

The Time of Armageddon

by J. Vernon McGee

Armageddon is a global conflict depicted in the Word of God, where every nation of the world will be involved, and it will take place during the great tribulation period.

Duration: 44:21

Scripture: Isaiah 63:1, Ezekiel 38:16, Zechariah 14:4, Revelation 16:12-16

Topics: "End Times", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the events leading up to the battle of Armageddon as described in the book of Revelation. The sixth angel pours out his bowl upon the river Euphrates, drying up the water to prepare the way for the kings of the east. Three unclean spirits, representing demons, come out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, gathering the kings of the earth for the battle. The preacher emphasizes the ongoing battle between light and darkness, good and evil, and predicts that this battle is drawing closer. He also quotes George Bernard Shaw, who criticizes the science and ideologies that have led to the decline of faith in Europe. The preacher then references Ezekiel 38, where God brings Russia against Israel to sanctify Himself before the Gentiles. He explains that Russia's blasphemy against God is allowed because people have become desensitized to sin. The sermon concludes with a description of the battle of Armageddon, where Jesus returns on a white horse, judges and makes war in righteousness, and is followed by the armies of heaven. He defeats the nations with a sharp sword and rules them with a rod of iron, displaying the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Transcript

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, Is laid for your faith in his excellent Word! But more can he say than to you he hath said, To you who for refuge to Jesus hath fled. Armageddon What comes to your mind when you hear that word? Does it strike fear in your heart, and bring terrible images to your mind? Or does it bring you hope that one day God will deal with the evilness of this world? I suppose it depends on who you are listening to. It seems that with every wind of change in the political arena, and with every war or potential for war to break out, there are those who predict the coming of the next world war or some great apocalypse.

When his disciples asked about such things, Jesus responded by saying, And ye will hear of wars, and rumours of wars. See that ye are not troubled. For all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

He then goes on to say that all these things are the beginning of sorrows. Although we don't want to get caught up in the wild utterances of prophecy mongers, as Dr. McGee called it, we do want to have a correct understanding of what the Bible teaches about the events surrounding the end times. So on today's program, our Bible teacher, Dr. J. Vernon McGee, will take us to the book of Revelation and present The Time of Armageddon.

Dr. McGee first gave this sermon at the historic Church of the Open Door where he served as the pastor from 1949 to 1970. I mention that because you may note in listening to this sermon today that he made references to the possible events that may occur in the year 2000. Now let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Heavenly Father, fill us with Your peace that comes from the confidence of knowing that You are in control of all things. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Our subject this evening is The Time of Armageddon. The Word of God depicts a war in the dimensions of a real global conflict. Actually, World War I and World War II do not meet those specifications.

Though they are called world wars, and they were the largest wars that had ever taken place in the world, they could not be called world wars because actually in World War I most of South America was excluded and most of the Orient was excluded. In World War II there were a few more nations added, especially in the Orient, but you could not call it by any stretch of the imagination a real global conflict. Now the one that is depicted in the Word of God, it beggars description as to its vastness, the number of nations that are involved, the size of the armies that participate, the intensity of the conflict and the issues that are involved in it.

And this word, even of Armageddon, it has caught the imagination of man, and every great war or threat of war to the peace of the world always raises the awesome image of Armageddon. And again and again that word occurs in the literature of the world. In World War I, for instance, after it a picture was made called the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, and it depicted World War I as being the one that would probably be the last.

When World War II took place and when the Blitz of Britain and then the release of the atomic bomb, many said at that time, this is it, this is Armageddon. And from that day down to the present hour, there has been a real uneasiness in the hearts of men about the future. And it's quite interesting to note the number of books that have been written by outstanding scholars in this connection.

Henry Steele wrote several years ago, Man, The Next Thirty Years. And a great many books are beginning now to appear that make the year 2000 an epical year. They feel like that's the year something is really going to take place.

And Wolstenholme, Man and His Future, he has edited a great many papers in this connection. Then we have Profiles of the Future by Arthur Clarke. And then the year 2000, A Framework for Speculation on the Next Thirty Years.

And Dr. Harrison S. Brown out here at the California Institute of Technology, he's written three books. One is Must Destruction Be Our Destiny? And then he wrote The Challenge of Man's Future? And then The Next One Hundred Years. And even H.G. Wells wrote The Shape of Things to Come.

Now, men in high places, scholarly men, are beginning to look into the future with great apprehension. And even the Spade Wall Street Journal at the time of the Berlin Wall, the time of China becoming a nation

and getting the atom bomb, and the Middle East tension, they speak of the fact that this may be Armageddon. It's a word that has captured the imagination of every student of Scripture, and of course a great many sensational things have been said about it.

