

nevertheless, they would rather be laid in the grave than to disgrace their Saviour by choosing to sin. They will not be conscious of their purity of love and devotion. They will not boast of perfection. In fact, they will see themselves as unworthy sinners. They will cling to Jesus all the more in their trial of faith. Jesus' gospel triumphs in them and thus He grants them executive authority in overcoming Satan's last fling—his farewell party to the 144,000, the time of trouble.

If anyone's heart responds, "No, I don't want that close a fellowship with Christ, living in the time of trouble; rather let me go to heaven by the underground, subway route," he is in fact rejecting Christ in rejecting full fellowship with Him. If we have the choice between (a) the comfortable, peaceful sleep in the tomb that we call death (with the hope of the first resurrection), or (b) living through the time of trouble and actually welcoming Christ's personal second coming, we dare not avoid that final intimacy with Him.

If we accept Christ, we must accept Him like He is, cross and all. How else could we ever find the courage to face Him in His kingdom? Would we not be cringing behind some bush, ashamed to walk out in the sunshine and meet Him face to face?

BATTLE of ARMAGEDDON¹

By Paul Penno Jr.

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The Battle of Armageddon has conjured up apocalyptic nightmares among wild-eyed fanatics for centuries. Speculation has run rampant as to whether the war against terrorism or the minutes to midnight showdown was Armageddon. But to day we confront the biblical testimony regarding this great battle of the day of the Lord.

Why is it important for you to know about what this battle consists? What preparations can you make in order to be on the right side? Who will be the survivors in this apocalyptic showdown?

John the Revelator reports: "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 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. 16:13, 14).

Frogs are unclean animals. Don't eat frog legs even if they do taste a little bit like chicken. These unclean animals are associated with "unclean spirits." The frog plague which came upon Egypt at Israel's exodus was a filthy, slimy mess that hopped all over the dwellings of the Egyptians including the palaces of Pharaoh. The magicians were able to reduplicate this miracle and thus deceive his majesty into believing there was nothing divinely

¹ Genesis 32:28, 29, How Great Thou Art; 200.

significant behind the plague. So Pharaoh was persuaded to oppose God and not to take seriously his message given through Moses.

That which deceives “all the kings of the earth and of the whole world” to assemble for battle against God is the spirits of devils speaking through the mouth of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. The dragon is Satan himself whose modern surrogate is neo-paganism in all its forms including spiritualism. The leopard beast is papal Rome. The false prophet is the New Roman Empire or apostate Protestantism.

The spirits of devils are not the dead spirits of former inhabitants of this earth. They are fallen angels who do the bidding of their Commander, the Devil. It is not difficult to conceive of spiritualism being the mouthpiece of devils. Simple parlor tricks of levitation, magic, card tricks, tarot cards, ouija boards, communicating with the dead through spirit mediums, etc.

But spiritualism has graduated from such closet trickery to much more sophisticated philosophical, pseudo-scientific, “Christian” belief systems. The core principle binding a plethora of off-beat religions is pantheism. God is everything and everything is in God. Of course, this is very pleasing to the human animal because he wants to think that he is apart of the divine whole with power from within. One of these logical, scientific “Christian” religions states it this way: “Knowing the Within to be the only worthy tribunal of Truth, he will endeavor to establish this

were able to drink of His cup and to be baptized with His baptism. They childishly assured Him, “We can” (Mark 10:39). But the Lord could not give them the place of honor they asked for. That is reserved for those who in an unusual sense taste of Christ’s cup of loneliness, and by faith conquer its bitterness. This will be their privilege during the time of trouble, when they live in the sight of a holy God without a mediator or intercessor, and wrestle with the temptation to feel themselves as forsaken as Jesus felt on His cross.

But they will have already learned how to say “No” to temptation. Therefore, they will conquer that final temptation to ultimate despair. There is royalty inherent in such a victorious faith! As no other group in all history, they will realize Christ’s special promise: “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne” (Rev. 3:21). That honor is not a mere token, like sitting in the Queen’s chair for a moment to have your picture taken. It is an invitation to share executive authority in God’s government, to be a member of His responsible committee that directs the successful conclusion of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. What a destiny! If Jesus’ promise makes sense, it can mean nothing less.

