

Armageddon and the Lord's Return

(Matthew 24: 26-31)

“²⁶ So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the wilderness,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. ²⁷ For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸ Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather. ²⁹ “Immediately after the distress of those days “ ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’ ³⁰ “Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.”

- In the “Olivet Discourse”, Jesus now speaks of His Return at the end of the age
- We have discussed the Tribulation preceding His Return
- We have discussed the Rebellion and appearing of Antichrist preceding His Return
- There will also be a Final Battle preceding His Return (Revelation 16:12-16)
“Then they gathered the kings... to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.”
(Revelation 16:16)

The text: Revelation 20:1-3, 7-10

“¹ And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. ² He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³ He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time...

⁷ When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. ⁹ They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰ And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

I. Armageddon

A. Satan is Bound for 1,000 Years (1-3)

- Satan is bound (restricted) for a thousand years
- He is prevented from deceiving the nations
- During this time, the Great Commission is being fulfilled (Mark 3:22-27; Luke 10:17-18; John 12:20-23, 31-32)

“The *binding*, *expulsion* and *fall* of Satan can be seen in other NT passages... the binding was probably inaugurated during Christ’s ministry. Satan’s binding was climactically put in motion immediately after Christ’s resurrection, and it lasts most of the age between Christ’s first and second comings.” (G.K. Beale)

“The binding of Satan and the fact that he is hurled into the abyss to remain there for 1,000 years indicates that throughout this present Gospel Age the devil’s influence on earth is curtailed. He is unable to prevent the extension of the Church among the nations... He cannot destroy the Church as a mighty missionary organization heralding the Gospel to all the nations. He cannot do that until the 1,000 years are finished.” (William Hendriksen)

B. Satan will be Released when the 1,000 Years are over (7)

- The abyss is now called a prison; he was restrained in some significant manner, though not in every way

C. Satan will Deceive the Nations and Gather them for Battle (7-9)

“He has been restrained from ‘deceiving the nations,’ but now is permitted to resume his deceiving activities. This included not merely blinding people to the truth but also, and especially, causing them to assemble together to annihilate the community of God’s people on earth.” (G.K. Beale)

“When the thousand years are finished, Satan is released from his prison. Then it becomes very clear that the final and most terrible persecution, by means of which antichristian forces are going to oppress the Church, is instigated, in a most direct manner, by Satan himself.” (William Hendriksen)

D. The Final Battle (Described in Revelation 16:12-16 and in Revelation 19:19-21)

Gog and Magog

“The expression “Gog and Magog” is borrowed from Ezekiel 38 and 39. In that prophesy, Gog and Magog are distinguished from other nations and are brought from the far north as enemies of Israel... But now in Revelation ‘Gog and Magog’ are figuratively equated with all the nations and they come from throughout the whole earth – the four corners of the earth. They consist of uncountable troops (in number like the sand on the seashore)” (G. K. Beale)

“The expression Gog and Magog seems to mean all people. Gog is mentioned in the Bible only in genealogy (1 Ch. 5:4), in a prophecy (Ezk. 38-39), and here. Magog is found similarly in genealogies (Gn. 10:2; 1 Ch. 1:5), the Ezekiel passage and here. Magog appears to be the land from which Gog came (Ezk. 38:2, though in LXX Magog seems to be a prince) ... In apocalyptic writings they symbolize the forces of evil. For John, the combination is another way of referring to the hosts of the wicked. He has in mind the last great attack of evil on the things of God.” (Leon Morris)

Armageddon

“Armageddon means ‘Mountain of Megiddo’. Unfortunately, no mountain appears to be called ‘The Mountain of Megiddo’. No place called Armageddon is known. The term is surely symbolic.” (Leon Morris)

“Armageddon does not refer to a specific geographic local, but the whole world. The battles in Israel associated with Megiddo... become a typological symbol of the last battle against the saints and Christ, which occurs throughout the earth.” (G. K. Beale)

“The symbol is rooted in Judges 4 and 5 when Israel is greatly oppressed by the Canaanites. The enemy is overwhelming with 900 chariots of iron. Israel does not have even a spear or a shield. The battle is fought at Megiddo and Israel’s enemy is routed. It was Jehovah Himself who had defeated them. “From heaven fought the stars; from their courses they fought against Sisera’ (Judges 5:20). For this cause, Armageddon is the symbol of every battle in which, when the need is greatest and believers are oppressed, the Lord suddenly reveals His power in the interest of His distressed people and defeats the enemy. When Sennacherib’s 185,000 are slain by the angel of Jehovah, that is a shadow of the final Armageddon. When God grants a little handful of Maccabees a glorious victory over an enemy which far out numbers it, that is a type of Armageddon.” (William Hendriksen)

