

## **THE CHARIOTS OF ARMAGEDDON**

**By Paul Penno**

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They dropped out of the midnight sky over Lake Victoria, landed, and coasted silently down the runway toward the Entebbe airport terminal. There in the heart of Africa, more than a hundred Israel' hostages held their breath between life and death.

As the Hercules C-130s rolled to a stop, one of them dropped its tail ramp. Out came a black Mercedes limousine, along with two Land Rovers filled with commandos disguised as Palestinians. In the back of the limousine sat a bulky officer with his face blackened, impersonating the Ugandan dictator Idi Amin.

Now the commando team approached the terminal, led by the black Mercedes. The airport guards snapped to attention and saluted, recognizing Amin's personal license plate (counterfeited by the Israelis). The rescuers moved past the guards toward the hostages.

Inside the terminal, the shooting lasted a minute and forty-five seconds. Then came the triumphant shout of liberation: "We are Israelis!"

As the C-130s with their precious cargo lifted off into the friendly skies of freedom, some of the former hostages wept. Others sat in stunned silence. One woman kept crying out, "A miracle! A miracle!"

And that it certainly was. The Israelis called their mission impossible "Operation Thunderball," after the James Bond thriller. How appropriate that these hostages obtained their freedom on July 4, 1976—the very day of our U. S. bicentennial anniversary. The commandos returned home to be hailed as international heroes.

This mother of all battles, Armageddon, is the prominent feature of Zechariah's seventh vision. This battle means deliverance for His people; destruction of the opposition; and vindication of God's government.

Zech. 6:1 "And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass." The four chariots proceed from between two brass mountains. This is the site of the glorious presence of God. In verse 5 we read that the chariots are going "forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth." We note similar imagery of the Lord's glorious appearance proceeding between two mountains in Zech. 14:4. "And his feet shall stand in that

day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.”

The aspect of mountains of “brass” is imagery associated with Jesus. In Revelation Jesus is described having “feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace” (Rev. 1:15). The two bronze mountains represent the resplendent Lord as planting his feet on the earth, taking his stand in the midst of his people. They thus symbolize much the same reality as the scene of the rider of the red horse stationed between the myrtles by the deep in Zechariah’s first vision.

The two mountains are a representation of the place of the Lord’s enthronement. It is the “mount of assembly,” referring to the gathering of the council of angelic beings there in the court of the King of heaven and earth. It is referred to by Lucifer as “the mount of the congregation” (Isa. 14:13). “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.” (Ps. 48:1, 2). Zion is the earthly, typical manifestation of the antitypical heavenly reality of God’s temple-city, Mount Zaphon/Magedon.

Ichabod—the glory is departed—has now been reversed. The royal Presence in the seventh vision is the geographic perspective of the account of the chariots’ mission—they issued from Mount Zion—the earthly temple-city of God’s Presence. The majestic coming of heaven’s King with His myriad of holy angels, are mighty agents of His judgments on the earth. He is to show Himself the Saviour of the righteous from their enemies.

Zech. 6:2, 3. “In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; and in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses.”

Zech. 6:4 “Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord?”

Zech. 6:5 “And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits [or, “to the four winds”] of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth.” These four chariots are the agents of the One who is “Potentate of all the earth.” The “black” go north (vs. 6); the “grisled” go south (vs. 6). They go “to and fro through the earth” (vs. 7). These four teams of horses are strong,

high-spirited, and eager to be on their chariot mission, to convey the coming appearance of the Almighty. He is all powerful through the ends of the earth.

Chariots were mainly employed in warfare and were indeed the pride of the royal military establishment. These chariots signify the advent of God as the divine warrior, advancing against His enemies, to execute judgment on all mankind. As they break forth from between the bronze mountains they spread judicial enforcement of the Divine dominion throughout the earth.

Zech. 6:6, 7. "The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the grisled go forth toward the south country. And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth."

