

The Victory of Armageddon

A SERMON – Preached on Sunday Morning, Jan. 28th, 1865, by

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"And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" Rev. xvi. 16

The battle spoken of in this chapter means that conflict between the church and the world that has been going on from the beginning, and that will continue down to the end of time; and the day here spoken of does not mean the judgment day at all; the judgment day will not be a day of battle; every foe will be conquered and in chains; every enemy will there appear a prisoner; they will appear then not in battle array, but they will appear as captives of the law, the justice, and the power of God; the conquest will be entire, the victory will then be complete. "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; "but Christ hath gained the conquest over sin and death, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." I may once more remind you before I enter upon the subject, that the first syllable of the word Armageddon signifies "a mountain," and therefore is intended, at least as I think, to represent the people of God as standing in the most elevated and advantageous position, standing on Mount Zion, standing on the vantage-ground of the great and eternal victory which the Saviour hath wrought, standing on the mountain of a covenant ordered in all things and sure. And I may again observe that it is the opinion of most of the learned that this word Armageddon refers to two circumstances in the Old Testament; first to Makkedah, where the sun and moon stood still till the victory of the Israelites was complete over their enemies; and secondly to Megiddo, where the Lord gave the victory unto Israel; and those two circumstances are typical of that spiritual conquest which the Lord gives his people by Jesus Christ.

There are three things I will aim at this morning. First, what we are to contend for. Secondly, the character of the people who are with the Lord in this conquest. Thirdly, if time permit, which I hope it will, the final judgment, as described in the 19th chapter of this book.

First, then, what we are to contend for. It is necessary that we should know this, because if men do not understand what they go to war for, it is sure to lead to confusion. Now in the 12th chapter of this book we read that "there was war in heaven." By the word heaven here of course we must not understand the heaven of glory; by the word heaven here we must understand the Christian dispensation, which is called again and again in the Evangelists "the kingdom of heaven." "Michael and his angels fought against the dragon." Now Michael there I think represents the Lord Jesus Christ; because in the last chapter of Daniel it says, "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble," that is to the Jewish nation "such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time;" and I suppose no nation ever was destroyed by a succession of such fearful judgments as was the Jewish nation; "and at that time thy people shall be delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book." There, there is a little light; cast upon what we are to contend

for; "at that time thy people shall be delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book." Here, I think, is clearly the great truth of eternal election. Michael here, therefore, I think means Jesus Christ; the word itself signifying "the likeness of God," or "like God" Christ is the brightness of Jehovah's glory, the express image of his person. Then it is said that the dragon and his angels fought. Michael and his angels of course mean Christ and his ministers, and perhaps his servants at large; the dragon and his angels mean the devil and his agents or servants, let them be what they may. "The dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven." These words I have often read with very great pleasure. There was place found for these adversaries no more in heaven; now what are we to understand by that? because the adversary still is in the dispensational heavens, where he persecutes the woman, and persecutes the remnant of her seed; and yet there is a heaven in which he is no longer; "neither was there place found any more in heaven." I may here repeat what I have once before said, that the land of Canaan, the temple, the mercy seat, and the presence of the Lord, these things made up the haven of the Jews; this was their dispensational heaven. Now Satan spoiled that land, and the city, and the temple; and the people by their apostasy forfeited the presence of God, so that God went away from them, and gave them up to the destruction which prediction showed that he would do. But. Here, in this new covenant is an inheritance which Satan cannot enter into; in this new covenant is a priest whom he cannot reach; he could lead the Jewish priests astray, but he could not reach our priest; here is a mercy-seat which he cannot reach; and the presence of God with the church of God can never be forfeited by their apostasy, because he that hath begun the good work will carry it on unto the day of Jesus Christ. And thus, then, the Saviour by what he hath done hath brought about the final defeat of the adversary-he is finally defeated. Hence it goes on to say, "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels," that is, his servant, "were cast out with him." Now let us be careful here, for we cannot understand these things without some degree of patience and attention bestowed upon them: and great humility, solemnity, and earnestness. If we are careful here just to compare things with what is there said, we shall see the truth of it, that Satan was cast out, and his angels cast out with him. You will never find a minister of Satan standing in God's immutable love; you will never find a minister of Satan standing scripturally in the new covenant; you will never find people that belong to Satan brought into the bond of the new covenant. Now he is cast out, Satan, and his servants with him. And so, if we take that one thought, the new covenant, that includes everything, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant," and the people of God have been distinguished in all ages, among other features and among other marks, by that one peculiar feature, in that they have been made acquainted with that covenant of which David speaks in his dying hour, "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." Thus you will see that into that covenant Satan cannot come; his ministers cannot come there, nor his servants; but the people of God do come there. And if there be any of you that are seeking your souls' welfare, and do not yet understand this new covenant, then read carefully the 31st and 33rd of Jeremiah, and then read carefully the 8th of the Hebrews, and then read other scriptures where it is dwelt upon, and it will in the Lord's own time open up your minds, and you do not know what consolation will flow into your soul when you once discover that the blessed God hath bound himself, that he hath sworn by his holiness, that he hath sworn by his right hand and by the arm of his strength,-yea, by himself, to be your God forever and forever; never to be wroth with you, and never either to lay or suffer anything finally to be laid to your charge. When you thus see God in this light, then you will contend for that blissful covenant that is ordered in all things and sure. But I must, if possible, be more definite than this. Well, now, when Satan was cast out, what was there brought in? And as I go along, let us see whether that is brought to us. "Now that Satan is cast out, now is come "-what? Salvation-"now is come salvation." That is just what Satan hates; he does not like to see us saved; he does not like to see the Saviour come in and gather his sheep, he does not like to see us acquainted with that great truth that Jesus Christ, because he abideth a priest continually, is able to save unto the

