

## 12. Babylon and Armageddon (2Q 2018—Preparation for the End Time)

**Biblical material:** Rev. 14:8; 16:19; Isa. 52:9; Rev. 18:1-10; 16:12-16; 1 Kings 18:1-40; 1 Cor. 15:1, 2; Rev. 17:5.

### Quotes

- The world is heading for another major crisis that is being called, even by the secular world, “Armageddon.” *Billy Graham*
- I have become more deeply aware of the enormous problems that face our world today, and the dangerous trends which seem to be leading our world to the brink of Armageddon. *Billy Graham*
- That’s how it goes, you think you’re on top of the world, and suddenly they spring Armageddon on you. *Terry Pratchett*
- This was especially true in some millennialist sects that filled their literature with paintings of Armageddon. Pictures of terrified people running away from some formless fiery doom that burned their world down behind them, while smug worshippers—of the correct religion, of course—watched from safety as God got with the smiting. *James S.A. Corey*
- Every generation of humans that has ever lived believed they would see the end of the world, whether they called it Armageddon or Ragnarök. *James Marquess*
- I remember once in the Holy Land seeing a sign in the shape of an arrow along a road. It said, “Armageddon, 4 kilometers.” If ever there was a sign that made you wonder whether you wanted to continue down a road, this was it. *Benedict J. Groschel*

### Questions

How do we talk about Armageddon without sounding like doomsday merchants? How is the showdown on Mount Carmel helpful in understanding what Armageddon is all about? What do you see as the key differences between true and false worship? What message of hope do we find in this week’s lesson?

### Bible summary

The fall of Babylon is described in Rev. 14:8, 16:19, and 18:1-10. It’s worthwhile reading these texts together to get the full picture. Babylon is the one who gave the nations false, intoxicating religion. In contrast, Jerusalem is redeemed (Isa. 52:9). Note very carefully who are gathered together at Armageddon (Rev. 16:12-16). This is the scene of God executing judgment. 1 Kings 18:1-40 records the story of the showdown on Mount Carmel between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. It is believed that Mount Carmel is to be identified with Armageddon (literally the mountain of Megiddo) since it is the only mountain in that area. We are encouraged to hold on to the true gospel (1 Cor. 15:1, 2). The woman dressed in purple and scarlet is identified with Babylon (Rev. 17:4, 5).

### Comment

The good news in this lesson is that there is an end! While the scenario of Armageddon may appear terrifying, this is part of God’s way of bringing the tragic rebellion of sin and evil to a close.

Many have tried to envisage how the end will come. Even Scripture provides some terrifying images. Images of people rushing everywhere and nowhere. Hordes of humanity, running, screaming. The earth in agony, worn out and groaning. Shaking and heaving, the world seems to be falling apart at the seams. The sky rolls back like a scroll, and in one last mighty convulsion the earth heaves and breathes its last.

Or will the end come through disease pandemic? The world is a vast leper colony, disease-ravaged and dying. Lying where they drop, all the world is one vast sick-bed, looking up with the vacant, staring eyes of those condemned to die. What sickness is this that wipes out the world? Whimpering and pleading, humanity dies with a tremulous sigh that echoes through the empty spaces of eternity.

Or will it be nuclear war? The mushroom cloud of death spells out its message of doom. For those not vaporised by nuclear explosion comes the long lingering agony of radiation sickness as the body dies from the inside out. Weeping and wailing, those whom remain still curse each other as the clouds rain radioactive dust in the dawnless night of nuclear winter. Like a shroud embracing the world, the lethal brightness of war fades to the cold sterility of emptiness. The world remains, but no one remains.

Or will it be some eco-disaster? Poisoned land, polluted seas, choked air, and each fights the other for breath and the scraps of life. Brother fights brother, father fights son, mother fights daughter in an ever-increasing spiral of self-destruction. Not enough food. Not enough water. And what there is carries the seeds of death as the world spasms in toxic shock. North fights south, east fights west in the killing fields of self-survival, and as one group wins they fight themselves on the dusty plains of Armageddon. The last picture is of an emaciated hand reaching out, pleading for food, for water, for air--but nothing remains, and all around the desert sands stretch far away.

So how *will* the world end? Does anybody know? Can we continue, thinking there will be no End? Or is this just scare-mongering, the nightmares of unbalanced minds? Will science provide the answers? Is there a new Golden Age just around the corner?

This is where the good news comes in. The truth is that Babylon will fall, and that God will be victorious at Armageddon. In so many ways we are creatures of the future. We invest in tomorrows. So we'd better be sure what's coming, and our part in it.

### **Ellen White Comments**

Every form of evil is to spring into intense activity. Evil angels unite their powers with evil men, and as they have been in constant conflict and attained an experience in the best modes of deception and battle, and have been strengthening for centuries, they will not yield the last great final contest without a desperate struggle. All the world will be on one side or the other of the question. The battle of Armageddon will be fought, and that day must find none of us sleeping. Wide awake we must be, as wise virgins having oil in our vessels with our lamps. . . . {Mar 257}

There are only two parties in our world, those who are loyal to God, and those who stand under the banner of the prince of darkness. Satan and his angels will come down with power and signs and lying wonders to deceive those who dwell on the earth, and if possible the very elect. The crisis is right upon us...

The battle of Armageddon is soon to be fought. He on whose vesture is written the name, King of kings and Lord of lords, leads forth the armies of heaven on white horses, clothed in fine linen, clean and white (MS 172, 1899). {7BC 982}

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