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The Conflicts of Armageddon

"And He gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon"

(Revelation 16:16).

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Preface

The most advertised battle engagement of all time is Armageddon. "In the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (16:16) was probably *Har Megiddo*, which means mount or city of Megiddo. Armageddon, presently only a rich archaeological excavation and tourist site, lies about 18 miles (29 kilometers) southeast of the coastal city of Haifa, in northern Israel. Because Megiddo occupied a strategic military position on the Plain of Esdraelon-- which is the Greek derivation of the Hebrew, Yizre'el meaning *God will sow*, and is also identified with the Valley of Jezreel of Scripture-- it was the scene of numerous historic, Biblical battles and many conflicts more recent. Geographically, Armageddon's Plain of Esdraelon cuts Israel in half, affording clear passage from the Mediterranean Sea to the Great Rift Valley of the Jordan River. Economically, Megiddo controlled a chokepoint on the ancient Via Maris-- the "Way of the Sea" (Isaiah 9:1)-- making it of great importance along that international trade route connecting Egypt to Mesopotamia, i.e., Euphrates River. Located immediately above the Palestinian controlled West Bank area, the Plain of Esdraelon is a green, fertile valley about 15 miles long by 5 miles. Whoever maintained an army at Megiddo, controlled this essential international trade route, as did the Romans, when they came and fortified Legio, a mile farther south on the same ridge. "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision" (Joel 3:14).

Deborah and Barak

Undoubtedly, the Apostle John appreciated the historic importance of Megiddo, as he recorded this passage. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2Peter 1:21). It was near the "waters of Megiddo" (Judges 5:19) that Barak "was sent on foot into the valley" (5:15) against 900 iron chariots of Sisera, the captain of the host for "Jabin king of Canaan" (4:2). Deborah the prophetess "judged Israel at that time" (4:4), and she it was that called for Barak to command an army of 10,000 men to meet Sisera at the "river Kishon" (4:7). As Jehovah promised Deborah victory over Sisera, i.e., "And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand" (4:7), she promised Barak victory; but, he refused to go unless accompanied by Deborah, i.e., "if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go" (4:8).

Flowing 25 miles (40 kilometers) from its southern sources through the western approach to the Plain of Esdraelon onward to the Mediterranean Sea in the Bay of Haifa, the ancient Kishon River overflowed its banks annually during the winter rains, making it a wonderful place for the horses of

Sisera's chariots to become mired in the swamps of Kishon. "Then were the horsehoofs broken by the means of the pransings, the pransings of their mighty ones" (Judges 5:22). But also, the Almighty unleashed the influence of the heavens against His foes through the torrential rain and flooding of the Kishon, i.e., "They fought from Heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera" (5:20). "The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength" (5:21). Victory over Sisera was sealed when "Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite" (4:17), drove a tent peg through the temples of the exhausted and sleeping Sisera. "And, behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will shew thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail was in his temples" (4:22). Thus, this records the first of the Biblical battles of Armageddon, which was a mighty deliverance for Israel. "So let all Thine enemies perish, O LORD: but let them that love Him be as the sun when [it] goeth forth in [its] might" (5:31).

Gideon

The battles of Armageddon begin to multiply when we discover that Gideon's exploits were accomplished against the "Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east [who] were gathered together... in the valley of Jezreel" (Judges 6:33). The "children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years" (6:1). Though ancient Israel is rightly to be blamed for their often backslidings, how much more are we to be blamed in this dispensation of grace, the finished work of the LORD Jesus Christ on the Cross, and the promised outpouring of the Blessed Holy Spirit, for rejecting the promises of God and having "done despite unto the Spirit of grace" (Hebrews 10:29)? "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luke 11:13). Israel despised its promised blessings, i.e., "8 This Book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. 9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:8-9), and the LORD God rewarded their unbelief and rebellion with the invasion of the Midianite and Amalekite kings of the east. "For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it" (Judges 6:5).

