

Coming Soon The Return of the King

Hope! So what do you do when it seems hopeless? You've probably been there. Maybe you're there now. I think we've all been there. Maybe your marriage is falling apart. Perhaps you have a wayward child, one who's turned their back on God...perhaps they're addicted to drugs? Have you had to bail them out of jail? Your job might be your source of hopelessness. It seems to be going no where. Or, it's just so difficult. Are you dealing with aging parents? Dementia may have set in. Things that should have been said never were said; old wounds never healed. You have a pit in your stomach when you pull up to where they're living. Maybe you hoped that the brokenness of your home would someday be healed. All your life you longed to hear your Dad or Mom say just once, "I love you. I'm proud of you." You know though, apart from a miracle, it will never happen.

Is the hopelessness in your own skin, maybe in your own soul? Maybe you're an addict. Just when you think you've got it beat, just when you think you're on the side of victory...Bam!! You fall in the same pit again. Or, you struggle with depression. Sometimes it's all that you can do to get up in the morning. Your world is so dark, the cave so deep. Maybe you've contemplated taking your own life...just to be free.

I've had periods in my life when it seemed hopeless. I've struggled with my own pits of despair. It's encouraged me to know that two of my heroes: Charles Spurgeon and John Piper also struggled with depression. It's a rare person who's not had thoughts of taking their own life or praying that God would please take them Home (Paul did) so that they could be free. But when I've had thoughts like that, there's one thing that has kept me going. I would not want to stand at the Bema Seat and face believers who were martyred or who faced all the wrath Satan could pour out on them, like the saints during the Tribulation – and tell them that my "stuff" was just too big for me to live with.

If you're a believer, there's always hope! Our study today is a wonderful biblical example of this truth, there's always hope. Because the worst time in this world, the most horrible time to be a believer is during the Tribulation but even then – there's hope! This world is not the curtain call. If there's hope during hell on earth, our stuff is mini-shrimp in comparison.

Ray Bakke shares a story that happened during World War II: "I knew an old Glasgow professor named MacDonald who, along with a Scottish chaplain, had bailed out of an airplane behind German lines. They were put in a prison camp. A high wire fence separated the Americans from the British, and the Germans made it next to impossible for the two sides to communicate. MacDonald was put in the American barracks and the chaplain was housed with the Brits. Every day the two men would meet at the fence and exchange a greeting. Unknown to the guards, the Americans had a little homemade radio and were able to get news from the outside, something more precious than food in a POW camp. Everyday, MacDonald would take a headline or two to the fence and share it with the chaplain in the ancient Gaelic language, indecipherable to the Germans. One day, news came over the little radio that the German High Command had surrendered and the war was over. MacDonald took the news to his friend, then stood and watched him disappear into the British barracks. A moment later, a roar of celebration came from the barracks. Life in that camp was transformed. Men walked

around singing and shouting, waving at the guards, even laughing at the dogs. When the German guards finally heard the news three nights later, they fled into the dark, leaving the gates unlocked. The next morning, those Brits and Americans walked out as free men. Yet they had truly been set free three days earlier by the news that the war was over.”

The great thing about having a Bible is that we not only know some of the struggles the world will face, we know the final score. We know we’re on the winning side. Good will triumph over evil, truth will win out over the lie, love will conquer hate and Jesus Christ will reign. There’s hope! There’s cheering in our camp even though the guards and dogs may still be seen, for we know that they’ll soon be gone and the gates to the prison will be opened. Jesus is coming back and this time He’s coming to conquer!

In the 19th chapter of the book of Revelation we’re told of the second coming of Jesus Christ, Revelation 19:11-21 (p. 1040). We’re studying today what gives those Tribulation saints hope and what gives us that same hope, **The Return of the King**. This is one of the greatest events the world will experience and which Christians should long for with eagerness. The Bible calls it the “*blessed hope*” when it says, “*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*” (Titus 2:11-13). Jesus Christ’s second coming, **The Return of the King**, is our great hope.

The most significant event in Bible prophecy is the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ. It’s an event that’s so important that there are over 300 separate prophecies relating to it in the Bible, making it one of the most important doctrines in Scripture. Did you know that for every prophecy in the Bible about the first coming of Jesus, there are eight concerning His Second Coming? It’s the key that unlocks the door that leads to the future. No Christian can be said to have a well-rounded faith who doesn’t understand basic truths about the Second Coming of Christ. All the roads of history and prophecy converge at this point. It’s the believers hope!

