

Revelation 16:12-21

INTRODUCTION

Just as John is given *supporting* and *in-depth visions* as the Lord shows him a chronological sequence of future events, so we're going to take a little side-trip tonight into *Armageddon*.

We're going to take this side-trip for 2 reasons:

1) The information we have about Armageddon is spread over scripture in several locations.

There's no *one passage* which spells it out in detail.

So we have to cull it from various passages and synthesize it into one coherent picture.

Because it's an important element of the last days, and because it figures so prominently in literature, film and the modern mind, we need to know what the Bible *really does* say about *Armageddon*.

2) We'll take a look at it *tonight* because our study begins with the 6th bowl of God's wrath, which is the passage which gives us the *setting & name* of this last great battle.

Let me quickly set the scene –

As we come to ch. 16, we are now at the tail-end of the Tribulation. The first half of the Tribulation, which lasts for 3½ years, has been marked by a kind of generalized peace and prosperity. (1 Thess 5:1-10)

But it's a false peace and only a temporary prosperity.

It's the kind of prosperity that comes from *living on credit*.

The problem with funding your lifestyle on credit is that eventually the bill comes and you have to pay – and that's what happens in the last half of the Tribulation.

During the first half of the Tribulation, the world has been increasingly attracted to a dynamic ruler who seems to possess super-human wisdom and skill in ruling and discovering solutions to problems that seem insurmountable. (2 Thess 2)

At the same time world attention is being drawn to this dynamic and charismatic leader, which is popularly known as *the antichrist*, there's a consistent voice of opposition to him that comes from 144,000 Jewish evangelists & two very powerful

prophets in Jerusalem. (Rev. 7 & 11)

They declare that the leader is actually leading the world on a path to ruin and hell.

They preach the Gospel and see the conversion of millions to faith in Christ. (Rev. 7:9-17)

The world becomes *polarized* between those loyal to the antichrist and those who convert to the Real Christ – Jesus.

Then, there's a dramatic change – at the mid point of the Tribulation, there's an assassination attempt on the antichrist that appears successful – and yet, miraculously, he rises from the dead! (Rev. 13:3-4)

This causes the entire world to flock to him in renewed allegiance and loyalty.

What actually takes place is that the devil himself possesses the dead body of the leader and stages a fake resurrection.

The last half of the Tribulation is marked by his rise to power even more far-reaching than before. (Rev. 13:4-18)

Along with his chief assistant – *the false prophet*, he asserts control over the *religious sphere* and demands that all worship him as God or be executed. (Rev. 13:15)

He manages to gain control over the economies of the world by demanding that all take a visible mark of allegiance to him without which no one may buy or sell. (Rev. 13:17)

Then, it's in his bid to assert both *political & military* control over the entire planet that he runs into a bit of trouble.

Some of the nations of the world *refuse to submit* to his hegemony.

That's what leads up to Armageddon.

In Ch. 16, John sees the very end of the last 3½ years of the Tribulation and the culmination of God's wrath being poured out on a rebellious and brutal world.

This completion of wrath is represented by 7 bowls poured out onto the earth by 7 angels.

Last week we looked at the first 5 bowls, tonight we pick it up at v. 12 and the 6th bowl.

CHAPTER 16 (PART 2)

12 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.

Compared to the previous 5 bowls of God's wrath, this seems rather mild until we realize what it leads to.

As we'll see in just a few verses – this sets the stage for the last great battle of history.

The Euphrates River is mentioned 40 times in the Bible and figures prominently in the geography of the OT because it forms the northern border of the territory God promised to Israel in Genesis 15.

It was only during the reign of Solomon that the Kingdom of Israel actually ever attained this border promised for the Nation.

The Euphrates River is 1800 miles long, an average of 30 feet deep and 300 to 1200 feet wide!

Until recent time, critics of the Bible scoffed at this passage while others interpreted it symbolically for the simple reason that drying up the Euphrates was considered *absurd*.

But today we see the *potential fulfillment* for this prophecy in the recent construction of several dams along the Euphrates in Turkey, the most notable being the massive *Ataturk Dam* project.

Almost 90% of the water of the Euphrates comes from drainage in Turkey.

If the dams were closed for a time, it would effectively dry up the river, and so make way for anyone who wanted to cross it from the East.

In 1994, the site manager of the Ataturk Dam was quoted in the Atlantic monthly as saying, "It is true that we can stop the flow of water into Syria and Iraq for up to 8 months in order to regulate their political behavior."

The word for "east" here is literally – "the rising of the sun."