It is Satan’s accusation in the great controversy with God that sinners are incapable of coming into harmony with God’s law. There is an enmity against God that prevents this. The executive authority which Christ gives to His saints in the time of trouble is grace to live in temptable flesh;

this distinction fully apparent, even to the participants themselves, and the justice of God in terminating human history is thus made evident to men as well as angels. It will then be demonstrated before the universe that, to a man, the remnant people would rather die than disobey God, and that those who have chosen the service of Satan would, if permitted, slay all who stand in the way of their purpose to control the earth. Caught in the very act of attempting to execute the death decree, they stand without excuse before God.

A wedding means that now the bridegroom and bride will begin sharing life together. This explains how the coming time of trouble will be the “honeymoon” for Christ and His bride. They will get to know each other intimately as they share the excitement of that time. And if there is to be any pain and sorrow endured by God’s people in the time of trouble, you can be sure that Christ will suffer it as much as they.

He is not the one who brings on the time of trouble; He will not cause it in any way. He would love to return the second time in perfectly peaceful circumstances; the time of trouble was never His idea. It is Satan’s idea of a farewell party for the saints of God. It will be brought on entirely by the machinations of the wicked who let their hatred of God erupt into a final frenzy of rebellion. Christ will meet this head on as “Michael,” the Son of God to be sure but also the Son of man “not ashamed” to call us “brethren” (Heb. 2:14-18).

James and John once naively asked Jesus for the highest places in His kingdom. Jesus asked if they

tribunal and refer all matters to it for final jurisdiction.”²

Pagan postmodernism has seduced us to believe that we have inherent power within us that can be tapped, if we can just learn how. If we pray more, study more, behave differently, then we can tap that power within. Even the pizza box promotes this notion with the saying: There is no challenge greater than the Power within you (and Power is capitalized). The Power, the Force . . . the god . . . is within you, waiting to be released, like a genie in a bottle. What a thoroughly pagan idea of God. We control God; He is at our beck and call.

Pantheism is a globalization philosophy. Everything is God. So if you are in God you are a part of everything. God is everything. All individualism is broken down. You are a part of the whole which is God. This is the philosophy of the New Age. Much of the care for the earth movement is based on this idea. We are going to have to give up some of our rights in order that the whole may have what the have nots do not have. Socialism and pantheism go hand in hand.

The spirits of devils has been speaking from the mouth of the beast and this will intensify as we approach the battle of Armageddon in order to deceive the kings and nations to support her warfare against God. The worship of Mary and the miracles associated with Mariology are the stuff of legends. People flock to centers of known Marian manifestations, such as Madjourrie, in their quest

² Taken from “Rosicrucian Info”
http://www.zyworld.com/jamus/Mystic_Christianity.htm

for healing; all the way from allergies, to cancer, and terminal illnesses. Mary's apparitions on churches and cathedrals fuel the belief that the saints do not die but live and are worthy of receiving prayers and can intercede on behalf of the living.

The teaching of popular Christianity regarding the immortality of the soul has been received from paganism through Greek philosophy. It has been passed on by Catholicism and inherited by later Protestantism. Death is the door to eternal life, it is proclaimed at funerals. It is calculated to bring comfort to the mourners that their loved ones have survived and are now in a better place looking down beneficently upon those left behind. And even though much of Protestantism teaches against spiritualism, communications with the dead, and parlors tricks; it still retains the basis of the doctrine of devils which is the immortality of the soul.

The text says that "the spirit of devils" will speak "out of the mouth of the false prophet" (Rev. 16:14, 13). This but reinforces what was written earlier regarding the lamblike beast who causes all on the earth to worship the first beast. The false prophet does this by the deception of miracles. "And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live" (Rev. 13:13, 14).

be washed away. He hopes so to destroy their faith that they will yield to his temptations and turn from their allegiance to God."

