

The Mother of All Battles

Revelation 16:12-16

INTRODUCTION

- A. Saddam Hussein warned the world community that the Gulf War would be “the Mother of all Battles.”
 - 1. Indeed, it was.
 - a. After nearly six weeks of air combat, ground troops invaded Iraq.
 - b. After 100 hours of that ground war, President Bush declared a cease fire. Kuwait was liberated.
 - 2. As this nation prepares for war in Iraq once more, Saddam Hussein is once more warning the world community about the doomsday that shall come upon anyone who invades his nation. But, the Iraqi military is only about 1/4 of what it was in 1991.
- B. If you really want to talk about “the Mother of all battles,” you need to go back to Revelation and the discussion of Armageddon.
 - 1. This evening, we want to discuss the real “Mother of all Battles.”
 - 2. There are lessons for us in the passage concerning Armageddon, lessons that we need to heed.

THE ASSEMBLING FOR BATTLE, vv. 12-14

- A. The sixth angel poured his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the war for the kings from the east, v. 12.
 - 1. The river Euphrates was the boundary between the Parthian and Roman Empires; the Romans and Parthians were fierce adversaries.
 - 2. There are at least fifty different interpretations concerning the “kings from the east.”
 - a. However, any reader living in Asia Minor in the first century would have understood “kings from the east” as referring to the Parthians.
 - b. There was, when Revelation was written, concern that Nero had not died but that he had gone to Parthia to gather an army and that he would come back and fight against Rome.
 - 3. The river Euphrates is dried up, because swollen rivers could delay the crossing of an army until a bridge or rafts could be constructed - The idea is that God is intervening to prevent any delay in these kings’ coming to receive judgment.
- B. John saw, issuing from the mouth of the dragon and from the mouth of the beast and from the mouth of the false prophet, three foul spirits like frogs, v. 13.
 - 1. The dragon would be Satan, the beast would be the sea beast, and the false prophet would be the land beast.
 - 2. From the mouths of this unholy triumvirate, come three foul spirits like frogs.
 - a. The frogs may allude to the second plague upon Egypt (Ex. 8:5-7).
 - b. Frogs were a negative symbol in antiquity.
 - 1) The frog was classified as an unclean animal, an abomination (Lev. 11:10).
 - 2) One ancient writer even suggested, tongue in cheek, that Nero would be reincarnated as a frog.
 - c. That these evil spirits come from the mouths of this triumvirate probably indicates that propaganda is here meant.
 - 1) In other words, those in charge of the Roman Empire spread forth propaganda to gather the world powers to fight against God.
 - 2) Think about Saddam Hussein and all that he is telling the world community - about how mean the Americans are and how he is complying with UN resolutions. He has many nations believing him.

- C. The frogs are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty, v. 14.
 - 1. This propaganda works, for the kings of the whole world are assembled in v. 16.
 - a. These frogs are demonic spirits, they are working for Satan.
 - b. These spirits perform signs; just like the false prophet performed signs, these spirits coming from mouth perform signs.
 - 2. They work to assemble the world's leaders for the battle on the great day of God the Almighty.
 - a. Gathering the nations for judgment is the judgment language of the Old Testament.
 - 1) "I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat, and I will enter into judgment with them there" (Joel 3:2).
 - 2) "My decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all the heat of my anger" (Zeph 3:8).
 - b. The "day of the Lord" is also language reminiscent of judgment.
 - 1) Amos 5: 18-20.
 - 2) "The day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10).
 - c. God is obviously bringing these world leaders together for judgment.

THE WARNING BEFORE BATTLE, v. 15

- A. John here records a parenthetical statement from Jesus. We may safely assume that this parenthetical statement was placed here because it was needed right at this point.
- B. Jesus declares, "Lo, I am coming like a thief."
 - 1. The Second Coming of the Lord Jesus has often been described as being like a thief in the night.
 - a. Mt. 24:42-44.
 - b. "The day of the Lord will come like a thief" (2 Pet. 3: 10).
 - 2. The Lord's Coming will be like a thief; at a time we do not expect it.
 - a. The idea is that Jesus will come without any advance warning.
 - b. So many religious leaders tell us that there will be all these signs that precede Jesus' coming. But, Jesus says that won't happen.
 - 1) Jesus said of his Second Coming, "Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Mt. 24:36).
 - 2) If Jesus said that only the Father knew when that day would occur, why do religious leaders claim to know?
 - a) In Bombay, India, 100 girls claim to have seen a semicircle of letters of fire in the sky which read: "Jesus is Coming Soon."
 - b) 300 people in Sweden were returning from an all-night prayer meeting when they saw a hand pointing to large letters in the heavens: "See, I Come Quickly."
 - c) Without any disrespect intended, Jesus said that won't happen, and I'll take his word for it.
- C. Blessed is he who is awake; keeping his garments that he may not go naked and be seen exposed!
 - 1. The imagery in this sentence could come from a couple places.
 - a. It could come from those who guarded the temple.
 - 1) There were several guards around the temple, and the commanding officer walked around the temple grounds to make sure the guards were awake.
 - 2) Those who were sleeping were stripped of their clothing, their clothing was burned, and they had to walk home nude for disgrace.
 - b. It could come from the common sleeping practices in the Ancient Near East.
 - 1) People in the Ancient Near East often slept nude during the warm season, but they were very careful not to be seen nude in public.
 - 2) The image could be that of a householder chasing a thief while he was naked.

2. However this image came about, we can easily understand the meaning.
 - a. We need to be prepared for the Second Coming of Jesus.
 - 1) “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming” (Mt. 25:13).
 - 2) “Let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober” (1 Thess. 5:6).
 - b. Are you watching? Are you reading for Jesus’ Second Coming?

THE PLACE FOR BATTLE v. 16

- A. The kings of the earth were gathered to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.
 1. Armageddon means ‘ Mount of Megiddo.’”
 2. Megiddo was an important place for battle in antiquity.
 - a. Megiddo was a plain situated in Palestine and was an essential crossing point for armies wanting to avoid the mountains.
 - b. Hundreds of decisive battles were fought on the Plain of Megiddo. Some examples from Scripture:
 - 1) Josiah fought Pharoah Necho at Megiddo, and Josiah died in that battle (2 Chr. 35:20-24).
 - 2) At Megiddo, Deborah and Barak delivered Israel from Jabin and Sisera (Jud. 5:19-20).
- B. Exactly what are we to make of this?
 1. However we understand this, we need to attempt to understand this in a way the early Christians who first read this would have understood it.
 - a. Just reading this passage in the historical context, I wonder how anyone can talk about Armageddon being a decisive battle at the end of the world.
 - b. Such an understanding does a great injustice to the biblical text.
 2. Pinpointing this battle to a specific historical event is difficult at best.
 - a. But, we can understand the meaning in first century terms - the rulers of the earth would be punished for their crimes.
 - b. What a comfort for us in modern times!
 - 1) Saddam Hussein, Slobadan Milosevich, Kim Jong-Il, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and a host of other ruthless dictators will meet the judgment of God!
 - 2) Although this text doesn’t speak of it, there will be judgment from God for all evil doers.
 - 3) Are you ready for that judgment?