This is the title used in the ancient world to refer to the peoples of the *Far East* – what we call the Orient; China and Japan.

As we read on we get more information about this . . .

¹³And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, [satan] out of the mouth of the beast [antichrist], and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴For 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.

Now John inserts a quick word of warning to his readers – it’s a word directly from the Lord Himself . . .

15“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.”

16And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

After mentioning the way of the kings of the rising sun being made ready by the drying up of the Euphrates, John shares his vision of seeing 3 unique demonic spirits which appear as frogs.

As we noted last week, there is a clear tie between the bowls of God’s wrath and the plagues of Egypt.

One of these was a plague of frogs that covered the land and made life miserable.

That may be why John sees these 3 demons as *frogs*: Though they are only 3, they go forth to *cover the earth* with their persuasive counsel, convincing the world of the importance of bringing their assembled military might to the last great battle.

It seems that these 3 demons are able to manifest themselves visibly somehow.

We conclude that because it says they are able to *perform signs*. Because they come out of the mouth of the devil, the antichrist and the false prophet, they appear to be an expression of their *breath*, or their word – meaning they are sent out as their emissaries to accomplish their will.

So looking at this in reverse; the kings of the East are one of the players that come, and the Euphrates has to be dried up to allow their passage.

The place the kings of the earth are gathered to is called Armageddon.

Now – there has been a tremendous amount of speculation on exactly what and where this is.

Throughout the generation there have been dozens of interpretations.

What can we say with certainty?

1) Armageddon is a place – a *geographical* location.

It isn't some spiritual or symbolic stage of human development as some have proposed.

John says the rulers of the earth will be drawn to a *place*.

The word is *topos* and means *space, location, tract*.

We get our word *topographic* from it.

2) John refers to a location with a *Hebrew name*, meaning it's within the borders of Israel.

It was a site designated with a Hebrew label so had historical significance to the Jews.

The actual word in Greek is - Εἰς τὴν ἀβύσσον

But John says this is a *transliteration* of the Hebrew word – which would have been –

øä— • har – *mountain* / Bcâ,îÀ • megiddoò – *rendezvous*; a city in northwest Israel.

The word "megiddo" comes from the root, *gaòdad* which means to *crowd*; also to *gash* (as if by *pressing* into): assemble (selves by troops), gather (selves together, self in troops), cut selves.

Megiddo lies at a strategic point in Israel, and really in the world.

Consider the nation of Israel – it lies at the very center of the world.

It's the land bridge between the continents of Africa, Asia and Europe.

All trade that flowed between these regions passed through Israel.

That meant that what happened around the world was brought to them, and what happened among them was brought to the world.

God placed His covenant people in this place precisely because He intended them to be a light to the nations.

In the ancient world, almost all commerce traveled along a few well-known and well-worn trade routes.

Whoever controlled the chief cities along these routes became incredibly wealthy and powerful.

Megiddo was one such city.

It lay at a strategic location where a smaller valley holding the well-traveled "Way of the Sea" met up with a wide open plain

that held a couple major trade arteries that connected the Way of the Sea with the other main trade route through the land – “The King’s Highway.”

Another lesser route also passed through Megiddo that led down the central Highlands of Israel toward Jerusalem.

Every ruler who wanted to exert control over this area realized the strategic importance of controlling Megiddo.

So it’s a city with a long and dramatic history.

In fact, James Michener used the archaeological research at Megiddo as the basis for his book, *The Source*.

The original city was built on the plain where a small valley that held the *Way of the Sea* opened out into the *Plain of Esdraelon*, or *Jezreel*.

But as is typical for most ancient cities, when the city was defeated by succeeding conquerors, instead of clearing the land and starting over again, they just filled in the debris, leveled it off, and built on top of the previous city and ruins.

The tel, or mound of Megiddo has at least 25 levels of occupation and now rises quite high over the surrounding plain.

Joshua recognized the strategic importance of Megiddo and conquered the Canaanite presence there.

Later, Solomon reinforced Megiddo, making it one of his main fortresses and one of the few places where he stabled his vast number of horses. [4 slides]

Megiddo’s chief reputation is for the sheer amount of blood shed there in battle.

Historically, 200 separate battles have been recorded there.

In fact, the earliest secular chronicle of a military campaign involves Thutmose III of Egypt’s taking of Megiddo in 1468 B.C..

Thutmose remarked that possessing Megiddo was equal to 1000 other cities – that’s how strategically important it was in the ancient world.

Gideon and his 300 men defeated the Midianites in the valley below Megiddo.

One of Samson’s key victories over the Philistines was at Megiddo. It was near Megiddo that Deborah and Barak defeated the hosts of Sisera (Judges 5).