There's rather a hazy conception of Armageddon. To begin with, World War and Europe is not Armageddon, because that's not the place of it. There is a hazy conception as to the place, as to the time of it, as to the forces that are involved, and as to the purpose of it.

And there are different interpretations on all these lines, as to place, as to time, as to purpose. And I was very much interested in reading one commentator who made this statement. He says, it's some place of a spiritual nature.

Now that, my friend, is what I call exegesis, and very scholarly exegesis, because it doesn't say a thing in the world, and it doesn't tell you anything at all. Some place of a spiritual nature. Now I believe that the Scripture's just a little bit more definite than that.

Now I think all agree, however, that it's the ultimate and final victory of God over the opposing forces of evil, or, put it in the good old Americana, when our side wins. That's the way a great many look at Armageddon. Now tonight, let's see what the Scripture has to say.

And you may be shocked if you don't already know this, that Armageddon is actually mentioned only one time by name. Now there are many references to it, as we will see. But the only time it's mentioned by name is in Revelation, the 16th chapter, verse 16.

And it says here, And he gathered them together in a place called, in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon. Let me go back and begin at verse 12. This is a very interesting section.

And the sixth angel poured out his bowl upon the great river Euphrates. And the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, out of the mouth of the false prophet.

For they are the spirits of demons, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

And he gathered them together into a place called, in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon. Now, Dr. Vinson, in his word studies, he was an outstanding Greek scholar. He translates here where it says, the battle of that great day of God Almighty, and where they are gathered together in this place called Armageddon.

The Greek word is polemon, and it means war. It does not mean a single battle at all. If you want a more accurate scriptural term, it's the war of Armageddon, and not the battle of Armageddon at all.

It is a conflict that you can't quite put it in that type of thinking at all. The word itself means, Hill of Megiddo. That's the meaning of it.

And you find that if you would turn back to 2 Chronicles, and I think that we'll do that, at least I believe that I have made a reference here. Yes, if you'll turn to 2 Chronicles 35-22, let me read this. Nevertheless, Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself that he might fight with him, and he hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and he came to fight in the valley of

Megiddo.

Now, it's called the Hill of Megiddo, and it's also called the Valley of Megiddo. And not only that, it's also called a Town of Megiddo. It's a very famous area.

It was the place where Josiah was slain. It was the place where Saul was slain. It's the place where Ahaziah was slain.

And there was a town there called the Town of Megiddo, and the king of Megiddo, for Joshua took the king of Megiddo. Deborah and Barak fought there. Gideon fought the Midianite in this particular area.

Now, it's a hill, and it's a valley. It's the Valley of Esdraelon. It's better known as that.

It's a valley that is probably about 15 miles long. I have pictures I took of it that you can see across it very easily, probably not over five miles across it. And there is a hill of Megiddo.

Solomon had stables there where he kept horses. And I don't think you could call it the Mountain of Megiddo, because I walked to the top of it in five minutes. My friend, when I can walk to the top of it in five minutes, you just couldn't call that a mountain.

It would have to be just called a hill. And there's quite a ruins there at that particular place. Now, the geographical location, however, is quite interesting.

For out of Lebanon, there comes what is known as the Great Rip. It begins at the Dog River, and then it turns south. And in that Great Rip is the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan Valley, and the Jordan River, the Dead Sea.

But it continues on down through that area and even goes into Africa. It's a tremendous area, and the armies of all the nations of the past have marched there. In fact, at the entrance to the Dog River, and we spent one whole morning there, and they call that the Calling Cards of the Nation, because all of the great rulers of the world marched through there, and they left an inscription when they went through there.

You can go back. Nebuchadnezzar came through there. The Assyrian forces came through there, and you will find that Egypt came through there, and all of the other great nations and great generals.

Alexander the Great, that's where he penetrated that land and was able to take Asia. Napoleon came through there. Napoleon said it was the greatest place for a battle of any place that he'd ever seen.

General Allenby, when he took that land from the Turks, and the Crescent came down after it had been there for over a thousand years. He came through that valley, and it was by knowing the topography of that land that he was able to take Jerusalem without firing a shot. Now, the final conflict, however, is not confined or localized to that immediate area, and the Word of God has a great deal to say about it, and tonight I'd like to turn to several of these passages that show that it's not confined just to what we call the Valley of Asdraelon, or to the Hill of Megiddo.

Now, it includes that, to be sure, but I'm turning first over to Zechariah, the 14th chapter, verses 2 and 4, and as I said a moment ago, there are many references in Scripture to this battle, our war, which is much more than a battle, by the way. Now, listen to this. God says in Zechariah 14, 2, For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, the women ravished, half the city shall go forth into captivity, the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations as when he fought in the day of battle. Now, it's very important to see that. The culmination of it is the, of the war of Armageddon will be when the Lord Jesus Christ comes.

