

The Good News About Armageddon

Lorraine Day, M.D.

The term **Armageddon** appears only once in the Bible, in Rev 16:16. It occurs in a section that describes the judgments of God, called the seven last plagues. These last judgments introduce the Second Coming of Christ as the Judge and Ruler of all nations. Revelation 16, as well as many other places in Revelation, portrays the final rebellion of the whole world, the uniting of all political and religious powers, against God and His people found among all nations.

“I saw three unclean spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon (Satan), out of the mouth of the beast (the One World Government - political power) and out of the mouth of the false prophet (the One World Religion - a religious power given its authority by the One World Government). They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty . . . Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon (Rev 16:13-16).

The persecution of God’s true followers will come about by the union of the One World Government, the political world power, WITH the One World Religion, the religious world power. In other words, persecution of God’s true followers will occur because Church and State have now united, there will no longer be a separation of Church and State.

Unfortunately, the dominant “Christian” view in America is that the Constitution does not guarantee separation of Church and State. The present “Faith-Based Initiatives” set in place by the administration of President George W. Bush and endorsed by nearly all Christian denominations in America, have essentially begun, in a major way, the amalgamation of Church and State in America.

Throughout history, whenever Church and State have united, there has ALWAYS been persecution of the religious minority who do not agree with the majority. A perfect historical example is found in the Middle Ages - the Dark Ages - when the Catholic Church had both political and religious absolute power. The persecution of the religious minority who refused to accept the “authority” of the Catholic Church was relentless and horrifying!

Many sincere Christians believe that Armageddon will be a literal battle, the LAST battle on earth, on the plain of Megiddo near Mt. Carmel in the area of northern Palestine now called Israel, a battle between Iraq together with the other Arab nations plus Russia and China, against Israel.

This interpretation of these events appears in the *New Scofield Reference Bible* (1967; note on Revelation 19:17) and is based on the (false) assumption that the language and imagery of Bible prophecy must be applied with absolute literalness.

Modern Christian fundamentalist interpreters read the prophetic visions of the Bible as a precise literal description of history in advance. This implies that in biblical prophecy, all the ethnic and geographic descriptions of Israel, (Mount Zion, Holy City, etc.) and Israel's ancient enemies (Babylon, Egypt, king of the north, etc.) must be interpreted absolutely literally in terms of the Middle East today. They ignore the transforming significance of the first coming of Christ on all prophecy. They are unable to understand Revelation in its spiritual context. They read Revelation and interpret it literally as they would any other textbook.

But the Bible is not like any other textbook. It can only be understood by the power of God opening our mind. Without God unveiling our mind, we will interpret everything in Revelation according to "sense" knowledge - according to our five senses.

Knowledge in this world is obtained through our five senses - sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell. This is termed "sense" knowledge. But the truths of the Bible can only be understood by "revelation" knowledge, by God giving us spiritual understanding, by God revealing truth to us - and not through our five senses. That is the difference between "sense" knowledge and "revelation" knowledge.

In John 5:39, Jesus said, when speaking about the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures, "These are the Scriptures that testify about Me." The Old Testament is not primarily Israel-centered. It is Christ-centered, Messiah-centered. The heart of Israel's prophetic and historic mission is Christ. This implies that we can properly understand the prophecies of the Bible **ONLY** when we relate the predictions to God and His Messiah, the anointed Son of God, rather than to literal Israel.

Revelation 1:1 tells us that the book of Revelation is "the **Revelation of Jesus Christ**." So everything in Revelation must be interpreted through Jesus Christ and His life on earth. **The focus of the book of Revelation** is not to reveal the history of the nation of Israel, **it is to reveal the character and plans of Jesus Christ**.

When the Israelite Pharisees rejected Christ as the Messiah, He declared:

"I tell you that the **kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit**" (Matthew 21:43).

The people who actually would receive the kingdom of God were those in Christ's time who accepted Jesus as the Messiah of prophecy. Christ assured His own disciples,

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give YOU the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

Christ ordained exactly 12 of them as His apostles to represent the new Messianic Israel, which He called “My ecclesia”, or “My called ones” (frequently mistranslated as the “church.”)

The group of true followers of Christ **is** the restoration of the “Israel” in prophecy, since the Israelites were actually Christians (NOT “Jews”). This is the Christ-centered focus of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the remnant of “Israel.” Neither the Old Testament or the New Testament “Israel” has any particular ethnic origin. They are both composed of those who were either a) looking forward to Christ, the Messiah (Old Testament), or b) those who were the true followers of Christ.

