

## **Study Guide #5: The Battle of Armageddon**

### **Introduction**

The very word “Armageddon” evokes fear of a final disastrous and catastrophic event that will devastate the whole world in the end-time. Historically in popular culture, it’s thought of as a military disaster of the highest proportions fought especially in the Middle East. Is Armageddon the final military battle centered in the Middle East? Are the issues political and/or economic in nature? Who are the 2 sides in that final conflict? What will be the ultimate outcome when the dust has settled? These and other issues related to it are examined in this Study Guide from a Biblical viewpoint. In doing so, this Study Guide will illustrate the principles of interpreting symbolic, apocalyptic end-time Bible prophecies—principles that you will see are derived from the Scriptures themselves. Enjoy this exciting adventure!

### **Question #1: What Scripture speaks *explicitly* about the battle of Armageddon?**

**Answer:** The word “Armageddon” occurs only *once* in Scripture, in Revelation 16:16. It’s mentioned in the context of the Sixth Plague. The entire Sixth Plague language follows:

**<sup>12</sup>Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. <sup>13</sup>And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. <sup>14</sup>For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. <sup>15</sup>Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame. <sup>16</sup>And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew Armageddon (Revelation 16:12-16, NKJV).**

### **Question #2: What name does Revelation give for this battle, and what does the word “Armageddon” mean?**

**Answer:** Revelation 16:14 calls this epic battle “**the battle of that great day of God Almighty**” (NKJV).

Its location is “**Armageddon**” (Revelation 16:16), which the text says is a Hebrew word. In fact, it’s a compound Hebrew word literally meaning “Mountain of Megiddo.” The problem is that there is no mountain by that name; Megiddo is an ancient *city* in northern Palestine. The closest most Biblically prominent mountain near Megiddo is Mt. Carmel, whose prominence is associated with the famous showdown over worship between the prophet Elijah and King Ahab in Israel. Interestingly, the word “Megiddo” itself is derived from another Hebrew word meaning



Elijah on Mt. Carmel

“rendezvous, assemble, crowd, and gash (as in pressing into).” And that’s a precise description of that famous worship showdown on Mt. Carmel—it was a place where both religious sides assembled as a crowd in a rendezvous, and the leaders of Baal worship gashed themselves with knives in a vain attempt to get Baal to send fire from the sky and consume their sacrifice to him (I Kings 18). [NOTE: The fact that Revelation 16:16 states Armageddon as **“the place called in Hebrew”** adds additional weight to a symbolic interpretation of the word **“Armageddon.”**] The evidence concerning the name **“Armageddon”** suggests that the battle here is a spiritual battle.

### **Question #3: According to Revelation 16:14, who will be on the wrong side, and who are their allies?**

**Answer:** That verse tells us that **“the kings of the earth, and of the whole world”** will be gathered **“to the battle of that great day of God Almighty”** (NKJV). Their allies are **“spirits of demons, performing signs,”** who persuade **“the kings of the earth”** to gather for this final battle. Lest anyone think that they are all gathered to this battle but are going to fight against each other, please note Questions #4 and #5 and their answers.

### **Question #4: Who are the “spirits of demons” associated with?**

**Answer:** The answer is in Revelation 16:13: **“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet”** (NKJV). Revelation 12:9 identifies the ultimate dragon as Satan himself, although Satan often uses human agencies as his instruments. The **“beast”** in Revelation is introduced in chapter 13 as the sea monster, universally identified as the Antichrist. And the **“false prophet”** is the symbolic beast in chapter 13 that plays the most prominent role in convincing the world to worship the first **“beast”** and to receive its mark. A symbolic beast in apocalyptic prophecy represents a political kingdom or power, according to Daniel 7:17, 23; 8:20-22. [NOTE: Unless the context demands it to be an individual king (as in Daniel 8:21b), then it’s a kingdom, with the king representing his kingdom.] This definition is connected with the 1<sup>st</sup> “beast” in Revelation 13, because its description is a composite of all 4 symbolic beasts in Daniel 7 (13:2). Therefore, Satan will use demons (evil angels) to persuade all of the political nations at the end-time to enforce the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:12-14). In turn, this means that all of the **“kings of the earth”** are on the *same*—and wrong—side in this final Battle of Armageddon. From this, we can safely conclude that the issues in this final battle are spiritual, not political or economic.