Crossing the Jordan River from the east, the hordes of Midian probably entered the Plain of Esdraelon between Mount Gilboa and the Hill of Moreh, since the other Jordan River approach would only be a narrow wadi between Mount Tabor and Moreh. "Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley" (Judges 7:1). Gideon was instructed to reduce his already small force from 32,000 to 300 through two means, by voluntary attrition (22,000 declined further service) and with an ingenious test devised by the LORD (9,700 were set aside by the LORD). It is believed that the "well of Harod" (7:1), where Gideon assembled his men, is the 'Ain Jalud at the foot of Mount Gilboa, on the southeast of the Valley of Jezreel. Only two other wells were to be found in this eastern end of the valley, i.e., one by Jezreel and the other out upon the plain (both open to the Midianites). The well of Harod fed a stream at its feet that constituted a formidable ditch between the defenders of the well and the enemy to the north on the plain. A

citizen-soldier who would drink from that stream by bowing himself down upon his knees did not appreciate fully his vulnerability to an enemy ambush that might arise from the stream's reeds and shrubs; but, one who merely crouched, lapping the water with one hand, while holding his weapon with the other, comprehended his danger and his need for vigilance. Providentially, a small force, attacking by stealth would serve the LORD's tactics well. "5 So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. 6 And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. 7 And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place" (7:5-7).

Gideon's plan was of the LORD, for it understood the strength of the Righteous Few and the weakness of the Wicked Many, i.e., "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion" (Proverbs 28:1). With such a small band of men against such a host, Gideon's men were not holding a sword in either hand; instead, they carried a lamp inside of a pitcher in one hand and a trumpet in the other. "16 And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. 17 And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do. 18 When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon" (Judges 7:16-18). God gave confusion to the enemy, when the newly set watch in the middle of the night were greeted with the crescendo of a chorus of breaking pitchers, sounding trumpets of attack, war cries of dominion, and flashing lights of menace and confusion. "19 So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands. 20 And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon" (7:19-20). Happily, this battle of Armageddon was another mighty deliverance for the people of God, for had not the Almighty employed the enemies' swords against each other, it would have been indeed calamitous for Gideon had they noticed the pathetic sight of such a pitiful few. "21 And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled. 22 And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Bethshittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abelmeholah, unto Tabbath" (7:21-22).

King Saul

Later, Israel's battles at Armageddon would be paid for with the lives of its kings. On Mount Gilboa at the southeast of the Vale of Jezreel, Saul, Israel's first king, fought his last battle. "Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa" (1Samuel 31:1). Saul was on the high ground of Gilboa, able to descend easily upon Esdraelon or upon the Upper Jordan Valley. This would be unacceptable to the Philistines. They must engage the superior position of Saul and eliminate him upon Mount Gilboa-- which they did-- to consolidate control over this valuable trade route. "And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons" (31:2).

God's purpose in allowing the death of Saul and his eldest son Jonathan, though it punished Israel, it also cleared the way for David to an undisputed throne of Israel "6 So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armourbearer, and all his men, that same day together. 7 And when the men of Israel that were on the other side of the valley, and they that were on the other side Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities, and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them" (31:2-7). This battle of Armageddon should teach the Godly that "if God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). But, "How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up?" (Deuteronomy 32:30).

King Josiah

The last Biblical battle of Armageddon before the upcoming Apocalyptic engagement, was the sad death of the Judean king Josiah. "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come" (Isaiah 57:1). Josiah was the best picture of a Judean king, who awoke to righteousness, while already sitting upon the throne of David. "And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him" (2Kings 23:25). His grandfather Manasseh, called the Nero of Palestine-- Palestine, being derived from a word meaning the land of the Philistines-- for his persecution of the righteous and the slaying of Isaiah, was the antithesis of all that was godly during the prime of his reign, until he was taken in chains by the Assyrian king Esarhaddon to Babylon. "12 And when he [Manasseh] was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, 13 and prayed unto Him: and He was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD He was God" (2Chronicles 33:12-13). Josiah's father Amon was an idolater, who was murdered in a conspiracy, bringing Josiah to the throne at the age of eight. And, at the age of sixteen, Josiah began to seek the LORD. "For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images" (34:3).

