Is the World Prepared for the Field of Armageddon? :: ::

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"For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."—Rev. 16:14.

There are two parties contending for supremacy over this world, Jesus and Satan. In this apocalyptic vision there is presented a brief but comprehensive summary of this conflict, with its ultimate issue in the establishment of the kingdom of righteousness. The aggressive work of Christ is presented in what might be called three series of moving pictures. These are the opening of the first six seals with seven seals, the sounding of the seven trumpets, and the pouring out of the seven bowls of divine wrath. Each series traces the course of a divine action from the beginning...
up to the grand consummation, according to its special purpose. The first series presents the general plan of conquest and is personally conducted by the Redeemer. The two series following mark two specific lines of action followed by Christ in His conquest of the world. The trumpet series presents the afflictive purpose of God, signifying that these prayers were accepted in heaven and that the trumpet series indicates this same purpose of reformation and those used by Satan. The three series is the symbol of Jesus's reign that He makes the world secure. These three series are become the kingdom of the Divine. So Satan as the usurper of divine prerogatives, like Jesus, employed these agencies to oppose his antagonist and to make his own reign over the world secure. These three series are the devil's agents, employed to work out his purpose in this world. It is one characteristic of Jesus's reign that He makes the affairs of His enemies work out His own plans. Though these evil spirits were sent to frustrate His work, they actually became instrumental in fulfilling His plan. Their evil work gathers the kings of the earth and the whole world to the field of Armageddon, where the Redeemer crushes His foes. The place, Armageddon, is not to be taken literally. That historic field points in symbol to a coming conflict of worldwide proportions and to a victory of correspondingly huge magnitude for the cause of truth. The world in battle is properly centered in the Revised Bible war; this implies a more prolonged struggle.

The question most commonly asked thereupon is, how is our attack for that struggle to be made? Is the world-wide war now raging, the deeper conflict prophesied for the field of Armageddon? Light may be thrown upon that question by closely examining the work done by these three agencies of Satan, for the world is to be prepared for that conflict through their machinations. Here three agencies of Satan completed the mobilization of the kings of the earth and of the whole world on that decisive field. Is the world ripe for that fearful visitation, which He is destined to inflict, "War made on His vendetta and on His thigh a name written King of Kings and Lord of Lords?" The reply will come from certain quarters, "the world is better today than at any time in history." In a certain sense that is correct, but we must bear in mind that guilt is not diminished simply by degeneracy, but also by rejected opportunity. This thought will come up further on.

To answer this question whether or not the world is prepared for the field of Armageddon, we will look at the work done by these three agencies of the evil one. There is the satanic spirit of hatred of divine authority abroad in the world. The first evil spirit mentioned comes from the mouth of the dragon. John tells us that he is "that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world." As here employed, the dragon is the symbol of the devil in His relation to the wicked powers of this world, whether civil or ecclesiastical. This member of the satanic Trinity sustains the name relating to the two following, as the first-mentioned here of the divine series does to the following ones. The beast and false
prophet supply the immediate instruments by which the work of satan is carried forward. After the devil’s decisive defeat, by our Lord’s successful completion of His redemptive work on earth and His return to His Father, He is represented as being “cast unto the earth” and as “having great wrath, because he knew that he had but a short time.” In this spirit of hatred and malice He bends all His energy to create insubordination and thus to defeat Christ’s work of love. By so doing the devil seeks for himself the supremacy over earth which Jesus had rightfully won by His redemptive work. In His second Psalm, the writer had a vision of this world as it had been learned by this evil spirit of the dragon. He saw men in their individual and organized relations proposing to discard the authority of their rightful Lord. “Why do the nations rage and the peoples meditate a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against Jehovah and against His anointed, saying, let us break their bands asunder and cast their cords from us.” The work of this evil spirit is fundamental because it prepares the way for the two unclean spirits following. The immediate consequence of this agent’s work has been (1) to blight the welfare of humanity; (2) to poison the fountain of life and to sow blight the welfare of humanity; (2) to poison clean spirits following. The agent against His anointed, saying, let us break their bands asunder and cast their cords from us.”

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them. This is what brought on the present conflict. A noted German scholar accounted for this view in one sentence: "It tends to be and might as well come now as later." From his viewpoint he was correct. In the selfish nature is to rule, the conflict was irremovable.

The law of history, decreed by the laws of selfishness. The recognition of Jesus upon the throne, which has preserved the rights of the weaker member, alone could have averred the agent of conflict to lay down his work, and in preparing the nations for the harvest which is certain to come to those which selfishly worship at the shrine of the god mammon. Cruelty is another distinguishing characteristic of the animal nature. This trait inheres as a consequence of the two preceding ones. The carnal and selfish nature knows no pity. The best of prey, when hungry, devours without mercy. The underlying cause of all the bloody strife, which has afflicted humankind to that man's higher nature guided by an enlightened conscience has been freighted with civil affairs by his lower self. Cruelty is an attribute of the god mammon. If you wish proof of this, ask Armenia, Belgium, France and the Lowlands and other victims. The world is to-day reaping the legitimate harvest of the seed sown by this agency of anise which has permitted even that civil government should operate only in the realm of the materialistic.

