

Christ Treads The Winepress Of God's Wrath

Ezra 7:11-12

Revelation 19:12-16

Revelation 16:13-16

Zechariah 12:10-14

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In the previous sermon, we sought to answer the question, What is the nature of this great battle between Christ and His enemies in Revelation 19? Is it only a spiritual battle, or is it also an actual military battle that is yet to come? It was concluded that there are sound biblical reasons (from the Book of Revelation and from Old Testament passages as well) for interpreting the figurative battle in Revelation 19 as referring to that final bloody battle that will issue forth in Christ destroying particular enemies once and for all: the beast, the false prophet (along with the image of the beast).

This Lord's Day, we now move to a couple more questions about Revelation 19: It being an actual military battle, **WHEN** will it occur and **WHERE** will it occur?

Some may even question the relevance of asking when or where this military battle will occur. It may be objected that such questions only take our eyes off of our own need to grow in Christ and our need to take the gospel of Christ to family and friends. Why get distracted from these most important needs? Let me suggest to you a response to such an objection.

First, I certainly do agree that **growing** in Christ and **bearing** a testimony for the gospel of Christ are most important and cannot be neglected. However, I would submit that those duties are not hindered, but are actually foundational to and are enhanced by a study of such prophetic

questions, like those we are now considering. For if we would rightly understand what God is saying to us in prophetic Scripture, we must first be growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ (from time spent in fervent prayer unto the Lord, crying out to Him that He would open our eyes to behold the wonders revealed in our study of the Holy Scripture). Dear ones, we must never forget that “all Scripture is inspired of God” [even prophetic Scripture—GLP] and therefore “is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). Thus, studying and applying prophetic Scripture is required of us if we actually believe that all of Scripture is inspired by God.

Secondly, if we would have hope that Christ will absolutely and certainly overcome these enemies (the beast and the false prophet) in this great battle in Revelation 19 and all His enemies at His bodily Second Coming (Satan and death), we must be firmly grounded in the gospel of Jesus Christ. For, dear ones, it is by the death and resurrection of Christ that our King of kings, and Lord of lords has already legally defeated sin, Satan, death, and every other enemy. And it is only because of Christ’s victory in His death and resurrection that we have a certain hope that such prophecies concerning His conquest in the future (over the beast and the false prophet) will certainly come to pass. It is by means of the gospel of Christ that those nations (both Israel and the Gentile nations of the world) will be converted at that future time and will prevail over the beast and the false prophet that stand against Christ. It is the power of the gospel to save individuals, families, and nations that gives us hope that Christ will be victorious.

Dear ones, we do not study prophetic events in order to satisfy some vain curiosity about the future, but rather we study prophetic events in order that we may give glory to God, who as the Sovereign Ruler of the universe has ordained all such prophetic events to demonstrate who

really is in control of all history (and who really is in control of all the events in your life and mine), and in order that we may in hope of Christ's victory apply our hearts to wisdom and prepare ourselves (and others) for events that may occur in our lifetime or in the lifetime of our children. After all, why did God give dreams to Pharaoh's servants of the devastating famine that was to come and why did God give to Joseph the ability to interpret them, if it was not to glorify His own sovereign power in ordering all events in history, and to prepare His people and save them through the devastating famine that was to come upon those nations at that time?

So likewise, as we grow in our understanding of this battle in Revelation 19, when it will occur, where it will occur, and who these enemies are whom Christ will defeat, we, too, will be able to glorify the sovereignty, the justice, and the mercy of the Lord, and will be able to apply our hearts to trust and hope in Christ in all areas of our life, and to prepare ourselves (and our children) for those times that are yet to come.

I. WHEN Will The Military Battle in Revelation 19 Occur?

A. Now as we consider **WHEN** it is that Christ will ride forth to destroy these enemies, let us note the following. We are not given a specific date, but we are given certain temporal parameters.

