

ARMAGEDDON IN YOUR LIFETIME

In popular usage the chilling words "battle of Armageddon" convey a grisly apocalyptic scenario of end-time military mayhem. Yet the term "Armageddon" is mentioned only once in the entire Bible. What is the truth about these terrifying words?

The skeptic claims: "The apostle John was merely a drug-driven, first-century hallucinator!"

"How could anyone in his right mind have written such a mind-boggling scenario of confusing and frightening symbolism?" he continues.

Can you answer?

Where *did* John get his prophetic ideas? Was he merely an elderly mystic whose mind was finally beginning to snap after years of persecution and opposition? Was he an apostolic drug addict recording the visions of some narcotic "high"? Or was he a rational, converted, Spirit-led Christian minister who was privileged to look into the terrifying future of the human race on beyond his own time?

The Source of the Apocalypse. The book of Revelation—the Apocalypse—the last book in the Christian Bible, begins: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God [the Father] gave unto him..." God the Father is said to be the original source of the vision of the book of Revelation. The overall message was delivered to Jesus Christ, who "sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John" (Rev. 1:1).

What John recorded—in the last decade of the first century (according to traditional reckoning)—was "the word of God" (verse 2) and the "testimony of Jesus Christ" Himself.

John, the "disciple Jesus loved," was projected ahead *in vision* to the time called "the Lord's day" (verse 10). *The Lord's Day* (or "the Day of the Lord") is the time when God will step in to take a hand in the

affairs of this world in a climactic and decisive manner. It is a general time period at the end of man's age described in numerous Bible prophecies (cf. Zeph. 1:14-18; Isa. 13:9; Joel 1:15; Jer. 46:10; Luke 21:34).

John was given messages concerning "things which are" and "things which shall be hereafter [the Day of the Lord]" (Rev. 1:19). The prophecy concerning Armageddon falls into the latter category.

Much, if not most, of what John saw in vision was conveyed in *symbolism*. John recorded his descriptions in the most graphic terms he was capable of using. (Our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled at Last* will greatly assist you in sorting out the story flow of Revelation and will help explain the sometimes difficult symbolism. Write for your free copy.)

Seven Last Plagues The "Armageddon" subject is dealt with in Revelation 16, where John describes the pouring out of *seven last plagues*. These "plagues" represent God's wrath (verse 1), poured out shortly before the triumphant return of the living Jesus Christ who will descend to take over the kingdoms of this earth (Rev. 15:4; 19:6; Zech. 14; Dan. 7:14). The plagues follow the opening of the last seven seals (Rev. 15:1, 8; 16:1).

The first bowl (vial) is poured out upon all those who are subservient to the great false Church-State System of the end time—the "beast" and the "image of the beast" (Rev. 16:2). Foul, painful sores are the lot of those who would adhere to this wicked and evil system.

The second plague affects the

"sea." This plague is similar to one of the plagues suffered by the Egyptians in the days just prior to the Exodus under Moses (Ex. 7-10). The water is to be turned to undrinkable, unusable blood! (Rev. 16:3.) The rotting remains of dead sea life will line the shores and cover the beaches as God's fearsome wrath is poured out on a rebellious and unyielding mankind.