uttermost all that come to God by him. So, then, to begin here with what we are to contend for, we are to contend for God's salvation for that salvation that is free, that is everlasting, and that is certain; this is that that we are to contend for. "Now is come salvation." "And strength." "As thy days, so shall be thy strength." "Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." We are to contend for this; we are to hold this fast that he will not plead against us with his great power, but will put strength in us. We must hold this fast, then, that God is our strength; that when heart and flesh shall fail as to all human hopes, God will be the strength of our heart in a better hope; when our heart and flesh shall fail as to all human comfort, God will be the strength of our heart in a better consolation; when our heart and flesh shall fail as to all human association, God shall be the strength of our heart in better association; when our heart and flesh shall fail as to all human prospect, and the scythe of death shall begin to cut us down, and despair as to this life seizes the mind, all hope is gone, die I must; when the heart shall thus fail, God shall be the strength of our heart for a better life, for a better world, for a better country. Now, then, Satan being overcome by what the Saviour has done, "now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God;" this is another thing that is come—the kingdom of our God. And always remember if you can that this kingdom of our God, when taken in the gospel sense of the word, means the reign of his grace. Is it any wonder that it is said to be a kingdom that cannot be moved, seeing it is the reign of his grace? Is it any wonder it is written that this kingdom rules over all, seeing it is the reign of his grace? And who, then, shall enter into the greatness of that scripture upon this subject wherein the Lord hath said, "My grace is sufficient for thee"? Oh, however mountainous your guilt, however numerous your sins, however wretched your condition, God brings in Christ Jesus the infinity of his favor, the infinity of his love, the infinity and eternity of his mercy; and therefore no wonder that it is said of this kingdom that it rules over all, and that it cannot be destroyed, and that it cannot be moved. How can that order of thing be moved that is based upon the grace of God? Whatever pardoning favor I need, there it is in infinite abundance; whatever healing favor I need, there it is in infinite abundance whatever sanctifying grace I need, justifying grace, directive grace, delivering grace, preserving grace, there it is in infinite abundance. What saith the apostle? "That I might preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Now, then, Satan fought against this salvation, and against the Lord being our strength, and against his kingdom. "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Again, "And the power of his Christ;" or as modern scholars translate the word which I rather prefer, "and the authority of his Christ." Jesus Christ has the highest authority. Sin has no authority over you before God; Jesus Christ has taken its authority away; it cannot come into court before God against you, you receiving Jesus Christ; his authority over you is to possess you. It is no use for sin to put in its claim now, he hath put that away; and the law will not put in its claim; and it is no use for Satan to put in his claim, and it is no use for false doctrines to put in their claim. "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ." Do we not read that "he must reign till he has put down all rule and all authority"? Pity that men that have gone before, whose names we respect, should so canalize that scripture that he is to put down all rule and all authority, and that the saints of God are to become great politicians and great statesmen, and that they are to have all the magisterial, and political, and regal power of the world; and so Jesus Christ will put down all authority and all rule, and the saints are to have all this. I was going to say it would be loss of time to us to have all that; we have quite enough of that as it is; we should find the whole of it but a bubble and a toy. But if you take the rule that he puts down to mean the rule of Satan, the authority of sin, the authority of death, and the authority of the law over us, and the authority of adversity; and when Jesus Christ comes he says, concerning all that would make any claim upon you, You have no right to that soul; sin, you have no right; Satan, you have no right; world, you have no right; death, you have no right; hell, you have no right; error, you have no right; tribulation, you have no right. Jesus Christ puts down all these authorities and all these rules, brings in his own authority, claims the soul, gathers the lamb with his arms, carries it in his bosom, and comes home to eternal glory rejoicing,