The chief target of the Lord's judgment is the land of the north. Zech. 6:8. "Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country." "The north country" is to be identified as Babylon. God issues forth a call for His people to come out of Babylon, "the land of the north." "Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD. Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon." Zech. 2:6, 7. There are two gatherings, or spiritual unions, taking place in the world today: the gathering of God's people out of Babylon under the banner of the everlasting covenant, and the gathering or unity of those who follow the lead of the papacy in exalting "the mark of the beast."

The seventh-day Sabbath is the sign or seal of God's everlasting covenant. It is the sign that God's people belong to Him, for the Sabbath is His rest which He gave man in the beginning. It comes to man with the blessing of His life and presence every weekly cycle. The fourth commandment is in the center of God's law to identify the law-giver as Creator and Redeemer. The Sabbath is a sign of God's justification of His peoples' sins. It is the seal of the Holy Spirit that God's ten promises are written in the heart and mind. Thus the Sabbath is the sign of righteousness by faith in Jesus.

Evangelical leader John Hagee, one of John McCain's highest-profile supporters from the religious right, has apologized for comments he made that were offensive to Catholics.

In a letter Monday to Bill Donohue, president of the Catholic League for Civil and Religious Rights, Hagee wrote, "I want to express my deep regret for any comments that Catholics have found hurtful."

Pastor Hagee, leader of San Antonio's Cornerstone Church, has often made references to "the apostate church" and the "great whore," terms that Catholics say are slurs aimed at the Roman Catholic Church.

In his letter, Hagee said he now better understands that the Book of Revelation's reference to the Catholic Church by those two terms are "a rhetorical device long employed in anti-Catholic literature and commentary." "Neither of these phrases can be synonymous with the Catholic Church," he wrote.

In this era of political correctness Protestants are tripping all over themselves in their overtures to heal the rift that exists in Christianity. These signs of ecumenical gathering together are the prelude to the battle of Armageddon.

The counterfeit sabbath is the first-day of the week, Sunday. It has been set up as the mark of the papacy's authority to change the times and laws of God. Sunday observance does not have Divine credentials as a day of worship. God never made any declaration in Scripture that He changed the Sabbath from the seventh-day to the first-day of the week.

Hence, Sunday is the mark of the beast. It is the sign of the covenant of salvation which the church mediates to man. Salvation is determined by participation in the rites and sacraments of the church—the channels through which grace comes to its congregants. The crucifixion of Christ is constantly re-enacted with the celebration of the mass. The priest, through his words, transforms the host from being bread to the very body of Christ. The mass becomes the means by which sin is forgiven and grace is imparted in order that good works may be performed in the Christian life.

This system of worship is the old covenant. Its mark is Sunday worship. Sunday worship is to gain world-wide status throughout all the religions. Prophecy forecasts that all the world will wonder after the beast. "Every soul that is not fully surrendered to God. . . will form an alliance with Satan against heaven, and join in battle against the Ruler of the universe."<sup>1</sup> The nations and kings and dictators of the world will give their allegiance to the papacy as the great healer of

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<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 465.

divisions. The Pope will be looked to as the unifier of the human race—the arbiter of all conflicts.

With the United States as leader of the nations, it will forsake its twin principles of republicanism and Protestantism as it seeks the final solution of economic, political, racial, and religious upheaval. It will turn to the papacy for this grand union. Such national apostasy will lead to national ruin when Congress shall enact a Sunday law requiring all to worship. It will be the ultimate religious solution to appeasing the wrath of God displayed in all the chaos and turmoil. When the Sunday law does not achieve its desired purposes, a death decree will be authorized against all non-compliance. The nations of the world will follow America's leadership. So the union will be sealed between the united nations and the papacy. Babylon will be solidified in her defiance against the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This is the battle to Armageddon.

This judgment of the antichrist king of the north is what is signified in Zechariah's seventh vision by the parousia-advent of the four chariots with the land of the north as ground zero of their attack. Babylon is identified with the beast in Revelation 17. She deceives the kings of the earth into uniting with her. "These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings." Rev. 17:13, 14. They are overwhelmed by the coming of Christ. "The kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. . . . And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." Rev. 16:14, 16. This is Zechariah's depiction of the battle for the mountain of God—Armageddon.