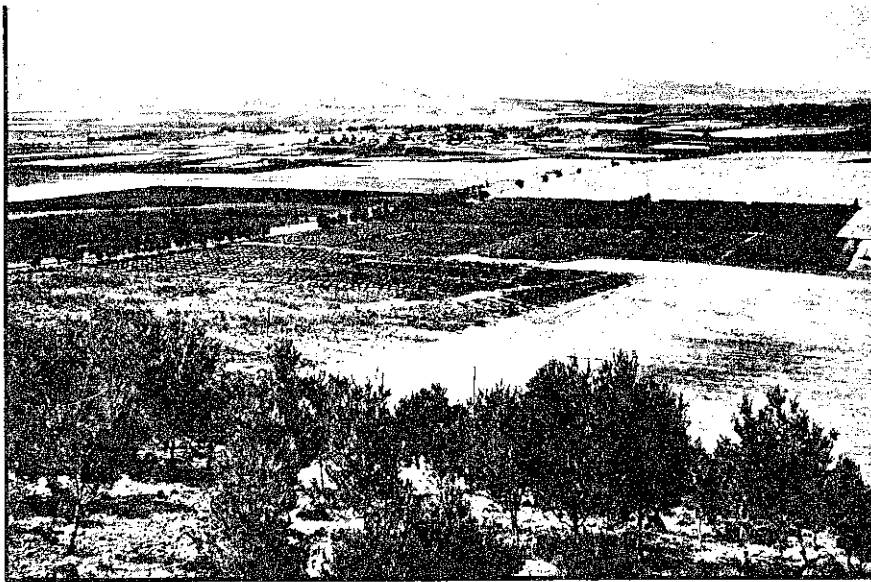
The third plague is like the second. Rivers and springs of fresh bubbling water are transformed to crimson torrents of real blood! This ironically fitting punishment will suit the crime. This world's religious and political leaders have long been responsible for the martyrdom of multiple thousands of God's true servants. Now the vengeance of God will be complete (cf. Rom. 2:1-9; Rev. 16:4-7).

The fourth plague is even more terrifying than the preceding punishments. The normally life-giving heat of the sun will somehow be intensified to an unbearable degree and men will be scorched by its fiery radiance! (Rev. 16:8.) Yet, in spite of the incredible severity of these punishments, men will still stubbornly refuse to repent before God! It is the hardening of heart of the ancient Egyptian Pharaoh all over again.

In spite of the cumulative pain of hunger, thirst, intense heat and the nauseating presence of the all-permeating odor of death and decay, man's rebellion will necessitate yet another frightening manifestation of God's wrath—total darkness!

The effect of this utter blackness will be devastating. Terror and con-

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fusion will reign supreme in the kingdom of the "beast." "... Men gnawed their tongues in anguish and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores, and did not repent of their deeds" (verses 10-11, RSV).

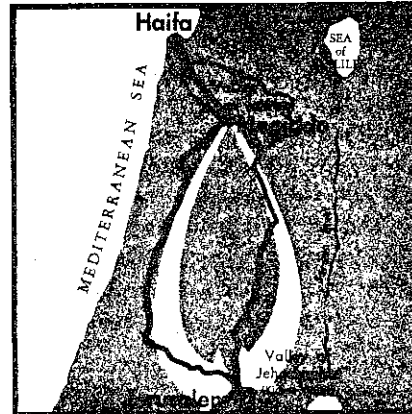
It seems that this end-time generation of humankind will be so intrinsically wicked that even the most severe and terrifying punishments, administered directly by the very angels of God, will be insufficient to bring about general repentance! How similar to the terminal time just before the great Flood of Noah's day when "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5, RSV).

Jesus Himself likened the endtime human condition to that of Noah's day: "But as the days of Noe were, so shall the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:37).

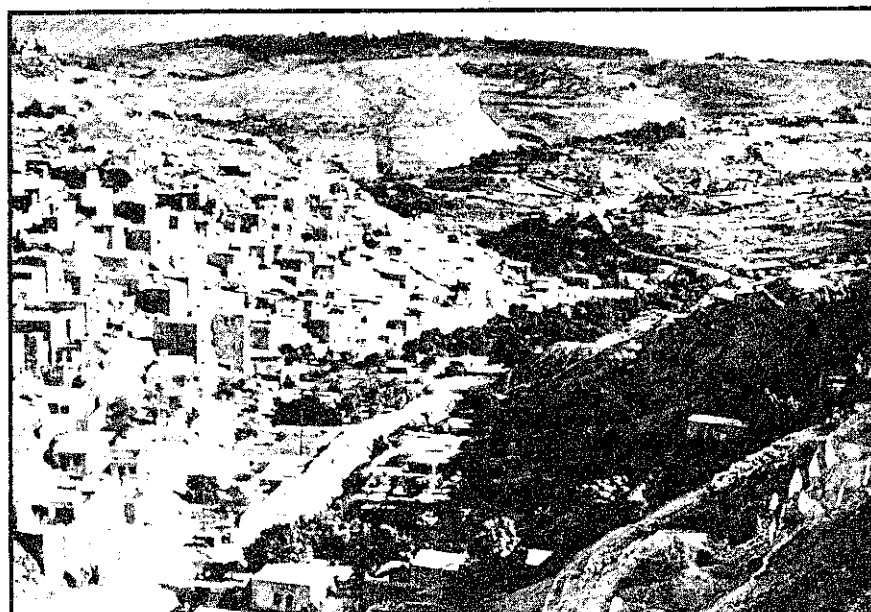
The Crucial Sixth Plague. Now, after five nightmarish plagues have been administered, the scene changes. At this crucial juncture the sinister forces of spiritual wickedness—Satan and his demonic followers—are unleashed to wreak hideous havoc upon the inhabitants of planet earth. (Is it significant that a plague of darkness precedes the unleashing of the forces of darkness?)