Josiah's godly renown was felt when he repaired the Temple; and, upon the discovery of the Law of Moses during repairs, he read it, only to realize, "Great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the Words of this Book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us" (2Kings 22:13). Josiah asked for further understanding of the mind of the LORD, to which Huldah the prophetess informed him that Judah would indeed be punished. "Because they have forsaken Me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore My wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched" (22:17). But, Josiah would be spared in peace. "19 Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before Me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD. 20 Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place" (22:19-20).

Hearing the Law of the LORD and its obedience was Josiah's chief concern for his people. "2 And the

king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the Words of the Book of the Covenant which was found in the house of the LORD. 3 And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep His Commandments and His Testimonies and His Statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the Words of this Covenant that were written in this Book. And all the people stood to the Covenant" (2Kings 23:2-3). The religious reforms against idolatry were so great that Josiah not only cleansed the Temple of Baal worship, but he attempted to destroy all vestiges of idolatrous worship throughout his kingdom. "8 And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba, and brake down the high places of the gates that were in the entering in of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on a man's left hand at the gate of the city... 14 And he brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men" (23:8, 14). And, with Jeremiah's help, he renewed the worship of Jehovah, and celebrated the restored Passover with unusual magnificence. "21 And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the Passover unto the LORD your God, as it is written in the Book of this Covenant. 22 Surely there was not holden such a Passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah; 23 but in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, wherein this Passover was holden to the LORD in Jerusalem" (23:21-23).

Thirteen years after the celebration of the great Passover, Pharaoh-necho, king of Egypt, marching against the Assyrians at the ancient Hittite capital of Carchemish on the Upper Euphrates River, came against Josiah at Megiddo. No doubt the conflict with the king of Egypt was occasioned by the Egyptians expedition along the Via Maris. "21 But he [Necho] sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that He destroy thee not. 22 Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo" (2Chronicles 35:21-22). Josiah made a poor decision, as any child of God will do, if they ask "not counsel at the mouth of the LORD" (Joshua 9:14). Only as we actively stand by faith upon special promise from the LORD can we avoid a similar Megiddo. "20 [Abraham] staggered not at the Promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21 and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Romans 4:20-21). What the Almighty seals with His Promise, we must cling to in faith. "For all the Promises of God in [Christ] are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2Corinthians 1:20). Otherwise, we have no special privilege to command the blessings of God. "Concerning the work of My hands command ye Me" (Isaiah 45:11). And, we must submit to whatever act of Providence that the Almighty sovereignly ordains. "In his days Pharaohnechoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him" (2Kings 23:29).

Josiah "hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God" (2Chronicles 35:22) probably because he distrusted that a divine oracle could come from such a heathen monarch. But, the Saints must always "try the spirits whether they are of God" (1John 4:1). Test any supposed declarations by their affinity to the Word of God. "To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to

this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). It is our bellwether of the leading of the Holy Spirit. "And thine ears shall hear a Word behind thee, saying, This is The Way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (30:21). Josiah was given the chance to live, but he could not see his way clear to *not* contend with Necho. "Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo" (2Chronicles 35:22). Sadly, enemy archers accurately targeted him, and mortally wounded him. "And the archers shot at king Josiah; and the king said to his servants, Have me away; for I am sore wounded" (35:23).

Whatever time Josiah may have needed to make peace with his God, he received, for he had been promised, "I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place" (2Kings 22:20). So, Josiah was slain at this last, historical, Biblical battle of Armageddon, perhaps to remind us that the "little strength" (Revelation 3:8) of Philadelphia must be withdrawn, i.e., by Pre-Tribulational Rapture, for the Restraining Influence of the Holy Spirit to "be taken out of the way" (2Thessalonians 2:7), before the Enemy is finally allowed to come in like a flood. "24 His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchres of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. 25 And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah: and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, they are written in the lamentations" (2Chronicles 35:24-25).