Irreligious intellectualism is the third evil spirit, preparing the world for Armageddon. This agency came out of the mouth of the beast prophet. The latter appears here for the first time, but in identical with the second beast, which John saw rising out of the earth. The first beast arose out of the sea and symbolized the less perfectly organized kingdoms. The second arising out of the earth was the symbol of kingdoms in their firmly organized and civilized state. He had the appearance of a man with two horns, but his head was that of a dragon. He had a headdress of Christendom, but in reality was under the rule of the god of this world. He represents partially the organized Christian government, as found in the greater part of the Christian dispensation. That beast had two horns, symbols of power, civil and ecclesiastical.

Regardless there has been the organic union of church and state, while in times an evil organic state has existed, but there has been time none of influence for evil. The change of name from second beast, to false prophet, is significant. In the latter part of the Christian dispensation the intellectual character of this agent has become so pronounced that he is the beast, and the beast would be a murderer. As John saw him at his origin, he had a headdress of Christendom, but the earlier principle was the beast. Now the intellect has gained the ascendancy. He is unity, the name of teacher, though at first he is false. This meets the claims of those who insist that all in good will with this world; that the depravity of former ages fails no place among the civilized nations of to-day. While that may be true, we are to remember that depravity is not the only condition that excites divine judgment. Despised opportunity as Jesus told his disciples to flee the city; in the final form of sin. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." That condition has well nigh been met. The mission of the prophet is to teach; prediction, being a minor part of his instruction. The spirit which arose out of the false prophet symbolizes the wisdom of the world, used as a medium by Satan for antagonizing the kingdoms of Christ. It is not Christian intellectualism, but what Paul saw arising in his day to antagonize the gospel, "Knowledge falsely so-called." In the nineteenth century the world's eminent philosophers, teachers and scientists gave a freethinking impetus to the revival of the spirit of HelLENISM, and the consequent rejection of the spiritual and the supernatural. Herbert Spencer, Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall and a host of others have done much to give the
world a godless system of thinking. Their theory of the origin of things and of evolution apart from divine control has brought forth abundant fruit and the end is not yet. The logical outcome of the doctrine of evolution, apart from the Great First Cause is the reign of force, the survival of the fittest. "The end justifies the means!" in a familiar explanation of various atrocities, that shock humanity. The followers of the new school of thought, so-called "advanced thinkers," ought to accept these explanations at entirely satisfactory. The Christian will always see in a sentence the insatiable logic of evolution. "Nature then, according to the evolutionists, teaches and authorizes us to practice lying, stealing, and unbridled lust, and justifies us in so doing whenever we have the inclination, backed by the power." This teaching of the false prophet has found a wide hearing in the world, in her schools, universities and even in the church. It is not difficult to see the hand of this agent in the events of to-day.

Can we not see in this conflict how wisdom has prepared the world for it by her wonderful working skill and lofty achievements in the arts and sciences. On land and sea the old military tactics have been superseded by the most complicated and scientific methods human ingenuity can devise. The long-range guns from the great ships in the little rapid firing ones have made war much destructive of life. The different kinds of high explosive ammunition have added to the horrors of war. Then there are the liquid fire, clouds of poisonous gases and the airplanes and submarines, all new products of scientific knowledge. John speaks of these spirits as working miracles. From the viewpoint of that day to converse with another many miles distant, to send a wireless message several thousands of miles, to navigate submarines beneath the surface of the sea and destroy great ships and to fly through the air, hurling bombs to earth, destroying life and property, are miraculous. But all these things and many other marvelous inventions of wisdom are now being used in war. Is it not a sad conclusion that these marvelous and lofty achievements of wisdom which ought to be used to bless man rather than destroy life, are perverted to this evil end and used to fulfill the prophecy of this false teacher.

The universal character of this struggle points to the direction of its being the war of Armageddon. This is the first time a world-wide war has been fought. Civilization has linked nations together in such a way as to make this possible. Already all the great nations and many of the smaller ones are engaged in this strife. Others are on the verge and may soon become involved. Whether the remaining so-called neutral nations enter or not, the fact is that they are all practically involved now and are suffering the consequences of the strife. These agents of Satan were sent into "the kings of the earth and of this whole world to gather them to the war of that great day of God Almighty." There is a general impressions throughout the world that such a war can never right take place. If so, then this conflict is the one indicated in the text. The trend of Providence seems to indicate that the last bowl has been poured out. The struggle is called "that great day of God Almighty." A day in which His matchless wisdom and power are to be made manifest in His works of righteousness. Already He has shown how easily in His Providence the greatest political antity can be overthrown. That of itself shows the trend of His activity at this time. There were those who sympathized with the cause of the Allies, yet were reluctant to see the Russian despotism overthrown. Yet when the overthrowing providence of God that supremacy, which was one of the greatest barriers to the progress of liberty, was overthrown, we trust, to rise no more. The edge of the "unspeakable Turk" over that portion of the world to which he has been a curse so long seems to be nearing the end. The reign of the
litter trample which has respected the dignity of neither God nor man and which has been instrumental in its way, is staggering beneath the gigantic blows which are following upon it.

