



THE REFLECTOR

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The Fultondale Church Of Christ
Invites YOU To
HEAR THE GOSPEL
With
HIRAM HUTTO

OCT. 19-24 Sun. - 9:45 am & 7:30 pm
Week nights - 7:30 pm

EVERYONE WELCOME!



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A PREACHER

Dear brother Paul:

I take pen in hand to write you after having heard that you seemed critical of me by saying I had deserted you because I loved this world more. Well, there are some things which I believe you need to get straightened out in your thinking and perhaps by calling some of these things to your attention, I may be of some help to you.

First, I found it very unpleasant to be associated with a man who was always critical about this or that. It seems as if nothing ever was up to your expectations. Why, telling a man he had to leave his wife and that the whole congregation must withdraw itself from him as you wrote to those poor, guilt-ridden Corinthians. And speaking of guilt, why you ought to be ashamed of always raising those guilt feelings in people. I don't believe you ever bothered to read what the best psychologists had to say about such things as guilt did you? Perhaps your preaching would have been more effective if you had. And the way you wrote to those poor Christians at Thessalonica, telling them to let a man starve if he refused to work. Don't you know that our first responsibility is to the whole man and we have no right to preach to one in need until we have first relieved that need? I do believe you never listened to what our more learned brethren had to say, did you? And the way you jumped down the throat of those great doctors at Athens, telling them in your first breath that they were wrong and ignorant. You did more harm to the Lord's cause by alienating those sincere people than all the Sadducees put together!

Second, I was so embarrassed by your record in life. You were always in trouble on every hand. If you couldn't stir up a debate with the Jews in every city, you would light in on the Gentiles. How many times were you in jail anyway? It seems that every time I turned around you were behind bars or facing a trial. And refusing to leave the jail in Philippi until you got an apology from some of the officials: that was ego in high gear! You even had the audacity to embarrass a king by telling him he ought to be a Christian as you were. Don't you know you can't win friends and influence people by being so militant?

Third, I just felt utter pain at your complete lack of tact. The way you wrote so plainly to other Christians about delicate matters which they could have worked out in due time. Telling people God commands them to repent! Don't you know that people respond to love and kindness more readily than to commands? Should not one who is effeminate be lovingly approached privately; and the way you embarrassed Peter in front of those at Antioch. You have on so many occasions showed complete disregard for diplomacy.

Fourth, I don't believe you ever left Phariseeism the way you insist that everyone else see the scriptures the way you see them. Don't you know that men have a right to see the Bible like they want to see it? And poor Timothy: imagine trying to get people to measure up to your standards before serving as elders. It's bad enough in this world just trying to be a preacher without imposing such stringent standards that most will not meet them. What do you think the church will do without elders anyway? Wouldn't it be far better to have just anyone to serve than to have no one to serve?

Having been a Pharisee for so long, I suppose, just got your mind so legalistic that you can't help stressing baptism and repentance so much, but Paul, the way you have tried to regulate the life of everyone — even telling women they had to dress modestly! Don't you know that how women dress is their right? If they want to wear a mini-robe, isn't that their right as a person? And telling women they had to be in submission to their

own husbands! Don't you know people are just going to recognize you as a woman hater you must be to say something like that? And to tell the Ephesians that they ought to stand against the devil and his wiles. You just never had to go out in real life and deal with people did you? If you had, you would have learned that you have to do it to them before they get it done to you.

And that matter of obeying the civil authorities you fooled the Roman Christians with: what if we want to drive our chariots just a little over the speed limit; or declare just a little less property worth to those crooked publicans — whose business is that anyway? Certainly not the business of a meddling preacher is it? But you are so strict you want everybody to be perfect. Why, you are causing people to think you are hiding something in your life and just want to create a diversion away from yourself by all this kind of nonsense.

Perhaps if you were not so hard on the Judaizers in your preaching you would get a little more cooperation from them in preaching the gospel. Also, if you were not so dogmatic and unloving toward brethren like myself who are broadminded, you would probably get more financial help than you need in preaching the gospel. That's something to think about, isn't it?

And last, I just don't believe you know what love is all about anyway. The very idea, telling the Corinthians that you had to hate error and stand up for the truth. Don't you think it is far better to love people out of their mistakes than to take so hard a stand against their errors? And talking about love, don't you see that by being so critical of what you consider to be wrong that you drive people away from the Lord? It would be far better to let love overcome and bridge the gulf between your differences than to isolate people and by your unloving and guilt-creating tactics and preaching harden them so they will have animosity toward you and what you preach?

