

# Armageddon

## Armageddon— An Overview

▷ Read Revelation 16:12-16

All we have seen so far about the plagues is a build-up for the final battle of Armageddon, the subject of Revelation 16:12-16. These verses are in some respects like a movie flashback: the movements backward and forward help us to see a total picture of what is really happening.

In verse 12, John pictures the results of Armageddon in the symbolism of the river Euphrates drying up to prepare the way for the kings from the east.

In verses 13 and 14, he goes back in time and leads us forward again. These verses give us the build-up to Armageddon. There is a gathering together of the forces represented by the dragon, the beast and the false prophet prompted by evil spirits.

Verse 15 gives a warning not to loose our hold on Christ because of miraculous deceptions.

We must take note of this important verse. It is the clue to what we are to look for in the battle of Armageddon. We are not talking about military forces engaged in battle. The real battle is for the hearts and minds of men and women. It centres on the great issues of the gospel.

“To have your clothes on” is a way of talking about being in a right relationship with Jesus. The forces of evil are going to work miracles to try to deceive even the closest followers of Jesus, as Jesus warned in Matthew 24:24.

Verse 16 brings us again to the gathering for battle of Armageddon.

### Old Testament Imagery Portraying Armageddon

In Old Testament times, the Euphrates River separated Israel from her enemies, Assyria and Babylon. Both of these nations had to cross this river to invade Israel.

The river flowed through ancient Babylon and was important to the city, providing water for crops and the people. Without the Euphrates River, the city of Babylon could not survive.

## The Big Picture

There are two harvests being prepared for end-time reaping in Revelation 14:

1. Those sealed with a protection from God because they trusted in the Creator and accepted the gospel invitation are likened to the grain harvest (verses 14-16).
2. Those who have resisted the gospel invitation and the three angels' warning messages are the recipients of the plagues. They are likened to the grape harvest being prepared for crushing (verses 17-20).

For the sixth plague, John uses Old Testament language describing Israel and the fall of ancient Babylon to show us how the battle will be fought by worshippers of the dragon and the beast against Christ and His church.

In Revelation, the name 'Babylon' is used to describe the religious forces united against God and His people.

The Old Testament tells the story of God's people being taken captive by Babylon and held within the walls of the city. Eventually, Cyrus, the Persian general, came with his armies from the east against the city. The city's inhabitants felt confident he could not conquer their city as it had formidable defences and an abundant supply of water and food.

One night, while the city's leaders were having a drunken orgy in the palace of King Belshazzar, Cyrus diverted the river's waters away from the city. He marched his armies in through the dried up river-bed and that night the city fell to the Persian armies. As a result of this fall of Babylon, God's people were

allowed to go free and return to Jerusalem.

The last night of Babylon is the background for describing the fall of spiritual Babylon and the end of the world. Revelation pictures God's people as captive inside Babylon; a call announces she has fallen and an invitation is made for God's people to come out of her (see Revelation 18:1-8). God's people are now free to go to the New Jerusalem (see Revelation 20 and 21).

In Revelation 16:12, the fall of spiritual Babylon described in similar language to that used to describe the fall of ancient Babylon.

Revelation 17 deals with the power, pride and corruption of spiritual Babylon. She is pictured as a woman dressed in scarlet riding a beast (see verses 1-5). Her name is Babylon (see verse 5) and she is seated upon many waters (see Revelation 17:1), which are "peoples, multitudes, nations and languages"

Map of Ancient Middle East | Frank Ramspott | Getty Images







Rebellion against the Creator came with the building of the tower of Babel. This same rebellion is found in the cities of the world at the battle of Armageddon | egal | Getty Images

(see verse 15).

Revelation 18 describes her fall in detail and describes the laments accompanying it from those who benefited from her corrupt ways. She has fallen because she had become the habitation of demonic powers and had committed spiritual adultery with the kings of the earth (see Revelation 18:1-3).

Babylon holds together an unholy alliance, but the time will come when those powers that support her will turn against her.

They will realise they have been deceived but they are fighting against the Creator and therefore cannot win. When Jesus returns with the armies of heaven, they will turn their anger against those who deceived them (see Revelation 17:16, 17).

This is the drying up of Euphrates described in Revelation 16:12. While Babylon is not

mentioned in the pivotal verse 12, it is brought to our attention through mentioning the Euphrates River. The Euphrates River represents worldwide civil, secular and political power united to serve end-time Babylon. The description in verse 12 occurs when those nations and civil powers withdraw their support for Babylon.

The fall of ancient Babylon is used to describe the end of the world (see Revelation 17:15-17). In Old Testament times, Babylon fell because:

1. The city oppressed Israel and held them captive.
2. They worshipped idols.
3. It was prophesied that the Persian general Cyrus (see Isaiah 41:2; 44 and 45; 46:11) would come from the east to deliver God's people and let Israel return to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple.