and at the last will say, "Here am I, and all that thou hast given me." Here, then, is that we have to contend for.

"Now is come "-now Satan is cast down-"now is come salvation." There was a time when he so blinded our eyes that we did not see this salvation, but God put him down under our feet, and then we saw God's salvation; and one of old, when he saw this salvation, he traced it in a few moments to its ultimate end, and said, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." "And strength." Satan was trying to persuade us that we were to be our own sanctifiers, and our own justifiers, and our own supporters; but the Lord put him down under our feet, made us feel our weakness, and he became our strength, and presently brings us into his own glorious kingdom, wherein he reigns over us in the riches of his grace, and where the authority of the dear Saviour claims us, and we rejoice therein. And then it says, "For the accuser of our brethren is cast down." Now "the accuser of our brethren," Satan, will take care, by his agents, to accuse us of our real faults, if he can get at them, and if he cannot get at any real ones, he will manufacture a great many false ones. It is a remarkable thing, which I dare say you have all noticed, that while the Saviour's life was not only negatively right-that is he did nothing wrong,-but that it was also positively right-that is, that he went about, not only abstaining from doing evil, and that entirely, but also went about doing good; yet, did the people at large acknowledge what a good man he was -did they do so? Oh, my hearer, look at it for a moment; it is instructive; how few there were in his day that held him who was perfection itself anything but that which we have been reading this morning- a gluttonous man, a winebibber, and, it says in another place, a friend of publicans and harlots, a deceiver, that he had a devil! Oh, how few there were that held him in his true character! just those few that were taught of God. What a world! what a state we are in by nature! "If they have called the master of the house "-who is perfection its self-"Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" The adversary will sometimes have occasion, perhaps, and opportunity, with you; and with with me, with whom he has had no opportunity, he has established in the minds of ungodly men such sentiments concerning me-"Therefore marvel not if the world hate you, for it hated me before it hated you." Never mind; happy, blessed are they that suffer for the truth's sake, for Christ's righteousness sake. Thus Satan was then, and he is now, the accuser of the brethren. "The accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before God day and night." He cannot let you alone, even while you are asleep. One would really think he would say, Well, now, the poor follow is asleep; let us leave him alone now for a little; let him rest. But no, "which accused them before God day and night." It is the whole desire and object of Satan, it is his very life, to destroy the souls of men, and nothing annoys him so much as that truth by which we are thus delivered from his power of darkness and brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son. They received this salvation, the Lord their strength, and his immoveable kingdom, and the authority of Jesus Christ, and the entire putting to silence of all accusers. Now how beautifully it is summed up! I can live in it, and should be no more afraid to die this moment with that testimony than I am to stand here. "They overcame him "-I must not say the words are worthy to be written in letters of gold, for that would be infinitely short of their worth; they are words of infinite importance; they are words of infinite depth-"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." Sinner, who feels that thou art poor, wounded, bruised, full of putrefying sores, that there is no part sound, that thou art a very infidel in thy own nature, a very atheist sometimes in your feelings, no gratitude to God, nay, so far from that, thou hast the hardest thoughts of him, sometimes blasphemous thoughts of him, sometimes thoughts rising in thy mind that show that thou hast within thee the very dregs of hell, and Satan will say to you, You a conqueror! How can you ever hope to see God's face with joy? How can you hope to conquer? The wondrous, "wondrous, wondrous answer, "They- overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." Oh, let that be our plea. It is the blood of the Lamb that prepares heaven for us, that prepares us for heaven, gives us the victory. The blood is the life, the blood is the sanctification, and the blood is the justification. "To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God." Never you mind what people