Jesus Christ’s return to earth is the climax of human history. He’ll return at the end of the Tribulation, the end of the 70th week of Daniel, to conquer His enemies and usher in His thousand-year millennial kingdom. Before Jesus reigns, He must war and conquer. Revelation 19 describes the climax of Satan’s rebellion and his devastating defeat at the Battle of Armageddon. It’s all part of **The Return of the King**. If you’re taking notes then...

1. There is coming the Mother of all wars. General Douglas MacArthur stood on the deck of the USS *Missouri* in Tokyo harbor. It was September 2, 1945, and General MacArthur, who’d engineered America’s hard-fought victory in the Pacific, had just witnessed the signatures of Japan’s leaders ending the bloody global struggle known as World War II. On that day, this American hero uttered a profound warning that he later repeated in his famous farewell address before the United States Congress: “*We have had our last chance,*” he said. “*If we do not now devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at our door.*”

Shortly after he was inaugurated as the 40th President of the United States, Ronald Reagan was astounded by the complexities of the Middle East. Israel, on its thin strip of land, was surrounded by well-armed Arab enemies who were splintered like broken glass into countless factions and divisions, impossible to reconcile. On Friday, May 15, 1981, scribbling in his diary, Reagan noted the intractable problems involving Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, the Soviet Union, and Israel. "*Sometimes I wonder*" he wrote, "*if we are destined to witness Armageddon.*" Just three weeks later, on Sunday, June 7th, he received news that Israel had bombed an Iraqi nuclear reactor. That afternoon, Reagan wrote in his diary: "*Got word of Israel bombing of Iraqi nuclear reactor. I swear I believe Armageddon is near.*"

Armageddon. The very word chills the soul, Revelation 16:12-16 (p. 1037). *Armageddon. Let me show you a map of Armageddon.* When Napoleon looked over the plains of Megiddo, he remarked that it was "*the most natural battlefield of the whole earth.*" The Bible tells us that World War III is coming. This war, Armageddon, makes all the wars ever fought in this world look like minor skirmishes.

While the word Armageddon is mentioned only once in the Bible, the mountain of Megiddo has a rich biblical history. The name *Megiddo* means "*mountain of slaughter.*" It was at Megiddo Deborah and Barak defeated the Canaanites (Judges 4-5). It was here Gideon defeated the Midianites (Judges 7). King Saul was killed in battle here during a war with the Philistines (1 Samuel 31) and King Josiah was slain by the invading Egyptians here (2 Kings 23). These are not by any means the only battles that have been fought on this bloody ground. There have been a long succession of battles waged at Armageddon as great armies marched across the field one after the other—the Crusaders, Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, Turks, and Arabs. During World War I, British General Edmund Allenby led his army against the Turks in a fierce battle on the plain of Armageddon. According to scholar Alan Johnson, "*More than 200 battles have been fought at or near there.*" Megiddo has earned its awful name: it's indeed a *Mount of Slaughter*.

It's here that Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet will gather their massive armies for a last stand against God. It's where the end of the world as we know it will culminate. It will be the greatest battle ever fought, the most decisive victory ever achieved, and the greatest defeat ever suffered.

The armies of the world will converge on this region, on a collision course with one another, but their intent and objective will change when the Lord Jesus appears in the sky. Instead of battling each other, the armies of the earth will unite to fight the army of heaven. This isn't the Rapture, the beginning of the Tribulation, it's the 2nd Coming, the end of the Tribulation.

Although the phrase "*the battle of Armageddon*" is a familiar one, it's somewhat misleading. It's not a single battle but rather, a whole series of conflicts that culminate at the Second Coming. The Greek word *polemos*, translated *battle* in Revelation 16:14, signifies a war or campaign. That indicates that Armageddon is really a campaign made up of numerous battles among a number of nations over a period of time at the end of the Tribulation. Then, the battle of Armageddon is not geographically isolated to the region around the plain of Megiddo. Revelation 14 teaches that the land involved in this end time campaign is actually about 180 miles in length (14:20). Several other locations are mentioned in the Bible other than just Megiddo; Jerusalem, the valley of

Jehoshaphat, and Edom. The many armies that gather and the hundreds of millions of combatants are apparently spread out over a much larger area than the plain of Megiddo. John calls this area of land the "winepress" of God's wrath.

a. This is a Satanic motivated battle. This is a battle inspired by the false trinity to overthrow the true Trinity. The demons that call the kings to battle come from each member of this unholy trio. It's an all-out, desperate war against God and His Son. Armageddon is the climax of the angelic conflict that began in heaven, was transferred to earth, and now has come full circle as Satan tries to defeat God by force. Armageddon is the world's final response to God's call for repentance. Throughout the Tribulation, God will be calling on mankind to repent but most will refuse and align themselves with the Antichrist. The end result will be that God will allow Satan to gather the world's armies to face defeat and God's swift judgment. Armageddon was prophesied in the Old Testament. Joel 3:9-17 is one of those passages, in which the place of battle is called "*the valley of decision*" (v. 14). The prophet used that term because this is the place where unbelievers will make their decision to join Satan in making war against God.

