

Revelation: Armageddon

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And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon. (Rev. 16:16)

Armageddon is often depicted as some final epic battle between good and evil, to be fought at the end of time. However, if the primary focus of the book of Revelation relates to the first century, then it likely has something to do with events that took place in the past, rather than the future (Rev. 1:1-3; 22:6, 10). In fact, it is the forces of the beast, identified elsewhere as the Roman Empire (cf. Rev. 13; Dan. 7), that gather to this place (Rev. 16:14), and so must be examined in this context.

The Symbol

The name is in Hebrew, fitting in with the Hebrew thought of the whole book (cf. 9:11; see notes on 13:18). The word is sometimes rendered Har-Magedon (NASB), meaning the hill or mountain (har) of Megiddo. To the early Jew or Christian, the name itself would likely bring to mind the following:

- 1) **Decisive Victory** – The valley of Megiddo (Jezreel) is known for decisive battles, such as when Deborah and Barak defeated Sisera (Judges 5:19), and when Gideon defeated the Midianites (Judges 7). While there is no mountain of Megiddo, it is very near Mount Carmel, where Elijah gathered and slew the prophets of Baal after the Lord showed decisively that He was the true God (1 Kings 18:19-39). If there should be any mountain connected with Megiddo, it might be this one.
- 2) **Great Mourning** – The valley of Megiddo is also recognized as a place of great mourning, as when the Egyptians killed King Josiah, the last righteous king before Babylon destroyed Jerusalem (2 Kings 23:29; 2 Chr. 35:22; cf. Zech 12:11; Rev. 18:8).
- 3) **Military Stronghold** – Additionally, Megiddo was one of the strongholds built (or built up) by Solomon as a storehouse for chariots and cavalry (1 Kings 9:15-19).

Given the significance of the name, it is logical to conclude that Armageddon refers to a gathering location for armies in which they prepared for a decisive victory, and where great sorrow and mourning would come upon those defeated

The Battle

It should be noted that Armageddon is the **gathering place** for the battle of the great day of God Almighty, which does not necessitate a “Battle of Armageddon.” The Scriptures do not say the gathering place is the place of battle, nor do they say that it is a battle between good and evil. The battle could be (and is) elsewhere.

In fact, this idea fits perfectly with the events of Revelation, in which armies were gathered near Caesarea by Titus before laying siege to Jerusalem (Lk. 19:41-44; Josephus, Wars 4.11.5; 5.1.1; 5.1.6). It is worthy of note that the Carmel range (see above) is within sight of Caesarea.

Therefore, Armageddon refers to the Roman-Jewish war, and more specifically, the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, leading to decisive victory in the destruction of the temple and fall of Jerusalem. This is the great day spoken about in Revelation (6:17; 16:14; 18:8; cf. 17:16, 17).

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