say; they will call you all sorts of ugly names for thus speaking and for thus contending; never mind that; you know your own heart, and you know by the experiences you have sometimes that it is wicked enough to damn your soul to the lowest hell to eternity. How can you look at infinite justice; how can you look at infinite integrity; how can you look at eternity; how can you look at the Day of Judgment; how can you ever expect to see your Maker's face with joy in any way- but by the blood of an incarnate God? "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." Here, then, I have salvation; here I have strength; here I have a kingdom; here I have the authority of the Saviour taking away all authority against me; here I have his atoning blood that gives us the victory, "And the word of their testimony." Now, mind, this is of essential importance. Roman Catholicism bears one kind of testimony of the atonement of Christ, but it is a false testimony. You that hold there are some in hell for whom Christ died, if I were in your place, merely as a matter of reason, I would never utter such an awful sentiment again until I could prove it from the Scriptures; and if you never utter that sentiment again till you can prove it from the Scriptures, will never utter it at all. Then duty-faith gives another kind of testimony of the atonement of Christ; that he died for the elect, and rest have a chance-a doctrine which I firmly believe to be from a certain quarter. But what is the word of the true Christian's testimony? Why, it is this; the blood of Jesus Christ; God's dear Son, where it cleanses from any sin, cleanses from all sin; that Jesus Christ, by his one offering, hath perfected forever them that are sanctified; that Jesus Christ by his death, hath obtained eternal redemption, and that Jesus Christ will by that perfection of his sacrifice present his people at last un-reproveable, un-blameable, and that with exceeding joy. Now you catch the idea here- the importance. If I am called upon to trust in God by the atonement of Christ, I want to know what kind of an atonement it is before I can trust; and if it is an atonement at all defective, if there be anything about it wanting, I should be afraid to trust it. But when the word of God shows to me what it is that the atonement was nothing else but his own infinite self-he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; he swallowed up death in victory by the omnipotency of his eternal power; I would say then-and I say it in all reverence, but I say it with pleasure and delight, -namely that if my sins were ten million times more than they are, and ten million times greater than they are, I would trust, without a wavering doubt or fear, to the infinity of his atonement to swallow the whole up, and bring me eternally triumphant forth at the last. Would that our pulpits were more filled with this theme! would that Christians felt their need more deeply of the infinity and blessedness of the atonement of Jesus Christ! "And the word of their testimony;" that is, they were led into the doctrine of it, into the truth of it, as to what it was; "and they loved not their lives unto the death." How should they? how should they? What a little thing is this life in comparison of the life that is by the work of Christ! how little are all things here below in comparison of those things we see when in the light of that atonement we can lift up our eyes unto the hills, whence cometh our help! "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens," seeing you have salvation, and strength, and a kingdom, the authority of Christ, your accuser silenced, victory by the blood of the Lamb, the understanding of the truth, love the Lord above everything else. "Rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them;" that is, the Christian; the Christian dwells in heaven. "O Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." Such people dwell on high; their place of defense is the munitions of rocks, bread given them, and waters eternally sure. But "woe to the inhibitors of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows that he hath but a short time. Ought I not to say a word here? Some of you know not the Lord; you know not what it is to come out of the world, truly so, into the church; you know not what it is to pass over from the first Adam unto the second Adam; you know not what it is to come out from under God's law, and dwell in the liberty of the gospel; you know not what it is to come out from under sin, and live in God's salvation; you know not what it is to come out from under the curse, and live in God's blessing; so that you have no place for soul or body but this poor dying world, and which you inhabit with all the uncertainty that mortality has in it. Not a week passes over my head scarcely but I am meeting among our friends with death; one dead here, another dead there. How uncertain is life! So, then, God help you to see your woe. You are

Satan's prey; you do not know it, but you are; it is Satan keeps you so blind; it is Satan keeps you unconscious of your state; it is Satan tries to make you happy where you are; it is Satan that makes you dislike religion; it is Satan that inspires you to all the carelessness about your soul that you feel; and whatever antipathy you may feel to the people of God or the of the earth?" They are, and they must partake of its woes; but unto them the woes will not be fatal; for while they are inhabitants of the earth, they are inhabitants of heaven also. They do not dwell upon the earth alone; they dwell upon the earth the same as other people do; but after the spirit they dwell in God, they dwell in Christ, they dwell in his love; yea, they dwell, as it were, in the city of God; and as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people, and that forever.

"If God be for us, who then can be against us?" And I can tell you this-if God be for you, you shall sometimes be driven into such a state of mind as to feel secretly before him that, unless he be for you, you are of all men the most miserable. "O Lord," said one, and you shall not altogether be a stranger to that experience and feeling, "I am oppressed; undertake for me." I know not what to say to the blessed truth of the Lord being thus on our side. So no wonder that Satan should fight against these precious truths by which the Lord comes so near to us, and brings us so near to him, by which he becomes glorious in our eyes, and the joy of our hearts. So, then, Satan gathers his troops together; but we stand fast in the truth upon Mount Zion; here the victory is sure.