b. This is a politically motivated battle. The Antichrist promotes himself from a European leader, to a world leader, to a tyrannical global dictator, and finally to a god. But his grip on global power will not last long. The world will become increasingly discontented with the leadership of this global dictator, who's gone back on every promise he made. Major segments of the world will begin to assemble their own military forces and rebel against him.

The king of the south and his armies will be the first to come after the Antichrist, followed by the armies of the north (Daniel 11:40). A great army from Africa, including not only Egypt but other countries of that continent will come to fight the Antichrist. This army, probably numbering in the millions, will attack the Middle East from the south. At the same time Russia and other armies to the north will mobilize another powerful military force to descend on the Holy Land and challenge the world dictator. Although Russia had a severe setback about four years earlier in the prophetic sequence of events, she apparently has been able to recoup her losses enough to put another army in the field. The Antichrist will put down some of these first attempts at rebellion against him. But before he can celebrate and move on toward his goal of destroying Israel and Jerusalem, something will happen.

Revelation 16:12, "*The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east.*" The Euphrates is one of the world's greatest rivers. It flows from the mountains of western Turkey, through Syria, and continues through the heart of Iraq, not far from Baghdad, and finally empties, into the Persian Gulf. So what's the significance of the drying up of the Euphrates River, and why will that event have such a disturbing effect on the Antichrist? The drying-up of the Euphrates is a prelude to the final act of this worldwide conflict; the kings of the east are entering into this conflict.

Is it any wonder the world dictator is disturbed and frustrated? He's just put down rebellions by defeating armies from the south and north. Just when it appears he's about to gain control of everything, he gets word that the Euphrates has dried up and massive armies of the east are crossing it to attack him. He thought he was safe, as no

army could cross this barrier and come into the Israeli arena where he fought. Now that barrier is down, an army of unprecedented numbers is marching toward him.

So how large is that army? Revelation 9:16, *“The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number”* It’s an army of two hundred million coming against the Antichrist and they’ll all meet on Israel’s front porch. When this unprecedented army crosses the bed of the Euphrates against the Antichrist, the greatest war of all history, involving hundreds of millions of people, will be set in motion. The major battle ground for this war is Armageddon.

c. The reason behind the reason for Armageddon. The Battle of Armageddon will begin with a conflict between the armies of the world; it will end with these armies uniting against the armies of heaven that will accompany King Jesus at His 2nd Coming, *“I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against Him who was sitting on the horse and against His army”* (Rev. 19:19). The Bible doesn’t tell us how the opposing armies united to fight against Jesus. It simply states that they do and that it’s Satan’s influence that draws them together.

2. God always keeps His promises: The King of Kings is coming back. If you’re a follower of Christ, what happens next should make the Packers winning the Super Bowl look like a bored yawn. It should give us an urge to stand and scream like a like a football fan watching the star quarterback come onto the field at the beginning of the Super Bowl. This isn’t the babe of Bethlehem. This is the General, this is the King of kings coming out of heaven to do battle and judge His enemies. Twice in Revelation we’re told that the door to heaven will be opened. It’s first opened to receive the Church into heaven at the time of the Rapture: *“After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this”* (4:1). Now the door swings open a second time for Christ and His Church to march out of heaven as they come back to conquer Satan and rule here on earth (19:11,14). The first opening is for the Rapture of the Church; the second is for the return of Christ!

When Jesus arrives on earth the second time, His landing will dramatically herald the purpose of His coming. The moment His feet touch the Mount of Olives, the mountain will split apart, creating a broad passageway from Jerusalem to Jericho. As you can imagine, this will be an unprecedented geological cataclysm. In describing it, Dr. Tim LaHaye wrote: *“There will be a Stellar Event. Celestial. Cosmic. Greater than earth. Greater than the heavens. And it will suck the air out of humanity’s lungs and send men and women and kings and presidents and tyrants to their knees. It will have no need of spotlights, fog machines, amplified music, synthesizers, or special effects. It will be real.”* Christ’s return will be amplified by a devastating spectacle that makes Hollywood disaster movies look like a Saturday morning cartoon. The world will finally see and recognize its rightful Lord and King. Jesus came the first time in humility and simplicity, this time His glory and majesty will be spectacularly displayed for all to see.

