



The Voice of Truth

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The Antichrist and the Battle of Armageddon By Jimmy Pettigrew

Many denominations teach that after the rapture (a false doctrine, the word not even found in the scriptures), the saints will return with Christ when He comes to destroy the forces of the Antichrist, and then He will establish His kingdom. The great battle of Armageddon will be fought. These false teachers of the pre-millennial doctrine are constantly talking about this great and terrible conflict. You can't go through the line at the grocery store without noticing the many magazines with headlines about who is the Antichrist and this battle and the end of the world. They say it will be a bloody slaughter such as the world has never known.

According to the teaching of premillennialism, the Antichrist is a man, now living, who will soon rise to the position of a world-wide dictator. This Antichrist will come to power just prior to the return of Christ. This view finds absolutely no support from the scriptures, God's word! Contrary to these claims, John applied the term "antichrist" to more than one individual, and I want you to notice also, he applied it to individuals who were living then: "Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour" (**1 John 2:18**). Also did you notice in this passage, that there is no one specific person talked about being "the antichrist" in the scriptures. But rather, John declares what? That "many antichrists" have risen. Again notice, "For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, (even) they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist" (**2 John 7**). John goes on and describes their behavior, "And every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is the (spirit) of the antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now it is in the world already" (**1 John 4:3**). What do you notice in this passage? John said not an antichrist, but the antichrist! John was saying that people living in his own day who denied Jesus is of God were to be regarded as the antichrist. The antichrists were simply anyone who denied Christ. So it's not some future dictator who will come to power just prior to the return of Christ.

Now let us look at "Armageddon. The term "Armageddon" is found only once in the Bible. "And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (**Revelation 16:16**). In keeping with the fashion of the book (apocalyptic language), the term "Armageddon" is used in a symbolic way. The apostle John is not alluding to a literal place; he was teaching some spiritual truth helping the Christians whom he was writing to: the seven churches. John in this book often used places as symbols for concepts (**Rev. 14:1; 21:1**). For instance, the word "hell" (Greek Gehenna) relates to the Hebrew Ge Hinnom, which was the Valley of Hinnom just south of Jerusalem. In the Old Testament times, when the Jews became engrossed in idolatry, they offered their children as burnt sacrifices there (**2 Kings 16:3; 21:6**). Later, because of these dreadful pagan alliances, the valley became the city dump which was always burning. Thus, because of its connection with pain, weeping, and burning, Gehenna became a symbol for the final punishment of hell. Certainly

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it would be foolish to contend that on the Day of Judgment, the wicked will be cast into the valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem!

Armageddon is used in the book of Revelation to teach spiritual truth helping the Christians coping with persecutions. In Hebrew, the term "Harmageddon" means "mountain (or hill) of Megiddo." Was there a hill of Megiddo? Yes! In fact, the Jews were only too familiar with this famous battlefield and area. Many bloody encounters stained the soil of this region. It was here that Deborah and Barak defeated the Canaanites (**Judges 4:15**). Gideon was victorious over the Midianites in this region (**Judges 7**). In the battle against Sisera, Sisera had 900 chariots of iron, (**Judges 4:13**), but in Israel there was scarce a shield or spear among 40,000 (**Judges 5:8**). Israel's position was completely hopeless. But when the battle was joined, the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army, and Sisera fled away on his feet (**Judges 4:15**). This importance was then employed by the Holy Spirit to convey to struggling, persecuted Christians in the first century the sure outcome of the conflict then being waged between the forces of evil (Satan and Imperial Rome) and the forces of righteousness (God, Christ, and faithful saints who endure). These Christians were in dire need of assurance that Christ would come to their aid soon! They needed encouragement to hang on and remain steadfast in the face of cruel mistreatment! The symbol of Armageddon provided that assurance. Christians were given the comfort that soon the outcome of the battle would be realized. The enemies of God and his people would be punished while suffering saints would be comforted. Thus Armageddon is purely symbolic and indicates that the forces of good will prevail.

In **Revelation 16**, it records the pouring out of the seven bowls of God's wrath into the earth (verse 1). The bowls of wrath are in form of plagues, reminiscent of the plagues in the book of Exodus. They point us to God's overthrow of all that is evil. In this connection, John sees three unclean spirits, like frogs, coming from the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet (verse 13). These spirits went forth unto the kings of the world, to gather them unto the war of the great day of God (verse 14). They were said to be gathered into the place which is called Armageddon (verse 16). Surely even the most childish person ought to be able to discern the figures of speech employed. Are literal frogs going to fight the battle of Armageddon? If one expects this to be a literal, material battle, he must expect the army to be headed by a committee of three frogs. Both figures are symbolical; neither is literal. There is no reason for making one literal and the other symbolical.

The pre-millennial view of the antichrist and the battle of Armageddon is totally false. It contains not the slightest support in the Scriptures. Such teaching must be rejected!

Purity and Doctrine

By Larry Ray Hafley

Which is greater, moral purity or doctrinal truth? Some say "purity" in life is more important, while others say "truth" in doctrine is the more excellent way. Why do we have to make a choice? Does the word of God encourage us to choose one above the other? One may be right on every point of doctrine, but go to hell for an impure life (**1 Cor. 9:27; Rev. 2:2-5**). One may live a "good, moral life" and be lost in doctrinal error (**Jas. 5:19, 20; 2 John 9**).

