*—to "make war with the Lamb" (Rev. 17:14).

From the staging ground or mustering area of Armageddon the world's armies will move to confront Jesus Christ himself.

Where will that climactic battle be fought? The prophet Joel pro-



vides the answer. Read it in Joel 3:1-2, 9-14.

The battle, involving "all nations," will take place in the *valley of Jehoshaphat!* This deep valley or ravine borders Jerusalem on the east, between the city and the Mount of Olives (see photo). Today it is more commonly known as the Kidron Valley.

Jehoshaphat means "judgment of the Eternal." The rebellious and unrepentant nations of this world will be *judged* there by God for their disobedience!

The world's armies will converge *on Jerusalem* to fight Jesus Christ. He will not go north to Armageddon to fight them; they will march south to engage him!

The ensuing confrontation is called in the Bible "the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Rev. 16:14). It is not the "battle of Armageddon" simply because it will *not take place* at Armageddon!

Zechariah 14:12-13 graphically describes this supernatural confrontation at Jerusalem with the world's armies. They will turn against each other in mistrust and fear as their *very flesh decomposes and their eyes cease to see!* "And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord shall smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall con-

sume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth."

Read Revelation 19:11-21 for a further description of the climactic events to occur on that day.

The rebellious armies of this world will be utterly *vanquished!*

Then, Good News!

Jesus Christ, now returned in *power and glory* as KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS (Rev. 19:16), will intervene mightily to save a God-rejecting world from self-destruction. He will destroy those who would have destroyed the earth through nuclear war.

These climactic times lie *just ahead!*

But beyond the chaos and war at the close of this age is *good news!* Having decisively put down rebellion, Jesus Christ will establish his Kingdom on this earth—a millennial kingdom of peace and prosperity for all peoples!

From the destruction of war, the world will erupt into *global peace!*

For an in-depth look at this coming new age, request your *free copy of The Wonderful World Tomorrow—What It Will Be Like.* Discover what lies ahead for you personally in days just ahead—and your potential in the utopian World Tomorrow! □