

Text: Rev. 19:17-21

Title: "The Battle of Armageddon"

Time: 10/14/2018 am

Place: NBBC

Intro: Wikipedia has a "List of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction" that includes books, radio programs, television series, and films dating as far back as the 19th century, which have been about the end of the world. The list has 971 entries in it. Another list I saw showed that since 2010, 82 movies have been released about the end of the world. Clearly, entertainers have found that there is a market for fiction about the end of the world. It seems to be a topic that society finds fascinating for some reason.

Our passage this morning, along with many other similar passages of Scripture throughout the Old and New Testaments, speaks about what the end of the world will be like. These passages are not fiction. They are Bible prophecy. They are the same kind of literature that revealed to men that Jesus Christ would come the first time, including when, where, and why He would come.

This prophecy of the second coming of Christ also has a when, a where, and a why.

The when is at the end of the great tribulation period of judgment, the description of which began in Revelation 5 when the Lamb began to break the seals of the scroll, the title-deed to the earth. In our passage this morning, we read how the Great Tribulation period ends at Armageddon.

The where is called *Armageddon* (Rev. 16:13-16). This phrase means *the Mount of Megiddo*, which is situated in the north of Palestine. The prophet Joel names the place of this war

*the valley of Jehoshaphat* and *the valley of decision* (Joel 3:2, 12, 14). *Jehoshaphat* means *Jehovah judges*, and the prophet likely has in mind the valley on the west side of the Dead Sea called *Engedi*, where Jehoshaphat won a great victory over Israel's enemies. Simply put, the where is that area of Palestine to the north and east that encroaches upon Jerusalem.

The why is the salvation of Israel. To destroy Israel is to destroy the promise of the Lord, which guaranteed the survival of Israel (Ezek. 39:27-28). Prior to 1948 there was no Israel to save. The Lord has faithfully reestablished them in the land in fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy. Antichrist and the false prophet will gather the nations of the earth to destroy Israel once and for all, but their Messiah, Jesus Christ, will save them as God has promised.

So with that understanding of the when, the where, and the why of the second coming of Christ, let's notice three things together this morning about the Battle of Armageddon, which happens when He returns.

I. The battle of Armageddon shall be the gruesome end of flesh (vv. 17-18).

Illustration: We do not normally consider carrion birds, the ones that eat roadkill, beautiful creatures. In fact, the website [factzoo.com](http://factzoo.com) tells me that the Marabou Stork is the ugliest animal in the world. Look it up. It is pretty unsightly, and it eats dead flesh.

Edgar Allen Poe noted the same ugliness in another carrion bird, the raven:

"But the Raven still beguiling all my fancy into smiling,

Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and  
bust and door;

Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking  
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of  
yore —

What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird  
of yore

Meant in croaking ‘Nevermore.’”

Why are carrion birds especially grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous? Well, theologically we must say that in their originally created form, they were not carrion birds (Gen. 1:29-30). This much we know for sure. Evidently, just as the form of the serpent was changed after the fall, the curse on the rest of nature also included a change in the form and function of some of the other animals too. Perhaps that is why so many of them are so very ugly. In a world of death and roadkill, carrion birds are an important part of nature’s eco-system.

Application: So what do carrion birds have to do with Armageddon? The answer is that they are called to a great supper of God just before He brings a gruesome end to all flesh (v. 17). Those who rise up against the Lord think they are kings, but they are actually bird food. They believe they are military commanders, but they are bird food. They believe they are mighty men with powerful horses, but they and their horses are bird food. Whether they were freemen or slaves, small or great, all their flesh is bird food.

The fact of the matter is that when we die, the flesh of us all is going to be something’s food someday. It is the viewpoint of antichrist to glory in the flesh, to prioritize the physical rather than the spiritual, and to trust the accomplishments of our own human hands. Paul told the Philip-

pian church that we as the Lord's people have a different view: "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3).

Our flesh is temporary, and its accomplishments are weak. We do not live for the pleasures of the flesh, but to worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus from the heart. Those who put confidence in the flesh put their confidence in bird food. The battle of Armageddon will be the gruesome end of all flesh. Do not live for the pleasures and accomplishments of the flesh.

II. The battle of Armageddon is an act of self-defense (v. 19).

Illustration: Violence is never a pleasant thing. It is always a part of our fallen world. But our legal code of justice rightly distinguishes between an act of violence that was offensive and an act of violence that was a necessary part of self-defense.