"A terrible conflict is before us. We are nearing the battle of the great day of God Almighty. That which has been held in control is to be let loose. The angel of mercy is folding her wings, preparing to step down from the throne and leave the world to the control of Satan. The principalities and powers of earth are in bitter revolt against the God of heaven. They are filled with hatred against those who serve Him, and soon, very soon, will be fought the last great battle between good and evil. The *earth is to be the battle field*—the scene of the final contest and the final victory. Here, where for so long Satan has led men against God, rebellion is to be forever suppressed."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *RH* May 13, 1902. *LDE* 250.

The message of God's love, the uplifted cross, and righteousness by faith are to play a key role in the battle of Armageddon. "The powers of evil will not yield up the conflict without a struggle. But Providence has a part to act in the battle of Armageddon. When the earth is lighted with the glory of the angel of Revelation eighteen, the religious elements, good and evil, will awake from slumber, and the armies of the living God will take the field."<sup>3</sup>

The angel of Revelation 18 bears the message of justification by faith. "Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, 'It is the third angel's message in verity.' The prophet declares, 'And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.' Brightness, glory, and power are to be connected with the third angel's message. . . ."<sup>4</sup> "The third angel's message in verity" is the sanctuary message—"the hour of His judgment is come." So justification by faith is the forgiveness of sins and the cleansing of sin from our lives by Christ's gift from the heavenly sanctuary.

The beginning of this message was in 1888. Its intent was to bring Christ more prominently before the world. "An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and to accept this truth, lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord's message through Brethren {E.J.} Waggoner and {A.T.} Jones. By exciting that opposition Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them. The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world."<sup>5</sup>

If the mission of the four chariots symbolically prophesies the Lord's advent in final judgment against the Armagedon challenge of antichrist, the consequence of that mission will be the inauguration of the eternal order of God's kingdom.

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<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *7BC* 983 (1899). *LDE* 251.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, "Repentance the Gift of God," *RH* (April 1, 1890), par. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. II, pp. 234, 235.

Zech. 6:8. "Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country." Here is a vista of the world to come. The holy war is over. At the great battle of Har Magedon the Lord has triumphed; he has eliminated the hostile forces. Sabbath time has come.

The four chariots are individualized extensions of the chariot-throne of the Glory-Spirit; they are bearers of the Spirit. It is the Glory-Spirit they have carried to the land of the north and therefore it is the Glory-Spirit that they set down at rest in the land of the north. Also to be noted here is the sixth vision's counterfeit parallel to the imagery of the chariots carrying the Spirit. Looking beyond the pouring out of the last bowl of wrath, beyond the final judgment on the antichrist world, the oracle of Zech. 6:8 announces the eternal glory of the Spirit. The enthroned Glory-Spirit's sovereign Presence, which was represented by the two bronze mountains, will be established even in the north country, and, if there, then everywhere. In the consummate state Mount Zion, throne of the Spirit, will be universalized. Zech. 6:8 represents the universal antitype, the Presence of the Glory-Spirit as the victor celebrating the enforcement of his perfect rule over his creation-wide domain.

The Lord rises up from his royal resting place on the mountains of bronze, up from the ark of his strength, and, as symbolized by the going forth of the chariots, he sets out on his judicial mission accompanied by the heavenly forces associated with his ark-throne. Then, the mission of judgment concluded, the Lord resumes his sovereign repose on his chariot-throne, which has brought him to rest in what had been enemy occupied terrain but now and forever is his unchallenged royal domain.

When Zech. 6:8 speaks of setting God's Spirit at rest, what is signified is the Spirit's peace established. The Spirit enthroned over the world at the beginning (Gen. 1:2) was the quintessential rest reality. In the Creator's seventh day Sabbath there is a foreshadowing of God's future enjoyment of Sabbath repose with the righteous. The seven-day Sabbath is the type that points to man's end-time arrival at the consummation of kingdom history, as the seventh-day Sabbath will be observed throughout eternity. The setting of God's Spirit at rest, as presented in Zech. 6:8, is the dawning of that antitypical, eternal rest, the manifestation of the

coming-presence of the glorious Spirit enthroned in the new heavens and earth.