"Though God's people will be surrounded by enemies who are bent upon their destruction, yet the anguish which they suffer is not a dread of persecution for the truth's sake; they fear that every sin has not been repented of, and that through some fault in themselves they will fail to realize the fulfillment of the Saviour's promise: I 'will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world'" (Rev. 3:10). If they could have the assurance of pardon they would not shrink from torture or death; but should they prove unworthy, and lose their lives because of their own defects of character, then God's holy name would be reproached."

"So, in the time of trouble, if the people of God had unconfessed sins to appear before them while tortured with fear and anguish, they would be overwhelmed; despair would cut off their faith, and they could not have confidence to plead with God for deliverance. But while they have a deep sense of their unworthiness, they have no concealed wrongs to reveal. Their sins have gone beforehand to judgment and have been blotted out, and they cannot bring them to remembrance."⁶

As willingness to die for another is the supreme manifestation of love, so the intent to take another's life marks the ultimate degree of hatred. During the last two plagues a situation develops that makes

⁶ *The Great Controversy*, pp. 618-620.

unbelief. His sins had separated him from God. The hand of the Lord was heavy upon him, and it was indeed the time of Jacob's trouble. This robust shepherd was attacked by night when he so much wanted to make things right with the Lord. And he still thought that he could do it by his own strength. It wasn't until the Lord put his hip out of joint that this wrestler, this strong man, became weak and clung to the Lord with all the strength that remained in his upper body.

And the Lord tested his faith saying, "Let me go" (Gen. 32:26). "And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Forgive me of my sins. I need justifying.

"And he said unto him, What is thy name?"

And he said, Jacob." Sir, I am the Trickster, the Liar, the Deceiver. That is all that I am and no more.

And the Lord said, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. . . And he blessed him there" (Gen. 32:28, 29).

"As Satan accuses the people of God on account of their sins, the Lord permits him to try them to the uttermost. Their confidence in God, their faith and firmness, will be severely tested. As they review the past, their hopes sink; for in their whole lives they can see little good. They are fully conscious of their weakness and unworthiness. Satan endeavors to terrify them with the thought that their cases are hopeless, that the stain of their defilement will never

vivid presentation cannot reach the magnitude of the ordeal. In that time of trial, every soul must stand for himself before God." *The Great Controversy*, p. 622.

When the Protestant churches of America unite with the United States government to form a union of church and state, and then Congress enacts a Sunday law for the day of worshiping God, it will have formed an image to the beast. And it will convince the world of its divine credentials by performing miracles, signs, and wonders. It will even cause fire to come down from heaven.

This will appear to be the long-expected, outpouring of the Holy Spirit, blessing the Sunday worship movement, the churches, the nation, and the whole world will want in on the blessing, but it is the false holy spirit.

All of this will be in an effort to persecute a small minority who refuse the mark of the beast and retain the seal of God in their worship of God on His seventh day Sabbath. These are the folk who will have the true Holy Spirit. The latter rain has been imparted to them because they believed God's most precious message. Consequently, they are prepared for the coming of Christ.

By all accounts an all volunteer army is a more healthy, motivated, committed army than an army that has been drafted. Volunteers are there because they believe in the cause and they want to be there. They serve out of a strong patriotism for flag and country.

When the U. S. and coalition forces invaded Iraq, the common foot soldiers readily collapsed at the first sign of trouble. It was the Republican Guard who were sworn in loyalty to Saddam Hussein that put up the toughest resistance. Today it is the all-

volunteer terrorists who are inflicting the most casualties in their hit-and-run tactics.

Likewise God is calling for a few good men and women to serve in His army of the 144,000. They must be all-volunteer. No one is to be coerced or conscripted against his will.

“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (Rev. 16:15).

In other words, Jesus’ coming will be sudden, but not unexpected. It will take many by surprise, but it will not be unanticipated.

The blessing is for the watchman upon the walls of Zion. When the announcement goes forth at midnight that the Master has come, he is fully prepared and clothed, ready to go. Someone who says he is waiting for Jesus to come and yet falls asleep thinking he can pull on his garments when he hears the announcement will be embarrassed when he has to go out into the streets, because his house is on fire and his clothes are burned, without a stitch of clothing on. When the alarm is sounded for the battle the soldiers of Christ will be fully clothed and ready for the fray.