The gathering of the religious and political powers to Armageddon is described within the framework of the sixth plague (Rev 16:13-16), but the actual “battle on the great day of God Almighty” (verse 14) will take place during the *seventh* plague.

Why is Armageddon placed within the setting of the seven last plagues? The key to unlock this and all other apocalyptic (Revelation) terms lies in their connection with God’s judgments on behalf of His ancient covenant people, the true followers of Christ, Old Testament Israel. The God who delivered Israel from the enslaving power of Egypt and of Babylon in the past now assures the people who belong to Jesus, the Messiah, that He will once again - in the time of the end - deliver His covenant people from worldwide suppression and deadly menace: the Satanic One World Government.

Because of this, it is mandatory that we study Revelation, especially the battle of Armageddon in relation to the types, or typology, found in Exodus regarding the 10 plagues and the deliverance of God’s people from the ancient, tyrannical Egyptian Pharaoh, as well as the deliverance of God’s people from ancient Babylon.

The book of Revelation brings the same assurance of liberation for the true people of Christ through the prospect of the seven last plagues. Israel’s history of redemption will become complete through the history of the true followers of Christ.

In Revelation 15:2-4, the victorious sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. This is an obvious allusion to the song of the first deliverance, sung by Moses and the Israelites on the shore of the Red Sea (Exodus 15:1-18), and makes Israel’s experience under Moses a prophetic type of the final deliverance of the “called ones” (ecclesia: incorrectly translated as “church”) of Christ. The specific emphasis of the future song of Revelation 15 is not the judgment of God but the manifestation of His glorious redemptive act.

The ancient Israelites were delivered twice: First from the Egyptians, during the Exodus and secondly from the Babylonians, after the captivity.

This is important in the interpretation of the seven last plagues: The first four future plagues find a striking analogy in the plagues of Egypt: God, through Moses, turned the waters and springs of Egypt into blood (Ex 7:17, 19-21), festering boils came on men and animals (Ex 9:8-11), total darkness covered all Egypt for three days while all the Israelites had light (Ex 10:21-23).

The two final plagues - the drying up of the great River Euphrates and the fall of Babylon (Rev 16:12,19) - are borrowed from the fall of ancient Babylon.

So, the seven last plagues of Revelation unite God's judgments on Egypt and on Babylon in order to assure the "called ones" of the absolute certainty of the coming judgment of God on end-time "Babylon" and "Egypt."

The term "Egypt" in Revelation is symbolic for atheism. "Babylon" is used to symbolize apostate religion.

This prophetic perspective points up the religious message of the future plagues: the God of Israel will act once more in judgment and deliverance, but now specifically on behalf of the followers of Christ who are captive in a worldwide Babylon and Egypt.

Two passages explain this war of Armageddon as the final contest between the combined forces of Satan, on the one hand, and Christ and His "called ones," on the other hand.

"They will make war against the Lamb (Christ and His true followers), but the Lamb will overcome them because He is Lord of lords and King of kings -- and with Him will be His called, chosen and faithful followers" (Rev 17:14).

"Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and His army" (the Lord and His true followers) (Rev 19:19).

This assures us that Christ is in full command. Revelation explains that Armageddon means the final show-down between end-time Babylon and **Spiritual** Israel's Messiah. This symbolism reveals to us that the "king," or political powers, will wage their war against "the Lamb" by actually persecuting and legally outlawing the faithful followers of Christ.

All of salvation history is basically a warfare between God and Satan (see Rev 12). Satan, as the apocalyptic dragon-serpent, is the SAME deceiver and murderer at the end of history as when he deceived Adam and Eve in Eden (Rev 12:9). Satan's specific aim was to destroy Christ, (verse 4), but when he was unsuccessful, he turned his warfare against the "called ones" of God, the true Christians.

“Then the dragon (Satan and his followers) was enraged at the woman (symbolizing the true followers of Christ) and went to make war with the rest of her offspring -- **those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus**” (Verse 17).

This clearly shows that the real issue in the battle of Armageddon is a religious-moral issue, the final test of loyalty to God and Jesus Christ.

The battle of Armageddon is not some nuclear war that destroys the world. Nor is it World War III. It is the battle of God’s enemies against the true followers of Christ.

Indeed, there will be many physical wars between nations right up until the time just before Jesus comes, but these physical wars between nations will NOT be the battle of Armageddon.

This satanic battle against the “called ones” of Christ forms the central theme of Revelation 12-19. While the evil warfare against the living body of Christ continues unrelentingly ever since the first coming of the Lord, the book of Revelation focuses its special attention on the FINAL crisis of God’s people.

