

92 ARMAGEDDON

Passage: *"The sixth [angel] poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates. Its water was dried up, that the way might be prepared for the kings that come from the sunrise [east]. 13 I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, something like frogs; 14 for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings [leaders] of the whole inhabited earth to gather them together for the war of that great day of God the Almighty. 15 'Behold, I come like a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his clothes, so that he doesn't walk naked, and they see his shame.' 16 They gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew, Harmagedon [Armageddon]." Rev 16:12-16.*

Introduction: To comprehend "Armageddon", we need to recognize its context in the 6th bowl. The 6th bowl passage uses at least three Old Testament events as symbols: The sneak capture of Babylon by the Medo-Persians, the frog plague visited on Egypt, and good King Josiah's sad defeat by the king of Egypt at Meggido. The 6th bowl passage also uses the Old Testament symbol of the dragon, emblematic of primeval chaotic darkness that threatens the divine order and can only be subdued by God. We will seek to show that, like the 6th trumpet, the 6th bowl was about the catastrophic turning point of the first century Roman and Jewish war when the Idumeans (Edomites) joined with the zealots in Jerusalem to slaughter its inhabitants, completely shifting the balance of power in favor of the tyrannical zealot cause. (See Preterist Paper #87, regarding the 6th trumpet about this same event.) As usual, we need to ground our interpretation in the context of the first century people to whom it was written, not in futurist fantasies.

1. The Beast of Revelation was the anti-Roman zealot movement of first century Israel.

Because the Roman Empire followed the Greek Empire in secular history, most preterists assume that Rome was the beast of Revelation. However, our studies caused us to note that after the Greek occupation, Judah was an independent nation for about 80 years (140-63 BC). We need to remember that the Bible is centered on Hebrew salvation history, not secular world history. Israel won its independence from the third kingdom, Greece, and therefore independent Israel was the 4th Kingdom—the beast of Revelation. With this understanding, there is a coinciding "fit" of first century Judah with the 4th beast prophecies which we have documented elsewhere. (See P.P. #28, #42, #36, #37, #38, #75, #76, #86, etc.)

2. The history of the capture of Babylon by the Medo-Persians reveals the Euphrates River reference.

Rev 16:12 *"The sixth [angel] poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates. Its water was dried up, that the way might be prepared for the kings that come from the sunrise [east]."*

A. Comment: In 539 BC, Babylon was seized by King Cyrus/the Medo-Persians when they diverted the waters of the Euphrates River, enabling them to enter the city through the riverbed, easily and quickly taking control of Babylon.

B. O.T. Reference: "I call a ravenous bird [Cyrus] from the east [Medo-Persia], the man of my counsel from a far country. Yes, I have spoken. I will also bring it to pass. I have planned. I will also do it." Is 46:11

C. O.T. Reference: "Yahweh says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held to subdue nations before him and strip kings of their armor, to open the doors before him, and the gates shall not be shut: 'I will go before you and make the rough places smooth. I will break the doors of bronze in pieces and cut apart the bars of iron.'" Isa 45:1-2

D. Comment: In the first century, during the Roman and Jewish War, the Idumeans easily entered Jerusalem when a dreadful storm obscured the sound of sawing through Jerusalem's gates. It is significant that Jerusalem is called Babylon in the book of Revelation. (See: P.P. #4 "Babylon, the Harlot of Revelation, was First Century Jerusalem")

3. The Dragon, Beast and False Prophet spewed a trilogy of consequential deceits (frogs).

Rev 16:13-14 *"I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, something like frogs; for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings [leaders] of the whole inhabited earth to gather them together for the war of that great day of God the Almighty."*

A. O.T. Reference: "Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt." Ex. 8:6

B. Comment: Jerusalem was identified as Egypt in Rev 11:8. "...spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified."

C. Comment: The disastrous turning point of the Roman and Jewish War was precipitated by a lie propagated by three actors. #1. John of Gischala, who had not yet identified himself as a zealot, told the zealots that the people of Jerusalem were colluding with the Romans against them. This was a lie. #2. In a letter to the Idumean leaders, the zealots propagated this same deception and asked the Idumeans for help. #3. The Idumean leaders spread the lie among their military and headed for Jerusalem, hell-bent on vengeance.