But, lastly, I notice the final judgment. In the 19th chapter of this book there is an apparently very ambiguous scripture bearing upon this, and I must have just a word upon it in conclusion. You read there of an angel standing in the sun-that is, in the light of the sun, and crying "with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great." Now does not this appear difficult? It does at first sight. Everyone knows in hot countries where a victory is wrought that the fowls of the air feed and fill themselves with the flesh of the dead carcasses; all know that. But we must be careful how we handle the simile. I take the fowls of the air there that fly in the midst of heaven mystically, and that they mean characters that pretend to heavenly authority; men in high-flying blasphemies, that our fellow-creatures, vast numbers of them, and thousands in England, cannot see. Only that one awful blasphemy belonging to these high-flying fowls, pretending to such heavenly power as to transubstantiate the bread and the wine into the body, the blood, the soul, the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ! What a high pretension is this! What an awful blasphemy is this! Where is their authority? Is there one word in the solemn book of God to authorize such an awful doctrine? There could not be a greater blasphemy. Nor need I remind you of other blasphemies of these high-flying fowls. Now they have been very numerous in times past, and they were to eat the flesh of kings, captains, mighty men, men bond and free. Now try and understand it. You must take these kings, and captains, and mighty men, and men bond and free, to be dead; not dead literally, but dead spiritually. Did not-I may take that as a sample; I do not mean that is the only church that has done it,-but did not the Roman Catholic church in very early ages make use of the power of kings, and of armies, and of men, to minister to its worldly aggrandizement? and did not the priests fatten upon the people by these dreadful assumptions and pretensions? Take Mosheim. Just look at that part of his history where you come to the 10th century. What did the priests do? Why, said they, the thousand years are just and the end of the world is coming. Dear! said one, what shall I do? Do! Why your money will be no use to you now; give it to the church. Mosheim tells us, and he is reckoned a good authority, that vast sums of money rolled into the Roman coffers from that gentle and pious stratagem the thousand years spoken of in the Revelation are just up, and at the end of that thousand years there is the judgment. Now did they themselves believe what they taught the people to believe? Verily not. Thus, then, these fowls of the air

have in different ages eaten the flesh of kings, armies, and men-that is, made use of them to their own worldly aggrandizement. What is Puseyism but the same thing? A parcel of dancing monkeys in their rags! They think to deceive us as to their real character; but we are not such fools as to hold these fellows as being anything else but what they are-the devil's monkeys; that is what they are. Paltry, contemptible maggots-cannot find a term contemptible enough for them. They dress and dance about, and want to persuade me that there is something in that that the great God sanctions, that can touch my woeful condition as a sinner, that can help me to the salvation of my soul. I do not wonder at martyrs burning at the stake before they would submit to such infernal pretensions as those put forth by these high pretenders, these fowls of the air, these birds of prey. "And I saw the beast "-the wild beast, the organized hostile body-" and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken "- he is not taken yet, not completely; virtually he is,-" and with him the false prophet "-these fowls of the air-"that wrought miracles." I like the rendering of the American Translation Society better than I do our rendering there; they take away the word "miracle "-I think I said so a Sunday or two ago-and put the word "sign ;" "the false prophet that wrought signs." All human systems set up signs, but they are false signs. "The false prophet that wrought signs before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast." The mark of the beast is to believe in him. If you believe in their system, then your faith is the evidence of things not seen; certainly they are not seen, for if they were men would very soon run away from them; "and them that worshipped his image." But while by those signs they deceive so many, they shall not deceive God's people. Now the beast was taken- that is, all that belong to that organized system of hostility to God's truth-and the false prophet, and they "were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." That is the end, then. So if we are gathered together against God's salvation, against the testimony of his being the strength of his people, or against his kingdom, or against the authority of the Saviour, or against his atonement, or against the blessedness of the saints, there is our destiny. If, on the other hand, we are delivered therefrom, and are with the Lord, and side with him, and feel that we could give our lives rather than part with one particle of his blessed truth, then blessed are our eyes, for they see; blessed, I may say, are such a people altogether; they know the joyful sound, and shall enter into all the happy consequences of the victory of the Saviour.