Joel and Armageddon

The Day of the LORD is the recurring theme of the prophet Joel. "Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come" (Joel 1:15). Why need we fear destruction from the LORD, unless we do not walk righteously? "Grudge not one against another, Brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the Judge standeth before the door" (James 5:9). Is it not Laodicea only that presently abides in the charade of a righteous walk with the LORD, to whom the LORD Jesus Christ must again seek entrance? "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20). An alarm need not be sounded with those who "walk worthy" (Colossians 1:10) of the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14), for they are sober and vigilant; but, the Day of the LORD will be a time of great alarm and trembling for the spiritually unprepared. "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand" (Joel 2:1).

Briefly, the Pre-Tribulational Rapture refers to the *Day of Christ*. "That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand" (2Thessalonians 2:2). The Rapture of the Saints will be a time of rejoicing. "Holding forth the Word of Life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain" (Philippians 2:16). The Day of Christ represents the departure of the watching and waiting Saints, an incentive for endurance and perseverance. "That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" (1:10). The Day of Christ refers to the Rapture of the Saints before the Tribulation week, while the *Day of the LORD* describes a time of Tribulation, in particular, the time following the Abomination of Desolation at the Middle of the

Tribulation Week. "15 When ye therefore shall see the Abomination of Desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) 21 For then shall be Great Tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:15, 21). Tribulation and anguish more appropriately describe the Day of the LORD, than any glad deliverance. "And the LORD shall utter His Voice before His army: for His camp is very great: for He is strong that executeth His Word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" (Joel 2:11). *The Day of God*, seems to fit more with the time of the Millennium and Eternity beyond. "12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to His Promise, look for New Heavens and a New Earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2Peter 3:12-13).

"The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come" (Joel 2:31). This was cited by the Apostle Peter in his Pentecostal sermon, to explain the miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit, with the result that "every man heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:6) the wonderful news of the Gospel. "16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; 17 and it shall come to pass in the Last Days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: 18 and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy: 19 and I will shew wonders in Heaven above, and signs in the Earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: 20 the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the LORD come: 21 and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the Name of the LORD shall be saved" (Acts 2:16-21). Obviously, the Pentecost of the Book of Acts was only a partial fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, since not until the Fourth Vial Judgment near the end of the Tribulation Week, will there be the scorching heat of the Sun. "And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire" (Revelation 16:8). And, only then will the Fifth Vial Judgment completely darken the Sun over the Kingdom of the Antichrist. "And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the Beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain" (16:10).

Of most interest, is Joel's reference to the Valley of Decision. "Multitudes, multitudes in the Valley of Decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the Valley of Decision" (Joel 3:14). At the time of spiritual re-birth for Israel, i.e., the nation born "at once" (Isaiah 66:8) at the Second Coming of Christ, when Jehovah "shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem" (Joel 3:1), the Almighty "will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for My people and for My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted My land" (3:2). This Valley of Decision is also referred to as the Valley of Jehoshaphat. "Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat" (3:12). Many commentators identify this with the Kidron Valley outside of Jerusalem, but there never has been a valley there by the name of Jehoshaphat. More probably the Valley of Jehoshaphat refers to Armageddon, for the Hebrew meaning of Jehoshaphat is Jehovah has judged, i.e., "for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about" (3:12).

Consider this passage from the prophet Joel, and see that it fits the Apocalyptic Battle of

Armageddon, immediately following the Vial Judgments at the End of the Tribulation Week:

"9 Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: 10 beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. 11 Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD. 12 Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. 13 Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. 14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. 15 The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. 16 The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the Earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel" (Joel 3:9-16).

More Recent Battles of Armageddon

More modern and notable personages have seen fit to do battle at Armageddon. Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Egypt to threaten British India, as well as to possibly duplicate some of the feats of Alexander the Great. In 1799, he crossed Esdraelon on his march to the coastal city of Acre (Akko), on the Bay of Haifa. There he was halted by Ottoman Turkish troops under British command. "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not" (Jeremiah 45:5). General Kleber was directed by Napoleon to engage the enemy on what Napoleon's dispatch described as "an immense battlefield", which was the Plain of Esdraelon. Further, after skirting Mount Tabor on the northeast of Esdraelon, they engaged the enemy at dawn. Napoleon's dispatches described the enemy's movements upon Esdraelon: "Never had we seen such a large group of cavalry do a half turn, charge and move in every direction." The French troops repulsed enemy cavalry charges from the Mamluks. But, when they unmasked their cannons on the enemy, to Napoleon's satisfaction, "this host of horsemen melted into disorder and headed for the Jordan". "Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another" (Galatians 5:26). Napoleon returned to France in August 1799, to forget the disaster of his Egyptian campaigns and, for a time, to become the master of continental Europe. "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 2:11).