If Babylon symbolizes the united enemies of God and Christ (dragon - Satan, beast – political power, and false prophet – apostate religious power: see Rev 12:8; 17:5; 18:2), then by the same kind of imagery the faithful Christians may be viewed as “the Israel of God” (Galatians 3:29; 6:16). The dramatic outcome of the mortal combat between this Babylon and this spiritual Israel is symbolically called “Armageddon” (Rev 16:16) because it signifies the total destruction of Babylon (verse 19).

John is writing to the seven *ecclesias* – mistranslated as “churches” but more precisely translated as “called ones” - (Rev 1:4) and he tells them that Jesus Christ “has made **us** kings and priests unto God and His Father . . .” (Rev 1:6). Thus the history of the “called ones” of Christ is meant to be the fulfillment and consummations of Israel’s history of redemption. This forbids any effort to apply the Hebrew names and geographic places again according to their old covenant ethnic and local restrictions.

The Book of Revelation has a clear purpose: to assure the end-time *ecclesia*, the called ones, that the God of Israel will dramatically intervene in salvation history in behalf of His covenant people through a final exodus redemption. Then He will vindicate His faithful people, while “the beast” and “the false prophet” and their followers will be “brought to nought (nothing) by the advent of His (Christ’s) presence.” (Literal translation of 2 Thess 2:8)

The description of the fall of Babylon, as a result of the sudden drying up of its Euphrates waters (Rev 16:12,19) is an unmistakable allusion to the ancient deliverance of Israel from Babylon. The Babylonian empire, as described in the books of Daniel and Jeremiah, was religiously and politically an archenemy of Israel as God’s covenant

people. John introduces Babylon into his future outlook because of its powerful opposition to Jerusalem, the City of God.

In the Old Testament, Babylon destroyed the Temple of God in Jerusalem, trampled on its religious truth, blasphemed the name of God, and oppressed the Israel of God (Daniel 1-5). These theological essentials, characteristic of Babylon, remain unchanged in its future antitype (what it will be like in this era) (Rev 14:8; 17:1-6; 18:1-8).

The hatred that inspired Babylon of old will motivate the end-time Babylon in a more intensified way. End-time Babylon directs its blasphemy and hatred against God, Christ (Rev 12:5) and the faithful “called ones” (verses 6-12). Babylon attacks and enslaves the people of God and distorts their teaching concerning the way of salvation and of true worship (Rev 14:6,8; 17:4).

“the thrust of the message of hope in the Apocalypse (Revelation) is that Christ will judge Babylon once and for all. He will vindicate His own people by rescuing them gloriously. The future fall of Babylon is based on the fall of ancient Babylon as its ordained type. As God’s judgments fell suddenly on ancient Babylon (Isa 47:9,11; Jer 51:8), so Christ will now cause His judgment to come suddenly on universal Babylon, the antichrist’s kingdom (Rev 18:8, 10,19). However, the final fall of Babylon will be much more devastating and infinitely more spectacular than that of its historical type. It will be Armageddon - that is, total destruction - for Babylon.

Look carefully at the manner in which Babylon actually fell. Cyrus, the Persian army general, came *from the east* (Isaiah 41:2,25) and, according to the **Cyrus cylinder**, took Babylon “without any battle.” His surprise entry into the city, by diverting its incoming water flow, took place in literal fulfillment of prophecy (Isaiah 44:27,28; Jeremiah 51:13,36; 50:38). Isaiah had stressed the redemptive purpose of it all: “For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen” (verse 4) and “He (Cyrus) will rebuild my city and set my exiles free” (verse 13) to restore the Temple (Isaiah 44:28).



Cyrus Cylinder

The Cyrus Cylinder or Cyrus Charter is an ancient clay cylinder, now broken into several pieces, on which is written a declaration in Akkadian cuneiform script in the name of Persia's Achaemenid king Cyrus the Great. It dates from the 6th century BC and was discovered in the ruins of Babylon in Mesopotamia in 1879.

Writing: Akkadian cuneiform script

Discovered: Babylon, Mesopotamia by Hormuzd Rassam in March 1879

Present location: Room 52, British Museum, London

Period/culture: Achaemenid Empire

Material: Baked clay

Created: About 539–538 BC

God called Cyrus “anointed” and “my shepherd” (Isaiah 45:1; 44:28). He served as a dramatic type of the Messiah’s final battle against modern Babylon.

“It is essential to define precisely the theological function of each participant in the ancient fall of Babylon before one can responsibly determine the corresponding function of each participant in the future fall of Babylon (Armageddon).

