



DISCOVERING REVELATION

Armageddon

It's just a tiny bit of real estate in the Middle East, but it has attracted more attention from religious groups than most places on the planet, largely because of the Bible's prophecy regarding the battle of Armageddon (**Revelation 16:12-15**).

There has been much speculation over the years regarding this prophecy. Popular interpretations of the prophecy range from a nuclear disaster or a comet striking the earth to an invasion of Israel by Russia. Some people, because of the large divergence of opinion on the subject, simply shrug their shoulders and declare, "Who can possibly understand it?"

Yet the Bible teaches that Bible prophecy was not given as fodder for speculation. **2 Peter 1:19** teaches that we should "take heed" to what prophecy is teaching us. This passage also indicates that "no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation"—which means that understanding Bible prophecy is not for a privileged few. God intended for *everyone* to understand it.

In **Revelation 1:3**, God promises a blessing on those who read the book of Revelation and keep the things that are written in it. The angel also instructs John in **Revelation 22:8-10** that the book of Revelation is *not* sealed. But if we were meant to understand it, why are there so many different opinions on the subject of Bible prophecy?

The answer is simple. Many fail to maintain a *balance* when they approach Scripture, and they fail to gather *all* of the biblical evidence on a given subject before they come to a conclusion. Approximately two-thirds of the book of Revelation is composed of language borrowed from other parts of the Bible. If John uses language that is hard to understand, you can often unravel its meaning by comparing it to similar passages found in the rest of the Bible. This is particularly true of the book of Daniel.

The word *Armageddon* itself is a composite word. It comes from *Har Megiddon*, which literally means, "the mountain of Megiddo." This prophecy refers to a mountain that is located at the crossroads of the ancient world. Many armies met at Megiddo and fought a number of decisive battles. Archaeologists have discovered fortifications built by Ahab, Solomon and other Bible kings. Joshua defeated the kings of Canaan there (Judges 5:19), and Deborah and Barak defeated the armies of Sisera there as well (Judges 4). It was also at Endor, on the eastern edge of Megiddo, where Saul turned his back on God and went to a spirit medium for advice. The next day, he died during a battle with the Philistines. Elijah confronted the priests of Baal in a spiritual showdown on Mt. Carmel—at Megiddo. A lot has happened in this valley—so much, in fact, that it has come to stand for conflict and struggle. It has come to stand for great spiritual controversy in particular.

In Daniel 5, we find the story of Belshazzar (grandson to Nebuchadnezzar) throwing a blasphemous feast in which he was apparently trying to reassure the citizens of Babylon that their city was indestructible. To prove it, he exhibited the spoils of past victories, including the vessels from the temple in Jerusalem. Why did the citizens of Babylon need reassuring? Because there was a massive *army from the east*—the Medo-Persian army—parked just outside the city.

Cyrus the Persian couldn't break through the walls of the city, so he decided to go under them where the Euphrates River passed through the city. In a dramatic fulfillment of the prophecy found in Isaiah 44:27-45:1, written more than 100 years before Cyrus was born, he drained the Euphrates River and marched under the walls. Because of the drunken feast going on inside, the gates along the river inside the city were left open. The city fell in one night, just as God told Belshazzar (**Daniel 5:22-25**).

If you take this story and compare it with the prophecy of Armageddon, you will notice some startling parallels. In **Revelation 16:12**, the Euphrates River is dried up to make way for the kings of the east (Cyrus was from the east). **Revelation 16:19** tells us that the end result of the conflict is that Babylon falls!

Cyrus, who attacked Babylon from the east, is called “God’s anointed” in **Isaiah 45:1**. Jesus Christ is God’s Anointed, and He also is depicted as coming from the east (see **Matthew 24:27**). The prophecy of Armageddon is pointing us forward to the day that spiritual Babylon (representing spiritual confusion) is destroyed by the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

The battle of Armageddon points us to something much bigger than a simple valley or a physical war. It is a symbol of a spiritual battle being fought for each one of us. That is why John is so careful to refer to the “Mountain of Megiddo,” or *Har Megiddon*. John is using language in Revelation 16 to point us back to the showdown on Carmel. As earth’s history winds up, we need to be sure that we are standing on the right side. Once and for all, the struggle between good and evil will come to a close.

The most significant mountain by the valley of Megiddo—by far—is Mt. Carmel, where Elijah called the nation of Israel to make a decision for or against God. “How long halt ye between two opinions?” he asked (**1 Kings 18:21**). The issues involved in Armageddon are much bigger than real estate or military squabbles. It is a symbol of the ultimate controversy when the destiny of every person on earth is going to be settled once and for all. It is the battle that decides whether or not Christ is Lord.

“How long will you falter between two opinions?” This is the real issue at stake in Armageddon. We need to make a decision—which God will we serve? The god of self? The god of money? Or the God of Heaven?

Revelation 19:11-16 is a description of the resolution of the great conflict taking place in the universe. This is the climax of the battle for your eternity. Jesus Christ will return and set the record straight. Sin and suffering will be done away with for all time. **Revelation 16:20, 21** describes those who are not ready for Christ to come. There is no need to be among them. How long will you falter between two opinions? The offer of eternal life is free—Christ has purchased it for you. Will you accept His gift and be found waiting for Him when He comes?