Revelation 16:12 speaks of preparing the way for the kings from the east—literally from the

land of the sun-rising. The Bible often pictures activities associated with God as coming from the east (see Matthew 24:27 and Revelation 7:2).

## Why Plural Kings?

Revelation describes God's people as kings and priests (see Revelation 1:6, 5:10). This is a valid description, although in the literal sense, when Jesus returns He is accompanied by the angels of heaven, as described by Jesus in Matthew 24:30, 31.

John is not denying this point; he is using symbolic language to show that when Jesus fights the final battle of Armageddon, it is fought as part of the great conflict between God and Satan. It is a battle over who is worthy of worship and how that worship should be carried out.

Revelation 17:14 shows that the followers of the Lamb will be with Him in this battle. When Jesus returns He leads the armies of heaven (see Revelation 19:1-15), described as being dressed in fine line, white and clean. This is the same dress as the bride of the Lamb (see Revelation 19:7, 8), representing the righteous acts of the true followers of Jesus.

Their deeds are symbolically portrayed as going into battle. Remember, Revelation 12:11 describes how the dragon is overcome by God's people and there are two important elements:

1. **The blood of the Lamb.** When Jesus died on Calvary, He defeated the accuser of the brethren. He showed how God could be both just and yet accept those who deserved to die (see Romans 3:21-26).
2. **The word of their testimony:** they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Satan is pictured in Job as being an accuser. He argues that Job only serves God because God has given him many things in this life. God replies by saying that, even if these things are taken away from Job, he will still trust God. Satan does take away many things from Job, but still he trusts in God. Job keeps saying he cannot see why he should

suffer as he does, but he also repeats that he still believes in God and will trust Him even if it costs him his life.

The life of Job is a way of viewing the lives of all who belong to God. Things do go wrong for them, particularly at the end-time, but they keep their trust in God. They are prepared to die rather than let go of their trust and obedience to His covenant.

Due to their faithfulness, God's people are pictured as going into the final battle alongside the Lamb (see Revelation 17:14, 19:14) as His army of 144,000 warriors (see Revelation 7:1-8, 14:1-5) are lined up in battle formation just prior to the final battle.

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God's end-time people are described in many different ways by John:

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- They are described as the rest of the offspring of the woman (Revelation 12:17).
  - They keep the commandments of God (Revelation 12:17, 14:12).
  - They have the prophetic gift among them (Revelation 19:10).
  - They are numbered as 144,000 (Revelation 7:1-8).
  - They are pictured as a great multitude (Revelation 7:9-17).
  - They proclaim the three angels' messages (Revelation 14:6-11).
  - They are sealed in their foreheads (Revelation 7:1-3). The Seal of God is the opposite to the mark of the beast. The fourth commandment—"remember to keep the seventh day Sabbath"—is the seal of the covenant law.
  - They are the Two Witnesses put to death.
  - They are the kings from the East coming to fight the final battle of Armageddon alongside the Lamb.
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The end-time battle of Armageddon is not a battle with tanks and guns; it is a battle of ideas for control of minds, centred in the gospel. It is about how we may keep or lose our covering of Christ's righteousness. It is about who is to be worshipped—how and when.

It also shows us how important are the lives we live each day. Each time we deny ourselves in order to be faithful to Christ, God takes note and these faithful deeds are used to overcome the enemy. Like Job, they say they will trust in God even though He should take their lives—God takes these deeds into battle.

The lives we live show to the universe that we believe God is righteous, just and fair. We are casting our vote on the side of God and saying the devil is wrong. Paul recognised this:

“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

## The Sixth Plague

▷ Read Revelation 16:12

The sixth plague as pictured in Revelation 16:12 is talking of the withdrawal of support of those secular powers supporting Babylon. Babylon had all nations behind her (see Revelation 17:15 and 18:3). She had deceived them into giving her support in war against God and His people.

It had been determined to put to death God's faithful followers (see Revelation 12:17, 13:11-17) but because of the plagues, they now realise they cannot win. They experience all the upheavals of nature and they turn on those who have been deceiving them. They see Christ coming from the east. The secular powers realise they have been fighting against the Creator because they have been deceived by Babylon and her miracles. Revelation 17:15, 16 states they will turn on her and devour her.

As he often does, John recapitulates and goes back for the build-up to this event, with the counterfeit trinity mentioned again. We also have another name for the land beast—the false prophet. Revelation 19:20 confirms this by saying that the false prophet worked miracles on behalf of the sea beast. We are talking of something that resembles Christianity and works a counterfeit of Pentecost. It brings down fire from heaven on the earth (see Revelation 13:13).

