

IT'S ALL ABOUT CONTROL: "The nations rage and the peoples plot in vain ..."

Yes, control, as in self-governance or autonomy. Autonomy is freedom from external control or influence; independence.

The battle of Armageddon is merely the climax of a war that has been brewing from ancient times—since the very beginning really. The very first skirmish over autonomy was God versus Adam and Eve. Who's the boss? Who rules over the planet? When Adam disobeyed, he fired the first volley. On that day in the garden he decided that God would no longer tell him what to do, but that he would now be the one to determine his actions. His rebellion set the world on a collision course with God that would end exactly where we are in our text this morning—in Megiddo in the valley of Jezreel.

Take a few minutes to compare the similarities between Psalm 2 and the following texts in Revelation 16 and 19. The kings of the earth had set themselves to plan their rebellion against God. God informs them that he has already appointed a King. And, then, God warns them of the consequences of not reverencing his chosen King and continuing in their contention and rebellion.

- **(Psalm 2:1–12 ESV)**

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us."

He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill."

I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

- **(Revelation 16:13–14, 19:19 ESV)**

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 demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army.

The Bible teaches that things will be wonderfully better, but only after they become unimaginably worse. There is only one solution for the world's problems: the return of its true King, the Lord Jesus Christ, to establish absolute monarchy and unilateral authority in His earthly

kingdom. Only under His rule will there be peace instead of war, justice instead of inequity, and righteousness instead of wickedness. But that glorious event will not occur without fierce opposition from Satan, his demon hordes, and the world of wicked sinners. The Tribulation, the seven-year period immediately before Christ's return, will see the greatest of all human world empires, headed by the evil genius known as Antichrist. The earth will be infested with demons, those who have been here all along, those cast from heaven with Satan (12:9), and those released from imprisonment during the Tribulation (9:1–10, 14–20). [MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2000). *Revelation 12–22* (p. 210). Chicago: Moody Press.]

But while chaos and turmoil reigns on earth during the Tribulation, the raptured church will be presented in heaven. The church, the bride of the Lamb, will be eagerly awaiting the marriage supper of the Lamb in the millennial earth (19:7). But before that wonderful celebration can take place, the warrior King must win the final battle. The forces of heaven and hell will meet in the climactic slaughter of human history, the Battle of Armageddon. At that final holocaust, man's day will end, all of Christ's foes will be vanquished, and His kingdom will be established. [Ibid.]

THEN I SAW HEAVEN OPENED ...

The opening of heaven this time is on a larger scale than any of these others, however. This opening purposes to reveal the Messiah, not as a Lamb or a bridegroom, but as a Warrior-King descending to do battle against the beast and his hosts. [Thomas, R. L. (1995). *Revelation 8-22: an exegetical commentary* (p. 382). Chicago: Moody Publishers.]

In 4:1 a door stood open into heaven.

Later (11:19; 15:5) the heavenly sanctuary itself was opened for further revelations. Now the heavens themselves stand open to reveal the conquering Messiah and his armies returning from heaven to war against the beast, the false prophet, and the nations of the world who flock after them. [Mounce, R. H. (1997). *The Book of Revelation* (p. 352). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.]

(Revelation 4:1a–2 ESV) After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! ... At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.

(Revelation 11:19a NIV) Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant.

(Revelation 15:5 NIV) After this I looked, and I saw in heaven the temple—that is, the tabernacle of the covenant law—and it was opened.

(Ezekiel 1:1 NIV) In my thirtieth year, in the fourth month on the fifth day, while I was among the exiles by the Kebar River, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.



Who's the Boss?