I trust that you won't think I am being critical or unloving, Paul, but your damnable doctrines of a narrow redemption and strictures regarding life is just too much for enlightened people to take and for your good I hope you will change. Perhaps, also, if you will just relent a little about the Hope of Israel, the Jews might lighten up in their resistance and accusations toward you. After all, what could the harmless belief in an earthly kingdom reign by the Messiah hurt? Besides that, if they lessened their accusations, you might get out of jail early.

Paul, I hope that I have helped you and that from this day on you will be more tolerant of others. After all, my blood will be on your conscience and I hope you will feel the guilt of that blood until you die for you have driven me from the noble profession of preaching to making tents. However, I am not too sorry, for making tents is a better life and I also believe I will be in a better position to influence far more people this way than if I had continued to preach. You know how many people regard preachers, thanks to you and your kind of preaching.

Very sincerely and lovingly yours, Demas

P. S. A number of brethren who have read this letter thought I should ask you to keep it confidential and I know you will do just that for regardless of our minor differences, I have always found you to be a man of your word.

(From *The Gospel Standard*, February 1980)

This fictional letter from one who left the great apostle Paul because he "loved this present world" (2 Timothy 4:10) should be a lesson for all, especially gospel preachers. — E. B.

The Battle of Armageddon

Its Biblical Significance

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"And the sixth angel poured out his bowl upon the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, that the way might be prepared for the kings from the east. And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the way of the great day of God, the Almighty. (Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame.) And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called *Armageddon*" (Rev. 16:12-16).

The passage quoted above contains the only mention of the word *Armageddon* in the Bible. Inasmuch as it is found in the Bible, it does have significance for those of us who are Christians. We cannot be content with only telling the world what the Battle of Armageddon is not; we need to tell the world the true meaning of the term.

The word *Armageddon* is derived from the Hebrew word *har meghiddo* which means "mountain of Megiddo." The allusion to Megiddo means very little to those who have little or no knowledge of the history of the Old Testament. Yet, to those who have a good background of Old Testament history, the area of Megiddo has significance for the many battles that were fought there. Deborah and Berek defeated Sisera and his host here (Judg. 5:19). Saul and Jonathan fell near here in their battle against the Philistines (1 Sam. 31:1-3). When Josiah went out against Pharaoh-Necho, he was slain on the battlefields of Megiddo (2 Kgs. 23:29; 2 Chron. 35:22). Hence, John has chosen this battlefield to discuss the great conflict which will occur between Christ and the forces of Satan. The allusion is not so much to a literal, physical, geographical location as to a great battlefield.

The usage of the word Armageddon is somewhat similar to the modern usage of Waterloo. Although few of us know the location of Waterloo, we have all heard about Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo. Hence, the word "Waterloo" has become symbolical of the place or time of a great defeat. The word "Armageddon" was of similar significance in John's time to those who were familiar with Old Testament history. It referred to the

scene of a great conflict, regardless of where that conflict might be fought.

The Context of the Battle of Armageddon

The Battle of Armageddon cannot be understood without a consideration of the context in which it is set in the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation was written by the exiled apostle John to the saints of the seven churches of Asia somewhere around 96 A.D. The book concerned itself with the things which were shortly to come to pass (Rev. 1:1-3). No interpretation of the book of Revelation or the Battle of Armageddon can have any significance unless it can be understood so as to have meaning to those first century saints to whom the book was addressed.

The saints in John's day were in the throes of a horrible persecution. The Roman Emperor, in an effort to unify the Empire, demanded that every loyal citizen confess that he was "lord." The Roman Emperor was to be worshiped as divine. Although some Emperors treated this as exaggerated attempts to exalt the Emperor, Domitian delighted in being looked upon as divine and in being so worshiped. The Christian could not conscientiously worship the Emperor as divine; he knew but one Lord, Jesus Christ. To the Christian, such homage was idolatry and an utter denial of faith in Christ. To the Roman, the refusal to worship the emperor was a sign of disloyalty to the State and an act of treason. A great conflict was inevitable.

Emperor worship was forced upon the Christians as a test of their loyalty to the State. Those who refused to worship the Emperor were persecuted. The forms of punishment were many. Some were put to death, some were exiled, some were tortured into a confession of the divinity of the emperor, some had their property confiscated, some received combinations of these measures.

The book of Revelation was written to reassure the Christian that God had not forgotten His saints and that the victory would ultimately belong to them. No doubt, some reached the conclusion that God did not care what was happening on the earth below. Yet, John wrote to reassure the Christians of the first century that God would not be defeated by Rome and its evil forces.

Beginning in chapter 12, John, as it were, lifts the curtain that the Christians who were suffering the many forms of persecution at the hands of the Roman Empire might see what was going on behind the scene. What was happening was nothing less than a struggle between God and Satan. Beginning in chapter twelve, we read of the birth of Christ and Satan's unsuccessful attempts to defeat Him. When Satan saw that he could not defeat the Christ, he vented his anger against the church. Consequently, he turned his forces toward the destruction of the followers of Christ.