D. Comment: The New Testament speaks of the spirit of antichrist (I John 4:3), spirit of slavery (Rom 8:15), spirit of divination (Acts 16:16), and the spirit of the world (I Cor 2:12). These are not spiritual entities, but world views or ideologies that can "possess" a person, a people, or a nation. "The dragon", "the beast" and "the false prophet" are roles, not identities.

E. The Idumeans exhibited the spirit of "the Dragon". In the O.T. the dragon was a metaphor for irrational over-whelming power, chaos, darkness and violence that only God can overcome.

F. The zealots had the spirit of “The Beast”. The zealots were defined by rebellion and godlessness. They wanted their personal freedom from Rome so much that they believed themselves justified in killing those who disagreed with them. The ultimate goal of the zealots was to rule the world.

G. The false prophets, also called the second beast, were the liars and propagandists who supported the zealots without being active zealots themselves. At this point in the war, John of Gischala was not yet a zealot, but was a deceiver working as a double agent. **John of Gischala exhibited the spirit of “The False Prophet”.**

H. “The whole inhabited earth” is a reference to the zealots coming to Jerusalem from all over the Roman Empire to join the rebel cause to overthrow Roman rule. (See Josephus Wars 4.3.3-4)

I. Comment: To summarize—The false prophet was John of Gischala who lied and set the catastrophic take-over of Jerusalem in motion. The beast was the zealots who propagated John’s lie urging the Idumean commanders to help them in their murderous exploits. The dragon was the Idumean army who epitomized brute power and chaotic destruction, bringing untold misery and death to Jerusalem.

4. The connection between watching, clothes, and nakedness.

Rev 16:15 *“Behold, I come like a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his clothes, so that he doesn’t walk naked, and they see his shame.”*

A. Comment: Levite guards were routinely charged with guarding the temple at night. They never knew what hour the captain would come by to check on them. Any guard found sleeping on duty was beaten and his clothing taken from him and destroyed.

B. Comment: With the city gates locked against the Idumeans, Jerusalem guards were permitted to sleep the night of the invasion, because the severe storm was thought to be divine punishment of the Idumeans for bringing weapons to Jerusalem. However, when the Idumeans broke through the gates, the guards were brutally murdered, some in their sleep, and largely unopposed access was made to the rest of the city. Josephus, “Wars” 4.4.5 to 4.5.1

5. The memory of the sad defeat of good King Josiah reveals the meaning of Armageddon.

Rev 16:16 *“He gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew, ‘Harmagedon’.”*

A. Comment: Harmagedon, also known as Armageddon, is a term derived from the Hebrew “Har Megiddo”, which means “Mount of Megiddo”. In Hebrew thought, a mountain is not necessarily high ground, but rather a lot of something gathered. A mountain was a symbol for a large and centralized group of people. (Jer 51:25, Isa 41:15, 44:23, Eze 36:1)

B. O.T. Reference: “In his days Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates; and King Josiah went against him, but Pharaoh Necho killed him at Megiddo...” 2 Kings 23:29

C. O.T. Reference: “All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. Jeremiah lamented for Josiah, and all the singing men and singing women spoke of Josiah in their lamentations to this day; and they made them an ordinance in Israel. Behold, they are written in the lamentations.” 2 Chr 35:24-25

D. Megiddo was the site of many battles in the Old Testament, but the ultimate grievous battle for Judah was the defeat of good king Josiah around 600 BC. After over 50 years of wicked rule, he was a model of moral and spiritual renewal. Josiah restored the temple and rid the nation of pagan worship. In a singular moment of bad judgment, he went to war against the King of Egypt and was killed. Megiddo became synonymous with immense sorrow and demoralization for the nation—a “Waterloo” event. Revelation 16:16 prophesied another miserable “Josiah” tragedy for Judah. First century Jerusalem was the ultimate and final location of “Armageddon”.

E. “Armageddon”, along with “Sodom”, “Egypt”, and “Babylon”, are names for Jerusalem in the book of Revelation. These names remove the geographical meaning and reveal the spiritual condition and fate of the Great City.

Closing thoughts: This is our understanding to date. We invite skepticism and scrutiny.

NOTE: “The spirit of anti-Christ” has many different aspects as revealed in Rev 12:9-10

Dragon = Serpent = the Devil (the slanderous) = Satan (adversary) = Deceiver = Accuser

NOTE: Read the 14 page Idumean invasion of Jerusalem in Josephus “Wars of the Jews” book 4, chapters 3-6.

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