### **Question #5: Who are the nations of the world going to fight against in the Battle of Armageddon?**

**Answer:** **“<sup>19</sup>And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. <sup>20</sup>Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image”** (Revelation 19:19-20, NKJV).

This passage tells us that **“the kings of the earth”** will be aligned with the beast and the false prophet. In the same context, Revelation 20:1-2 says the dragon will also be imprisoned at the end of this battle. This alliance with these 3 evil powers in connection with the final mark of the beast crisis connects this battle in Revelation 19 to the reference to the Battle of Armageddon in Revelation 16 and the final mark of the beast crisis at the end-time. In other words, it’s the same battle.

**11“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war....13His name is called The Word of God. 14And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses....16And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:11, 13-14, 16, NKJV).**

In other words, all the nations of the world will fight against Jesus in the Battle of Armageddon! Again, this shows that this battle is not over oil or Middle East politics.

### **Question #6: When will the Battle of Armageddon occur?**

**Answer:** Revelation 19:15 says that **“He [Jesus] Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God”** in reference to this final battle (NKJV). Revelation 14:19-20 refers to **“the great winepress of the wrath of God”** as being **“trampled...”** (NKJV). In both sections, Jesus Himself is portrayed as leading what is obviously the destruction of the wicked at the end-time. This means that Revelation 19:11-21 and 14:14-20 are 2 different pictures of the same end-time event. Then notice the harvest metaphor in Revelation 14:14-20. This harvest metaphor, with reapers, etc., is explained by Jesus in His explanation of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares to be **“at the end of this age,”** when Jesus **“will send out His angels”** to cast the wicked (**“tares”**) into fire (Matthew 13:36-43, NKJV). The harvest of the righteous at **“the end of the age”** is clearly identified in Matthew 24:3, 30-31, as occurring at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Jesus. Therefore, the Battle of Armageddon will occur at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Jesus.



### **Question #7: According to Revelation 16:12, upon what will the 6<sup>th</sup> Plague be poured out?**

**Answer:** **“Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared”** (NKJV). So the 6<sup>th</sup> Plague will be poured out on the Euphrates River.

### Question #8: What city was the literal Euphrates River particularly associated with in Bible times, and how did that river function in relation to the city?

**Answer:** Any good geographical map of the Near East in Bible times shows that the Euphrates River flowed through the city of Babylon. History reveals that this river provided support for the city's people, animals, and plants. See also Jeremiah 51:60-64.

### Question #9: In the book of Revelation, is Babylon literal or symbolic?

**Answer:** The Bible predicted that the literal ancient city of Babylon would be destroyed, at least beginning with the Medes, and that it would never recover (Isaiah 13:17; Jeremiah 51:11, 28). Moreover, the Greek word for “**mystery**” as part of Babylon's title in Revelation 17:5 is used in the New Testament to represent a hidden truth which was then revealed to Christian believers (see Matthew 13:11; Romans 11:25; 16:25; Ephesians 3:3; 5:32; 6:19; Colossians 1:27; 2:2; 4:3; II Thessalonians 2:7; and Revelation 1:20). If end-time Babylon were literal, then it would *never* have been a “**mystery**” (hidden truth) to anyone. Therefore, end-time Babylon in all of the prophecies is a *symbolic* power. [NOTE: See Explorer III, Study Guide #9 for the revelation of precisely what end-time Babylon is.]

### Question #10: What is the relationship between end-time Babylon and “the kings of the earth” (Revelation 16:14, NKJV)?

**Answer:** According to Revelation 17, Babylon is also a harlot who will cause “**the kings of the earth**” and the wicked to be drunk with spiritual (obviously not literal) fornication (v. 2) and will ride the persecuting beast (vv. 3-6), indicating that she will exercise control over the beast, whose 7 heads and 10 horns represent kings or kingdoms (vv. 9-10, 12). Note that Babylon and the beast “**will make war with the Lamb [Jesus]**” (v. 14, NKJV). Therefore, end-time Babylon must be the power that leads “**the kings of the earth**” to the Battle of Armageddon against Jesus. [NOTE: This means that whoever Babylon exactly is, she will be cooperating with “**the false prophet**” of Revelation 13 to lead the world to accept the mark of the beast—the crisis which will lead to the final showdown in the Battle of Armageddon at Jesus' return.]

### Question #11: What event in ancient history does the Sixth Plague remind us of? And what does this language mean for the Sixth Plague itself?

