

# Armageddon and the Second Coming of Christ

by John F. Walvoord

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*The final world conflict is a gigantic world war that brings to a close the times of the Gentiles and is the final effort of Satan in his strategy of opposition to the divine program of God.*

**Scripture:** Revelation 12:9

**Topics:** "End Times", "Second Coming"

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## Description

John F. Walvoord delves into the dramatic conclusion of the 'times of the Gentiles,' describing a colossal world war culminating in the second coming of Christ as God's response to Satan's opposition. The conflict unfolds with the rise of a world government during the great tribulation, led by a world ruler who receives worship and control over the global economy but faces divine judgments. The 'trinity of evil' emerges, comprising Satan, the world ruler, and the false prophet, orchestrating a final great world war in the Middle East.

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## Transcript

The dramatic conclusion of the "times of the Gentiles" is described in prophecy as a gigantic world war which is climaxed by the second coming of Christ. The war that brings to a close the times of the Gentiles, which already has embraced twenty-five hundred years of history, is also the final effort of Satan in his strategy of opposition to the divine program of God. The second coming of Christ is God's answer. Some of the major elements of this conflict have already been considered and now need only to be related one to the other.

### The Beginning Of The Final World Conflict

The great world war which will engulf the Middle East at the end of the age is an outgrowth of the world situation during the time of the great tribulation. The Roman Empire formed earlier has now extended its power "over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" (Revelation 13:7). The world government formed at the beginning of the great tribulation is scheduled in prophecy to endure for forty-two months or three and a half years (Revelation 13:5). At its beginning there is no serious challenge of the power and authority of the world ruler, and he is able to assume supreme power not only in the political field, but also receives recognition and worship as God and controls the economic power of the entire world. His reign is afflicted, however, by a series of great judgments of God described in the breaking of the seals, the blowing of the trumpets, and the outpouring of the vials of the wrath of God (Revelation 6:1--18:24). The disruptive force of these judgments is keenly felt throughout the world and it soon becomes evident that the promised

utopia which his rule was designed to produce is not going to be fulfilled.

### The Trinity Of Evil

Many students of prophecy have noted the "trinity of evil" which characterizes the end time. In some respects this trinity corresponds to the Trinity of the Godhead. The ultimate source of power and evil in the end time is none other than Satan himself, referred to as "the great dragon," and as "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan" (Revelation 12:9). The political as well as the religious power which dominates the world is unquestionably Satan, and for this reason it is stated in Revelation 13:4 that the world "worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast." Satan assumes much the same power and prerogatives as God the Father.

The world ruler, who is Satan's masterpiece as a counterfeit of Christ, is the actual supreme dictator of the entire world and in a sense is Satan incarnate. He is undoubtedly a brilliant man intellectually and a dynamic personality, but he is completely dominated by Satan. In keeping with the satanic approach of imitation and counterfeit of God's program, the world ruler is Satan's king of kings and lord of lords. Many students of Scripture assign the term "antichrist" to this person for this reason, although in the Bible none of the references to antichrist clearly indicate the personage in view (cp. I John 2:18, 22; 4:3; II John 7).

The third member of the unholy trinity is the "beast coming up out of the earth" (Revelation 13:11) who assists the world ruler, performing satanic miracles and causing all men to worship the image of the beast (Revelation 13:12-15). He apparently also is instrumental in linking the economic and religious life of the world in that only those who worship the beast can buy or sell (Revelation 13:16). This personage is undoubtedly the same as "the false prophet" (Revelation 19:20) and in every respect he is the right-hand man and expediter for the world ruler. In his activities he corresponds to some extent to the ministry of the Holy Spirit on behalf of Christ and thus forms the third member of the trinity of evil. The world situation is therefore firmly in the grasp of Satan, Satan's man who is the world dictator, and the false prophet who heads up the satanic world religion of the great tribulation. In spite of the satanic control of the world by divine plan (Revelation 16:16), as the great tribulation moves on to its close, major sections of the world rebel against their ruler, and this sets the stage for the final great world war.