In September 1918, General Edmund Allenby completed the conquest of Esdraelon from its German-Turkish defenders, near the close of the Great War, i.e., World War I, being perhaps the turning point of the war in the Middle East. After a bombardment by British Artillery supported by the Air Force, the Infantry (English, Scottish, Welsh, Irish, Indian, and French), successfully fought a battle on the coastal Plain of Sharon, between Arsuf and the Falik River, where in 1191 AD Richard Lionheart defeated the Saracens. The way was cleared for the Cavalry to advance upon Esdraelon.

"The 4th Division and the Australian Mounted Division crossed from Sharon by the still more famous pass up Wady 'Ara and by Musmus to Lejjun and Megiddo, the route of Thothmes [1479 BC] and other invaders from the south. Here they divided very early on the 20th. Part turning south by Taanach reached Jenin by 5 P.M., while the main body

having captured el-'Afflueh on the plain and its railway station by 8 A.M. and having sent a detachment to make for the railway bridge over Jordan, marched down the Vale of Jezreel to Beth-Shan which they reached at 4.35 P.M. -- having covered seventy miles in thirty-four hours -- and thence dispatched a Brigade south along the Jordan River" (excerpted from George Adam Smith's "The Historical Geography of the Holy Land", p. 267).

Allenby consulted daily both his Bible and an earlier edition of "The Historical Geography of the Holy Land"-- a copy without the above excerpt, and without mention of Thutmose III's similar successful Megiddo exploits-- for his own Megiddo campaign. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

The Justice and Judgment of God

Mankind cries out continually for the justice of getting what is rightfully theirs; but, the reality is that we could never have truly tolerated our just deserts. Our consciousness agrees with the testimony of Scripture: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The "wages of sin is death" (6:23), that is, when we first violated God's Holy Law of Perfect Love toward Himself and toward our neighbour, then we were immediately worthy of Eternal Death. "36 Master, which is the great commandment in the Law? 37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the First and Great Commandment. 39 And the Second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:36-40).

The angels who did *not* rebel with Lucifer would testify to the necessity of God's immediate judgment of the rebels' sin, for the felicity of Heaven to endure. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (2Peter 2:4). Likewise, Adam and Eve instantly incurred the penalty of Spiritual Death when they ate of the Forbidden Fruit. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). The LORD Jesus Christ demonstrated by His Sacrificial Death, that He values our obedience to the Law of Love so much that He became "sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2Corinthians 5:21). Thus, we obtain pardon for past disobedience through repentance, i.e., "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15); and, we receive "Salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2Timothy 3:15).

If restoring us to obedience cost the Life of the Son of God, then Justice demands that Enduring Disobedience must incur the Judgment of the Wrath of God. "For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the Truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18). Armageddon, then, stands for the Just Judgment of God against "all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (1:18).

- God-- *not* you or I-- sets the Absolute Standard of Justice. "That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee: Shall not the Judge of All the Earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25).
- If we do not avail ourselves of the mercy that you or I certainly need, then God will find a way of judging us. "Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and

that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation" (Exodus 34:7).

