

Armageddon Illusions

By Steve Wohlberg

Armageddon! This frightening apocalyptic word refers to Earth's last battle. But who are the contestants? "Russia, Syria, or Iran against Israel," is a common reply. As U.S., British, and Israeli intelligence monitor closely Iran's quest for a nuclear bomb, and as the Middle East simmers toward a boiling point, millions of Christians, Jews, Muslims, and even secularists are pondering, "Is Armageddon at hand?" I believe so. Yet I'm also convinced massive *Armageddon illusions* are rampant. Let me explain.

The word "Armageddon" appears only once in the entire Bible, in Revelation 16:16. If you open God's Word and read this passage for yourself, along with the verses right before and after it, you will be amazed at what you'll find – and not find. Take a close look, and see for yourself:

(16:12) And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. (16:13) And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. (16:14) For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. (16:15) Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. (16:16) And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. (16:17) And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. (16:18) And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. (16:19) And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. (16:20) And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. (16:21) And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great (Revelation 16:12-21).

First of all, the word “Jew” is not found in this entire section, which is rather striking, especially since the common belief is that Armageddon is a bloody military battle against Israelis. Secondly, at least some of the above words are symbolic, for verse 13 speaks of “the dragon” and “the beast.” The dragon is earlier depicted as having “seven heads and ten horns,” as is “the beast” (see Revelation 12:3 and 13:1). Will a literal, fire-breathing “dragon” run loose in the last days? How about a literal, scaly, seven-headed ten-horned beast? Obviously not. These are *sacred symbols that must be interpreted correctly* (1).

On the side of the enemy, Revelation pinpoints the combined forces of the “dragon,” “beast,” “false prophet” (verse 13), “spirits of devils” (verse 14), and “great Babylon” (verse 19) which finally drinks “the wine of the fierceness of [God’s] wrath.” Thus it’s the “dragon,” “beast,” “false prophet,” “spirits of devils,” and “great Babylon” who are the bad guys. They will be crushed at Armageddon.

On Heaven’s side are “God Almighty” (verse 14), Jesus Christ (verse 15) who is coming “as a thief,” and individuals who “watch and keep [their] garments” (verse 15). The “garments” represent the spotless robe of Jesus Christ’s righteousness which He places upon individuals – one by one – who repent of their sins, trust His grace, “walk” obediently with God, and “watch” out for Satan’s tricks. Jesus Christ will rescue these when He returns. They survive Armageddon.

Those gathered to Armageddon are “the kings of the earth *and of the whole world*” (verse 14), not just Middle East dwellers. When Armageddon slams Planet Earth, God’s voice thunders from “the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, ‘It is done!’” Verse 17. Thus Revelation’s focus is God’s heavenly temple, where Jesus Christ now ministers in our behalf, not any physical building on earth. What is the affect of Armageddon? A massive earthquake rocks the globe (verse 18), “the cities of the nations fell” (verse 19), “and every island fled away, and the mountains were not found” (verse 20). Thus Armageddon is global, not local, and the entire earth is decimated.

What about “the great river Euphrates” drying up (Revelation 16:12)? Will the literal Euphrates River now flowing near modern Baghdad someday evaporate? “Yes!” some tell me, “don’t you believe the Bible?” Of course I do. But just think with me for a moment. “The great river Euphrates” is mentioned right before “the dragon” and “the beast,” which are clearly symbolic terms. What about the river? Could it be symbolic as well? Let’s take a closer look.

As we have seen, Revelation 16 not only mentions “the *great* river Euphrates” (verse 12), but also “*great* Babylon” (verse 19). This great Babylon is described in Revelation 17 as an unholy whore riding a seven-headed ten-horned beast. Clearly, this woman is symbolic. No literal prostitute riding a reddish monster will be reported on CNN. Hell’s Harlot also “sits upon many waters” (Revelation 17:1). In Old Testament days, ancient Babylon sat on the Euphrates. Drawing upon Old Testament history, Revelation depicts a “Mystery Babylon” (Revelation 17:5) again seated upon “many waters.” What does this mean?

Notice carefully. An angelic interpreter declared, “*The waters* which you saw, where the whore sits, *are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues*” (Revelation 17:15, emphasis added). There it is. According to Revelation – not Steve Wohlberg – “the waters” beneath the Harlot *represent people around the world who support Mystery Babylon*. Eventually, these waters will be “dried up.” Why? Because the 6th angel pours out God’s wrath upon these very waters! Read Revelation 16:1 and 12. This means that right before Armageddon, God’s judgments will suddenly drop upon those who support Babylon’s deceptions instead of wearing Jesus Christ’s white robe. This prepares the way “for the kings of the east” (Revelation 16:12).

In Old Testament days, Cyrus, whom God called “My shepherd” (Isaiah 44:28), attacked from “the east” (see Isaiah 46:11), dried up the Euphrates (Isaiah 44:27), conquered Babylon (see Daniel 5), and freed Israel from captivity (see Ezra 1). This history is utilized in the book of Revelation as a type of the apocalyptic moment when Jesus Christ, God’s Shepherd, descends from “the east” (see Matthew 24:27) to rescue His people at Armageddon!

To summarize, the popular notion that Armageddon is a Middle East showdown against Jews is not supported by Revelation 16:12-21 – *the only place in the Bible where the word “Armageddon” is mentioned*. Yes, these are the last days; yes, Islamic terrorists are marching; yes, Hezbollah Jihadists are irrational and insane; and yes, their murderous madness could ignite the spark leading to earth’s final events. But according to Revelation, Armageddon is vastly bigger than a military conflict a few miles east of Tel Aviv. Its scope is global, its enemies are massive, and its deliverance is worldwide. Ultimately, it is Lucifer himself and his Babylon (representing *all* false religions) that will be defeated when King Jesus descends from the eastern skies with His heavenly army (see Revelation 19:11-16, 19).

The Crucified and Risen One will soon return for His people – Jews and Gentiles – who are wearing white robes (see Revelation 16:15; 3:18; 7:9, 10; 19:7-9).

At Armageddon, whose side will you be on?

(1) For a detailed study of the “beast” of prophecy, see Steve Wohlberg’s book, *End Time Delusions*, pages 55-137.

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