King Josiah died at Megiddo when he tried to interfere with Pharaoh Necho's campaign against Assyria.

The last battle to be fought at Megiddo was during WWI when British General Allenby defeated the Turkish forces there.

The *Plain of Esdraelon* or *Jezreel* stretches out to the north & east of Megiddo.

Because Megiddo is the most important city in that area, Esdraelon is sometimes called the *Valley of Megiddo*.

When Napoleon passed through this valley on his way to his disastrous excursion in Egypt, he remarked, "If ever there is a place on earth where the last war must be fought, it is here."

Esdraelon is a vast, wide open and flat plain that could easily accommodate hundreds of thousands of troops and a vast array of military hardware.

There is really only one place in Israel that qualifies to be identified with the term *Armageddon* – and that is the *Tel of Megiddo* which overlooks the very center and heart of the Plain of Esdraelon.

In v. 14, John writes that "the kings of the earth and of the whole world" are gathered there "to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

As we've seen in many of our studies, the term "The Day of the Lord" is a strong bible idiom for that period history when God intervenes directly in human affairs to bring the rebellious kingdoms of man in league with the devil to an end and He sets up the Kingdom of God on earth in Visible form, through the earthly reign of the Messiah.

Though it's called "The DAY of the Lord," it's much longer than 24 hours.

Day in that sense means "time of"

Technically, the Day of the Lord will begin as soon as the Church is raptured and proceeds all the way through the end of the Millennium; so it's about 1007 years long.

But IN the Day of the Lord, there will come *one moment* that is *absolutely definitive* in terms of the defeat of the kingdoms of this world and their being taken over by the Messiah – and that is what is described here in v. 14.

While the demons that come from the unholy trinity of the devil, the antichrist, and the false prophet go forth to all the rulers of

the world and persuade them to come to the scene of the last great battle, in the end, they are really only accomplishing the will and purpose of God.

They come for what seems to them their *own reasons*, but in actuality, they are being assembled for the battle of the great day of God Almighty!

The word John uses here for “battle” is better translated as “war.”

You see, this will actually be the end of a long conflict that began with Lucifer’s fall and attempt to usurp the throne of God thousands of years ago.

Leading a third of the angels, he made a bid to rebel against God and set himself up in His place.

He failed in that first attempt but has not ceased to oppose God ever since.

When man was created, satan managed to secure his participation in his rebellion.

And throughout history he’s managed to work behind the scenes to bring about the corruption of the human race and so forestall God’s victory over him.

This war has gone on in the spiritual realm since the beginning and has occasionally spilled over into the physical world.

What we are reading about here is the point at which the reality of the spiritual war comes to dominate and take over the *entire* physical world.

Satan has taken a sort of physical form himself in the person of the antichrist.

He’s then persuaded the kings and kingdoms of the world to meet him, where he intends to unite them all in a concerted assault on God.

So though the war is thousands of years old – this is the final battle, the showdown!

But who are the players and how will it all come down?

Sorting that out takes a little bit of work.

1) From what we’ve already discovered about the antichrist, we know that he has risen as the leader of the European Community – so the nations of Europe will be one of the set of players in the Battle of Armageddon.

We know how powerful NATO is, and it is only comprised of

the separate and distinct militaries of Europe.

Imagine how powerful the military might of Europe would be if they decided to work aggressively at *uniting* their forces.

2) Here in v. 12 we read that another set of players in the Battle of Armageddon will be the *Kings of the East*, or rising sun.

Ch. 9, vs. 13-16 gives us a bit more information about this same thing –

13Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, **14**saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.” **15**So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. **16**Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them.

In preparation for the 6th bowl in ch. 16, the 6th trumpet was blown and 4 angels, in light of their destructive nature, probably *fallen* angels, go forth to stir up an army of 200 million.

These 4 angels are said to be bound at the Euphrates.

The Euphrates has been the classic boundary between the East & West.

The terms John employs here give the impression these spiritual beings have been blocked or kept from crossing the Euphrates from East to West.

But now the boundary is taken down and they are allowed to cross, bringing death and destruction with them.

The agents of their ruin are 200 million *horsemen* – which is an idiom for an army on the move.

As we noted when we were in ch. 9, an army of 200 million was just plain beyond comprehension in John’s day; There was maybe 200 million people on the whole planet then!

It wasn’t until modern times that a nation could field an army this vast – and even today, there is only one nation that could do so – China!

In fact, some years ago, a high ranking Chinese official seeking to intimidate the West made the specific claim that China could field an army of - 200 MILLION! Interesting he should use that very number.

