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Questions & Answers

SEPTEMBER 24, 2023

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Question: Where do people get the idea that God and His angels are coming to earth to fight a battle for a thousand years?

Preliminary Comment:

I think this question is actually a combination of two different passages in the Book of Revelation, specifically Revelation 16:12-16 which speaks of kingdoms gathering at a place which the KJV refers to as Armageddon, and Revelation 20:1-6 which speaks of a thousand year reign. Tonight, I would like for us to examine each separately in order to understand what John is describing.

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¹²“The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east.

¹³And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs;

¹⁴for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, **Slide 4** to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

¹⁵(“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”)

¹⁶And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.”

(Revelation 16:12–16, NASB95)

I. SIXTH BOWL: KINGDOMS GATHERED AT ARMAGEDDON (VV. 12-16)

1. The “great river, the Euphrates” upon which the sixth angel pours out his bowl is not a physical or geographical location — rather it symbolizes a barrier or deterrent to invasion, which is now removed.
2. “I saw” introduces a new phase of the vision.
3. “Coming” is not in the original text.
 - a. Though the unclean spirits issued from the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, John does not say that he saw them coming out.
 - b. Instead, he saw them **“out of the mouth”** of each — he saw them at work (**v. 14**).

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4. Earlier in John’s vision . . .
 - a. **“Out of the mouth of the dragon”** there had emitted a river of lies intended to engulf the woman, but which the earth swallowed up (**12:15f.**).
 - b. **“Out of the mouth of the beast”** had been uttered great pretenses and blasphemies (**13:5**)
 - c. **“Out of the mouth of the false prophet”** had come seductive propaganda, enticing the world to accept and practice emperor worship (**13:14-17**)

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5. Now, out of the mouth of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet, John sees **“three unclean spirits like frogs” (v. 13)**
 - a. Frogs are thought of as unclean, loathsome, a nuisance and an aggravation, whose croaking probably symbolizes confusion.
 - b. According to **Leviticus 11:9-12** such creatures were detestable to Israel.
 - c. Now, coming from a source as these three came, there is no doubt they were unclean.
6. These frogs are further described as **“spirits of demons” (v. 14)** — they are

sent forth to gather forces to battle God.

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7. **“The great day of God, the Almighty” (v. 14)**
 - a. This is a day of judgment, but not the final or ultimate judgment.
 - b. At the final judgment no battle will be fought — all will be over.
8. As John is recording the vision of the gathering of forces for the war of the great day of God, a voice suddenly breaks in — it is the voice of the Lord Jesus Himself.

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“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.” (v. 15)

- a. To keep one’s garments (clothes) is to keep them undefiled.
- b. As the Lord told the Christians at Sardis, those **“who have not soiled their garments . . . will walk with Me in white” (3:4).**

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9. The forces are gathered at **“Har-Magedon”** (Armageddon, KJV) — “Mount of Meggido”
 - a. The Bible speaks geographically of . . .
 - 1) **“Megiddo and its towns” (Joshua 17:11; Judges 1:27)**
 - 2) **“The waters of Megiddo” (Judges 5:19)**
 - 3) **“The plain (valley) of Megiddo” (2 Chronicles 35:22; Zechariah 12:11)**

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- b. Megiddo was a strategic point in the protection of Israel and Judah — since it guarded the northern approach to Israel, it was the area where several decisive battles had been fought.
 - 1) Deborah and Barak won a decisive battle there against Jabin and Sisera of the Canaanites (**Judges 4,5**).
 - 2) It was in this valley (Jezreel) that God made possible the victory of Gideon’s three hundred against 120,000 Midianites (**Judges 7:1**).

- 3) Saul and Jonathan were killed in the eastern extremity of the plain (**1 Samuel 31:1-6**).
- 4) Ahaziah, king of Judah, in league with Joram of Israel, died here, having been put to death at the command of Jehu (**2 Kings 9:27**).
- 5) King Josiah fought against Pharaoh Neco in the valley of Megiddo, where he was slain (**2 Kings 23:29f.; 2 Chronicles 35:22**).

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- c. John now uses the word symbolically to describe a great decisive spiritual battle between the army of Satan and the forces of God.
 - 1) This battle was fought and won by the Lord in the complete defeat of the Roman Empire and paganism behind which the empire had thrown its total power.
 - 2) Any search for a physical military battle to be fought between human armies in northern Palestine at some future date is without scriptural support and completely foreign to the spirit and purpose of Revelation.

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II. The Thousand Year Reign (1-6)

A. SATAN BOUND FOR ONE THOUSAND YEARS (1-3)

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¹“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.

²And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

³and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.”

(Revelation 20:1–3, NASB95)

1. John sees “an angel coming down from heaven” — in his hand he holds two things:
 - a. “the key of the abyss” — the bottomless pit
 - b. “a great chain” — with which to bind Satan
2. The key and the chain are not literal, but symbols conveying ideas as have other symbols throughout the book.
 - a. The key symbolizes power to bind.
 - b. The chain symbolizes that by which Satan is bound.
3. With the loss of his allies (the beast, false prophet and harlot) and the victory of the saints under Christ, Satan is bound — his power is severely curtailed.