The things which Satan used against the disciples of Christ were as follows: (1) The First Beast (13:1-10). The first beast represents political governments. The imagery is the composite picture of the four beasts mentioned in Daniel 7 in which text the four different beasts referred to four separate governments. Here the four beasts are

Child-raising rules

DEAR ABBY: I've been carrying one of your columns around for six or seven years, and it's practically falling apart, but it still makes a lot of sense. Will you please run it again? A whole new generation of teenagers is coming up and I'm sure it will help other fathers as much as it has helped me.

TOUGH BUT LOVING

DEAR T BUT L: With pleasure. And here it is:
TEN RULES FOR RAISING A JUVENILE DELINQUENT

1. Begin at infancy to give the child everything he wants. In this way he will grow up to believe the world owes him a living.
2. When he picks up bad words laugh at him. This will make him think he is cute.
3. Never give him any spiritual training. Wait until he is twenty-one then let him decide for himself.
4. Pick up everything he leaves lying around: books, shoes, clothes. Do everything for him so that he will be experienced in throwing all responsibility on others.
5. Quarrel with your spouse frequently in his presence. In this way he will not be shocked when the home is broken.
6. Give a child all the spending money he wants. Never let him earn his own. Why should he have things as tough as you had them?
7. Satisfy his every craving for food, drink and comfort, denial may lead to frustrations.
8. Take his part against neighbors, teachers and policemen. They are all prejudiced against your child.
9. When he gets into trouble, apologize for yourself by saying: "I never could do anything with him."
10. Prepare for plenty of headaches. You are sure to have them.

put together to refer to political government in general which Satan uses to destroy saints. (2) The Second Beast (13:11-18). This beast is identified as a false prophet or false religion. Satan uses false religions to destroy the children of God. There is little doubt that the specific form of false religion which is intended in this passage is the emperor worship to which I have already referred. (3) Babylon the Great, the Great Harlot. This refers to the city of Rome, the capital of the Roman empire.

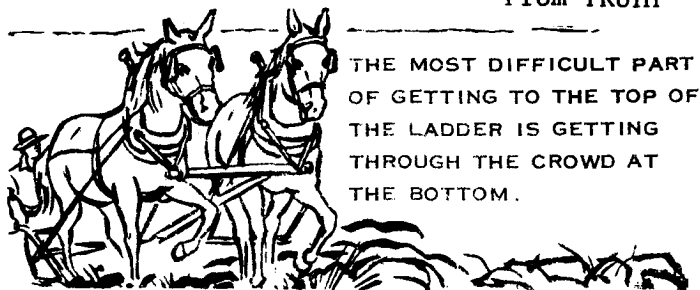
As the scene unfolds, God and Satan assemble their forces for conflict. Satan gathered all of his forces together against God (16:12-16). Then, the Bible tells the outcome of this great battle. Babylon the Great is destroyed (16:17-18:24). The two beasts were destroyed (19:17-21). And, finally, the Great Dragon, Satan himself, was defeated by God (20:7-10). In the Battle of Armageddon, the great conflict between God and Satan, God was altogether victorious.

Hence, the Battle of Armageddon refers to the great conflict which occurs between the hosts of Satan and the hosts of God. Its meaning for those of the first century is quite clear: God will defeat the forces of Satan. Hence, to that saint which was suffering at the hands of Rome, the knowledge that the victory would ultimately belong to God would give him the necessary strength to endure the persecutions which he was suffering, even if they cost him his life. He knew that the ultimate victory belonged to God.

The Battle of Armageddon does not describe some literal, earthly conflict between Russia, Egypt, Europe and China which might occur in the twentieth century. That would have had absolutely no meaning to the saints in the first century who were suffering at the hands of pagan Rome. This concept of the Battle of Armageddon is part and parcel of premillennialism, a system of interpretation of Bible prophecy which is a system of infidelity.

Rather, the Battle of Armageddon was a symbolical method of revealing God's ultimate victory over Satan. Hence, though Satan may rage and the earthly scene appear as though Satan was in control and God was completely defeated, the Christian knows that the ultimate victory belongs to God. In the conflict the victor has already been decided. God will defeat Satan and completely destroy him in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone. That being the case, we who are Christians should never take sides with the Loser, Satan; we should always stand with the great Winner, Jesus Christ our Lord, the victor at the Battle of Armageddon.

From TRUTH



THE MOST DIFFICULT PART
OF GETTING TO THE TOP OF
THE LADDER IS GETTING
THROUGH THE CROWD AT
THE BOTTOM.

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