

He Met His Waterloo

200 Years Ago—the Great Battle That Decided the Fate of Europe

by John A. Battle, President of WRS

June 18, 1815, exactly two hundred years ago, a great battle took place near a small town named Waterloo, ten miles south of Brussels, Belgium. Two great armies fought courageously, and 65,000 men were killed or wounded on that day. It was one of Europe's bloodiest battles of the century.

The most famous leader was Napoleon Bonaparte, emperor of France. He seemed invincible. He had just escaped confinement on the island of Elba and had gathered a massive French army, men in high spirits who loved their commander. He came against an English field commander named Arthur Wellesley, recently made the first duke of Wellington. Wellington held a defensive position, supervising a coalition of English, Dutch, German, and Prussian units.

Bonaparte was very confident. He outnumbered Wellington in soldiers, and especially in cannons. Napoleon's huge cannons fired 12-pound balls, and could be heard 140 miles away! His military genius was legendary, and morale was high.

On the other hand, Wellington, outnumbered and outgunned, had to rely on troops from different countries, with different commanders, who spoke different languages and followed different procedures. Yet he knew his duty, and, while not loved, was respected by his subordinates.



Everyone knew that this battle would decide the future of Europe. Would it fall under the empire of Napoleon? Or would the countries of Europe be free to rule themselves? While Wellington had been able to choose good defensive ground, every other advantage was Napoleon's. Napoleon was riding a crest of enthusiasm and victory, and

now was on the verge of seizing the whole prize.

All day the battle raged, sometimes favoring one side, sometimes the other, but Wellington's defenses were getting weaker. As darkness came, they were treading on thousands of dead and wounded bodies. Finally, Prussian reinforcements arrived; and the balance tilted against Napoleon.

By morning it was clear that he was defeated. Napoleon was captured; he was exiled to the island of St Helena in the South Atlantic Ocean, where he died six years later. Wellington became a national hero in England, and was showered with honors from the other countries of Europe.

Ever since that time we hear the expression, "He met his Waterloo." Napoleon, so proud and powerful, was brought low and met a sudden and unexpected end. This saying describes how someone can be stopped and undone quickly.

The Bible talks about this happening. It speaks of "sudden destruction," "disaster," or "calamity" coming suddenly on those who rebel against God. Here are some examples of people "meeting their Waterloo":

- God controls all events, including "Waterloos": "I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things" (Isa 45:7).
- He prepares the wicked for their "Waterloo": "The LORD has made all for Himself, yes, even the wicked for the day of doom" (Prov 16:4).
- The Lord deprives the wicked of sound thinking, to lead them to their "Waterloo":
 - "For the LORD had purposed to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring disaster on Absalom" (2 Sam 17:14).
 - "Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these prophets of yours [Ahab], and the LORD has declared disaster against you" (2 Chr 18:22).
- Those who forsake God will find their "Waterloo": "Because they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and embraced other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore He has brought all this calamity on them" (2 Chr 7:22).
- It will be "Waterloo" for unbelievers when Christ returns: "For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape" (1 Thess 5:3).

Be sure you're found in Christ, and are living for him. That way, you will never "meet your Waterloo"!

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