

Eschatology: Earthquakes, Armageddon, and the Mark of the Beast (various Scripture)

The title of my sermon this morning in my series on eschatology pretty much sums up how most Christians see the last days. I guess we could say they are “3 dimensional.” It’s no wonder. Since I became a Christian way back in ’74, the teachers I used to listen to camped on those three topics. The only topic in my title that you and I have witnessed and will witness more of is earthquakes. So,

Let’s talk about earthquakes

For just a brief moment lets turn back to Matthew 24 and I’ll read three verses, ⁶ *“You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for **those things must take place, but that is not yet the end.**”*

⁷ *“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.*

⁸ *“But all these things are merely **the beginning of birth pangs.**”*

(Matt. 24:6-8 NAU) Jesus was letting us know that that is how life on Earth will be after His ascension till the day He removes the church from the Earth. That will be normal. That’s why He said, *but that is not yet the end.* And, *“But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.”* Earthquakes and famines will be the norm.

You may have seen this on the news last Wednesday, Sept. 30, that **“A swarm of hundreds of earthquakes, including one measured at magnitude 4.9, hit near the Imperial Valley in Southern California on Wednesday afternoon.**

Over a period of two-and-a-half hours, a total of 45 quakes above 3.0 on the Richter scale shook the rural desert town of Westmorland, two hours east of San Diego, and could be felt as far away as Riverside County, according to the Los Angeles Times. The U.S. Geological Survey said there was a total of 240 quakes altogether by 8 p.m. PT.”

And note this, “Annual Earthquakes. In a single year, on average, more than 900,000 earthquakes are recorded and 150,000 of them are strong enough to be felt. Each year about 18

earthquakes are major with a [Richter magnitude](#) of 7.0 to 7.9, and on average one earthquake has a magnitude of 8 to 8.9. Magnitude 9 earthquakes are rare.”

We even have them frequently here on the East Coast, diverse places, but they’re usually too small to make the evening news. What I take Jesus to mean and what other Bible scholars see in His words is that earthquakes will increase as we approach the Lord’s return. But they are not signs of His imminent return.

But the end is not yet.

Lets talk about Armageddon.

Where do most folks get their ideas about “The battle of Armageddon?” Hollywood, certainly not the Bible. Here’s Hollywood’s idea of Armageddon, ***Pics here.**

I Googled “movies about Armageddon” and pulled up a list of dozens and dozens of movies that refer to or are about Armageddon. And other than using the Biblical name, the Armageddon of the Bible almost never came up. Hollywood’s version of Armageddon is just pure fiction designed to entertain fans of horror movies and sci fi.

But, what does the Bible say about Armageddon? I’m glad you asked. Turn to Revelation chapter 16 and verse 16, repeat. I will put the verse in its context after we read it and I’m pretty sure you will be surprised at what is involved in the battle of Armageddon. ¹⁶ *And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon. (Rev. 16:16 NAU)* Your version of the Bible will have “Armageddon” rather than “Har-Magedon” because my version refers back to the Hebrew pronunciation of the word. This, by the way, is the only place in the Bible where Armageddon occurs. The area just outside old Jerusalem described as a plain is called Megiddo and that’s where the battle of Armageddon will take place.

With all the uninformed talk about the battle of Armageddon most of us have gotten the idea that it’s going to be like one of the many long drawn-out battles of WW2 or our never-ending war in the Middle East, but it isn’t.

3

I ask you to read these verses I have included in your handout for yourself if you want to examine what I'm saying. But may I sum it up for you? **The battle of Armageddon will be over before it gets started.** The Lord will end it by His appearing in the clouds and by His coming.

⁸ *Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;*

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.*

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

¹⁴ *"These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful." (Rev. 17:14 NAU)*

¹⁹ *And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. (Rev. 19:19 NAU)*

²⁰ *And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. (Rev. 19:20 NAU)*

⁹ *that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, (2 Thess. 2:9 NAU)*

²¹ And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh. (Rev. 19:21 NAU)

The battle of Armageddon will be the shortest battle ever. After the kings of the earth have gone to all the trouble of organizing against the saints of God and have gathered on the plain of Megiddo, Jesus will end it by just showing up and by speaking a word of destruction over them. What the devil and his minions have spent thousands of years preparing for will be all for naught in the end.

Finally, Lets talk about the “mark of the beast.”

Speaking of the mark of the beast, did anyone see in the news this week, on September 30, a new way of paying for stuff using “The Amazon One Payment System?” ***Pic here.** It’s a palm reader. I wonder if Sister Rose, the psychic reader, will buy one. Anyway, certain people are already saying that this could be the way the mark of the beast will be implemented. I don’t think so, but who knows?

I have never seen three numbers that have caused so many people to get all bent out of shape as the numbers 666. I have known people who found those three numbers occurring in that order on a receipt and demanded that the poor cashier give them another receipt. I’ve heard of people who got a new license plate with those consecutive numbers and pleaded with DMV to give them another one. Seriously, people do silly things like that.

And where do we find that mentioned in the Bible? Revelation 13:16-18, and six other places in Revelation. ¹⁶ *And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead,* ¹⁷ *and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name.*

¹⁸ *Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six. (Rev. 13:16-18 NAU)*

That number is accurate, by the way. There are some who argue for 649, but they're wrong. 666 is the number.

The mark of the beast will be forced on those who worship the beast and his image and the Antichrist will do that by commanding all merchants everywhere to only accept customers who have that number somehow embedded in their bodies. *he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name.* That fact alone tells me that the church will have been raptured before the Antichrist does his thing. And I do take this mark to be a literal mark of some kind. And I do not believe that the church will be around when it is given. That's my opinion.

I close with this, 2 Thess. 2: ¹³ *But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. (2 Thess. 2:7-13 NAU)*

Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God? You do so because you are chosen.

Do you believe that God raised Jesus from the dead? You do so because you are chosen.

Do you believe that you were saved by grace and by grace alone? You do so because you are chosen.

Have you chosen to believe in Jesus? You do so because you are chosen. Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but our Father who is in heaven.

This is the gospel that you have believed by the grace of God, ² *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.*

³ *For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,*

6

⁴ *so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Rom. 8:2-4 NAU)*