

# REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 3 THE FINAL CURTAIN

## STUDY FIVE

### Shock and Awe Revisited

*Revelation 16:12–16*

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*What do we mean when we refer to Armageddon? The Bible tells us it is the event when nations from around the world will gather to face God's judgment.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**W**HAT images come to your mind when you hear the word *Armageddon*? According to Merriam-Webster's, this term depicts "a final and conclusive battle between the forces of good and evil."<sup>1</sup>

Hollywood movie producers and authors of speculative novels have painted this battle between good and evil with pictures of blood-red skies, cataclysmic earthquakes and tsunamis, cities consumed by flames, and piles of dead bodies.

Yet Armageddon is not a thing of fiction.

In fact, these modern-day storytellers have adapted their narratives from Scripture—God's reliable account of history from eternity past to eternity future. Though some of these familiar images of Armageddon are exaggerated speculation, many of them find their origin in God's Word, specifically this book of Revelation.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we will turn to the final chapter of God's great story to examine the truth about the battle of Armageddon. We won't find answers to all our questions, but we will clearly see the clash between Jesus and Satan and God's decisive defeat of evil.



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## PREPARE YOUR HEART

Do you ever feel like it's almost *impossible* to make sense of the teachings of Scripture? If so, you're not alone! Thankfully, God has offered us His Holy Spirit, who illuminates God's Word and aids us as we pursue sound understanding and practical application. Say this prayer to ask God to guide you as you open His Word today:

*Father, I want to know You. Thank You for giving me the opportunity to do so through the Scriptures. As I explore the challenging topic of Armageddon, reveal Your true character. As a result, equip me to emulate You. In Jesus' name, amen.*



## TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The term *Armageddon* occurs only once in the entire Bible: [Revelation 16:16](#). John described it as the place where Satan's demonic army encountered Jesus, the slaughtered Lamb. According to [16:1](#), what divine event set the stage for this dramatic battle?

The sixth angel poured out his bowl of judgment on the location called *Har Megiddo*—the “mountain” or “hill” of Megiddo—a region in the Jezreel Valley, about sixty miles north of Jerusalem. Find this locale on your Bible atlas or the maps available for free at [insight.org/general/bible-maps](https://insight.org/general/bible-maps) (see “[Topography of Palestine](#)”). To visualize *Megiddo*, check out [bibleplaces.org](https://bibleplaces.org).

With the scene set, let's now turn to the Scriptures to see how the battle unfolds.



## Observation: Experiencing Armageddon

The final cycle of judgments in Revelation—the bowl judgments—culminate in [Revelation 16:12–16](#) in a series of events that anticipate Armageddon—the *final* judgment of God's enemies. As you *observe* these events, pay careful attention to the details John included.<sup>2</sup>

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### Setting the Stage—Revelation 16:12–16

John noted in [Revelation 16:12](#) that the sixth angel poured his bowl of God’s wrath on the Euphrates River. What did this action do to the river? What happened as a result?

Next, John saw an odd vision of three frog-like evil spirits. According to [16:13](#), where did these spirits originate? What did they do in [16:14](#)?

[Revelation 16:15](#) records an interesting note from Jesus’ perspective that interrupted the flow of John’s vision. This comment may seem misplaced, but it is for that exact reason we must pay careful attention to its message. Summarize Jesus’ statement in your own words.

Jesus warned John that His return would be imminent. His long-anticipated return to earth would be *entirely* unexpected like a thief in the night. Though humanity may be surprised, Satan would be ready, and he and his minions would gather the rulers of the earth to clash with the King of heaven at Armageddon in earth’s final battle ([Revelation 16:16](#)).

Yet John foreshadowed how this battle would end in [17:14](#): “Together they will go to war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will defeat them because he is Lord of all lords and King of all kings.”

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## Drawing Back the Curtain—Revelation 19:11–16

Though we might expect John to cover the battle of Armageddon in detail, his vision is relatively brief. His account begins with a majestic picture of the risen Christ descending from heaven. Read John's description of Jesus in [Revelation 19:11–13](#) and record what stands out to you most.

Who joined the risen Christ on His descent from heaven to earth in [19:14](#)?

The entirety of the battle of Armageddon took place in [19:15](#). Summarize what happened in the battle.