In 1997, China gave its army size as 352 million! [\[1\]](#)

What encourages such a large army, and all the larger in our own time is China's strict one-child per family policy.

The population boom in China – 1.2 billion people – has moved the government to pass a law limiting each family to only one-child.

And according to Chinese custom, it is the son's duty to carry n the family name and provide for his aged parents.

So baby girls are killed and only boys are allowed to live. The result has been a skewing of the youth population of China toward an all male society.

The problems this creates are phenomenal – but it supplies a huge boost to the military forces of the nation.

With few women among so many men, most men will opt for military service.

And at the same time that China is looking to expand its borders because of the needs of it's growing population.

China has remained secluded, proud, and isolated throughout its history.

It's not likely that it will long abide the antichrist's growing influence and assertion of control over the affairs of Earth.

The 4 fallen angels of Rev. 9 will stir up the kings of the east to bring their army west & present a challenge to the antichrist's hegemony & control.

As ch. 9 tells us, as they make their way west toward the Euphrates, they will end up killing a third of the remaining population of Earth.

Seeing as to how this army will pass through some of the most densely populated regions of the world – India,

Pakistan and such, who will probably not bend over backward welcoming them – it's not hard to imagine the vast loss of life they will leave in their wake.

Then, once the Kings of the East reach the Euphrates, the River is dried up, allowing them to pass over the age old divide between East and West and 4 fallen angels whip up the 200 million strong army into a blood lust of destruction.

3) V. 14 then tells us the rest of the kings of the earth are persuaded to come join the fray.

Very likely they come because they are either siding *with* the antichrist in defending against the attack of the kings of the east, or they are coming to resist him as well.

Daniel 11:37-38 make it clear that the antichrist, whose by this time has already managed to assert control over the religious realm and global economic markets, will make a bid for global political and military dominance as well.

It's at that point the nations of the world, specifically the nations of the Far East say, "That's enough" and move to stop the antichrist's growing influence and control.

They're especially concerned as he's managed to take possession of the Middle East Oil fields.

And as it says in Daniel 11, he's been converting the wealth into more military equipment and fortifications.

Daniel 11:40-43 tells us that a king from the South and one from the North will make a bid at this time to attack the antichrist – but both of them are quickly dealt with.

The king from the South refers to the leader of Northern Africa while the king from the North refers to the leader of the nations just north of the Israel.

In all likelihood, this is a concerted attack from north & south made up of Muslim allies.

The territories Daniel describes as the antichrist's spoils of this conflict fit perfectly.

After this attack from and defeat of the Muslim alliance we have the last vs. of Daniel 11 –

44But news from the east and the north shall trouble him;

therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many. ⁴⁵And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.

The news antichrist gets is about the advance of the army of China.

They are now at the banks of the Euphrates to the NE of his position.

So he sets up his defensive perimeter right across the nation of Israel, stretching from the Plain of Esdraelon in the north to the outskirts of Jerusalem and the Valley of Jehoshaphat in the South. (Zech. 12, 14 Joel 3)

Once the kings of the east arrive, the battle begins and there is so many men and so much bloodshed, it looks like a virtual river of blood. (Rev. 14:14-20)

But into the very midst of this battle – Jesus comes again. The forces of antichrist and the kings of the east which have been going at it, suddenly turn and unite in attempting to stave off this invasion of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Of course it's rather understandable why they do unite to resist Christ.

After all, it's been for the very cause of world domination that they have come to fight in the first place!

The antichrist sees the Chinese as all that remains in his way while the Chinese see the antichrist as all that now stands in their way.

They've let him deal with everyone else, now they will try to take what he's accumulated.

But of course, they both see Jesus as the biggest threat to their aims and unite in resisting Him.

Ch. 19:11-21 tell us how the whole things turns out.

But look here now as we see the 7th and final bowl of God's wrath

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17 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from

the throne, saying, “It is done!” ¹⁸And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth.

We know that the battle of Armageddon brings the Tribulation to an end and is itself ended by the Return of Christ in glory and victory over all.

Therefore, this 7th bowl takes place concurrent with the Second Coming.

This earthquake is nothing less than the Planet shuddering as Jesus comes!

And that’s why it’s the most severe of all time.

All previous earthquakes were merely local or regional – the slippage along a fault line here or there.

But this quake is more than the movement of some fault – this is something deep in the earth that shakes the entire planet.

Notice that when the 7th bowl is poured out, it’s into the air.