B. We have clear information provided for us that this battle will precede the thousand year reign of Christ from heaven over all the nations of the world. Thus, this great battle in Revelation 19 must be yet future. For this vision concerning the victory of Christ over the beast and the false prophet in Revelation 19 precedes the vision concerning the initiation of the millennium in Revelation 20.

1. Again, I would have you note that the use of the phrase, “and I saw” in Revelation 19 and Revelation 20, is indicative of a chronological progression through this vision given to John beginning in Revelation 19:11 (note Revelation 19:11; Revelation 19:19; Revelation 20:1; Revelation 20:4).

2. Thus, this great military conflict in Revelation 19 immediately precedes the millennium. It is the premillennial battle that will immediately lead to the worldwide reign of Christ over every nation (when it will be fulfilled as prophesied in Revelation 15:4: “for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments [upon the beast, the false prophet, and their confederates—GLP] are made manifest”). Thus, this great battle must be yet future to us, since the millennial reign of Christ over all nations (as just indicated in Revelation 15:4 and in Revelation 20:4-6) has not yet come. That is one time indicator.

C. Another indication from Revelation 19 as to when this battle will occur is that as long as the enemies that Christ is to defeat in the great battle (namely, the civil beast and the papal false prophet) are yet alive and well on the earth (as they presently are), it may be concluded that this battle has not yet occurred, but is yet in the future. In other words, while the civil beast (who tyrannizes and persecutes the faithful witnesses of Christ), and the papal false prophet (who deceives and deludes the nations) are yet alive (to a lesser or greater degree of visibility throughout this period of history), that battle in which they will be destroyed by Christ is yet in the future. For when this battle occurs and Christ overcomes the civil beast and the papal false prophet, they will both be “cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone” (Revelation 19:20). They will not be heard of any longer. Therefore, this battle cannot yet have occurred in past or present history, because the papal false prophet that conspires with the civil beast to silence the faithful witnesses of Christ and which tyrannizes and deceives the nations of the

world is not yet destroyed. As we consider who these enemies are (in future sermons), it will become more clear that these enemies have not yet been destroyed.

II. WHERE Will The Military Battle in Revelation 19 Occur?

A. This question leads us to consider a couple passages in the Book of Revelation and in the Old Testament.

1. From our text in Revelation 19:15-20, we read once again concerning the great battle of Almighty God that is depicted for us between Christ and his enemies (particularly the beast, the false prophet, and the nations that follow them).

2. Now let us turn to Revelation 16:13-16 where that same battle is mentioned in the Sixth Vial Judgment by way of anticipation and the same enemies are the very ones that are being gathered to this final battle (namely, the beast and the false prophet gathering the nations together for war). They are gathered to a place called Armageddon. Armageddon means “the mount of destruction” in Hebrew. Since the question we are seeking to answer is WHERE will this military battle occur, we now have a location, namely Armageddon. But where is Armageddon? Is it intended to point to a geographical location, or is it intended to convey merely that the civil beast and false prophet will be destroyed (wherever that may be)? I propose that Armageddon points to a geographical location in Israel.

3. Let us turn to Zechariah 12:10-14. Here we read of a national mourning on the part of Israel as the Lord God opens their eyes and breaks their hearts to see how they have rejected their Messiah, Jesus Christ, and how they as a nation conspired with the Romans to put Christ to death out of their hatred for Him. Thus, this passage in particular (and chapters 12-14 of Zechariah in general) are all clearly Messianic, i.e. the prophecies in these chapters point to a period of time

after the death of Jesus Christ, when the nation of Israel will turn in faith and repentance to Jesus Christ (this does not refer to the salvation of a remnant from Israel, but to the conversion of the whole nation in language that encompassed all of Israel). Thus, this national conversion of Israel that is prophesied to come must be yet future, for no such national conversion of the land and of all the families of Israel has yet occurred.

