

ARMAGEDDON: MEANING AND MYTH

By

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Milo (3rd Tenure)

Second Draft

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my Milo Adventist Academy Bible Class (2022-23) who put up with my incessant references to the wonders of prophecy during the general time that this book was crafted and written.

It is my deepest hope that these precious students live productive lives of service for Jesus, and that we will meet in the Kingdom of God.

Special Thanks

Special Thanks goes to my sister, Anita Beerman Shultz, for her wonderful help in preparing the manuscript, and providing supporting material.

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1

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Few biblical topics have incited greater interest than the *Battle of Armageddon*. The subject of *Armageddon* offers dramatic material for theology, evangelism, the cinema, and even the arts. Whether it is the allure of conflict, or a grand, futuristic curiosity toward a cosmic war story, or just the general sensational nature of apocalyptic drama, most any person acquainted at all with Christian or biblical literature knows at least a little bit about this climactic, final battle. Most moderns, at least, probably have some faint idea in their head about the *Battle of Armageddon*.

The particular “place” referred to in John's *Apocalypse* as “Armageddon” is one of the world's most widely recognized biblical terms. Yet, at the same time, it qualifies as a geographical site, or battle, in which practically nothing conclusive has ever been established. For Bible students and theologians, the meaning of the word, *Armageddon*, has remained as an enigmatic mystery over much of the last two thousand years. The place, *Armageddon*, is famous, no doubt, largely because of the mystery that surrounds it, and because of its relation to the climactic prophetic events described in the pouring out of the seven bowl plagues of the biblical book of *Revelation*, chapter 16.

To be sure, many have made bold and explained its identity and meaning with an air of certainty. But the positions on the subject are many and varied, none of which are wholly satisfactory to some exegetes. Many are simply tired of the subject, for good reasons, and they cannot be blamed for not wanting to listen to any further explanations. The one common denominator is the view that Armageddon refers to a large-scale battle. Beyond this the interpretations vary. The diverse views mainly line up along the issue of the battle's nature, from one that is purely *physical*, to one that is solely *spiritual*.

Adventists, to whom this book is primarily addressed, do not have a consistent historical theology on Armageddon, though some would say they do somewhat, at the present day. The reason for this book is that I, the author of this treatise, do not believe that Adventists, or at least most Adventists, really have a full understanding of it in a specific sense. They are generally accurate in understanding the big picture, with the major players, and the final outcome. But I would also say that the discussion on the subject is still open in the minds of many Adventists. This was true of early Adventism, and is even true today, even in considering all of the theological developments, and including all the current dialogue.

The purpose of this treatise is to attempt to discuss and clarify some of the issues, imagery, theology, and expectation around the term, *Armageddon*. In this book, I, as the author of this book, will offer what I think is a definitive answer to this mystery. I deplore the typical habit of certain writers who give us vague and wordy exercises, dance around the problem, and will not in the end own up to their lack of understanding, or even sometimes own up to their own real convictions. Being open minded, and having a willingness to represent the leanings and thoughts of others, or to offer multiple solutions or options is perhaps responsible scholarship, but to leave it there with no favored resolution, is like a song with no appropriate ending.

So, I hope the reader will digest all that is said in this endeavor, and especially not skip over the key arguments, but follow it to the end. I promise to leave you some resolution and a proposition on it. This is how I work, I argue for a particular conclusion. I believe this mysterious matter has an answer, and that God wants us to understand it more than we do, perhaps, in these final days of this earth's history.

But in so doing (arguing for a solution), please keep in mind that I am in the truest sense only trying to challenge you to study and digest your own version of events, and that I am not saying that if you disagree with me you are wrong, or that I am the only one who knows it all, on the matter. I will say right now, I don't know all that much about these gigantic, cosmic themes, and I realize it! Nor do I want to start a war over Armageddon!

This book will not cover all the issues around the subject of *Armageddon*. But as I state in all my preaching, teaching, and seminars, my goal is not to promote my personal theology, or share my relative ignorance, but rather to engage God's people in learning and dialogue on the issues that are relevant to our day. If I can but only stimulate their interest and stir their noble minds into pure thought on these momentous and important themes--- I will consider this small effort a booming success. And nothing stirs the imagination like Armageddon!

Come to your own conclusions, but be wise about it. Unfortunately, the shallow, careless, or sensational approaches to this subject have only muddled the matter in the past. So I ask for caution and care as we proceed, and as you, the reader, proceed toward a conclusion as to the meaning of Armageddon. It is not a salvation issue. But the grand climax of history does speak of life and death matters, and the meaning of the word, "Armageddon," informs us about the deciding issues that are right out in front of us as we face the latter times. While the identity and meaning of Armageddon is not a salvation issue, per se, it certainly is a relevant one, and in the opinion of this author, a fascinating, and enriching one as well.

So, on to the *fray*!

2

CHAPTER 2:

ARMAGEDDON AND THE LARGER WORLDVIEW

No apocalyptic expression stirs the imagination or arouses the emotions and fears like the name and place: “ARMAGEDDON.” The Battle of Armageddon has become the subject of cinematic drama, the inspiration for exposes’ on the final cataclysmic events before us, and sometimes even made a premier celebration of eschatological or ultimate horror. Every modern generation has seen themselves as on the eve of the final holocaust, one where the world spins out of control--- where blood, disaster, and carnage all come together in a climactic struggle that leaves few survivors.