First the great river Euphrates, which flows some 2235 miles from Turkey to the Persian Gulf, will be dried up (Rev. 16:12). This powerful intervention in the ecosystem of the East will be performed by God's angel. But it is only a prelude, a setting of the stage for what is to come: "And I saw, issuing from the mouth of the dragon and from the mouth of the beast and from the mouth of the false prophet, three foul spirits like frogs; for they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty" (verses 13-14, RSV).

The dragon, of course, is Satan the devil (Rev. 12:9). The beast is the great end-time military leader who will be influenced by the devil. And the false prophet, who works



BIBLE PROPHECY reveals that just before God establishes His rule on earth, armies will gather in the valley of Jezreel (top photo) adjoining Megiddo. They will then converge on Jerusalem (at Kidron Valley, below) to fight Jesus Christ who is coming to enforce peace on a war-torn world.



hand in glove with the military leader, is a religious leader who will have universal influence and appeal because of his satanic charisma and power. This unholy triad, in league with a second triad of unclean spirits, will influence the world's political and military leaders to mobilize their forces for a final climactic battle called—what?—"the battle of that great day of God Almighty"! These "kings of the east" (verse 12) will then march westward to the nation of modern Israel where they will gather at a *site* named "Armageddon."

"And they [the demons] assembled them [the armies] at the place which is called in Hebrew *Armageddon*" (verse 16, RSV). As John states, *Armageddon* is actually a Hebrew name. It is *Har-Megiddo*, which simply means "the hill (or mountain) of Megiddo." This is the site of ancient Megiddo which is located about twenty air miles south-east of the modern port of Haifa.

A Brief History of Megiddo. Today this location has an Arabic name: *Tel el Mutesellim*. It is regarded as one of the most important archaeological sites in Palestine.

Anciently, Megiddo was one of the royal cities of the Canaanites. The city was not fully occupied by Israelites until the time of King Solomon (I Kings 4:7, 12). Solomon fortified the city (I Kings 9:15). Megiddo, and the valley of Megiddo (which was part of the larger Plain of Esdraelon), became an important and strategic site. Megiddo was the most important fortress city which guarded the strategic passes of the Mount Carmel area. The other cities were Joakneam and Taanach. Megiddo, in the middle, was flanked by the other two fortresses (each about five miles apart).

Megiddo was the site of the death of King Amaziah of Judah. Later King Josiah was killed near the fortress in his unfortunate and unnecessary battle with Pharaoh Necho of Egypt (cf. II Kings 9:27; 23:29; II Chron. 35:22).

For Israel, Megiddo and the Plain of Esdraelon became the battleground of the centuries. Time after time the blood of battle was shed there. Over and over again this thir-

teen-acre mound was refortified. Its thirteen-foot thick walls were doubled in thickness to make it a virtually impenetrable fortress. Four fifths of the attacks launched against Megiddo were unsuccessful. Yet some were, helping to add to the successive building or rebuilding of levels on the site. Down through the ages these have raised the mound some 75 feet above the original rock upon which it was built!

Extensive archaeological work has been done at Megiddo. Today the site (*Tel el Mutesellim*) is nothing more than an unoccupied, silent mound of historic rubble. Occasional tourists and archaeologists traverse its rocky face, but it is not a major military site at this time.

But Megiddo is a symbol.

It is a symbol of war and human conflict. It looks over the Plain of Esdraelon and the Valley of Jezreel and stood at one of the great crossroads of the ancient world. "It is no accident that the very name Megiddo has come to symbolize war in our own language, the Armageddon of Revelation 16:15, for this little corridor, the 'Plain' *par excellence* of modern Israel, is the cockpit of Palestine" (Denis Baly, *The Geography of the Bible*, p. 151).

