

Episode-262

Speaker 2

Welcome to the Got Questions podcast. We're continuing our series on eschatology, different questions we get about the end times. Today we're going to be covering two of the biggies and this was kind of a hard episode to put together because they're separated, these two events, the abomination of desolation and the battle of Armageddon, by likely around three and a half years if you study the book of Revelation, Matthew 24, a little bit, and Daniel. But these are the two events that seem to be the end of the tribulation and also the middle of the tribulation. So joining me today, continuing the series, is Kevin, the editor-in-chief of Got Questions Ministries, and Jeff, the managing editor of BibleRef.com.

Shea Houdmann

So with the abomination of desolation, it's an interesting topic in that there was an abomination of desolation that occurred in the days of the intertestamental period where Antiochus Epiphanes sacrificed a pig on the altar of the temple in Jerusalem, thereby desecrating it, and it was desecrated for a pretty extensive period of time until the temple was cleansed and restored. And that seems to be what Daniel prophesied. But then in Matthew 24, Jesus predicts that the abomination of desolation will occur again. And so, Kevin, the abomination of desolation, what do we need to know?

Kevin Stone

We need to know that it is going to be a horrible and blasphemous act that this end-times Antichrist performs in the temple. And you mentioned Antiochus Epiphanes, who desecrated the Jewish temple back in 167 BC. And that, you know, what a horrible thing that was, and took a long time to get the temple purified again and ready for sacrifice, the true type of sacrifices.

Kevin Stone

But when Jesus comes along, he says, the abomination of desolation that was predicted by Daniel, it is still yet to come. And that probably surprised a lot of people. You know, they were looking at Antiochus as being the fulfillment of that. And Jesus says, no, there's one coming, and it's going to be even worse. I mean, Antiochus Epiphanes, he was a piker compared to this Antichrist who's going to be on the world scene in the end-times.

Kevin Stone

It's going to be a time in the middle of the week. Remember, Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy are 70 groups of seven years, and we've seen 69 of those

years play out through history. There's still one week left, one set of seven years left in order to take care of the transgression and establish righteousness and bring everything to a close, Daniel says. And so it's that week of tribulation, that seven years of tribulation that we're talking about. And the Antichrist comes to the fore, and he is involved in world events, and things are going along for the first three and a half years. And then Jesus says, watch out, in the middle of the week, there's going to be an abomination that causes desolation. There's going to be a terrible act, an outrage in the temple in Jerusalem.

Kevin Stone

And basically, this is going to be the time when the Antichrist shows his true colors. At this time, he's going to consolidate his power, he's going to take full control of the government, the one-world government that's been established. At the same time, then, he is getting rid of the one-world religious system that's pictured in the book of Revelation as the prostitute that's riding on the seven-headed beast and all of that. He destroys that religious system because he's setting up his own religious system. And he's going to be the God, in fact. He sets himself up as God in the temple.

Kevin Stone

So, it's going to be a terrible time of persecution. Jesus says, when this happens, when you see the abomination of desolation occur in Jerusalem, then if you are living in Jerusalem, you need to hightail it out of there. Head for the hills, literally. You need to flee Jerusalem. Don't look back. Don't go back into your house to grab some possessions. Just get out as quickly as you can, because there is coming a time of trouble in the world, the likes of which the world has never seen before. It's going to be the most terrible time in the history of the world.

Kevin Stone

The false prophet is involved. We read about him in Revelation 13 as well. And so, the false prophet is promoting this new religion, this new religion that's based on the man of the Antichrist. The Bible calls him the beastly man, as far as his character is concerned. It's going to be a very blasphemous time as well. A book of Thessalonians—well, 2 Thessalonians, specifically—says that Paul calls the Antichrist the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. That's going to be part of this abomination for the last three and a half years of the Tribulation. Antichrist is setting himself up as God to be worshipped by all the world. He's going to demand the worship. He's going to be issuing the death penalty on people who refuse to worship him.