Yet, Satan and his allies will try to take on King Jesus. Could there be anything more futile than creatures fighting against their Creator? Than little men stuck on one tiny planet, floating in the immeasurable cosmos, striking back at the Creator of the universe? Yet futility is not beyond hearts hardened against God. Somehow the beast

and false prophet will persuade the armies of the earth to go to war against Christ and the armies of heaven. It's like persuading mice to declare war against lions. This final war will be the culmination of all the rebellion that men have leveled against God from the beginning of time! And there's not one iota of doubt about the outcome. Because this is King Jesus returning to conquer and claim His throne and what a return it will be.

John said that *"every eye will see Him"* (Rev. 1:7). How will this be possible for people who don't have television? Some believe that Christ and His accompanying armies will travel around the globe, passing in front of the sun during the daylight hours so that every person on earth will witness this incredible sight. The return of Jesus Christ will be unlike anything ever seen or experienced before. Notice what the Bible says about Christ as He rides out of heaven.

* ***The Names He Wears.*** The Bible says that the One who is coming from heaven on the white horse *"is called Faithful and True"* (Rev. 19:11). Jesus is called *Faithful* because as the Perfect Man, He is perfectly obedient to the will of God—unlike the First Adam, who failed and plunged the human race into sin. Christ is called *True* in contrast to Satan and his cohorts, who are liars. Because He's God, Jesus is the embodiment of truth (John 14:6). It takes a person like this to judge righteously.

I'm intrigued by the name Jesus carries that *"no one knows except Himself"* (Rev. 19:12). It's a very powerful thing whenever God gives you a name. In the Bible names always reflect character. Apparently there's some aspect of Christ's character that's still unrevealed, and something special about Him we've yet to learn.

In verse 13 we read, *"His name is The Word of God."* Jesus Christ is the ultimate expression of God's character and person because He is God in the flesh.

There's still another name given to Christ, *"On His robe and on His thigh He has this name written: King of kings and Lord of lords"* (v. 16). Jesus is the King of anybody else called a king and the Lord of anybody else called a lord, and all of earth's rulers will bow to Him.

* ***The Garments He Wears.*** At His return Jesus will wear *"many crowns"* (Rev. 19:12). These crowns are emblems of His conquest because He's coming to put down rebellion and rule the world. He will also wear *"a robe dipped in blood"* (vs. 13) because He's coming for judgment. There will be no question about Jesus' authority or purpose when He returns to this planet.

* ***The Armies He Commands.*** Jesus isn't coming back alone. *"The armies of heaven were following Him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean"* (Rev. 19:14). These are the angels and all the saints in heaven, including the Church that was raptured at the beginning of the Tribulation. That means we're in this army. These saints are dressed in white linen, which is symbolic of righteousness—in this case, the *"righteous acts of the saints"* (v. 8). Why are we in righteous dress? After the Rapture, we'll go through the Judgment Seat of Christ where our unworthy acts will all be burned up. Only the good remains so when we return with Christ to reign with Him in His kingdom, we'll appear in righteous clothing.

* ***The Sword He Wields.*** I've always loved swords. My brother attended a military academy and I loved to play with his sword. One of my favorite swords is not that big but it's very special to me because my son, Aaron, brought it back for me after his mission trip to China. But those are nothing compared to Jesus' sword. Our Lord is not

coming back unarmed. *"Coming out of His mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty"* (Rev. 19:15). The sharp sword in Jesus' mouth is God's Word, which the writer of Hebrews said is capable of discerning the deepest thoughts and motives of our lives (4:12). This sword speaks of judgment...so does the imagery of the *"winepress"* of God's wrath.

When He returns, Jesus Christ will judge and rule the nations by His Word. So certain is this judgment, so sure is the outcome that even before the Battle of Armageddon begins, an angel appears to announce the outcome and invite the birds to *"the great supper of God"* (Revelation 19:17) at which they will feed on the carcasses of all God's enemies. Remember the movie *The Birds*? That's a little of the scene that awaits the enemies of King Jesus.

Those gathered against King Jesus at Armageddon are those who've refused to repent during the Tribulation, even though God has been demonstrating that He alone is God. Tragically, when you refuse to repent, judgment is all that awaits you.

That's why this account concludes with a chilling description that might offend our sensibilities, *"And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, 'Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and the mighty, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, great and small'"* (Rev. 19:17-18). Though it's a gruesome description, it reveals an important insight: the angel proclaims victory and invites the vultures to this supper, even before Jesus has slain anyone by the word of His mouth. The armies are massed together for what they think is a great battle during which they'll overthrow God. But what they're really gathering for is a great judgment in which they will become bird food when Christ simply speaks the Word from His mouth. The angel knows that the victory of Jesus is assured. The battle hasn't begun, but even so it will soon be over. As someone has said, "it's all over except the shooting!"