The Camp of God’s People and the City He Loves

“The universalization of the Ezekiel prophesy suggests that oppressed Israel in Ezekiel 38-39 is also universalized, and in fact it becomes equivalent in Revelation 20:9 to ‘the camp of the saints and the beloved city,’ which is to be understood as the church throughout the earth.” (G. K. Beale)

“This is the final attack of anti-Christian forces upon the Church... This final onslaught is directed against ‘the beloved city’, also called ‘the camp of the saints’. Thus the Church of God is described here under the double symbolism of a city and a camp.” (William Hendriksen)

II. The Lord's Return

A. The Time (Matthew 24:28-29)

“Vultures swoop down upon a carcass. When morally and spiritually the world has degenerated to such an extent that it resembles carrion, in other words when the Lord judges that the world's cup of iniquity is full, then, and not until then, Christ shall come to condemn that world. Then His coming is a divine necessity... The final ‘tribulation’ to which the wicked will subject God's children is that which will ripen the world for judgment... The picture is very vivid. While the earth is drenched by the blood of the saints in the most terrible tribulation of all times, all at once the sun becomes darkened...” (William Hendriksen)

B. The Return (Matthew 24:30-31; Revelation 19:11-16)

Visible – “So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the desert,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. For as lightening that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man... For the Lord Himself will come down from Heaven, with a loud command, with a voice of an archangel and with the trumpet call of God...” (Matthew 24:26-27; 1 Thessalonians 4:16)

Cosmic – “The Heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare... The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.” (2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 6:14)

“The Greek word for His “coming” is *Parousia*. This refers to the arrival of royalty or majesty. Notice the cosmic dimension of this coming – nether the sun nor moon will give light; there will be a disturbance in the stars; the powers of Heaven will be shaken.” (Hendriksen)

“You cannot develop this as a concept. Nothing in history is even a reference point. You cannot duplicate or triplicate the event from what we know. It is a point of eventuation, not a series of successive events. As an event, the *Parousia* is catastrophic!” (Gerhard Vos)

“Jesus is saying that, whatever the powers of the heavens may be, they are subject to God, and that at this time, that of the return of the Son of Man to this earth, their power will be disturbed. Whatever functions they may be exercising at the time will be affected by the great fact that the Son of Man is coming back to this earth to bring an end to the current system and to inaugurate the reign of God over all the earth.” (Leon Morris)

Final – “And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of His mouth and destroy by the splendor of His coming... But fire came down from Heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” (2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 20: 9-10)

Assertions

1. Jesus will not return until certain things occur: 1) the Gospel will be preached in the whole world (Matthew 24:14), and 2) the Rebellion occurs and the Man of Lawlessness (Antichrist) is revealed (2 Thessalonians 2:3).
2. When the Church has finished its mission and ministry, the Beast will come and lead an end time World Government (State) (Revelation 11:7; 13:7; 17:12-13). The Church and Christians will be greatly persecuted and experience a Great Tribulation (Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21-22, 29).
3. Satan will deceive the nations and gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty... They gather to the place called Armageddon (Revelation 16:12-16); they march across the breadth of the earth and surround the camp of God's people, the city He loves (Revelation 20:9).

A. Armageddon is not a literal place but is Symbolic

There is no specific mountain or place known as "Armageddon". It is a symbol of every battle where the odds are overwhelmingly against God's people and He stands up to defeat the enemy. The last battle will occur throughout the earth.

B. Armageddon will occur in Israel (Luke 21:20, 24)

- Luke says "the Desolation" was the surrounding of Jerusalem by the Roman armies. He goes on to say Jerusalem would be trampled on by the Gentiles "until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."
- Zechariah 14:2-3, 5 says, "I will gather all nations to Jerusalem to fight against it... Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle... Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with Him."
- Bishop J.C. Ryle (1858) in his commentary on Luke says:
A fixed period is foretold when the Jews would have no dominion over their ancient city
It would end and Jerusalem would again be in Jewish hands
There would also be a second siege of Jerusalem and tribulation

"Our Lord had in view a second siege of Jerusalem and a second tribulation accompanying that siege as well as the first siege and tribulation when the city was taken by Titus. That such a siege is to be expected, the 14th Chapter of Zechariah appears to me to be the unanswerable proof."

4. Satan's little season will end when Jesus returns in the clouds with the Holy Angels. The Lord will destroy Antichrist with the breath of his mouth and splendor of His coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8). Satan will be cast into the lake of burning sulfur for eternity (Revelation 20:10)