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Conducted by  
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***“What is meant by ‘Harmageddon’, in Rev. 16:16?”***

There is no doubt that the world has in recent weeks experienced alarming, and even terrifying, events which have caused many to wonder just where mankind is heading.

Man’s potential for self-destruction has never been more evident than it is today, and the half-veiled threat of the use of nuclear weapons that was recently made by Osama bin Laden, has fuelled people’s anxiety. Are we heading for the end of the world?

Is *‘Armageddon’* just around the corner?

Well, in any time of international unrest, uncertainty or conflict, there have been those who have raised the age-old spectre of *‘Armageddon’*. Years ago the word frequently appeared in the “Watchtower” publications of the self-styled *‘Jehovah’s Witnesses’*, as they attempted to arrest people’s attention.

Furthermore, the word has become something of a by-word; a synonym used to describe any cataclysmic event, whether real or imaginary.

***What do the scriptures really tell us about ‘Armageddon’?***

Does the word, indeed, carry a warning concerning a mighty battle? And does it relate to a literal or to a figurative conflict in the 16th chapter of the Revelation where the word occurs? The explanations and theories which have been advanced as attempts have been made to explain *‘Armageddon’* are rather like the demons in the demoniac of Gadara; their name is *‘Legion’*.

Some expositors have claimed that *‘Armageddon’* represents *‘the last great conflict between East and West’*.

Others explain it as *‘the great universal conflict before the return of Christ’*.

And others, again, describe it as *‘all the nations against the Church’*.

Not surprisingly, in the light of the present international situation some have seen it as a conflict between Christianity and the faith of Mohammed.

But, *do* the scriptures, in fact, warn us of a literal battle, with armies taking to the

field and employing all the weapons of modern warfare?

***The Revelation; The Most Figurative Book in the Bible.***

I think we should bear in mind, whenever we read the 'Revelation', that this 'conflict' is described in the most figurative and symbolic book in the scriptures, and remember, also, that every single figure, symbol or illustration that we find there, comes from elsewhere in the scriptures. In other words, *not one symbol, or illustration, used in the 'Revelation' comes from outside of the scriptures themselves.*

This means that to understand the term 'Armageddon' it is essential to go back to the Old Testament scriptures for guidance.

***A Little History.***

Before we do this, let us notice that the *one and only* reference to 'Armageddon' is found in the chapter already referred to, Rev.16:16, where, in v.14 it is described as '*the war of the great day of God, the Almighty*'. Armageddon is God's Day! And it is hinted at again in ch. 19:19-21, where it is described in terms which remind us of Ezek. 39:19.

***"AR" or "HAR" mageddon?***

The word 'Ar' means 'city', so that 'Armageddon' indicates the 'City' of Megiddo.

'Har' means 'hill', and, '*Harmageddon*' describes the 'Hill' of Megiddo.

Just as there are in history, names of physical locations that tell familiar stories - such as 'Masada', 'The Alamo' and 'Waterloo'; names which remind us of great or special events, so, about 60 miles north of Jerusalem, there is a valley about 10 miles long stretching from the River Jordan to the Coast and enclosed by mountains at one end, which is called the '*Plain of Jezreel*'. Bible maps will also use the name '*The Valley of Megiddo*', the valley which is famous in the O.T. as the site of some of the bloodiest battles in Israel's history.

'*Harmageddon*' - the Hill of Megiddo - is still there. It is the hill upon which remain the ruins of '*Armageddon*', the City of Megiddo, which is the ancient city that was formerly a Canaanite stronghold.

(I might add that I have personally seen the ancient Canaanite altar, which still exists at Megiddo).

***The Significance of 'Armageddon' area.***

A brief examination of the Old Testament will reveal how significant this place was in those days.

Judges 5:19 tells us that it was here that Barak defeated the Canaanites.

Jud. 7:33 records that Gideon fought against the Midianites here.

2nd Sam. ch.1, tells of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan in that area.

2nd Kings 23:29, reports that the good King Josiah also died here, when he intervened in a battle with which he really should not have become involved.

Here, too, King Ahaziah was killed by Jehu.

In a word, the Valley of Megiddo was renowned in Old Testament history as the location of great battles and terrible events, so that it came to symbolise conflict.

***First mentioned in Judges ch.4.***

Jabin, king of the Canaanites, had oppressed Israel for 20 years, and the reason for his apparent superiority and invincibility was the fact that his army commander, Sisera, had at his disposal 900 war-chariots which supported his army.

And what weapons had the Israelites? None! Not a sword, shield or spear! (Judges 5:8).

This is because the Canaanites had followed the example of the Moabites before them, who, having conquered the Israelites, had disarmed them. They had stripped

them of their weapons. This was the usual policy in those days, designed to make rebellion impossible.