Now, will you notice verse 4? His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley. Half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, half of it toward the south. Now, I said a moment ago there's that great rip that runs down through there, north and south.

Now, God says when the Lord Jesus comes, the entire topography of the land is changed. Instead of the valley running that direction, it will run east and west from the Mediterranean on into the Dead Sea, which will be a tremendous transformation of the topography of that land in that day. Now, there's a more description given in the 12th chapter of Zechariah.

I'd like to turn there. In this chapter, Jerusalem is mentioned 12 times, and the expression, in that day, is mentioned 7 times. Now, that day in the Old Testament is a reference always to the Great Tribulation and the Millennium, that is, to follow it.

That is the way that you find it used in Scripture. In the 63rd chapter of Isaiah, we find that the battle, our war, which is much better, the war of Armageddon, is also extended down into the land of Edom, because we read in the 63rd chapter, who is this that cometh out of Edom? Who is this that cometh from Basra, a city of Edom, with dyed garments? And the old interpretation of that was the crucifixion of Christ has nothing to do with his first coming, because it's the blood of his enemies that are on his garment. And he's coming from this war of Armageddon as he's the one who will end it.

Now, this reveals the fact that the war of Armageddon is not confined to just one local spot, but it's spread over the entire Near East. And not only that, Ezekiel says in the 38th chapter, verse 9, that when Russia comes down, they come down like a cloud to cover the land. So the entire land is involved in this.

Now, what is the time? May I say this very cautiously, because here's where a great many good men disagree. I believe that you have to put it into the context of the great tribulation period. Now, there are fine men that say it takes place before, and others say it takes place afterward.

But I can't see that it could take place anytime except during the great tribulation period. And I think Revelation 16, 14 makes that very clear. For they are the spirits of demons working miracles which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the war of the great day of God Almighty.

Now, the great day of the Lord, it begins with the great tribulation period. And that is the Hebrew way of reckoning days, by the way. Remember at the creation of the earth, God says the evening and the morning were the first day, the evening and the morning were the second day.

We begin a new day in the morning when the sun comes up, but God begins it when the sun goes down. And the great day of the Lord begins in darkness. Joel says that the great day of the Lord is not light, it's darkness.

And you will find that several of the other prophets make the same statement because they consider it rather important. Now, many of us believe that in the middle of the great tribulation period, and this of

course is not my subject tonight at all, but that Russia comes down in the middle of the week that triggers the conflict. And you'll find in the 38th and 39th of Ezekiel that Russia comes down into that land.

I believe that when Antichrist comes to power, he comes to power on the program of peace. And he'll bring peace into the world for a time. And the world will accept him because the world tonight would accept anybody that would bring peace to this world.

We want it desperately. This country has paid billions of dollars throughout the world to try to bring peace in the world. And a great many hang on to the United Nations just with one faint hope that maybe we're going to have peace.

Now, I believe that that'll be the platform of Antichrist. And I interpret the scripture to mean that for the first three and a half years, he's successful. But out of the north, Russia triggers the war of Armageddon by coming down.

And when he comes down, the 38th chapter of Ezekiel says, God intervenes as he did in Sodom and Gomorrah, destroys the army with brimstone. And that naturally stirs up a turmoil throughout the world. This peace that Antichrist has settled down on the world is a false peace because after that white horse rides, the red horse of war comes forward.

And therefore, a great many forces then are involved. All nations are going to march against Jerusalem. Let me read it again.

But they are the spirits of demons, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world to gather them to the war of that great day of God almighty. These are the forces that are gathered. Every nation of the world will be involved in that day.

And the thing that makes the war of Armageddon brand new, the thing that makes it different from anything yet that's happened on this earth, are the forces that come out of the east. This is new. The Orient has not been involved except in World War II, and we did not fight them.

In the west, we fought them in the Pacific. They did not move out of the east into the west at all. Japan made no motion in that direction.

Now the thing that makes this extremely interesting is that the book of Revelation says this is something that will take place in that day. Now we find marching at this time something that actually is tremendous. They are marching from every direction against Jerusalem.

Now I'm not at this point going to attempt to fill in details. It's breathtaking to begin with, and you may say that this is oversimplification to leave it like this. But I'm going to leave it like this.

I'd rather do that than to do what was done a few years ago. A great man of God, a man I respected, he was a wonderful preacher. He's preached in this pulpit here even since I've been pastor, and I wish we could have him again.