- God *is* the standard for unchanging, perfect judgment. "He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His Ways are Judgment: a God of Truth and without iniquity, Just and Right is He" (Deuteronomy 32:4).
- Those who reject God's justice will ultimately receive God's vengeance. "To Me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste" (Deuteronomy 32:35).
- God's Justice is to unfailingly reward us according to our works, though the Righteous know that they owe all of their righteousness to Him. "26 With the merciful Thou wilt shew Thyself Merciful, and with the upright man Thou wilt shew Thyself Upright. 27 With the pure Thou wilt shew Thyself Pure; and with the froward Thou wilt shew Thyself Unsavoury" (2Samuel 22:26-27).
- God has prepared His Throne for the Judgment of Armageddon. "7 But the LORD shall endure for ever: He hath prepared His Throne for Judgment. 8 And He shall judge the world in righteousness, He shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness" (Psalm 9:7-8).
- Justice and Judgment are defined by the Throne of God. "Justice and Judgment are the habitation of Thy Throne: Mercy and Truth shall go before Thy face" (Psalm 89:14).
- Righteousness is not arbitrary, any more than God could be arbitrary. "10 Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: He shall judge the people righteously... 13 for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the Earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His Truth" (Psalm 96:10, 13).
- God's Justice penetrates to our innermost secrets. "For God shall bring every work into Judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14).
- Outside of God, no one exists that can dispense True Justice. "Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside Me; a Just God and a Saviour; there is none beside Me" (Isaiah 45:21).
- If we value justice, then we would seek to understand our Creator. "But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the LORD which exercise Lovingkindness, Judgment, and Righteousness, in the Earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 9:24).
- What folly for sinful men to accuse God of injustice! "29 Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not My Ways equal? are not your ways unequal? 30 Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the LORD GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be

your ruin" (Ezekiel 18:29-30).

- Even before the Judgment of Armageddon, does God judge justly. "The Just LORD is in the midst thereof; He will not do iniquity: every morning doth He bring His Judgment to light, He faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame" (Zephaniah 3:5).
- The Almighty is impartial in His dispensing of justice. "8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, 9 tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile" (Romans 2:8-9).

Conclusion

The Battle of Armageddon, in the world's vocabulary, evokes images of a doomsday destruction of the world, and a sense of overwhelming fearfulness. This is as it should be. For though the Saviour has tirelessly invited humanity to find forgiveness for sins "through faith in His Name" (Acts 3:16) and, consequently, "peace with God" (Romans 5:1), there must come a time when His gracious offer would be withdrawn. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this The Judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). To allow man's probation to go on forever would only harden man's resolve that his sin would never find him out. But, "be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23)! The cavalier attitude of many toward Christ and sin, is, "I may repent tomorrow." However, tomorrow may never come. "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow" (James 4:14). "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of Salvation" (2Corinthians 6:2). "To day if ye will hear His Voice, harden not your hearts" (Hebrews 4:7).

The certainty of Judgment for sinning against God, rejecting His love, and loving ourselves at the expense of our neighbour, is the necessity for Armageddon. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20). The Father's Magnanimous Love in giving us His Only Begotten Son, Who willingly gave Himself, "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have Everlasting Life" (John 3:16), must lay in *sharp contrast* to the Judgment of Armageddon. "He shall judge among the heathen, He shall fill the places with the dead bodies; He shall wound the heads over many countries" (Psalm 110:6). God is to be justified for His bringing to pass Armageddon. "Every transgression and disobedience received a Just Recompence of reward" (Hebrews 2:2). The Almighty's preservation of the happiness of Heaven as a place without the wretchedness of sin, demands a Judgment and conclusion for sin that can be seen in Armageddon. "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life" (Revelation 21:27).

Armageddon is synonymous with Judgment. "12 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... 16 And He gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (Revelation 16:12, 16). The Righteous delight in Judgment. "It is joy to the just to do Judgment: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity" (Proverbs 21:15). But, the Wicked "scorneth Judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity" (19:28). Armageddon is the proof that God judges sin. "Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about" (Joel 3:12). Let the Righteous be warned to walk

justly; and, remind the Righteous: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1Corinthians 10:12). And, may the Righteous always remember that it is only God that makes us to stand. "To his own Master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand" (Romans 14:4). To the Wicked, however, be warned, "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin" (Ezekiel 18:30). Armageddon truly cometh. "1 Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered: let them also that hate Him flee before Him. 2 As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God" (Psalm 68:1-3).

Amen, and Amen.