Kevin Stone

Book of Revelation, chapter 13, he's given a mouth, speaking great things and blasphemies. He was given authority to continue for 42 months, three and a half years. He has his way for three and a half years. Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, his tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. This guy's got a big mouth, and it's a blasphemous mouth, as he is, well, he's king of the world, and he is wanting to be worshipped as God.

Kevin Stone

Of course, this Antichrist, this beast of the Revelation, he's empowered by Satan, and hasn't that always been Satan's goal, to set himself up as God and to receive the worship of every creature? Well, it seems like Satan's dream is coming true in the person of the Antichrist. Antichrist is allowed to continue for three and a half years before he has a comeuppance.

Jeff Laird

Interesting connections to Antiochus. I've heard some people discuss the idea that they think that the Antiochus is the fulfillment entirely, because Jesus talks about it, and this happens after, but there does seem to be a lot of things in Revelation that fit in, tie in well with that, especially because Jesus makes the reference to something that was spoken of by Daniel. Daniel's information certainly seems to fit better into Revelation, but we do see times where prophecies have dual fulfillment. We see echoes, we see shadows of things that happen beforehand that kind of give us an idea of these things happening.

Jeff Laird

We were talking in a prior episode about the idea of the world being able to see these things happen and watch them as they happen, and the global effect that you read of things happening in Revelation. I can imagine people 2,000 years ago sort of just taking it for granted that that was maybe a complete allegory, or that was just a figure of speech, and just within the last 60, 70 years, we've gotten to a point where the idea of people actually watching somebody desecrate a temple in Jerusalem. I mean, you could be watching that live literally around the world as it happens, so it's chilling, I guess, to think of a major figure who decides that he's going to overtly just openly dismiss and destroy a faith that way and do these things.

Jeff Laird

And it makes sense that if you were going to split the tribulation between bad times and really bad times down the middle, that an event like that would be the kind of thing that would kick it off. So we don't know exactly what he's going to do, or what he's going to say, or how it's going to work, but I've heard

some pretty interesting theories, but none of them are really worth putting any stock into. I just know whatever he does, it's going to be awfully bad, and people are going to know exactly what it means.

Shea Houdmann

In the episode just previous, we discussed the two witnesses, and it seems like the ministry of the two witnesses ends also at the midpoint, so possibly part of this abomination of desolation is the Antichrist kills the two witnesses, and then potentially goes into the temple and desecrates it in some way, and sits down at the temple on a throne and declaring himself to be God, as we read in 2 Thessalonians. So not a whole lot of details of exactly what the Antichrist is going to do, other than it's going to be blasphemous, it's going to be evil, and it's going to mark really his turn from being kind of the first white horse, the first horseman of the apocalypse, where he kind of rides in in peace, kind of establishes a peaceful reign, one world government, yes, bad things are still happening, to the person that we think of when you think of the Antichrist as the persecutor of Christians, the destroyer of the world, the blasphemer, the person who's potentially possessed and empowered entirely by Satan, the dragon, and so forth.

Shea Houdmann

So the abomination of desolation is, as you said, Jeff, and as you described, Kevin, it's the turning point from bad to really, really bad. The abomination of desolation is what kicks that completely off. And Jeff, I liked your point about the double fulfillment concept. It's kind of like where Scripture says that you've heard there's an Antichrist coming to the world. I'll tell you, there have been many Antichrists, and there still is one more to come, and that some of these things tend to happen over and over again. But there still ultimately is one event, there's one Antichrist, there's one abomination to rule them all, so to speak.

Shea Houdmann

Even when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in AD 70, it's not a whole lot of details of what actually they did, but there are some who say that the Roman governor Titus, I believe, who was leading the Roman army, actually went into the temple and did sort of an abomination of desolation even there in AD 70. So that's a potential as well. Destroying the temple itself is an act of desolation. So these things have happened again and again and again. You can even go back to Nebuchadnezzar destroying Solomon's temple. So history repeats itself, but it ultimately points to a final fulfillment when God says, nope, that's the last time I'm going to allow anyone to do this.