But he went out on the limb in prophecy, and he has the king of the south, Great Britain. He has Antichrist Mussolini. Now I say to you, that sounds pretty absurd tonight, and that's the danger of trying to nail down specifics, especially in a day when we are not told to try to figure out all the details.

We are looking tonight not for the battle or the war of Armageddon or the time of Armageddon. We're looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior. I'll leave it at that particular juncture.

But I'd like to say this, that we need to consider always the purpose and the ultimate issue, the result of Armageddon. This is, first of all, a great rebellion against God. That is the thing that identifies it.

I'd like to turn to the 13th chapter of Revelation and listen to this language that we have here. Verses 5, let me begin at verse 4. They worshiped the dragon, Satan, which gave power unto the beast. That's Antichrist.

And they worshiped the beast, saying, Who's like unto the beast? Who's able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies. Power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. Now that's the last half of the great tribulation period.

I believe that during that period Antichrist is a world dictator. And they will have, in that particular period, the worst period the world has ever seen. He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle and them that dwell in heaven.

And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, to overcome them. Power was given him over all kindreds and tongues and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

If any man have an ear, let him hear. And then he goes on to say, He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity. He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword.

He's saying to God's people that remain on the earth in that day and God have mercy on them. But during that period he says, Do not resist. This is Satan's day.

God's taking hands off. And for this brief period of time, this is hell's day on the earth. And it will be just that, my beloved.

Because God will let him have that. It's a rebellion against God. That that began as just a little temple on the surface by man's rebellion in the garden of Eden.

And the sin of man now leads to the man of sin and to this great running sower of humanity of man's rebellion against Almighty God. Now during that period, they're going to try to exterminate every vestige of God on the earth. They're going to drive him from his universe if they can.

Now they naturally are going to come against the city that has represented God down through the ages. And at this particular time, there will be 144 witnesses. The church is gone.

The church is not, the church of the open door won't be here. There will be these witnesses on the earth. Their headquarters will be Jerusalem.

And so now man from every quarter wants to get rid of God. And what are you going to do? Destroy Jerusalem and these that have witnessed for him. And if you can, you've gotten rid of God on the earth.

And that's exactly what multitudes are attempting to do even at this very moment. Now we may not be able to pinpoint at the beginning or the course of Armageddon, but we sure know how it's going to end.

Over in the 19th chapter of the book of Revelation, will you listen to this? This is the way Armageddon is going to end.

I saw heaven open. They hold a white horse and he that sat upon him was called faithful and true. And in righteousness, he doth judge and make war.

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. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood.

And his name is called the word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword that with it he should smite the nations.

He shall rule them with a rod of iron. He treaded the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of almighty God. He hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, Lord of lords.

Now that gathers up all the prophecies that say that all nations are to be gathered against Jerusalem. He's coming now to the earth. He's coming down here to put down that rebellion that is here on this earth.

And that is one of the purposes of his coming and one of the reasons that Armageddon must take place. Because there's a rebellion in the heart of man today, I think it's being held back a great deal. It doesn't look like it, but it is.

The spirit of God is hindering. But when he is removed for that brief period, then that rebellion will break out on this earth in a tremendous way. Here is something that Dr. Charles Malick, he was former president of the United Nations General Assembly.

He was from Lebanon. He was a Christian. And he made this statement.

He says, if I were asked to choose between the dialectical materialism of the Soviet and the practice commercialism of the West, I'm not sure I would choose the Western brand. And then he goes on, he says, we have lost the sense of the eternal battle raging between Christ and the devil. May I say that Armageddon is the consummation of that rebellion and he brings it to a conclusion at that particular time.

We've lost the sense that there is that struggle going on in the world today. There is a battle between light and darkness, between right and wrong, between God and Satan, between that which is good and right and that which is evil and wrong. And may I say to you, that battle is drawing, I think, closer and it'll end in this tremendous war that is to take place.

Now he's going to put down this rebellion that's in the heart of man. It's quite interesting to note today the men that have led in it in the past and their reaction finally. I have a quotation here that you will not hear the liberals quote from George Bernard Shaw.

Let me give you this. Before he died, he wrote an article entitled Too True to be Good. Too True to be Good.

Listen to it. The science to which I pin my faith is bankrupt. Its councils which should have established the millennium have led directly to the suicide of Europe.

I believed them once. In their name, I helped to destroy the faith of millions of worshipers in the temples of a thousand creeds. And now they look at me and witness the great tragedy of an atheist who has lost his faith.

How tremendous. May I say to you, the battle has been raging and Christians are asleep tonight, friend. There's a battle going on.

It's a war. It's a conflict. Many of us have run to cover.