Babylon is composed of three parts: spiritualism, Papal Rome, and the false prophet, apostate Protestantism. These three are joined to “the cities of the nations,” i.e., the political entities of the whole world.

The one grand purpose of this religio-political combination is to achieve world unity in worshiping God on Sunday. This ecumenical movement is to assuage the anger of God because of the plagues that are coming upon the earth. When the hold outs who worship on the seventh day Sabbath refuse to give up their individualism to the whole, they become the target of oppression and fury.

Politics produces strange bedfellows. In order to achieve common goals opposites often attract. The ecumenism portrayed under the seventh plague of churches, religions, and states does not last for long. It soon collapses. The battle of Armageddon will be cut short by the appearance of the armies of heaven led by the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

The gospel of Jesus Christ proves to be a far more cohesive force in holding together the army of God’s 144,000. Here is the patience/endurance of the saints. It is amazing how the love of God in Christ Jesus produces a small band of warriors who do not give in to the ideological warfare and persecution.

My father was a medic during World War II on the European front. He saw his comrades in arms fall at the hands of enemy fire. He risked his own life under the hail of bullets to go out and rescue the wounded and bring them back to safety and medical attention. For that he received the recognition of his country—the purple heart and silver star—for bravery in the face of enemy fire.

In the battle of Armageddon there will not be one casualty fall on the side of the 144,000. They are sealed by God and not one will be slain. There is no need for their blood to be spilled for the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church. However, there will be no conversions after the close of probation. Therefore, there is no need for their lives to be sacrificed in order to witness for others to be saved.

We are so in love with Jesus that we want Him to be victorious in the battle of the end time. The trial of Jacob’s trouble, attending the plagues, perfect the characters of the saints, and leads them to trust more confidently in God.



All of us have a part to play in Armageddon. When God overcomes the powers of evil, we overcome with Him! Revelation assures us that the saints will triumphantly “sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.” Rev. 15:3.

The song of Moses and the Lamb! What could this be? Do you remember how God delivered Moses and the Israelites during their showdown with Pharaoh, during their Armageddon with its tribulation and its plagues? We too will endure tribulation during earth’s last crisis. There will be “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered.” Daniel 12:1.

Thank God, He will deliver us, just as He saved Moses and the Israelites long ago. We will overcome earth’s final tribulation through the blood of the Lamb—the blood of Jesus Christ on the doorposts of our hearts.

Imagine how thrilling it will be in heaven to stand before God’s throne with the saints, that great multitude which no one can number. Clothed in white robes and holding palm branches of victory, we will break forth in joyous song: “Salvation belongs to our God . . . and to the Lamb!” Rev. 7:10.

I want to sing this song of Moses and the Lamb, don’t you? It will be worth whatever it takes for us to come out of Babylon. Heaven will more than fulfill our fondest expectations!

Think about that day when the Lord Jesus Christ breaks through the eastern sky. Think about it over and over. Let it give you something to live for. Could anything be more exciting to contemplate!

Seeing first a small black cloud. Watching it move nearer and nearer till it becomes white and glorious. A cloud like none you’ve ever seen before—a cloud of angels, uncounted angels. Hearing a sound like none you’ve ever heard before—the sound of a trumpet echoing round the world. Then a voice like none you’ve ever heard before. It’s the voice of our Lord calling the dead to life.

The earth quivers. Tombs burst open. Angels everywhere carry little children to their parents’ eager arms. Loved ones long separated by death reunite with shouts of joy, never to part again! And then, together with those resurrected ones, we who have waited through earth’s long night are caught up into those angels’ chariots for the trip to our heavenly home.

I want to be there, and I know you do too! God help us be ready for that great day.