The cockpit of Palestine! What an apt description of this important

strategic location. If we are to take the prophecy of Revelation 16 literally, Megiddo and the Plain of Esdraelon will become the rallying point for the greatest concentration of military might ever assembled!

Political and military leaders from the world to the east of the river Euphrates will be supernaturally induced to direct their armies to march on modern Israel. But who will compose this conglomeration of military might?

"**The Kings of the East.**" Which nations lie to the east of the great Euphrates valley? To the northeast lies the Soviet Union with its vast armies and prodigious military strength. South and east of Russia, in China, wait even more millions of infantry in constant military preparedness. Separated from China by the Himalayas lies teeming India with starving millions and a turbulent political scene. Smaller, less militarily significant nations—Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan—provide buffer zones between these nations.

These "kings of the east" will lead their armies to tiny Megiddo. With this symbol of war as their rallying point, these armies will then be confronted with yet another great military establishment—the combined might of a United Europe!

The final resurrection of the

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fourth "beast" of the book of Daniel has been identified by the majority of conservative Bible scholars as the Roman Empire. Rome followed three earlier empires—Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece—in world dominance. The last beast of Daniel was to have ten successive resurrections or revivals. The final revival, that of the *modern* Roman Empire—a union of church and state—is now in the making!

Prophecy indicates that this final manifestation of the nations originally dominated by ancient Rome will unite in a political, military and religious alliance of incredible power. A vast and mighty army will be formed which will find its way into the Middle East—perhaps on the pretext of protecting Israel from the threat of Communist domination. And oil will undoubtedly play a major role in any such maneuver.

The army of the "beast" will confront the armies of the "east." The ensuing titanic, unequalled violence would threaten "all flesh" with utter extinction but for the surprise intervention of a third party from outside! Long heralded, yes, but One whom few expected would come!

Enter Jesus Christ. You will notice the battle is not called "the battle of Armageddon"—it is called "the battle of that great day of *God Almighty*"! (Rev. 16:14.) The Last Great Battle will involve the armies of the Lord of Armies (Hosts) Himself! And it will center near the environs of modern Jerusalem.

The climactic final battle is described in intimate detail in the book of Zechariah: "Behold, a day of the Lord is coming. . . For I will gather *all the nations* against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be

taken. . . Then the Lord will go forth and *fight against those nations* as when he fights on a day of battle. On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives which lies before Jerusalem on the east. . ." (Zech. 14:1-4, RSV).

The two superpower armies will suddenly be confronted with an invader from space, a common enemy, the returning Jesus Christ! They will unitedly turn to face him in battle, motivated by the god of this world—Satan the devil (II Cor. 4:4).

Writing prophetically, David was inspired to describe this final confrontation between man and his God: "Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and his anointed, saying, 'Let us burst their bonds asunder, and cast their cords from us'" (Ps. 2:1-3, RSV). This is exactly what the leaders of officially godless communism would say! Let us break the yoke of religion, the opiate of the people, by destroying their God! The leaders of the great false religious system, those who actually worship Satan the devil and follow his way, will also look upon Christ as an enemy. They will combine their forces into the greatest conglomeration of military might, with the most modern, powerful and sophisticated weaponry in history, in one last attempt to defeat the King of kings and Lord of lords—Jesus Christ. But they will fail miserably!

"He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his

fury, saying, 'I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill'" (verses 4-6, RSV).

Terror is indeed the word! Zechariah describes the mind-bending, frightening manifestation of the wrath and might of God in fighting against those who oppose Him: "And the Lord will send a plague on all the people who fought Jerusalem. They will become like walking corpses, their flesh rotting away; their eyes will shrivel in their sockets, and their tongues will decay in their mouths.

"They will be seized with terror, panic stricken from the Lord. . ." (Zechariah 14:12-13, *The Living Bible*).

This is the battle of the Great Day of God Almighty described by John in Revelation. This is the terror that will begin at Armageddon and have its culmination at Jerusalem. And it could happen in your lifetime and mine!

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