### The Gathering Of The Armies Of The World

The armies of the world which converge upon the Middle East according to Revelation 16:13 are induced to engage in the final conflict by satanic influences. This is introduced in the statement of John the Apostle: "I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, 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" (Revelation 16:13, 14).

There has been endless speculation as to the identity of the three unclean spirits like frogs. The passage itself indicates plainly that they are spirits of devils or demons and unquestionably are fallen angels under the command of Satan who are sent forth to draw the kings of the world into this final conflict. Humanly speaking, they are gathering to wrest the world rulership from the Roman ruler. In the satanic purpose, however, the armies of the world are gathered to fight the armies of heaven which will accompany Christ at His second coming. As in so many undertakings of Satan, such as is supremely illustrated in the crucifixion of Christ, the very program of Satan is its own destruction, and although Satan is inevitably impelled to gigantic opposition to Christ, he only sets the stage for the triumph of God. It is to facilitate the

gathering of these armies that the Euphrates River is dried up that the armies from the east may converge without difficulty upon the Middle East.

Three major armies are mentioned in the Bible, namely, the army from the north, the army from the east, and the army from the south. These three armies are combining their efforts to wrest power from the Roman ruler who may be considered as the king of the west, although this title is never given to him in the Scriptures. The focal point for their gathering is declared in Revelation 16:16 to be "a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." Although various explanations have been given of this title, it seems to refer to the valley of Esdraelon also known as the valley of Jezreel located to the east of Megiddo in northern Israel. The word Armageddon actually means Mount of Megiddo from har meaning mount and Megiddo.

The broad valley that is here described is approximately fourteen miles wide and twenty miles long and historically has been the scene of many great battles of the past. In modern times the area became a great swamp, but with the revival of the area under the state of Israel the water has now been drained, and it is a fruitful and beautiful plain well suited for a great army. It is obvious, however, that this is only the central staging area for the war as actually the size of the armies involved preclude the possibility of confining them to this valley. As Scripture indicates, the war rages for some two hundred miles north and south thereby engulfing the entire Holy Land.

#### The Early Battles Of The Final World War

Scripture does not provide much detail on the characteristics of the final world conflict. The main significance is that they are assembled in the Holy Land at the time of the second advent and oppose Christ in His return to the earth. However, some indication of the nature of the battles preceding the second coming of Christ is given in Daniel 11:40-45. If the order of introduction of events is taken chronologically, it appears that the first stage of the battle is an attack by the king of the south. According to Daniel 11:40, "And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him."

In rapid succession an attack also comes from the north which apparently is successful. The Scriptures state that "the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over." This king of the north may be Russia. The force of his invasion is such that he proceeds through the Holy Land and conquers Egypt at least temporarily. (Some expositors, however, interpret the passage beginning in Daniel 11:42 as referring to the Roman ruler who is naturally to the north of Africa, rather than to Russia as the king of the north, i.e., north of Palestine, as this seems to be the main theme of the passage.) The warfare brought about by the invasion of the king of the north and the king of the south, however, is now followed by another phase, namely, the arrival of the host from the east.

According to Daniel 11:44, "Tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many." The arrival of the forces from the Orient described as an army of two hundred million in Revelation 9:16 brings on the last phase of the world struggle, and at the time of the second coming of Christ the war is raging in a number of areas.

At least four geographic locations are mentioned in the Bible as figuring in the final struggle. The center, of course, is Armageddon where the main forces are located. Another focal point for the battle is the city of Jerusalem itself. According to Zechariah 12:2-10 a siege will be declared against the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem apparently will be defended to some extent by the power of God by miraculous intervention, for

the armies of the world have great difficulty in subduing the city. It is stated in Zechariah 12:3, "And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people; all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it." The passage goes on to say how the horses are smitten with blindness and the riders with madness.

At the time of the second coming of Christ, however, Jerusalem has finally been entered and is in the process of being subdued at the very moment that the glory of Christ in the heavens in His second advent appears. This is stated in Zechariah 14:2, 3: "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and 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." From this description it is clear that the nations are engaged in active warfare in relation to Jerusalem at the time of the second advent.