*Please understand that these horrendous scenes should not give you a bit of fear nor cause you any dread. . . . If you trust the Lord Jesus now, you will later be delivered from the wrath of God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### **Interpretation: Understanding Armageddon**

The Euphrates River is one of the most important landmarks in the story of Scripture. When God set creation into motion, He sent the Euphrates flowing through Eden to nourish the plants and trees ([Genesis 2:8–14](#)). And in Revelation, John watched this once-mighty river dry up to allow the armies of the east to march toward Jerusalem for an assault ([Revelation 16:12–16](#)).

During the most prosperous season of the kingdom of Israel, God gave King Solomon reign over the entirety of the promised land—from the Jordan River in the west to the Euphrates River in the east ([1 Kings 4:21](#)).

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Find these two rivers using your Bible atlas (or the map, “*World of the Patriarchs*,” available at [insight.org/general/bible-maps](http://insight.org/general/bible-maps)). Then identify the following cities: Nineveh, Babylon, and Susa. These cities were the capitals of Israel’s key national enemies in the Old Testament: Assyria, Babylon, and Persia (respectively).

On what side of the Euphrates River do these cities lie? Why is this significant? How does this help us understand the meaning of *Revelation 16:12* and, more broadly, the battle of Armageddon?

Why is it significant that Jesus’ pure, white cloak was soaked in dark red blood *before* the great battle (*19:13*)? Whose blood did He wear? What does this blood signify?

As John witnessed this decisive, final battle, he observed, “From his mouth came a sharp sword to strike down the nations” (*19:15*). Why did Jesus’ sword extend from His *mouth* rather than from His hand? In other words, what does this sword represent? For some help answering this question, consult a commentary, like Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s, *Insights on Revelation*, or *Constable’s Notes* at [netbible.org](http://netbible.org).<sup>3</sup>

*The best thing you could do to prepare for the coming of Christ is to tell people about Christ. It becomes for them an escape, a rescue from the horrors of what remains yet future. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### **Correlation: Foreshadowing Armageddon**

Though the depiction of the battle of Armageddon may startle modern-day readers, faithful Israelites would have highly anticipated the coming clash because the Old Testament prophets foresaw a day when God would dramatically intervene in the affairs of the world to judge the wicked and vindicate the righteous.

# Shock and Awe Revisited

## Revelation 16:12–16

Read the prophecies from the passages listed in the chart below. Then, record how each prophecy foreshadows the events depicted in Revelation's battle of Armageddon.

| Passage                   | Description |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| <i>Psalm 2:1–3, 10–12</i> |             |
| <i>Isaiah 13:9–13</i>     |             |
| <i>Isaiah 24:21–23</i>    |             |
| <i>Daniel 11:40–45</i>    |             |
| <i>Joel 3:1–3, 12–13</i>  |             |
| <i>Zechariah 14:1–5</i>   |             |

What value does knowledge of a *future* battle have in the present? Let's answer this question in the application phase of our study.



### Application: Anticipating Armageddon

Though Armageddon plays a key role in the future of God's creation, we have many lessons to learn right now from its account in Revelation. Consider the four following points:

- *The absence of certain details is surprising.* Though we want to know exactly how the battle of Armageddon will happen, John told us *everything* we need to know.
- *The presence of demonic activity is frightening.* Satan and his minions lead the rebellion against God, and their influence touches the whole world.
- *The resurgence of interest in spiritual matters is encouraging.* Many today recognize that this world moves in a dangerous direction. They are looking for true light.
- *The influence of Christ is compelling.* Let's point this lost world to Christ, whose promise to overcome Satan, sin, and death offers hope in a hopeless world.

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Which of these four points means the most to you? What practical steps can you take to respond to this truth this week?

How has this study shaped the way you understand that final, future clash between the forces of good and evil? How does this understanding fill you with the hope of the good news of Jesus Christ?

Jesus and Satan are engaged in an intense war, and this conflict will conclude with one final battle. Many fear Armageddon. It sometimes seems like Satan is so strong that he just might win that battle. But we don't need to fret. Jesus already won the war when He died on the cross and rose again.



## A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for the reminder that You have the final say. Though this world feels hopelessly lost, I find peace knowing that Jesus, the slaughtered Lamb, will return in all His glory to defeat Your enemies for good. The sting of sin and death is strong, but help me remember that it is temporary. In Jesus' mighty name, amen.*

## ENDNOTES

1. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2014), "Armageddon."
2. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the article, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"
3. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014).

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Brad Smith, writer and content strategist, *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2004, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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