- 1) Babylon functioned as the enemy of the Lord and as the oppressor of Israel.
- 2) The Euphrates River was an integral part of Babylon, supporting and protecting it as a wall, thus likewise hostile to Israel.
- 3) The drying up of the Euphrates indicated God’s judgment on Babylon, causing its sudden downfall. It functioned therefore as the preparation of Israel’s deliverance.
- 4) Cyrus and his allied kings of the Medes and the Persians (Jeremiah 50:41; 51:11,28) came to Babylon as the predicted kings from the east in order to fulfill God’s purpose. They were the enemies of Babylon and the deliverers of Israel. Cyrus was “anointed” by the Lord to defeat Babylon and to set Israel free.
- 5) Daniel and the Israel of God in Babylon constitute the repentant, faithful covenant people of God (see Daniel 9).” Ibid

These are the essentials of the fall of Babylon which must be compared to the end-times events.

Babylon represents the enemy of Christ and of His church.

Both Babylon and Israel will be universal, their territory worldwide. (Rev 14:6 - “every nation, tribe, language and people”).

Verse 8 says she “made **ALL** nations drink the wine of the wrath of her adulteries.”

Babylon's river Euphrates has a universal application.

"The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages" (Rev 17:15).

These are the people who support the Babylonian system. The divine judgment is set in motion when the political rulers and the multitudes of all nations will suddenly realize God's verdict on religious Babylon and so unitedly withdraw their support from Babylon. They will even dramatically reverse their loyal support into active hatred, into such a hostility that they will completely destroy Babylon. (See Rev 17:16).

God will bring about the self-destruction of Babylon by way of her own supporters, just the way God has brought all the previous judgments on mankind. We do it to ourselves!

The moment of truth dawns when millions and millions of people around the world suddenly see through the hypocrisy of their spiritual leaders and loathe the clergy in whom they have reposed their confidence. This will result in the withdrawal of popular support from the end-time false religious system known as 'Babylon.

The beast with 10 horns (the One World Government - the Ten Kingdoms of the whole earth) will suddenly become the harlot's hater, instead of her illicit lover. They shall destroy her completely (Read Rev 17:16).

Jesus used a double application in His forecast of the doom of Jerusalem and of the whole world in Matthew 24. That is why it is imperative to study the Old Testament along with the New Testament. God's judgment on modern Babylon as portrayed in Revelation is the parallel and fulfillment of Cyrus' defeat of ancient Babylon.

Notice the phrase "so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared" (Rev 16:12 NKJV). God sent John the Baptist to "prepare the way for the Lord" so that a people might be ready to receive Christ (Matt 3:3; Isa 40:3; Luke 1:17,76). Jesus described John the Baptist as "Elijah", the one who prepared the way. "Elijah" or rather the "Elijah Message" must come again right before the Second Coming of Christ, (Mal 4:5)

The Elijah message certainly includes the summoning all men back from worshipping of nature - the creation - to worshipping the Creator. **"Worship Him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water"** (verse 7). (The Fourth Commandment - Exodus 20:8-11).

In the exaltation of the human being above God, in the praise of popular leaders, in the worship of humanity and possessions, and in the placing of the teachings of science above the truths of the revelations in the Bible, multitudes today are following after Baal.

The “Elijah message” demands that we make a decision: “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal is God, follow him” (1 Kings 18:21).

Truth has never been measured by numbers. Elijah stood practically alone against the 850 prophets of Baal and Asherah supported by Israel’s government (verses 19,22).

Ultimate deliverance for the human race will not come through any economic programs or political parties. It will come from outside, from outer space, when Jesus, the Messiah, returns as the Deliverer of His people.

When the Israelites escaped from Egypt and were about to cross the Red Sea, Pharaoh pursued them with his army. But Moses encouraged the frightened Israelites: “**Do not be afraid.** Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. **The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.**” Exodus 14:13,14 (In other words, “Sit down and Shut Up! And watch the Lord deliver you!”)

Apostate Christianity plus all the apostate religious forces, will lead ALL the political powers on earth to unite in one common cause, waging war against the true followers of Jesus Christ! This is the last demonic war pictured in Revelation. War against God is war against God’s people, the true followers of Christ.

The battle of Armageddon will not be World War III because at Armageddon the kings of earth are assembled by demons to fight not so much against each other as against the Lamb, the true followers of Christ.

The ultimate purpose of Christ’s return is not just the destruction of spiritual Babylon (the tyrannical Jewish Illuminati One World Government) but the rescue of His true followers (“those who keep the Commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus” Rev. 12:17), and the establishment of God’s sovereign rulership in His universe.

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