a. Further confirmation of the Messianic nature of these prophecies is also made clear in Zechariah 13. For this theme of Israel's national conversion continues in Zechariah 13:1. And in that day (or at that time) when Israel becomes a Christian nation, she will no longer endure false prophets who deceive and mislead the people, but will smite and thrust them through (according to Zechariah 13:3). However, the guilt of national Israel is displayed in Zechariah 13:7 because in her hatred of Christ (at His first coming) she smote her faithful Shepherd (who was God's "fellow" i.e. who was equal to God, John 1:1). Zechariah 13:7 prophesies that because the Jews will smite their true and faithful Shepherd, Jesus Christ, they will be scattered (as was fulfilled after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 a.d.), but it is prophesied that the gracious hand of the Lord would be turned again to Israel in granting to her faith and repentance (which is what is happening in Zechariah 12:10-14 and Zechariah 13:1).

b. But notice in Zechariah 12:11 that the national, familial, and individual mourning of Israel (which is yet future) is likened to another case of national mourning: "as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo." This recalls the mourning that occurred at the time of the death of that godly king of Judah, Josiah, in 2 Chronicles 35:20-25 (who was killed in a battle with Pharaoh Necho of Egypt. The death of Josiah occurred in the valley of Megiddo (in the northern kingdom of Israel), and the great national mourning of King Josiah occurred in Jerusalem (in the southern kingdom of Judah). Thus, I submit that we see from Zechariah 12:10-14 that just as there was a great battle

in the valley of Megiddo in Israel which brought about the national mourning of the Jews (at the time of King Josiah's death), so there will be a great battle in the future in Israel that will likewise bring about the national mourning of the Jews, in which Israel as a nation will be turned to faith in Jesus Christ and will mourn over her guilt in the rejection and death of King Jesus.

4. Now where will this great battle be fought that will lead to Israel's conversion? The specific location of this great battle between Christ and the rebellious nations (which are in confederation with the civil beast and the papal false prophet) is stated to be in the area of Jerusalem (in Zechariah 14:1-2). This, I submit, is the same battle that is fought against Israel in Zechariah 12:2 (which leads to her national conversion to Christ in Zechariah 12:10), and is again the same battle that is fought against Israel in Zechariah 13:8-9 (which leads to her national conversion to Christ at the end of Zechariah 13:9). In other words, the thrust of Zechariah 12-14 is to reveal the war that will be fought in Israel by antichristian Gentile nations, which war will lead to Israel's national conversion to Christ, which in turn will lead to Christ's victory over His enemies as a converted Israel cries out to Christ to come to her defense.

5. There are a number of Christian scholars who would interpret the battle in Zechariah 14 to have already occurred (rather than to be yet future), either when Antiochus Epiphanes, the Syrian tyrant, devastated Jerusalem (in 167 b.c.) and then was defeated by the Maccabees subsequently; or when Jerusalem was destroyed by pagan Rome (in 70 a.d.), and pagan Rome destroyed by Constantine (by 325 a.d.). However, this war in Zechariah 14 could not have been fully realized at the time of Antiochus when Syria attacked and devastated Jerusalem (167 b.c.), for the prophecies in Zechariah 12-14 occur in the age of the New Covenant of Jesus Christ (as previously noted); nor could this war prophesied in Zechariah 14 have been fully realized at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem (70 a.d.), for the city of Jerusalem is not

destroyed in Zechariah 14:2 and those left in Jerusalem after the greater part have been cut off from the city shall turn in faith to Christ and shall be rescued from their oppressors, whereas Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 a.d. with no remnant left in it to turn to the Lord nor to be rescued from the Romans after Jerusalem's complete destruction.