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4. The four names of the deceiver (cf. 12:9)
 - a. “the dragon” — strong and ferocious
 - b. “the serpent of old” — the cunning deceiver, who since Eden has beguiled with his craftiness
 - c. “the devil” — the accuser and slanderer, the malignant enemy of God and man
 - d. “Satan” — the adversary, opponent and antagonist of all that is good

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5. The thousand years of Satan’s binding must be interpreted symbolically, as are other numbers in the book.
 - a. It is a complete number which stands for an indeterminate but full period of time (cf. Job 9:3; 33:23; Psalm 50:10; 90:4; Ecclesiastes 6:6; 7:28; 2 Peter 3:8).
 - b. As a result of his binding, Satan is divinely restrained from

reestablishing his control over the nations.

- c. The binding of Satan does not render him absolutely helpless or unable to operate — he continues to be extremely active.
- d. He continues to prowl around like “a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8) — however, his activity is limited, like a dog chained between two trees.

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- 6. Having bound Satan, the angel “threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him” (3).
 - a. The abyss was the place dreaded by the demons (Luke 8:31).
 - b. The purpose of casting the devil into the abyss was not punitive, but preventative — his punishment will come later (10).
 - c. At present he is restrained from deceiving the nations, trapping and controlling them as he did before Jesus came — his power and the power of paganism are now broken.
 - d. The abyss is not final — when the appointed time is finished, Satan is to be released for a short time (3c).

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Note: To better understand the scene before us it is necessary to bring into proper focus periods of time previously mentioned in the book:

- 1) The holy city was to be trodden under foot for 42 months (11:2)
- 2) The witnesses were to prophesy under persecution 1260 days (11:3)
- 3) The radiant woman was to remain in the wilderness, protected from Satan and cared for by God and the Lamb for 1260 days (12:6) or “time, times and a half a time,” “three and one half years” (12:14)
- 4) The beast with authority to persecute and blaspheme would

continue his unholy work 42 months (13:5; cf. Daniel 7:25)

Each of these periods are the same and were interpreted to be the period of the Roman persecution.

Previously, in two separate visions, God had said . . .

- 1) To the saints under the altar “rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also” (6:11).
- 2) Following the casting down of Satan, “the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time” (12:12).

7. These time periods are the same and are now fulfilled:

- a. The Roman persecution and its backing of paganism has come to an end.
- b. Satan has been cast into the abyss, no longer to deceive the nations.
- c. The saints, whose death for the Word of God has been vindicated and avenged, now sit upon thrones, reigning with Christ (4-6).

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8. So it is that the thousand years symbolizes that period of victory which began with Constantine when the Roman persecution ended, and continues until sometime before the Lord’s return when Satan will be loosed from his present binding.

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B. SAINTS REIGN WITH CHRIST FOR ONE THOUSAND YEARS (4-6)

⁴“Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

1. The judgment given to those on the thrones is that against Satan on behalf of the saints.
2. A similar judgment had been executed against . . .
 - a. The harlot as she was burned with fire (18:20).
 - b. The beast and the false prophet as they were cast into the lake of fire (19:20).
3. Now it is executed against the dragon as he is cast into the abyss(20:2).
 - ❑ Because these had been relentless enemies, persecutors and seducers of the church, so now, on behalf of the saints, judgment is executed against them.
4. John saw “souls,” of two groups seated upon the throne:
 - a. “Of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God” (4a).
 - b. “Those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand” (4b).
5. These “souls” who sat upon the throne were sharing the rule of Christ’s victory for 1000 years, the full and complete time in the mind and purpose of God.
6. Those saints who have lived since that time are not portrayed in this vision — those who presently “receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:17).

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⁵The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.

⁶Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will

reign with Him for a thousand years.”

(Revelation 20:4–6, NASB95)

7. “The rest of the dead” **who** “did not come to life until the thousand years were completed” **are not the dead awaiting a bodily resurrection.**
 - a. They are those who were killed with the sword of Christ in their war on behalf of the beast and paganism (19:21).
 - b. These will experience a resurrection of their cause in the revived effort of Satan which will come toward the end of time through new allies, Gog and Magog (vv. 7-9).
8. “The first resurrection” symbolizes the victory of the martyrs underneath the altar, whose “little time” is finished, whose cry has been answered and who are seated on thrones.
9. Those who have “a part in the first resurrection” are pronounced “blessed and holy” have three great rewards:
 - a. “Over these the second death has no power”
 - 1) Those who have a part in the first resurrection are those who overcome (2:11).
 - 2) The “second death” is “the lake of fire” (v. 14; 21:8).
 - b. “They will be priests of God and of Christ” (cf. 1:6; 1 Peter 2:5,9)
 - c. “They will reign with Him for a thousand years” — the reign which began with Christ continues here in the victory and triumph achieved through Him.

Conclusion

1. The Lord you and I worship and serve is presently reigning from His throne

where He took His seat after His ascension back to His Father.

“So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.” (Mark 16:19, NASB95)

“When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,” (Hebrews 1:3, NASB95)

2. **There is coming a day, however, when He** “will come in His glory, and all the angels with Him” (Matthew 25:31).
3. “Then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left” (Matthew 25:31b-33).
4. **To those on His right He will say,** “Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34).
5. **To those on His left He will say,** “Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41).
6. **At that point, when He has abolished** “all rule and all authority and power” **He** will hand the kingdom over to His Father (1 Corinthians 15:24).
7. **Don’t you want to be a part of that great kingdom?**