Appropriately, this chapter ends with the Beast and the false prophet being thrown into the lake of fire (v. 20). History as we know it is over, but a new chapter on Planet Earth is commencing. The millennial kingdom is about to be established. At last, the promises given to King David and verified by an angel to Mary will be fulfilled. A descendant of King David will rule on his throne and administer justice and righteousness throughout the earth.

Conclusion: Are you feeling hopeless today? Hang on! Hope is coming. This world is not the end. The King is coming back. This all ends in hope. We must trust God. We must have faith and believe His Word. A scene from Auschwitz illustrates this. After the Allies liberated Auschwitz, they found this scratched on a wall in 1945: *"I believe in the sun, even though I don't see it shine. I believe in love, even though I don't see it expressed. I believe in God, even though I can't hear Him speak."* What kind of man who endured such horror could write these words of promise and hope? Only someone who deliberately choose to see the unseen. That poor prisoner clung to hope and so must we!

Pastor Doug Goins of the Peninsula Bible Church told the story of an American missionary couple and their family who were home on furlough, spending their vacation

at a cabin near a lake. They had three children, ages twelve, seven and four. One day the four-year-old slipped away from his brother and sister, went out on the dock to play, and fell into the lake. He didn't know how to swim and he wasn't wearing a life jacket. The screams of the two older children alerted the father to the danger. He ran out on the dock and the kids pointed to where their brother had fallen in. The father dove into the lake. The water was only about ten feet deep, but it was so murky that he couldn't see a thing. He went all the way to the bottom and felt around frantically for his little boy. Finally, he ran out of air, came to the top, took another huge gulp of air, and went down again, searching for his son. On his way down a third time, his hand brushed his little boy's leg. He turned and found his four-year-old son with his arms and legs wrapped tightly around one of the pilings, about three feet below the water. The father pried him loose, carried him onto the lawn, and they both caught their breath.

After about thirty minutes, when they'd all calmed down and things were back to normal, the father asked, "Son, what were you doing down there, hanging on to that piling?" The little boy answered, "I was just waiting for you, Dad." My friend, are you just waiting for the Lord Jesus?

Hope! Hanging on for dear life is reality. Spiritual warfare is reality. Fighting the battle to take new spiritual ground and not giving up is reality. And hopeful, confident rest is reality as well. We know that we are covered by the great protective wings of our Lord and we can trust our Heavenly Father to deliver us, fight for us and give us the victory over the most horrible circumstances. If you're a believer, you're going to get out of this world. We're all going to be Home before dark. That's our confident hope. Jesus is coming back!

Two thousand years have passed since Jesus went to heaven. Some of God's children are tired and weary. We wonder why Jesus hasn't come back yet. Perhaps He's forgotten us. Perhaps He made other plans. But my friend, Jesus always keeps His promises. He said He'd come back—and He will. Fear not, child of God. Keep believing. He hasn't forgotten you. Soon Christ will return for His own.

It's with this hope we lay our loved ones to rest in the sacred soil of death. With this hope we rise each morning, look to the eastern sky, and say, "Maybe today?" All Christians believe that Jesus will come back someday. He said He would—and He never forgets his promises.

So here's the application of this great truth. Jesus is coming. That much is certain. The precise time is hidden in the heart of God. It may be soon. It may not be for a 100 years. But one of these days, the King is coming and He's going to fix everything!

Are you ready? Do you know Jesus? Is He your King? Have you committed your life to Christ? Do you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior? If you don't know Jesus, please don't wait another day, another hour, or even another second. Run to the cross, lay your sins on Jesus, and trust him as your Savior. This is the most important decision you can ever make. Don't be caught unprepared when the Son of God returns to the earth.

Christian friend, do you feel hopeless today? Don't give up. Jesus wins! And because He wins, we win! He's coming back and He's going to reign forever and ever! So hold on to Jesus. Hold on to your hope. Believe in His coming. Pray for His coming. Love His coming. Watch for His coming. Wait for His coming. Expect His coming. Look for His coming. Live as if it might be today and one day you won't be disappointed. We have

hope because Jesus is coming back. Please don't let Satan discourage you and steal your hope.

*“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our **blessed hope**, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ”* (Titus 2:11-13). Hope came 2000 years ago. I'm so thankful that hope has a return trip...we just don't know when! Until then, by God's grace, let's hope and trust our Heavenly Father!!