How, though, may we have moral purity without doctrinal truth? Someone must teach the truth about moral purity in order to establish it in the lives of Christians. The context of the statement, "Ye have not so learned Christ," shows that pure, godly living is a taught and learned behavior (**Eph. 4:17-5:18**). Indeed, it is the grace of God that teaches us to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts" (**Titus 2:11-14**). Doctrinal truth, the teaching of the word of God, is essential to righteous living. "By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer" (**Psa. 17:4**). The word from God's lips is imparted by teaching, by doctrinal

"instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).

Observe the combination of "doctrine," the teaching and instruction of the word of God, and the ability to lead a clean, pure life. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee" (Psa. 119:9-11). Likewise, Peter's admonitions to avoid "former lusts" and to "be holy" are rooted in the command to desire the spiritual milk of the word "that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 1:15-16; 2:1, 2, 11). In other words, one will grow in holiness and will lay aside his former lusts only as he desires, imbibes, and ingests the teaching of the word of God. The corruption of "doctrinal truth" leads to moral impurity (2 Pet. 2:1, 2; Jude 3, 4). That is cited as a reason why we must earnestly contend for the faith. Doctrinal impurity leads to moral corruption. It is not, therefore, an "either/or" situation ("either" holy living, "or" doctrine). Ignorance of "doctrinal" truth, a lack of instruction in the word of God, leads to moral depravity.

Can there be "moral purity" where "doctrinal error" is preached regarding social drinking (1 Pet. 4:3, 4)? Can there be "holy living" where no "doctrine" or teaching is done with respect to gambling, modest apparel, "and such like" (Gal. 5:19-21). Will there be holiness and godliness in a congregation of the Lord's people where "doctrinal truth" is not taught about social drinking, beach attire, idle words, profanity, "and such like" (Gal. 5:19-21)?

Is it possible to raise up a generation of young people without definitive, doctrinal truth on marriage, divorce, and remarriage and still have pure homes and faithful families? If the truth is not taught, if there is not rebuke, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness on what constitutes a marriage and home relationship as God would have it, churches will soon be filled with adulterous marriages. Men and women will be living together who have no right to one another if they are not taught "doctrinal" truth on "the marriage question." Yet, there are those who decry all this "doctrinal teaching" on marriage, and who insist that we must leave that alone and teach more about how to live a pure life before God. Such advice is a recipe for both doctrinal and moral corruption. Some hate all the "wrangling" and "doctrinal" fusses over drinking, immodest dress, and dancing, and they insist that we quit such strivings and simply encourage people to "live right." It is a nice thought, but it will not work. If certain "doctrinal" truth is not taught about behavior that affects one's purity, there will be neither truth nor purity.

Rest assured that there are those who are tired of fighting the battle we appear to be losing on the moral front. Some may "cave in" to the pressure. They are ready, not to attack the compromise and doctrinal softness that brings impiety and impurity, but they are ready to assail those who stand. Their message is indeed appealing. It promises peace. It soothes the conscience of those who want to sip their liquor at a business convention and who want to drink an "occasional glass of wine" at the country club. It comforts the teenager who can drink and undress "like everyone else does." It will fill churches of the future with worldliness. Broken candlesticks will litter the highway of heaven (Rev. 2:5).

This is the lesson of ancient Israel. Immoral lives of sexual debauchery and riotous drinking parties with music and dancing were a part of the lives of those who had "no knowledge," and who were not instructed in "doctrinal" truth regarding the word of the Lord (Isa. 5:11-13; Hos. 4:6-11). Will we ever learn? *Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com*

“Does It Matter What I Believe?”

By Jarrod Jacobs

Many ask this question in reference to religious matters. Some will try to say that it does not matter what we believe as long as we are honest and sincere about religious issues. Let us look to the Bible and see the consequences of that reasoning.

If, in spiritual matters, it does not matter what you and I believe, why did Jesus condemn the Pharisees and the Sadducees for their behavior? Let us read **Matthew 15:9**. There, Jesus said, *“But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”* Does this sound like Jesus does not care how we worship him? If it does not matter what we believe, then why did Jesus make that statement in **Matthew 15:9**? Another passage we ought to read is found in **Matthew 22:29**. Jesus condemned the Sadducees at this time, and said, *“Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.”* How could these people “err” if it does not matter what we believe on religious matters?

Let us look at an early teacher and preacher of the gospel; a man by the name of Stephen. This space will not allow us to print the entire text, but please read **Acts 6-7** so you can understand the entire context. We are introduced to Stephen in **Acts 6**, and **Acts 7** records a time when he was opposed by the Jews for preaching about Christ. Toward the end of **Acts 7**, Stephen condemns the Jews for refusing to believe that Jesus was upon this earth, and the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecy. Please notice what happened, *“When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth...And cast him out of the city, and stoned him”* (**Acts 7:54, 58**). Does this sound like a reaction from folks who have been told, “It doesn’t matter what you believe”?

Why do people insist that it doesn’t matter what folks believe in religious matters? We know that this idea of “It doesn’t matter what you believe” is not true in any other area of life. We can’t say, “It doesn’t matter what you believe about gravity.” We can’t say, “It doesn’t matter what you believe about the rules of addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division.” Why then do men teach “It doesn’t matter what you believe” when it comes to religious matters? Put simply, it is because these folks do not want to do what God says, but want to follow their own will!

My friend, what we believe religiously, matters! What we believe concerning religious matters will determine whether we go to Heaven or Hell! This is how serious it is. When people declare that it does not matter what you believe as long as you are honest and sincere, they are teaching something completely foreign to the Scriptures. *Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com*

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear and Learn - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3

Believe - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24

Repent - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30

Confess the Lord - Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21

Be Baptized - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27

Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17