

## UNPACKING THE SYMBOLS OF ARMAGEDDON

In the Old Testament, the kingdom of Babylon opposed God and His plan for His people. That's why the book of Revelation consistently uses Babylon as a symbol of opposition to God in the last days. Old Testament Babylon was eventually destroyed, and God's people were set free. Revelation's prophecy is telling us that, likewise, spiritual Babylon will be destroyed in the end-time Battle of Armageddon so that God's people will be set free to go home with Jesus when He comes.

The Battle of Armageddon is a worldwide battle between the forces of God and Satan—a spiritual battle for your heart. Elijah asked, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him." (1 Kings 18:21)

Joshua challenged the Israelites, "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve." (Joshua 24:15)

Will you accept this challenge today? Will you choose to follow God with all your heart?

### MY DECISION

- I choose, today, to stand with God in the last great battle between good and evil in the world.

### MY PRAYER

*Father, I give You my heart. I want to be with You in Your kingdom. Help me, I pray. In Jesus' name, Amen.*



## The Battle of Armageddon

The idea of Armageddon as planet Earth's final global conflict comes from the Bible—from the book of Revelation. But almost no one agrees on just exactly what the Battle of Armageddon is or what it's all about. Some see Armageddon as a great end-time military conflict—perhaps between the United States and the countries of the Middle East. Others think it's a nuclear holocaust that destroys the world. Another view is that Armageddon will be caused by natural disasters or incurable plagues.

Everybody has a different idea about what the Battle of Armageddon will be. So let's see what the Bible says about this topic.

## GOD IS TRYING TO TELL US SOMETHING IMPORTANT

1. What is the purpose of Bible prophecy? (**Amos 3:7**)

Surely the Lord God \_\_\_\_\_

God wants us to understand His plans for us and for our world. God looks at the way human beings are rebelling against Him, and it breaks His heart. He sees where we're headed. So—with love—He tells us what is coming. He says, "Stick with Me and I'll help you get out of this mess." That's what Bible prophecy is all about. God is trying to tell us something important.

2. But Bible prophecy seems so difficult to understand. How can we grasp what God is trying to tell us? (**Isaiah 28:10**)

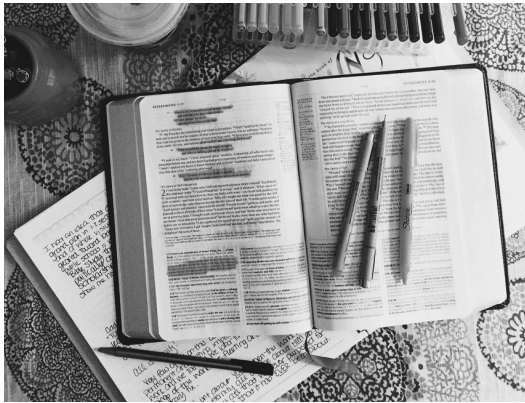
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The key to understanding prophecy is to let the Bible interpret itself—here a little, there a little, line upon line, we put together all that the Bible has to say about a topic. When we put it all into context, the prophetic picture becomes clear.

In isolation, taken out of context, Armageddon can be made to look like a last-day nuclear battle in the Middle East. But understood in the context of the complete biblical picture, it is the prophecy of a much more important battle—the battle for your heart.

## HOW TO UNDERSTAND BIBLE PROPHECY

**PRINCIPLE #1: Always read a verse in its context.** You can build any theory you want if you just lift different Bible verses in isolation and then put them all back together to make them say what you think they should say. But the only way to really understand God's message is to look at all the verses surrounding the one you're trying to understand. Ask: "How does this verse fit with everything around it and all the rest of the Bible's teachings?" When you do that, the meaning of the verse usually becomes very clear.



**PRINCIPLE #2: The symbols in Bible prophecy often appear elsewhere in the Bible.** Some Bible students say that as much as two-thirds of the symbols and images of the book of Revelation are borrowed from the rest of the Bible. So if you find a puzzling symbol in Revelation, see if it appears somewhere else in the Bible. Putting these together will often make it plain. This is especially true in the books of Daniel and Revelation. One will often help explain the other.

## THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON

With this background, let's take a look at what Revelation has to say about the Battle of Armageddon. (**Revelation 16:12-16**)

3. Who initiates the battle by gathering the participants, and how widespread is the battle? (**vs. 14**)

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Armageddon involves a global spiritual deception. The spirits of demons gather the whole world for a final confrontation—not a physical battle, but a battle for the hearts and minds of every person on earth.

4. When does the Battle of Armageddon take place? (**vs. 15**)

Behold I am \_\_\_\_\_

Right in the middle of the prophecy about the Battle of Armageddon, Jesus announces His second coming (see also **1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10-13**). So the Battle of Armageddon takes place in the last days just before Jesus appears.

5. Where does the Battle of Armageddon take place? (**vs. 16**)

The Hebrew name "Armageddon" means "the Mountain of Megiddo." This is an actual place in northern Israel—a small valley bordered by three mountains. Clearly, the armies of the whole world can't gather for battle in this one small valley. That should be a clue that the Battle of Armageddon is not a physical battle between vast armies.



Armageddon is a spiritual contest between good and evil—a struggle for the hearts and minds of every person on earth. The Valley of Megiddo in Israel is where so many spiritual conflicts took place in the Old Testament. Mount Carmel—one of the mountains on the boundary of this valley—is where Elijah dramatically faced down the false prophets of Baal. (1 Kings 18:20-40)

6. What challenge did Elijah give to the children of Israel? (**1 Kings 18:21**)

How long \_\_\_\_\_

In the last days, every person will face this same choice—truth or falsehood. God or Satan.