6. Moreover, I submit that this battle in Zechariah 14 is the same battle that is fought in Revelation 19:11-21 (where Christ rides upon a white horse against the nations that are confederate with the beast and the false prophet) and is the same battle that is anticipated in Revelation 16:14-16 at Armageddon.

a. Just as John identifies the battle of Armageddon as "the great day of God Almighty" (Revelation 16:14), so Zechariah declares in chapter 14:1, "Behold, the day of the LORD cometh."

b. Just as John notes that the battle of Armageddon will involve "the kings of the earth and of the whole world" (Revelation 16:14), so likewise the Lord states through Zechariah, "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle" (Zechariah 14:2).

c. Just as John describes Christ going forth going forth to war against these rebellious nations gathered against Him (in Revelation 17:14 and in Revelation 19:11-21), so likewise Zechariah prophesies, "Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations (Zechariah 14:2-3).

d. Just as John uses language to indicate that this battle occurs in Israel (Revelation 16:16, where the nations are being gathered for war at Armageddon, Megiddo being a geographical location in Israel), so the battle in Zechariah 14 occurs in the Land of Israel where Jerusalem is specifically mentioned.

7. I would submit that there are two significant stages to this great battle that is revealed in Zechariah 14.

a. The first stage of the Battle is found in Zechariah 14:1-2, wherein the confederacy of the wicked nations against Israel is

initially successful with great devastation brought against Jerusalem and Israel (even half of those who survive this battle and the ravaging that follows are led into captivity among the nations). I would submit that it is after this defeat and captivity that those Jews that are left within Israel are granted the grace to turn to Christ, to believe the gospel, and to mourn over their rejection of Christ (note Zechariah 13:8-9). This is the initial stage of Israel's national restoration.

b. The second stage of the Battle is when the Lord supernaturally intervenes on behalf of a converted and Christian Israel that cries out to Christ, and Christ wars against the confederated nations (as we see in Zechariah 14:3-5, which will be accomplished by means of a devastating plague brought by the Lord in Zechariah 14:12 and by means of an internal conflict brought by the Lord within the confederated antichristian armies that leads to self-destruction in Zechariah 14:13). When the Lord brings about this supernatural victory to His converted people of Israel within the land of Israel, those Gentile nations that had gone up in battle against Israel will be converted and brought to Christ through the gospel proclaimed by a converted Israel within the land (which converted Gentile nations will then restore a converted Israel that is in captivity back to the land with those who have already been converted within the land of Israel, and so all Israel shall be saved according to Romans 11:25-26). And it is those newly converted nations (both Israel and the Gentile nations) that have come to Christ that will then turn against the antichristian civil beast and the papal false prophet to bring God's righteous judgment against them and all who yet worship the beast (as we see in Revelation 17:12-16).

B. Dear ones, where this battle of Armageddon occurs bears greatly upon God's amazing plan and His marvelous grace to bring about the conversion of the rebellious and ungodly nation of Israel as well as the conversion of all the godless Gentile nations of the world to Jesus

Christ. Thus, dear ones, it is not insignificant at all where this battle in Revelation is fought. For where it is fought (i.e. in Israel and in its initial stage against Israel), is one of the means that Christ will use to bring about the conversion of Israel as a nation (as Israel is decimated under the hand of the antichristian forces of the beast and false prophet), and in turn the conversion of the Gentile nations who will witness how Christ goes forth to war on behalf of the Christian nation of Israel. Oh, dear ones, this is the gospel of Christ's redeeming love in proportion and to an extent like the world has never seen. This is why it is so important to have a clear view of Christ's future victory, as King of kings and Lord of lords, ever before our eyes with a certain hope. For without such a hope, we will give up when we see resistance (from family and friends) to the gospel and to a covenanted reformation from every side. Without such a hope that Christ will by the Gospel use that great battle at Armageddon to convert nations and to promote reformation, we will live in discouragement and fall into despair at the opposition we face. But, dear ones, we are assured that though the war is not over, there is victory in Jesus, our King of kings and Lord of lords. We can live in confidence and assurance in our present circumstances (whatever they may be) that Christ, our King of kings and Lord of lords, will prevail (and that same glorious King will uphold us and grant us hope to face every trial), as we look with the eye of faith upon His death and resurrection, and with the eye of hope upon His victory as He rides upon His white horse to conquer His enemies. Dear ones, we cannot despise the day of small things, when such a King of kings and Lord of lords has given us His very word that no rebellion, no resistance, and no enemy is too great for our King to overcome.

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