Another geographic location is that of the valley of Jehoshaphat mentioned in Joel 3:2, 12. Although there is some dispute as to its location, it appears to be a valley immediately east of Jerusalem. Here, according to Joel, God declares: "I 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." This valley is the scene of the divine judgment mentioned in Joel 3:12. Whether this gathering has to do with the battle for Jerusalem or is a subsequent event to the second advent, is not entirely clear.

Still another geographic location mentioned is that of Edom in Isaiah 34:1-6 and 63:1-6. Again it is not entirely clear, however, whether this is part of the battle or a subsequent judgment of God. In Daniel 11:41 Edom, Moab, and Ammon are specifically mentioned as escaping the full brunt of the battle.

The awful bloodshed stemming from this conflict is indicated in Revelation 9:18 where one-third of the armies are declared to be destroyed by the army from the east and the statement in Revelation 14:20 that "blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs." This is a distance of approximately two hundred miles and seems to indicate the extent of the bloody battle as these armies converge upon the Holy Land.

Although the exact deployment of the forces and the precise character of the successive battles which precede the second coming of Christ are not indicated in Scripture, it is sufficient for us to know that the Holy Land will be crowded with the armies of the world in preparation for the dramatic second advent of Christ. This is the final showdown of Gentile power dominated by Satan in blasphemous opposition to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

#### The Second Coming Of Christ And The Annihilation Of The Armies

As the armies of the world are engaged in struggle for power throughout the Holy Land and in the very act of sacking the city of Jerusalem, the glory of the Lord appears in heaven and the majestic procession pictured in Revelation 19:11-16 takes place. At the head of the procession is Christ, described as riding on a white horse coming to judge and make war. His eyes are as a flame of fire and on His head are many crowns. His vesture is dipped in blood. Accompanying Him are the armies of heaven also riding on white horses and clothed in fine linen. In verse 15 it is stated of Christ, "Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

In contrast to His lowly birth in Bethlehem where He was laid in a manger, this advent is the triumphant King of kings and Lord of lords coming to claim the world for which He died and over which He is now going to exercise His sovereign authority in absolute power. The verses which follow invite the fowls of the earth to feed upon the carnage of the flesh of kings and mighty men and of their horses (Revelation 19:18).

According to Revelation 19:19 the armies of the world, which have previously been fighting each other, forget their differences and unite to fight against Christ in His second advent to the earth. John writes: "I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army." Their struggle against such an adversary, however, is useless. It is apparent that they are put to death not by ordinary military struggle, but by the word of authority proceeding out of His mouth described as "a sharp sword" (Revelation 19:15). All the armies and their horses apparently are put to death at one stroke, but the beast (the world ruler) and the false prophet (the religious ruler of the world) are taken alive, and according to Revelation 19:20, "These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." However, the doom of the rest is sealed in Revelation 19:21: "And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh."

Thus ends in one dramatic blow the power of the Gentiles which had controlled Jerusalem from the time of Nebuchadnezzar, 606 b.c. Thus ends also the satanic control of the Gentiles who had been a demonstration of satanic power, guilty of blasphemy and of the blood of countless martyrs, especially in oppressing the nation Israel.

Satan, their unseen leader, is also dealt with, and according to Revelation 20:1-3 he is cast into the abyss where he is rendered inactive for the entire period of the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. Then he is destined to join the beast and the false prophet in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). The Gentile population of the world as a whole is judged at a separate judgment which follows and is a part of the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth.

The inglorious end of Gentile power is precisely that which was anticipated in Daniel 2 where the great image disintegrates into chaff when struck by the stone cut out without hands. The same dramatic end is contemplated in the destruction of the beast (Daniel 7:11) followed by the inauguration of the everlasting kingdom in Daniel 7:13, 14. Jerusalem was no longer to be trodden under the feet of the Gentiles and once again Israel was to be exalted.

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