In 1st Sam. 13:19 we are told that there was '*no smith in Israel*'. At that particular time, the Philistines, who were oppressing the Israelites, did not allow them to work in metal because they did not want them to be able to make weapons for themselves.

Indeed, there was even a time when Israel's farmers had to go to the Philistines, and pay to have their tools sharpened, because the Philistines had obtained the secret of iron smelting.

This explains why Jud. 3:16 records that Ehud '*made himself a sword*' - an action which, under normal circumstances, would hardly have been regarded as a startling event, whilst ch.3:31, tells us that Shamgar fought the Philistines armed only with '*an ox-goad*' - a stick with a point on the end!

It is, therefore, not surprising that, when Sisera's army attacked the Israelites, they turned and fled.

So, what followed? Read Jud. ch.4.

In the mountains there lived a woman named Deborah, a prophetess, to whom the Israelites turned for advice. She stated plainly, "*You are not able to deal with this enemy. But God is!*" Then, at the right moment, she told Barak, "*Up! For this is the day when YAHVEH will deliver Sisera into your hands. Is not YAHVEH gone up before you?*"

The two armies faced each other. On one side there was the mighty army of the Canaanites, and on the other, the unarmed men of Israel. They met in the Valley of Megiddo and the seemingly impossible happened! the Canaanites were defeated.

But not by Israel, but by God.

In Jud. 5 we read Deborah's song of victory in which she makes it very clear that God Himself fought for His people. Notice v.20.

#### *The Day and the Victory is God's*

Now, this is the first Bible reference to 'Megiddo' and it is a story which reveals that when the need of His people was greatest, and His time was right, God Himself defeated their enemy for them, without His people lifting a finger to defend themselves.

Consequently, whenever the ancient Israelites, and the Jews in later years, heard the word '*Armageddon*', far from striking fear into their hearts, it was a word of comfort and encouragement, just as in N.T. times, the word '*Maranatha*' became a word of comfort for Christians.

Therefore, when, in Rev. 16:18, where '*Harmageddon*' appears again, God is telling the Christians that opposition raised against His people and His cause will meet with the same overwhelming defeat that was inflicted on Sisera. It will be God's Day and His conflict once again! He will inflict the final defeat of evil!"

This means that there is no literal, physical conflict predicted in the 16th chapter of the Revelation. The reference to Armageddon can only be properly understood if we recognize that it is God's assurance that the spiritual victory lies with His cause and His people, because His purpose must be accomplished.

#### *God and Magog?*

But someone asks, "*Is there not something about Gog and Magog*"?

Indeed there is; in Rev. 20:8. Here, again, we are carried back to the Old Testament, where the reference to these two names is found in Ezekiel 38.

'Gog' is said to be the ruler, and 'Magog' his kingdom; and, as we might expect, there has been a great deal of speculation as to the meaning of these two names, as

people have attempted to identify a particular individual and a particular nation.

They are not identified for us by Ezekiel himself. He merely predicted that a nation would come *'from afar'* to fight against Israel. But, the prophet also said, that God would destroy this enemy without fighting on Israel's part, and the outcome would be that the Nations would see His glory.

I think it will help us to understand this passage if we know that the word *'Gog'* is the ancient Sumerian word *'Gug'*, which means *'darkness'*. Therefore, *'Gog'* is the Prince of Darkness, and *'Magog'* his kingdom, the Kingdom of Darkness.

Is further identification really necessary?

Here, then, in Rev. 20, we see that once again a piece of Old Testament history involving God's ancient people is used to bring comfort to the Church of the New Testament.

The important - and significant - fact which should always be remembered, is that this persecution by *'Gog and Magog'* predicted in the prophecy of Ezekiel, represents the last persecution of God's ancient people in Old Testament times.

When the names re-appear in the New Testament, in the *'Book of the Revelation'*, they are used to predict the end of the persecution of the Church, and the defeat of Satan, the prince of darkness and those who serve him.

#### *A Final Question*

How can these references to Armageddon possibly relate to a literal, great, world-conflict?

Remember that the Valley of Megiddo is a very small valley in a very small country.

I suggest, therefore, that common-sense should tell us that the ideal of a *literal* battle, involving modern armies with modern weapons, in a *real geographical location* such as the Valley of Megiddo, is nothing short of ridiculous.

The scene is symbolic. It declares that, although the Church experiences difficult times as she faces persecution and false doctrine in her spiritual conflict, her final victory is guaranteed. Not because she becomes numerically or politically or financially strong, or strong in any other conceivable way, but because this is God's War and His Victory.

If you know this, you will realize that there is nothing to fear. Whatever the future holds in store for the World, The Church's future is secure, because the War is God's war and the Day is His day.

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