Shea Houdmann

Now let's transition to the other half of this episode. So we covered the abomination of desolation happens at the midpoint, or close to the midpoint, the Tribulation. Now the Battle of Armageddon, another huge question that we get a ton of questions about. People want to know, what is this? What does the word Armageddon mean? When will it occur? Where will it occur? What will be involved? And who wins? So Jeff, why don't you tackle that one? What is the Battle of Armageddon?

Jeff Laird

Yeah, Armageddon is an interesting word. When you hear it, sometimes you think, I don't want to close my eyes. I don't want to fall asleep because I'd miss you and I don't want to miss a thing. It's really a little bit deeper than that, especially if you like deep impact better. But the Battle of Armageddon, strictly speaking, is really more of the war of Armageddon based on some of the things that we see in the Bible. And the word comes from Megiddo, which is a location in the general vicinity of Jerusalem. And the phrase for the plain of Megiddo, or even the mountain of Megiddo is Har-Megiddo or Armageddon. And it's interesting when you look at the geography of that, that when you look at the location that's usually associated with that, it is exactly what you would want.

Jeff Laird

If you were going to film an epic battle sequence somewhere on earth, and you wanted the most massive possible army to be there and be able to have that army fight as one coherent unit, this would be the place. It's sort of like this giant open field with places that you can stay above and see everything that's happening. So, especially from the ancient mindset, it's sort of like the perfect battlefield.

Jeff Laird

But Revelation describes that at the sixth bowl that comes in Revelation is one of the angels is going to pour out on the river Euphrates and it's going to be dried up. And when it's dry, that's going to create an opportunity for an invasion or a war or battle. For what reason or exactly what purpose? It actually doesn't say, but it says that these three spirits come from the two beasts, the Antichrist and the false prophet, and they gather all the kings of the world at Har-Megiddo or Armageddon for a battle. That's about all the detail that we really get.

Jeff Laird

But then elsewhere in scripture, we see references, for example, to Jesus returning and treading out the wine press of wrath. And then when we actually have a description of the second coming, there's a sword that comes from Jesus's mouth and destroys the people who are opposing him.

Jeff Laird

So some people think that it's possible that these armies that are coming are assembling specifically to fight against Christ, which sort of is possible. But I sort of like the interpretation personally that at some point in time that the people of the world, the kings of the world become dissatisfied or angry with the Antichrist, and they mass for war against him. And then when Christ shows up, they just instinctively all turn and rejoin with Antichrist to try to fight against God. I think that was the interpretation that was used in the Left Behind series of books, just as an example.

Jeff Laird

So we do know that there's going to be awful, terrible things happening. The Bible describes just disgusting things happening in Jerusalem during this. But the general idea of it seems to be that this is going to be not literally the last battle, but the last battle before the Millennial Kingdom, where Christ is going to come back and there's going to be terrible devastation that happens here. And it's going to take longer probably than just a single battle. This will probably be something that goes for a while until Christ shows up to end it. So that's kind of the general idea of what Armageddon is, where it is, and what it means.

Kevin Stone

It is a series of battles, I think, like Jeff said. And when you start taking a look at some other passages outside of Revelation and Daniel, you start seeing some other details emerge. So there's a passage in Zechariah chapter 12 and chapter 14 that talks about Jerusalem being ravaged. The nations of the earth gather at Jerusalem, and yeah, possibly they are turning on the Antichrist. If the Antichrist has his headquarters in Jerusalem and these nations are coming in there angry at him, that's a possibility. But they are attacking Jerusalem.

Kevin Stone

Zechariah 14 and verse 2 says, this is God speaking, I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem. The city shall be taken, the houses rifled, women ravished, half of the city will go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. So God's going to be preserving a remnant.