Let me quote from Bertrand Russell. I'm quoting from the wild ones tonight. Now, will you listen? He says, he wrote in Atlantic Monthly, and this was way back in 1951 now.

He says, before this century ends, unless something unforeseeable occurs, one of three possibilities will have been realized. The end of human life, perhaps of all life on our planet. Second, a reversion to barbarism after a catastrophic demunition of the population of the globe.

Third, a unification of the world under a single government. And he says it's all unforeseeable, and to him it was. But he sensed what was coming.

May I say to you, that one world government is coming, and it'll be as godless as it possibly can be. May I say, he's coming to put down rebellion. Armageddon is necessary.

And then the second thing, and the second reason he's coming, is to get glory to his name. He is going to declare to a rebellious and Christ-rejecting world that he's god and that he's holy. And I say it tonight reverently, it's about time he's doing it too.

Because the world tonight, they've just about forgotten him in the play many years ago in New York. I read the book, I never saw the play. The title of it was Green Pasture, and the thing in that was a man played god.

And one of the things he said is quite interesting. He says, as I look down at the earth, it looks like my chilling done forgot all about me. There's no glory to him in Los Angeles tonight.

He's blasphemed tonight in Los Angeles and in the world. He created this earth. And you can't live on the moon, we found that out.

A fellow here about 15 years ago gave me a deed to a lot on the moon. He did, he came down here, very fine looking gentleman. I have that up for sale tonight.

I'll be very happy to make you a good price. And I say to you, you can't live on the moon, and you can't live on Mars it looks like. Isn't it interesting, and this is the thing right now some of these men are saying, it couldn't be an accident that in this little world, in this vast universe, this is the only place we got human beings.

And they're in rebellion against their creator. You know if I were God tonight, and forgive me for saying it, I don't mean to be a reverend, if I were God tonight, I'd look over this great vast universe with these created intelligences that he has that praise his name. And I'd see little man down there, and I'd look over the battlement of heaven, and I'd say I'm through with you.

Watch out. But I say to you tonight, thank God he's not doing that. He loved this little earth, and he loved man, and he gave his son to die for man down here.

And he's patiently dealing with this earth, but he's going to have to get glory to himself. Will you listen to him now? Why does God permit Russia to come down, and why does God destroy them? This is not senseless. Will you listen to him? In Ezekiel 38 verse 16, thou shalt come up against my people of Israel as a cloud to cover the land.

It shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land that the heathen, that is the Gentiles, may know me when I shall be sanctified in thee, O God, before their eyes. Russia's blaspheming God, and people say, well, how does he get by with it? I can remember as a boy that I used to swipe watermelon, and I remember the first time I swiped watermelon. I guess today I ought to be called a juvenile delinquent, but in that day it seemed to be all right.

Anyway, I swiped, and the first time I actually thought that there'd be lightning out of heaven that would strike me dead. But you know, after you do that about a half a dozen times, you come to the conclusion God's not going to do anything about it. And that's where the world is tonight.

They think God's not going to do anything about it. God's name is being blasphemed, and God's going to get glory to himself. Listen to him again in 39 verse 7. So I will make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel, and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more, and the heathen shall know that I'm the Lord, the Holy One in Israel.

He hasn't done that yet, but he's going to do that. This world must know that he is God, that he's holy, but that he is a Savior. And then may I conclude with this, how else would he put down the rebellion? Can you suggest, if you could suggest another way to God, I think he'd be interested in hearing you.

These people that like to criticize him for what he does, how do you think he'll put down the rebellion? Throw cream puffs from the sky and turn it over to the United Nations? He has no notion of doing that. He shall break them with a rod of iron. He shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

He's a potentate. He's a despot, and a despot is the one that when he comes to power, he bowls over all opposition. Whether you like it or not, Jesus Christ will be the dictator on this earth someday.

But my friend, when he is, this is going to be a good place to live, and that's the way, the direction that he's moving tonight. God has a glorious and good purpose for this earth, and he's not going to turn it over to Satan and his minions and evil men today. He's going to take it back and rule someday on this earth as King of King and Lord of Lord.

His staff and his rod, they comfort me. That rod today that someday will break down all opposition ought not to cause any person to be afraid tonight, because he uses it just to discipline those that are his own. My friend, if you're not going to have his discipline, if you're not going to yield to him now, I tell you this, he's going to break the rebellion, and he's going to rule this earth someday.

You and I live in a day. He's not moving. I'm very frank to say God's not moving today, and you know why? He's patient, long-suffering.

He's not willing that any should perish, but that all might come to the knowledge of the truth. God is long-suffering. He's waiting, even now, for you to come to Him, so that He can give you eternal life.

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