**Answer:** Remember from Questions #7 and #8 that the actual 6<sup>th</sup> Plague will be an event that directly impacts the Euphrates River, “**and its water was [will be] dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared**” (Revelation 16:12, NKJV). In 539 B.C., Persian King Cyrus (Cyrus the Great) created several canals as channels into which he diverted the water of the Euphrates River, which flowed south through the city of Babylon. This dried up the water so that his Median and Persian soldiers walked on the riverbed underneath the city's water gates and then opened the main city gates. This resulted in the Medo-Persians capturing the city in one night. [NOTE: Daniel 5 tells the story of the fall of Babylon from Daniel's perspective.] Since the literal Euphrates River provided support for the literal city of Babylon, and end-time



Fall of Babylon

Babylon is *symbolic* (not literal), then the *symbolic* Euphrates River must symbolize the *people* of the world that provide support for symbolic Babylon. Therefore, the 6<sup>th</sup> Plague is some undefined action of God that will suddenly dry up support for end-time Babylon. The Bible doesn't tell us what that event will be, but it must be some global event in order to arrest the attention of all the wicked, who will then turn against Babylon. Revelation 17:15-17 depicts the fact that the world will eventually turn against Babylon, although it will be too late for anyone to be saved by then.

### **Question #12: Who are “the kings from the east,” and why are they coming?**

**Answer:** A popular theory is that these kings represent the armies of Eastern nations like China and/or Russia who will invade modern Israel and fight a great battle there (centered near the ancient city of Megiddo). But that can't be true because those nations would be included within the designation **“the kings of the earth and of the whole world”** (Revelation 16:14, NKJV). Moreover, we have already shown that the issue is spiritual, not political or economic in nature. In addition, such armies would have to cross the literal Tigris River before they came to the Euphrates River, yet the prophecy only mentions the drying up of the Euphrates River.

In Cyrus' day, the literal drying up of the Euphrates River prepared the way for the Eastern armies of the Medes and Persians. Moreover, God had named Cyrus about 150 years before his birth as the one whom God would use to rescue His people by allowing them to return to Jerusalem, thus ending the Babylonian Captivity (Isaiah 44:28). The obvious parallel to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Jesus to rescue His people from end-time Babylon is consistent with Biblical testimony associating the **“east”** with heaven and the Messiah (Isaiah 41:2, 25; Ezekiel 43:2; Matthew 24:27; Revelation 7:2). The reference to the plural **“kings”** may well be an intentional reference to the Holy Trinity in contrast to the *Unholy* Trinity of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet in Revelation 16:13.

### **Question #13: So where will the Battle of Armageddon take place? And just what kind of battle will it be?**

**Answer:** In this Study Guide, we have discovered that the Battle of Armageddon is a battle of nearly all the world—those who receive the mark of the beast and all of the world's nations—against Jesus. Although the ultimate battle will be fought as a one-sided “battle” at the actual 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Jesus, the battle over the spiritual issue of the mark of the beast will be a special period of persecution of the relatively small minority of believers who will refuse to give allegiance to the beast (Antichrist). The prophecies don't tell us how long this final tribulation period will last, but it will probably be of fairly short duration—although Revelation 13:11-18's description suggests it will be a horrific time. In the persecution period just preceding the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Jesus, Armageddon is every place on earth where the few who refuse the mark of the beast are living. Of course, the outcome of the Battle of Armageddon is certain. The final score at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Jesus will be Jesus 1, Satan 0!





## Question #14: What principles of interpretation did we learn from the prophecy in this Study Guide?

*Answer:*

- Perhaps the most important principle illustrated in this Study Guide is that the Bible is its own best interpreter. If we can lay aside our preconceptions and allow the Scriptures to provide the Answer Key, they will lead us to the truth. We can find that Answer Key if we compare Scripture with Scripture.
- Especially important for the study of end-time prophecies is the knowledge that Daniel and Revelation are companion books and thus should be compared with each other to help find the answers.
- In addition, it also helps to learn a little Biblical geography and apply that knowledge to a prophecy. In all of this, make a concerted effort not to attempt to fit a square peg in a round hole.
- Moreover, this study strongly suggests that stories from the Old Testament that were *local* and *literal* are often applied in Revelation in a *global* and *symbolic* way.

We need to remember and use these principles as we explore other aspects of end-time prophecies.