Paul refers to the devil as “the prince of the power of the *air*,” meaning the atmosphere. (Eph 2:2)

The word he uses describes the realm in which men and women live – the scope of man’s kingdoms.

That’s the realm over which the devil has exerted influence – and now that we come to the end of his dominion – the angel pours out the last bowl into his realm.

This bowl is like a spiritual bug fogger!

Note that with this last bowl, a voice is heard from the temple in heaven.

As we saw in v. 8 of ch. 15, there was no one left in the temple but God so this voice was His.

What does He say? “It is done!”

This corresponds to 15:1

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.

When the last bowl is poured out – God says, “That’s it! The expression of My wrath is now complete.

What a contrast between what God says here and what Jesus said on the cross!

Here God says – “It is done!” meaning His wrath has been spent in judgment on rebel man.

And the result is the earth is left hanging by a thread.

It is devastated; earth’s population decimated.

The planet is a burned out, ruined, blighted cinder!

On the Cross Jesus said – “It is finished!” meaning God’s wrath against sin was fully paid for for those who will look by faith to Him.

The result is new life – deliverance from the blighting effects of sin, and the promise of redemption & restoration.

19 Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.

Babylon is going to be dealt with in one more supporting vision John has in chs. 17 & 18.

Here we simply get a *summary* of its judgment.

Exactly what John means by *the great city of Babylon* we’ll have to wait and see next week.

But the point he makes here is that the great earthquake that shakes the earth splits Babylon and brings the other cities of the earth to ruins.

20 Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21 And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.

Part of the judgment of the 7th bowl is a complete altering of the face of the earth, which the great earthquake takes care of.

It’s almost like God is wiping His hand over the ripples of sand on the beach, starting over again as He moves to restore the Earth under the Messiah’s glorious rule.

The islands of the sea sink beneath the waves.

The mountains tumble down.

And then to help beat the high places low, there's a hail storm that tears the face of the land apart.

The hail stones reach up to 100 pounds each!

There's an interesting statement in Job 38:22-23.

God is responding to Job's demand that He appear and answer him on why Job has gone through so much trouble.

When God does finally appear to Job, Job realizes how foolish he's been to demand anything of God.

God queries Job about the basis of his demand with many challenges.

One of them is this

"Have you entered the treasury of snow, Or have you seen the treasury of hail, Which I have reserved for the time of trouble, For the day of battle and war?"

Besides all else that God does during the Tribulation, He will prepare an arsenal in the atmosphere of ice rockets.

In light of all the other cosmic disturbances we've been reading about it's really not at all difficult to see how vast amounts of water and debris may be swept up into the atmosphere and come plummeting back as these projectiles.

Severe hail damage was noted as one of the after effects of some of the nuclear tests we performed in the South Pacific.

It seems that vast amounts of water were vaporized and then swept up into the sky.

The tons of dust particles also swept up acted as germs for the water to condense on, and then because it was so high, flash froze and came rocketing back to earth to wreck terrible destruction on the ground many miles away from the blast site.

If tactical nukes or high explosives are used in the War of Armageddon, this would account for the hailstones.

This clearly has to be the end.

With the ground shaking under their feet bringing every building low, and the heavens opening up to pour on them 100 pound ice cubes, God makes it clear that the earth they've been trying to claim as their own is under His complete control.

In light of this revelation – there's only one sane response –

REPENT!

But what do they do? They blaspheme!

In Leviticus 24:16, what's the punishment for blasphemy?

Stoning!

The people of the earth have been blaspheming God for the last few cycles of judgment – so God rains stones, hailstones on their heads.

And all it does it bring forth more blasphemy.

I'm reminded of disciplining my sons when they were younger.

I would spank them – not in an abusive manner, but in a way to discipline them and train them to realize the foolishness of their rebellion.

But what occasionally happened is that my punishment drew out of them a fierce kind of anger that made them tighten up, growl at me and act defiant.

Now, all that did was reveal the attitude and heart of rebellion that was bringing about their spanking in the first place.

We don't spank for mistakes or awkwardness – spanking aims at driving the moral pollution of rebellion from a child's heart.

Spanking is moral training and is for clear demonstrations of defiance and rebellion.

So when a parent sees rebellion in the midst of such correction, it's a sign of something highly dangerous that HAS to be dealt with lest it grow and turn into something far more dangerous than just childish defiance.

The earth-dwellers are hardened rebels who when they are spanked by God, just tighten up their petulant little fists and hold them in His face.

Next week we'll take a look at chs. 17 & 18 which is an in-depth vision John is given of the fall of Babylon.

[1] Lindsey, Hall *Apocalypse Code* pg. 154