The garments are the imparted righteousness of Christ. “His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the *righteousness* of saints” (Rev. 19:7, 8). There are two words for “righteousness”—*dikaioisune*, which is the righteousness of Christ. It is His alone developed here on earth in the face of temptation and adversity in which He did not sin. Then there is

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.

This is the time of Jacob’s trouble.⁵ The reason for Jacob’s great fear of his brother was because of

⁵ “The ‘time of trouble, such as never was,’ is soon to open upon us; and we shall need an experience which we do not now possess and which many are too indolent to obtain. It is often the case that trouble is greater in anticipation than in reality; but this is not true of the crisis before us. The most

Surely the hearts of hardened men will turn to God now for deliverance. But there is only cursing and blasphemy against God proceeding from their lips. They are more determined than ever to take out their fury upon the faithful band of God's soldiers.

"And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath" (Rev. 16:19).

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 worshipping 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

dikaionomata, which is the word used here. This is imparted righteousness. Jesus has given it to the saints, but she must put it on.

Christ is the Bridegroom. His church is the bride. He wants to marry her, but only she can "make herself ready." No matter how much a groom loves his bride, he cannot make her get ready. She must dress herself for the wedding. There is something she must do before Jesus can come for her.

What that is, involves the reception of the most precious message that God gives to His people. To recover that message in our history and believe it is to receive the beginnings of the latter outpouring of the Holy Spirit which precipitates the loud cry message for the world. It brings revival and reformation to the people of God. It is the message of justification by faith and the sanctuary message to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord.

The message of righteousness by faith will precipitate the battle of Armageddon. "We need to study the pouring out of the seventh vial. 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."³ We are not ready for the battle of Armageddon until we believe the 1888 message. Then we will be soldiers fitted up and ready for the mother of all battles.

³ Ellen G. White, Ms. 175, 1899. Cited in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 983.

The Sabbath seal of God's everlasting covenant will testify that we belong to Him. He has assigned His name to the 144,000 warriors in the end-time battle. The hatred of the nations of the earth will be directed against this band of soldiers for God. A day and hour will be set for their extermination because they will not receive Sunday worship which is so much needed in order to turn God's wrath from them in the form of the seven last plagues. But an execution date set against God's army is the same as the plottings of murder against Himself and His government.

"And he [better, "they," συνηγαγεν] gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (Rev. 16:16).

It is the unclean spirits, the spirits of devils, that gather the kings and the whole world to Armageddon. The coming of Christ to deliver His saints is the battle of Armageddon. Armageddon means the mountain of slaughter. It will be located "where Christ makes His descent at His second coming."⁴

"And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done" (Rev. 16:17).

The sixth plague was the preliminaries leading up to the battle of Armageddon. The seventh angel is the battle itself. From the Pentagon war room of the heavenly temple are heard the words, "It is done." God permits the forces of evil to advance to the

point of apparent success in their sinister design to eradicate the people of God. As the moment appointed in the death decree arrives and the wicked rush forward with shouts of triumph to annihilate the saints, the voice of God is heard declaring, "It is done." This declaration terminates the time of Jacob's trouble, delivers the saints, and ushers in the seventh plague. Not since Sinai has the voice of God been heard. This one sentence rolls through the earth.

The revelator describes the destruction that is to take place:

"And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. . . . And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great" (Rev. 16:18, 20, 21).

Electrical discharges from thunder clouds strike the earth simultaneously. A great earthquake rips the earth open at its seams. Towering buildings collapse under the forces of the reeling earth. Volcanoes spew forth lava burying cities at their base. Islands sink into the ocean out of sight under the tsunamis triggered by the great earthquake. Tall mountains like Everest's majestic 29,000 foot summit, flattens out like a plain. From the angry clouds drops the forces of nature's hail in the form of 66 pound missiles crushing everything in its path.

⁴ James White, "Thoughts on the Great Battle," *Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, 19, 8 (Jan. 21, 1862), p. 61.