Kevin Stone

Remember when Jesus was speaking in Matthew 24, and he said, when you see that abomination of desolation, you need to flee Jerusalem. And so a lot of the Jews are going to do that. Where do they go? Well, it seems like they go to Edom. Seems like they go to Basra, because those places are also mentioned in Scripture. They go to the wilderness, Revelation chapter 12, the

woman flees to the wilderness, the dragon pursues her, but God gives her wings so that she can escape. And she is there in the wilderness for 1,260 days, three and a half years, that second half of the tribulation.

Kevin Stone

So when we get to the end of the tribulation, and we have this, the battles of Armageddon, this war of Armageddon, we have some troops that are going to be chasing after Israel. It seems like, I mean, it could very well be that the Antichrist or the forces aligned with him are going to be trying to go ahead and wipe out all of the Jews. We got most of them there in Jerusalem, and we attacked Israel and all of that, but there are still some left there. They're holed up in Edom. Let's go get them. And so they march south, and they march toward Edom.

Kevin Stone

And then we have Joel chapter 2 comes in here, Zechariah chapter 12 as well, Hosea chapter 6 talks about all of this. But then we get to Isaiah chapter 34. God says, My sword shall be bathed in heaven, and it shall come down on Edom, on the people of my curse for judgment. The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, goes on, Lord has a sacrifice in Basra. Basra was a place in Edom. It was like one of the centers there in Edom. Also, Isaiah 63, Who is this who comes from Edom with dyed garments from Basra, this one who is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.

Kevin Stone

And then the question is asked, this one who's returning from battle, obviously, his clothing is soaked in blood. Why is your apparel red, your garments like one who treads in the winepress? And his answer is, I've trodden the winepress alone from the peoples, no one was with me. I've trodden them in my anger, trampled them in my fury. Their blood is sprinkled on my garments. I've stained all my robes for the day of vengeance is in my heart. The year of my redeemed has come. I've trodden down the peoples in my anger, made them drunk in my fury, brought down their strength to the earth. And so I think it's probably during this time that the Antichrist is killed.

Kevin Stone

2 Thessalonians 2 and verse 8 talks about how the Lord will consume this man of sin with the breath of his mouth. He will destroy him with the brightness of his coming. So when Jesus comes again the second time, he's coming to war, coming to save the remnant of Israel, to establish his kingdom. He's got to deal with this army of the Antichrist. So he treads out the winepress and there's a lot of bloodshed. And it happens in the area of Edom

or Basra and after the amassing there in Armageddon. And there's a lot of details, a lot of running around. And then there's also the Mount of Olives prophecy that comes into play, I think happens after all of this. When you start taking a look at all the various pieces of scripture, it gets kind of complicated trying to track out all of the battles that are taking place.

Jeff Laird

You know, one thing that helps me sometimes imagine some of these things coming together is I think it was, you can correct me if I'm wrong, I think it was Einstein who made a reference to saying, I don't know what weapons we're going to fight World War III with, but the Fourth World War is going to be fought with sticks and stones. It might have been somebody else who said that. But the sentiment was that, you know, we could destroy the earth enough that after that we're kind of kicked back to more primary technology. And it's possible when you look at all the things that we saw in the trumpets and the bowls, that earth really could be in a position where things like tanks and airplanes and motorized vehicles are just not part of the plan anymore. Even if we have the technology for communications, we just may not have the infrastructure anymore to run some of these other things.

Jeff Laird

So when it talks about things like horses and such, it's not impossible to think that you could actually have massive armies of people in person who are fighting a very traditional or ancient style of battle going on with this. And that can extend a lot things out from single moments and single times into days, weeks, months. So it helps sometimes to think that it doesn't necessarily mean that we're going to think of, you know, like a call of duty sort of war that's going on here. It's going to be some kind of war and things that it describes certainly make it seem like it's really talking about violence.