Then there is a general spiritual awakening throughout the world to the fact that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that procedeth out of the mouth of God. That is, there are higher aims than material prosperity, such as our obligations to our fellowmen and to God. Then, too, this war was providentially forestalled upon the nations. Only one or two of them welcomed it. All the resources known to diplomacy were employed to avert it, but in vain. Our own government honestly and persistently under great provocation strove to remain neutral, but at last was compelled in defense of its rights and in the interests of humanity to enter the conflict. The Lord evidently has a large purpose to work out in compelling us to interfere. Perhaps a personal, chastening and a mission of leadership among the other nations.

The Lord's victory at Armageddon is to prepare the world for the compass of truth.

It is a mistake to suppose that the war of Armageddon is to reform the kingdoms of this world. The millennium is not due at its close. The germs out of the heart of divine wrath are strictly judicial, not reformatory. Their mission is to remove those institutions of wickedness, which have resisted all preceding moves of reform, and which are barriers to the progress of liberty and righteousness. The former wastes much time and money clearing his field of stubble and stones. That as all negative work, is preparation for the planting of the seed. At Armageddon we may expect that the Redeemer will clear the field of all obstructions as we have held back the advance of His Kingdom. It is upon us at least three of those against which His wrath is being specially poured out. These are militarism at war, antagonizing and the liquor traffic. There are other obstacles to the progress of the Kingdom. How the Lord may remove these is not apparent, but the ease with which He is overthrowing greater obstacles should strengthen His people's faith in His ability to complete the work begun. The removal of these great barriers is what might be called the negative work of the kingdom. The positive or constructive work follows. This latter feature of building up the Master's Kingdom in its completion is presented in a supplement found in the eleventh chapter from the eleventh verse to the end of the chapter.

John saw heaven opened and One clothed with a vesture, dipped in blood. On His head were many crowns and His name was "The Word of God." He was girded upon a white horse and there followed armies, clothed in white, mounted upon white horses. Out of the mouth of the Commander went a sharp sword with which He should smite the nations. It is not difficult to see under this symbolism the Prince of Peace with the gospel message of salvation and His people cooperating with Him.

There are those who believe that the war of Armageddon is to be a purely physical struggle. But it is more than that. It is to be a physical conflict first, clearing the field of certain barriers, which have barpered the ground, then the spiritual forces complete the work.

This is the construction work of the kingdom. How long it will be before this reaches its consummation has not been revealed. Evidently this latter feature of the work is so vast that no little time must elapse before the dawn of the millennial morning, when "the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord." That the progress will be more rapid, after the great powers of evil have been removed is reasonable to believe. One of the prophets beholding this day, asked in rupture, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" The things which ought to engage the attention of Christ's followers, must are the opportunities and obligations arising out of this conflict. In Russia, a vast empire has been
freed from the chains of both civil and ecclesiastical despotism. These people in their neces-
sarily chaotic state need Christian guidance in both civil and religious affairs; 'let a wise thing come upon them.' Then, too, it looks as though the Turkish power would be so re-
strained that that large and uneasy field will be opened as never before for the gospel of the kingdom. "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes." Whether we not we have correctly interpret-
ed the meaning of this passage of Scripture, as applying to the present hour, one thing is cer-
tain, this is a 'great day of God Almightv.' It is a day in which it seems the helplessness of men, when God 'speaketh upon them as His wrath.' The wisest, most carefully prepared plans, the best through equipment, is impossible for men to make, avail nothing; when Je-
boah 'speaketh upon them.' It has been made evident that if the nations of the earth are to dwelt at peace with each other, it must be on a different basis than that on which they have rested hitherto. The need of the recognition of the authority of the Prince of Peace whose law requires nations to respect the rights of others and preserves the rights by which their relations with each other must be directed, is the lesson of the hour. God has demonstrated both His marvelous wisdom and His irresistible power in dealing with the kingdoms of the earth today. He has made it evident that He counts men's wisdom as folly, and His strength as weakness. The abdication of the sacred poet, as he viewed from afar the war scene presented today, is the living message to these distracted kingdoms: "Now, therefore, be wise, O ye kings, Be instructed, ye judges, of the earth. Serve Jehovah with fear and rejoice with trembling." "Kiss the Son lest ye be angry and ye perish in the way; for His wrath will be kindled, and he shall cast down all they that take refuge in Him."