The frogs remind us of Jannes and Jambres, who duplicated some of the plagues of Moses and Aaron. The frog plague was the final one they were able to duplicate (see Exodus 8:1-15).

The three frog-like demons of the sixth plague are Satan's last attempt to counterfeit the work of God. They are pictured as the counterpart of the three angels of Revelation 14:6-11. These are the two great God-like entities and the two sets of messengers being presented to the world at the same time—so the stakes are high.

Frogs are classed as unclean, associated with Babylon which, at the end, is described as being full of unclean spirits (see Revelation 18:2). The kings of the whole world would be the same as the Euphrates River (see Revelation 17:15). The demonic trinity sends three demonic angels to persuade the secular and political powers of the world to serve them rather than the true God. The method of persuasion is deception.

The success of the persuasion is measured by the degree to which the kings gather for the



In Revelation, the water of the Euphrates symbolises those who support Babylon during the end-time | Getty Images

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great battle. If the demonic trinity succeeds in uniting all the nations of the earth under their leadership, there is a good prognosis for the battle on the day of God Almighty. When the civil and secular powers of the world lend their powers to the demonic trinity, the stage is set for the final battle.

The three frogs unify the two great end-time evil forces:

1. Religious Babylon
  2. The secular-political unity of the nations
- The entire corpus must be gathered together.

## Thief in the Night

There is an abrupt change of pace in the midst of the evil activity in Revelation 16:15. With it, John ties together all the New Testament end-time messages:

“Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed” (Revelation 16:15).

Here is a glimpse of the role of the righteous in the final battle. As in Jesus’ final sermon, there is a call to be watchful (see Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21). Paul uses the same language in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11. There is an allusion to Jesus’ letter to the church at

Laodicea (see Revelation 3:15-18).

As the end approaches, the appeal is made to God’s people to use all the great messages from the New Testament:

- The gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke;
- Paul’s letters; and
- Revelation’s letters to the seven churches.

The messages are the last call of God to His end-time confederacy of those following of Jesus.

In the midst of the preparation for the final battle, John pauses to insert the message found in Revelation 16:15. It alludes to temple guards keeping watch. If they were found asleep, the captain would take their clothes. To be a temple guard and be found naked was a disgrace. This was also done to soldiers captured in war.

## Similar Warning about Jesus’ Return

In Matthew 24:42-44, Jesus gave a similar warning to His followers to be ready. If they did not watch, they would be like an owner of a house who is not aware that a thief was





The plain of Esdraelon below the ruins of Megiddo today | Brown Bag Photography | Lightstock

coming to steal their goods. Jesus talked of His coming back to earth as like a thief, in the sense of its unexpectedness.

Paul also uses the thief concept in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 3 where he describes people talking of peace and safety only to be followed by destruction. The sudden destruction is a visible, audible event. The thief-like concepts are associated with the unexpectedness. There is nothing secret about Jesus' second coming, for it brings destruction.

Peter also talks of Jesus coming back as being like a thief, but he also says when He comes the heavens will disappear with a great roar and the elements will melt with heat (see 2 Peter 3:10-13).

Revelation 16:15 is a warning to professed Christians to remain spiritually alive and alert so they are not deceived by the Christ-like, miracle-working deceptions at the end-time. If they are deceived they could lose their covering of righteous deeds, which are required for being with Christ in this battle (see Revelation 19:7-9).

This covering also includes the righteousness of Christ as promised in Revelation 3:18, as something we need to receive from Christ. We are warned that without it we will be found naked. All those found on the side of Babylon are described as being desolate and naked (see Revelation 17:16).

## Armageddon

▷ Read Revelation 16:16

The word—pronounced “H’armageddon”—is a Greek equivalent to something in the Hebrew language and is a one-time occurrence in all of Greek literature. *Har* is a Hebrew word for mountain. The meaning of the word *Mageddon* is still uncertain. There is a linguistic connection to Megiddo, but there is no Megiddo mountain—only a ‘tell’ comprises the ruins of the old city.

The imagery of Armageddon here is as the opposite of Mount Zion, where God’s people are gathered with the Lamb. Both gatherings are described in symbolic language.

The city of Megiddo overlooks the Plain of Esdraelon (below the Sea of Galilee) where many famous battles were fought in the ancient world. It was a key site to the taking of the rest of Palestine. As a place of violence and bloodshed it can easily be symbolic for God’s final judgement battle.

But there is no way a literal battle of all nations could be fought here. Modern ways of going to war would forbid such a decisive battle in an area like this. Warfare today is fought on a larger scale, with missiles firing over enormous distances.

If we look up from the Plain of Esdraelon towards the coast, we can see Mount Carmel. The use of the term ‘Armageddon’ could be

a reference to Elijah's time, when there was a contest held to show who was the true God: the God of Elijah or Baal. The God who answered by fire was to be the true God.