A man who enters a home with a gun to murder a family is unrighteous, but the man who shoots an armed intruder to protect his family is righteous. The difference is that one is an act of offence, the other is an act of self-defense.

Application: The text is clear that when Armageddon happens, it will happen because an armed intruder makes war against Christ and His people. It is in this sense an act of self-defense.

God's judgment is always just for this reason. Every sin God ever judges is a sin that has made war against Him as holy God. To disobey this Sovereign is an act of violence against Him. To return His love with indolent indifference is an act of violence against Him. To respond to His truth in

unbelief is an act of violence against Him. This is so because He is God.

Now God, of course, has no trouble defending Himself against the violence of His enemies (the laugh of Psalm 2). The futility of Armageddon's earthly attack upon Jesus Christ is described in Zech. 14:12-15. Evidently, a microbe of some kind will do the job with a plague.

No act of self-defense is a pleasant experience. If you have to shoot an armed intruder in your home, you do not feel very good about it afterwards. This is true for the Lord as well (Ezek. 33:11, "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"). The Bible tells us that God's work of judgment is His strange work (Isa. 28:21). It is the work that is made necessary, in part, by conditions that arise outside of His nature. He is a merciful God who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).

Even in the battle of Armageddon, things begin with an angel in full view with a great voice calling out to the birds as a gracious warning about what is about to happen. And still the enemy persists and attacks. And so Armageddon is an act of divine self-defense.

Will the Lord have to defend His own righteous nature from you? Have you attacked Him with the claim that either He is not your God or that He is not righteous and will overlook your sin? Understand, God is merciful, but He is not mocked. Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. Though magnificently patient with you thus far, the day will come when God defends Himself from the attack of your unbelief, your disobedient rebellion, and your lack

of love, and your Armageddon will come unless you repent and turn to Christ for forgiveness and redemption. He experienced the Armageddon we deserve, so that we can be saved. To reject that gift is the ultimate act of violence against the Lord.

III. The battle of Armageddon is a consequence of truth (vv. 20-21).

Illustration: I saw a video on the news page of the *Washington Post* this past week that showed a fire-fighter's recording of a burning sulfur mound in Worland, Wyoming. Evidently, the fire was caused by the remains of a Texas Gulf Sulfur Plant that operated there in the 1950's. The video is available on line, and the burning sulfur does indeed form a windblown lake of fire with sulfur.

Application: The word translated *brimstone* at the end of verse 20 is the Greek word for *sulfur*. We are told that the antichrist and the false-prophet are thrown into a lake of burning sulfur after being seized during the battle of Armageddon. And we are reminded that the false-prophet was the one who used supernatural miracles to deceive those who received the mark of the antichrist and who worshipped his image.

As the false-prophet did those miracles of deception, he never mentioned anything about the coming battle of Armageddon. Instead, his miracles were used to validate lies – the lie that the mark of the antichrist was man's hope and that the antichrist was a god whom man should worship.

But the problem with these lies that excused their idolatry is that they did not come true. The lies we believe to excuse our idolatry will not come true either.

What does come true is the battle of Armageddon. This battle and the judgment it shall render are consequences of the truth. Truth corresponds to reality and lies do not. My truth is not different than your truth, because my reality is not different than your reality. What is real is the same for both of us, therefore, what is true is the same for both of us. We cannot escape the reality that truth has real consequences.

Ill: If our meeting place was engulfed in flames this morning, that circumstance would be equally true for both of us because it would be equally real. Unless we take action, we shall really perish in that real fire. That is our common truth. No firefighter tells victims of a house fire to go back to bed.

With the same sense of truth, the apostle John was given this real prophecy of this real warning about the real end of the real world. We do not need another movie to help us speculate about what will happen. We have been told what is real and true by the Word of God. Now we must choose whether to believe God's Word or to believe our lie, but our lie will not change the reality that God's Word is true. He cannot lie.

Conclusion: The battle of Armageddon will be the gruesome end of all flesh. Is your life characterized by confidence in the flesh, or do you worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Jesus Christ as your Savior?

The battle of Armageddon is self-defense. Will God need to defend Himself someday as your righteous God against your claim to the contrary? Have you trusted Christ for forgiveness for the violence you have done to Him?

The battle of Armageddon is a consequence of truth. These consequences of God's truth are eternal consequences. Will you and I believe God's truth, or will we choose the lies of our idolatry and suffer the consequences?

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*