

Revelation 16b • Chapter Study

INTRO

We covered chs 15 & half of Ch. 16 last week.

We saw the first 5 of the 7 bowls of God's wrath that will be poured out on Earth in the last half of the Trib.

While the bowls may be poured out *sequentially*, 1 after another, the grammar may also mean they're poured out *simultaneously*, all at the same time.

And while some of the bowls are similar to previous judgments in Rev., those prior judgments were limited in scope, while the bowls are global.

This is the full & final expression of God's righteous wrath poured out on a world in utter heinous rebellion.

Ch16 closes w/the last 2 bowls which point to the great history ending Battle of Armageddon.

Then in the next couple chs, John is given *detailed visions* of how things will go down when the bowls are poured.

So, ch16 is an *overview*, while the chs17&18 give *specifics*.

Tonight, we're only going to cover the *rest* of ch16; the 6th & 7th Bowls of God's wrath.

I'm slowing down tonight because the information we have about Armageddon is spread over several passages.

There's no *one place* which spells it all out.

So we have to cull it from various passages & synthesize it into a coherent picture.

Because it's an important part of the end times, & figures prominently in literature, film & the modern mind, we need to know what the Bible *really* says about Armageddon.

Let me quickly set the scene –

We're now nearing the end of the Trib.

The 1st 3½ yrs of the Trib are a false peace & prosperity engineered by the A/C & FP.

But they've secured it by forfeiting the future.

It's a peace & prosperity bought on credit & the time comes to pay the bill in the last half of the Trib.

The 1st half of the Trib is the calm before the storm of the last half.

For visitors & those new to our study in Rev. lets recap ...

During the 1st half of the Trib, the world is increasingly attracted to a dynamic ruler who possesses super-human wisdom & skill in ruling & discovering solutions to problems have seemed insurmountable.

This guy is popularly known as the A/C.

But as his support skyrockets, there's opposition from 144,000 Jewish evangelists; led by 2 powerful prophets in Jerusalem.

They preach the Gospel & warn the world the A/C is leading the world to ruin.

Millions are won to faith in Christ through their work.

The world becomes *polarized* between those loyal to the A/C & those who convert to Jesus Christ.

Then, at the mid-point of the Trib, there's a dramatic change.

The A/C is assassinated, or so it seems.

He miraculously rises, causing the entire world to flock to him in renewed loyalty.

What really happens is that satan himself possesses the dead body of the leader & stages a fake resurrection.

The last half of the Trib is his reign of terror as he ruthlessly tries to seize control of Earth *politically & economically*.

Along w/his chief assistant, the FP, he even assumes control over the *religious sphere* as well & demands all worship him as God or be executed.

And *that's* when he runs into trouble.

Some nations refuse to submit to his hegemony.

That's what brings about the Battle of Armageddon.

¹² Then the 6th angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, & its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the East might be prepared.

Compared to the previous 5 bowls, this seems mild until we see what it leads to.

This sets the stage for the last & great battle of history.
The Euphrates River is mentioned 40 times in the Bible & figures prominently in the geography of the OT because it forms the N'n border of the territory God promised Israel in Gen 15.

It was only during the reign of Solomon Israel attained that border.
The Euphrates River is 1,800 miles long, averages 30 ft deep & is 300 to 1200 ft wide.
Until recently, critics **scoffed** at this passage & others interpreted it **symbolically** for the simple reason drying up the Euphrates was thought absurd.

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

90% of the water of the Euphrates comes from Turkey.

If the dams were closed, it would dry up the river, & make way for anyone who wanted to cross.

In 1994, the site manager of the Ataturk Dam was quoted in *Atlantic Monthly*, "It's true we can stop the flow of water into Syria & 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**."

That is the word the ancient world used for the *Far East*; what we call the Orient.

¹³ And I saw 3 unclean spirits like frogs *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon, [satan] out of the mouth of the beast [antichrist], & out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴ For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, *which* go out to the kings of the earth & of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

John inserts a quick word of warning to his readers from the Lord Himself . . .

¹⁵ "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed *is* he who watches, & keeps his garments, lest he walk naked & they see his shame."

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

We'll come back to v15 later.

John has a vision of 3 demons that appear like frogs.

As we saw so clearly last week, there's a link between the bowls of God's wrath & the plagues of Egypt.

The 2nd plague was a frog-explosion that made life in Egypt miserable.

Though there are only 3 demon frogs here, their influence is global & makes everyone miserable.

They convince the world to bring their militaries to a last great battle.

Remember, the A/C wants control of the whole world.

There are a few nations that resist his power-grab, most notably, the Kings of the East.

So the unholy trinity of satan, the A/C & FP conspire to drag those who resist them to a final showdown.

It's the A/C's plan to crush them & seize control once their military might is defeated.

What's interesting is that John says these frog-demons perform signs.

Hard to understand how they could do that unless they were visible somehow.

What these may be are emissaries from the A/C; men who are possessed by powerful demons, who go to these hold-out nations as **ambassadors**.

They do something that provokes these nations to send their armies toward the Middle East.

Their destination is called **Armageddon**.

There's been a all kinds of speculation exactly what & where that is.