In the end time, however, fire falls on the false altar. The Land beast brings down the fire and deceives the world.

If people trust in their senses alone they will be set up for the end-time deception.

This end-time deception will demonstrate conclusively to the senses that the counterfeit trinity is the true God. It comes after the great end-time proclamation of the gospel (see Revelation 14:6, 7). To endure such a strong deception, we must be grounded in the scriptures.

The battle is spiritual not military, and God's people will have to stand on raw faith affirmed by the scriptures alone, especially the prophecies.

The larger picture is of a battle of two trinity powers. It's a battle to answer the question: "Who is the legitimate ruler of the universe?"

A counterfeit must be based on something genuine. There will be a great end-time proclamation of the gospel followed by a great end-time deception with a showdown like Mount Carmel in which the deceptive counterfeit will appear to win.

During the sixth bowl plague, the spiritual nature of the battle of Armageddon becomes clear but the battle itself is fought at the pouring out of the seventh bowl (Revelation 16:17-21).

# The Seventh Plague

▷ Read Revelation 16:17-21

This terrible plague comes out of the temple, referring to the introductory vision when there is great glory in the temple and no-one

## Notes:

[illegible]



can enter until the plagues are finished (see Revelation 15:8).

God's final action is to undo the work of the demonic trinity. In the end-time Mount Carmel experience, the evil trinity will seem to have won but it will be a short-lived victory. In the seventh plague, God quickly acts to destroy any advantage gained by Satan.

In the Book of Revelation, the flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake is language always associated with the throne (see Revelation 4:5, 8:5, 11:19).

God remembered Babylon "for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes" (Revelation 18:5). God gave her the cup "filled with the wine of the fury of His wrath" (Revelation 16:19). It is poured on all those who follow the beast (see Revelation 14:10) and especially the prostitute:

"Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Mix her a double portion from her own cup" (Revelation 18:6).

God's final execution of judgment is on Babylon and everyone who chooses to identify with her.

At the opening of the sixth seal, the islands and mountains were also removed from their place (see Revelation 6:14). Both are in the context of the final events before the Second Coming. The great earthquake precedes the final events.

If the hailstones are literal, the 45 kilograms (100 pounds) is translated from the measurement 'talent' which varied in weight in the ancient world. Hailstones were used as weapons against the Canaanites who threatened God's people (see Joshua 10:11) and in the victory over Gog and Magog (see Ezekiel 38:18-22).

If the hailstones are symbolic, they imply God's judgments on His enemies—the full and final judgment in this case.

In the bowl plagues (see Revelation 16), whenever God judges a person, they curse

The last great battle is accompanied by earth's final earthquake, an earthquake like no other. The unity of the counterfeit entities is now shattered and split into three parts: the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. The cities of the nations also collapse, meaning the civil and secular powers have also fallen | Bulgac | Getty Images







declare that she has become the habitation of demons and has deceived the nations with her maddening wine (see Revelation 14:8; 18:1-8). This message stirs up the forces of Babylon against God's people.

God's people also give a warning to those who do not heed the call to come out of Babylon (see Revelation 14:9-11).

The preaching of the three messages stirs up the forces of Babylon against God's people. It causes people to make a decision for or against the Creator.

The majority of the inhabitants of the world will choose to worship the beast and its image. Those preaching the messages of the three angels are a source of annoyance to them. It is determined to put to death all those who will not conform to worship the beast and its image and receive its mark.

Many of God's people are hunted down like Jesus and cast into prison. They expect to die as they follow in the footsteps of Jesus. They are overcoming the dragon by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death (see Revelation 12:11).

Religious and secular powers are united against them. While in prison news comes





of dreadful catastrophic events: disease, droughts, wars and famines are all coming as God sends His judgments upon the forces of Babylon. God's people are given a limited amount of time to change their minds; after that a time is set to put them to death.

As this time approaches their plans are interrupted. There is a tiny spot of light in the sky. It gradually grows lighter, whiter and bigger—it is the coming of the Son of Man.

At this time there is a great upheaval in nature. A voice rolling through the heavens like a roar of thunder declares: "It is finished." Nature is sent into convulsion: islands disappear into the sea—great hail falls and crashes through buildings—cities are decimated and mansions reduced to rubble.

Those who have been deceived turn upon those who deceived them. Babylon the great has fallen apart. The waters of support for her have now dried up.

Prison walls break open and God's people are free. Graveyards yield up their treasure as those who have died in Christ are raised back to life. All of the true followers of Jesus are caught up to meet their Lord in the air.

God's people have waited for this time over thousands of years. Now the time has come. Time has ended. Eternity has begun.

When the multitudes realise they have been deceived, they will turn on Babylon | NiseriN | Getty Images