Jeff Laird

You were talking, Kevin, about treading out a wine press. Revelation 1420 makes a reference that may or may not be directly related to that, but it talks about, you know, the treading out of the wine press outside the city and the blood that was coming out as high as a horse's bridle for 1600 stadia, which is about my height and 180 miles in diameter. Probably not a literal flow of blood, but the idea being that it's going to be that level of catastrophe. And if we're at the point where we're going after each other with sticks and stones and clubs and axes, because that's what we got left, I can imagine it being just that bad and just that nasty. And it's going to be quite a moment when Christ shows up to finally clean up all of that and start a process of making things new.

Shea Houdmann

Yeah, Jeff, I love the point you just made about technology. So many people, they read Revelation like, oh, clearly this isn't true because a war in the end times wouldn't be fought like this. It would be fought with tanks and missiles and rockets and planes and machine guns and those sorts of things. But if everything else in the Revelation had happened up to that point, I don't know how much of that stuff is going to be left. So we could actually be back to horses and swords and knives and axes and so forth.

Shea Houdmann

And it was interesting, and Kevin, when you talk about Basra, two years ago, almost, we were, as a Got Question staff, took a trip where we were supposed to spend three days in Jordan and then the rest of the time in Israel.

And it turned out we took off on October 7th, the actual day all that horrible conflict started. So we ended up spending the whole time in Jordan. I remember our Jordanian tour guide kind of gave me a little bit of an argument with our main teacher about where Jesus is coming back. Is he coming back to the Mount of Olives? Is he coming back to Basra? And I'd actually never really heard the Basra connection before. So it's just fascinating to hear all that. I thank the Lord that several years before, MeLissa and I actually did get to go to Israel and we got kind of a tour of the Valley of Megiddo. And you're right, it's a fairly flat plain. There's not a whole lot going on. And it's interesting that right now there's a whole bunch of vineyards in the Valley of Armageddon. It's like filled with vineyards. So maybe this wine press of God's wrath has both a literal and metaphorical fulfillment. Because actually in this territory, there are a whole bunch of vineyards and grapes. So who knows how that plays into it all.

Jeff Laird

That's a little on the nose.

Shea Houdmann

A little on the nose. Armageddon, like Jeff referenced, the movie that's probably dating the three of us that we actually remember that movie. But the term Armageddon is come to know, denote basically the end of the world.

When people refer to Armageddon, that's the end. That's the worst time. Similar to like in Norse mythology, there's a Ragnarok where this is the last battle before it gets really bad and everything is destroyed. That's kind of what Armageddon means in pop culture. But in terms of the Bible, Armageddon is the valley where this final battle will occur. And we purposely not talk too much about what ends the battle of Armageddon, because that's next episode. When Jesus returns and destroys whatever's left of these armies and about anyone who opposes him, Jesus returns, conquers, and then we get to the good stuff. So this battle of Armageddon is like the worst of

the worst of the worst, unimaginable in terms of bloodshed and death and destruction. It's hard to say maybe a fitting end to the seven years of tribulation that the world will have just experienced.

Kevin Stone

I've always been struck by the idea that the armies of the world would turn their armaments against Christ when they see him return. You know, they start fighting him, you know, the one who's coming in glory from the sky. What a fool's errand that would be. That is futility personified there with trying to fight against God himself as he is coming to set up his kingdom.

Shea Houdmann

Futility of all futilities, but as the book of Revelation repeatedly shows us, even though people of the world know these judgments are from God, they're like, I refuse to repent. I'm going to keep sinning. I'm going to keep fighting. I'm going to keep rebelling. And even at this last great battle, well, maybe second to the last great battle, we'll get to that in a couple episodes, but this last battle of the tribulation, one last attempt to war against God, to fight against God, to prevent God from accomplishing his plan. And as we all know, ends in futility as any war against God will do.

Shea Houdmann

So this has been the Got Questions podcast on what is the abomination and what is the battle of Armageddon, two hugely popular search terms and articles on gotquestions.org. Hope our conversation has been helpful to you in understanding these two events and what role they play in the end times. Got questions? The Bible has answers and we'll help you find them.