Throughout the generations there's been **dozens** of interpretations.

All we can say with certainty is that

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 – a place on a map!

2) Armageddon is a **Hebrew word**, which suggests it's within the borders of Israel.

It's a compound of ...

1) Har = Mountain

2) Megiddo = A city in NW Israel. The word itself means **rendevouz**.

The ancient city of Megiddo lies at a strategic point in Israel.

It's on a hill where some of the most important highways of the ancient world met.
Think of the layout of the ancient world.

There's the powerhouse of Egypt in S.

To the N is Mesopotamia & Persia.

To The W is Anatolia, with the Hittites, and further W, Greece and later Rome.

To the Far E is India and China which supply great riches in spices & silk.

But the great desert of the Arabian Peninsula forces the trade routes into a limited belt.

The city of Damascus in Syria became the ancient world's meeting place where N,S, E, W all met.

Heading South from Damascus toward Israel were 2 routes.

The lesser **King's Highway** that followed the Jordan River.

And the far more important **Way of the Sea** that followed the edge of the Med down into Egypt.

Megiddo sat on a hill **right on** The Way of the Sea.

The massive Plain of Esdraelon ends right at Megiddo where the hills take over.

On each side of Megiddo's hill are 2 little valleys all traffic has to flow through.

So, whoever controls Megiddo, controls all the traffic along those rich trade routes connecting the rest of the world.

And for that reason, it was the scene of many famous battles in history.

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.

That's why **James Michener** used the archaeology of Megiddo as the basis for his bestseller, *The Source*.

The tel, or mound of Megiddo has at 25 levels of occupation & rises high over the surrounding plain.

Joshua recognized the strategic importance of Megiddo & conquered the Canaanites there.

Later, **Solomon** reinforced Megiddo, making it 1 of his main fortresses & 1 of the few places where he stabled his vast number of horses.

Megiddo's reputation is for the sheer amount of blood shed there.

200 separate battles have been recorded there.

In fact, **the earliest secular chronicle of a military campaign** involves **Pharaoh Thutmose III** of Egypt's taking of Megiddo in 1468 BC.

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

Gideon & 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 **Deborah & Barak** defeated the hosts of Sisera in 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* stretches out N & E of Megiddo.

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

When **Napoleon** passed thru 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, flat plain that could easily accommodate hundreds of thousands of troops & a vast array of military hardware.

There's only 1 place in Israel that qualifies as *Armageddon*; the *Tel of Megiddo* which overlooks the Plain of Esdraelon.

In v14, John says "*the kings of the earth & of the whole world*" are gathered there "to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

While demons persuade these rulers to come so the A/C can crush them, in the end, they're all only accomplishing the purpose of God.

They come for what seems their *own reasons*, but in reality, they're assembled for the battle of the great day of God Almighty.

This word "battle" is better translated "war."

This isn't just a *skirmish*; it's *the end* of the long conflict begun w/Lucifer's fall long ago. The war has gone on in the spiritual realm since the beginning & spills over into the physical world. What we find here is the end of it all when the spiritual & physical merge. Satan has taken a physical form in the person of the A/C.

He persuades the nations to meet & intends to unite them all by force.

But he won't be able to pull it off because God Himself will intervene.

So, *who* are the nations; *who* are the players in this final showdown?

Sorting that out is a bit of work.

1) We already know the A/C is the leader of the EU.

2) V12 says set of players are the *Kings of the East*.

In 9:13-16 we read about an end times army of **200 million** that kills a third of the world's population.

An army of 200 million was beyond comprehension in John's day.

There was *maybe* 200 million people on the whole planet!

It wasn't till modern times a nation could field an army that vast.

And even today, there's only 1 that can: China!

Several yrs ago, a high-ranking Chinese official hoping to intimidate the West said China could field an army of - 200 MILLION! Interesting he should use *that very number*.

What encourages such a large army, & all the larger in our own time is China's strict 1-child per family policy.

The population boom in China, **1.4 billion**, has moved the govt to pass a law limiting each family to only 1-child.

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

So baby girls *are killed* & only boys are allowed to live.

The result has been a skewing of the population of China toward an all-male society.

The problems this creates are phenomenal.

But it supplies a *huge boost to China's military*.

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

Over the last 30 years China has emerged as a global powerhouse.

Their influence in world markets & global political affairs has exploded.

They aren't likely to abide the antichrist's power-grab of the affairs of all Earth.

So they'll march W, cross the dried up Euphrates, the classic, age-old border btwn E & W, headed for a showdown with A/C's forces.

They wipe out a third of the World's population on the way.

Which isn't difficult when you realize they're crossing some of the world's most densely populated nations, like India, which may very well be allied with the A/C at that point.

V14 says the rest of the kings of the Earth are persuaded to come join the fray.

Either they're allies of the A/C or join with the Kings of the East to resist him.

When the kings of the east arrive, the battle begins & there's so many men & so much blood, it looks like a river.

But into the midst of that battle, Jesus comes again.

The forces of A/C & the kings of the east which have been going at it, suddenly unite in an attempt to stave off this invasion of the King of kings.

Ch. 19:11-21 tells us how the whole thing turns out. But we'll leave that for a later study.

Let's look at the 7th & last bowl of God's wrath.

¹⁷ Then the 7th angel poured out his bowl into the air, & a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" ¹⁸ & there were noises & thunderings & lightnings; & there was a great earthquake, such a mighty & great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the Earth.

The battle of Armageddon ends the Trib & is itself ended by the Return of Christ in glory.

So, this 7th bowl is concurrent w/the 2nd Coming.

This earthquake is the Planet *shuddering* as Jesus comes That's why it's the all-time most severe.

Earthquakes up till then have been local or regional; slippage along fault lines.

This quake is probably caused by something deep in the Earth.

Note when the 7th bowl is poured out, **it's into the air**.

In Eph. 2:2, Paul says the devil is “the prince of the power of the *air*,” meaning the atmosphere.

The word describes the realm in which people live; the location of man's kingdoms.

That's the realm over which the devil exerts influence.

Now that the end of his dominion is reached, the angel pours out the last bowl on his realm.

It's a spiritual bug-fogger.

John hears a voice from the temple in heaven.

15:8 says the only person left in the temple is God, so this is Him. And He says, “It is done!”

That corresponds to 15:1

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: 7 angels having the 7 last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.

When the last bowl is poured out, God says, “That's it! My wrath is now complete.”

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

Here God says – “It's 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 has been cut in half since the beginning of the Trib.

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, & the promise of redemption & restoration.

¹⁹ Now the great city was divided into 3 parts, & the cities of the nations fell. & 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 detail in chs17&18.

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

Exactly what John means by **the great city of Babylon** we'll wait to see next time.

But the great earthquake that shakes the Earth splits Babylon & brings other cities to ruins.

²⁰ Then every island fled away, & the mountains were not found. ²¹ & 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.

The 7th bowl alters of the face of Earth.

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.

Mountains tumble.

To beat the high places low, there's hail that tears the land apart.

The hail-stones reach up to 100 lbs each!

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

God responds to Job's demand He appear & answer why Job's gone thru so much trouble.

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

God queries Job about of his demand with several 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 God does during the Trib, He prepares an arsenal of ice rockets.

In light of all the other cosmic disturbances we've encountered in Rev. it's not difficult to see how vast amounts of water & debris are swept up into the atmosphere & come plummeting back.

This has to be the end.

With the ground shaking under their feet bringing buildings low, & the heavens opening to pour out 100 pound ice cubes, God makes it clear the Earth can't escape.

In light of this revelation, there's only 1 sane response: REPENT!

But what do the E-D's do? They blaspheme!

In Lev 24:16, the punishment for blasphemy is stoning.

The people of the earth have blasphemed God during the bowls, so God rains hailstones on them.

And all it does is **bring forth more blasphemy**.

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

Sometimes, instead of repenting, they'd throw a fit of rage. >> Imagine that!

Here they were, all of 6 or 7 & nowhere near as strong or wise as I.

But they'd screw up their little face & ball their fists in angry defiance.

If they had gone the other direction and humbly repented, admit their error and ask to be forgiven, it would have gone very differently for them.

But no! They'd dig in their heels and take me on.

And I knew they absolutely **COULD NOT GET AWAY WITH THAT**.

So the discipline had to get harder, more severe till they broke and repented.

Thank God they always did!

These E-Ds don't & won't.

They're hardened rebels who when punished by God, tighten their petulant little fists & shake them in His face, while dodging 100 lbs popsicles.

Let's end tonight by looking again at v15 –

¹⁵ “Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, & keeps his garments, lest he walk naked & they see his shame.”

Why does John insert this here? It seems so out of place.

It is! & is meant to be so we'd ask **why** it's here & pay **closer** attention to it.

Right in the middle of all these visions of final judgment John pauses to remind his readers, people he knew would read this **LONG BEFORE** these events come to pass, that even though they don't see the things he writes about here, they must nevertheless realize the spiritual battle is no less real for them.

Jesus is coming for the Church in the Rapture in an unknown hour.

So we need to be ready at all times.

The way to be ready is to **watch**; to stay spiritually alert & not spiritually lazy or drowsy.

We stay ready by watching ourselves **morally**, which is what it means to watch our garments.

We know we're saved by the grace of God thru faith, not works.

So there isn't some **work** we could do that would **forfeit** salvation.

The key is faith. We are saved by Grace through faith.

God's grace flows to and saves us when we believe in Christ.

What the devil wants to do is to maneuver believers into giving up their faith.

The route to that end is most often made by getting the believer to compromise with sin.

Some immorality they become addicted to.

They get to the point where they want their sin more than Christ, & turn from Him to unbelief.

This is why you'll find most people who fall away **aren't quiet about it**.

They feel the need to **justify** their rejection of the faith.

They go to secular colleges and imbibe the skepticism of the lost.

Get a degree in unbelief and go on to write books that others of their ilk imbibe.

And for most of them, the journey to apostasy began with some little sin, some immorality they decided to embrace.

And if the devil can't get a believer to fall away, he at least tries to get him/her to be ineffective in living the Christian life & being an example of holiness to others.

This is why John says we're to watch ourselves & keep our garments clean.