Armageddon has been the theme for several Hollywood productions, presenting disaster and carnage, of course, and filled with dramatic action to entertain the masses. With the present author, having not watched any of them, he cannot say how they portray the Armageddon theme. But his guess is that

considering the typical disposition of Hollywood drama, they would usually present such matters only as perceived by the secular mind. Rarely would such cinematic drama really leave us with any genuine idea what the biblical teaching regarding Armageddon is actually about.

But, biblical *apocalypticism* has become a fertile field for drama and the arts, regardless of genre, or whether one is of a religious or secular persuasion. “Armageddon” has even been the theme for hymns, songs, and music:

The famous, late country singer, Hank Williams, produced a hymn titled: “The Battle of Armageddon” (1956),¹ that directly referenced the approach of the day of God Almighty. Though we can never be sure what impact such efforts actually play in the people that hear them, it is an example of how the world in general perhaps, views the subject of Armageddon:

There's a mighty battle coming and it's well now on its way
It'll be fought at Armageddon, it shall be a sad, sad day
In the Book of Revelation, words in chapter sixteen say
There'll be gathered there great armies for that battle on that day. . . .

(more vss. below)²

¹ Written by Roy Acuff and Odell McLeod.

² All the way from the gates of Eden to the Battle of Armageddon
There's been troubles and tribulation, there'll be sorrow and despair
He has said "Be ye not troubled for these things shall come to pass."
Then your life will be eternal when you dwell with Him at last

Turn the pages of your Bible, in St. Matthew you will see
Start with chapter twenty-four and read from one to thirty-three
In our Savior's blessed words He said on earth, He prophesied
For He spoke of this great battle that is coming by and by. . .

There'll be nation against nation, there'll be war and rumor of war
There'll be great signs in Heaven, in the sun, the moon, the stars
Oh, the hearts of men shall fail them, there'll be gnashing of the teeth
Those who seek it will receive it, mercy at the Savior's feet

Though it doesn't use the word, *Armageddon*, another popular hit from the 1970's rock band, Creedence Clearwater Revival, "Bad Moon Rising,"³ written by lead singer, John Fogarty, anticipates apocalyptic events, and emphasizes mental preparation for it. Again, how much it served this purpose of revival is anyone's guess, but at least it had a catchy lilt to it, and a strong, rhythmic beat!

I see the bad moon risin'
I see trouble on the way
I see earthquakes and lightnin'
I see bad times today

Don't go around tonight
Well, it's bound to take your life
There's a bad moon on the rise

I hear hurricanes a-blowin'
I know the end is comin' soon
I fear rivers overflowin'
I hear the voice of rage and ruin . . .

Hope you got your things together
Hope you are quite prepared to die
Looks like we're in for nasty weather
One eye is taken for an eye

Well, don't go around tonight
Well, it's bound to take your life
There's a bad moon on the rise . . .

An early SDA hymnal even included a hymn entitled "Armageddon." With phrases taken from Rev. 14:14–20 and 19:11–21, it is about the role of Christ and the angels in the battle of Armageddon, defeating the evil powers of earth, and delivering God's people.⁴

³ John Cameron Fogarty; (Released 1969).¹⁰

⁴ (*Hymns for Second Advent Believers Who Observe the Sabbath of the Lord* [1852], pp. 23, 24).

Even secularists of different ranges admit the possibility of such a gruesome demise for our present earth. Both religionists and secularists agree that we live in momentous times, times that bode an unpredictable future. The specter of nuclear annihilation hangs over our heads like the sword of Damocles. The concurrent threat of terrorism that sits on our very doorsteps and streets, the declarations of war and rumors of wars that have become constantly occurrent in our world—terrorism, bloodshed, violent and deadly weather events, all smack of impending DISASTER. But no word better summarizes the culture of imminent annihilation like the word, ARMAGEDDON.

Armageddon and the gathering to battle comes in the apocalyptic showdown found in *Revelation* 16:15-17 ff. The battle comes in the sixth of seven plagues poured out upon the earth in the final moments of this earth's temporal history:

“Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walked naked, and they see his shame.”

“And he gathered them together to a place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.”

“Then the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and a loud voice came....” (vs. 15-17a) KJV

Armageddon comes only moments in time before the days of the voice of the final and seventh angel. When the seventh in a *Revelation* series comes along, it is virtually over. It is final. “But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.” (10:7) (NKJV)

On September 2, 1945, at the close of the Pacific front of WWII, General Douglas MacArthur stood on the deck of the battleship, Missouri, just following the surrender of the Japanese forces. Only less than a month before, a B-29 bomber nick-named *Enola Gay*, had dropped the first atomic bomb over Hiroshima. MacArthur warned:

We have had our last chance. If we do not devise some greater and more equitable system [for settling the world's international problems] Armageddon will be at our door.⁵

Many at the time, believed that Armageddon was indeed on the doorstep, and had believed so with the arrival and waging of WWII, and even with other previous world conflicts. Along with the horrors of that war (WWII), complete with the holocaust, genocide, and military annihilation dealt among a score of nations, the world looked like a virtual Armageddon. With the momentous scale and horror of what really took place in World War II, one could only wonder at the time what could ever really be worse than that. And no one can be blamed for thinking Armageddon was imminent at the time, when one considers how bloody and horrific those world wars were, bringing the annihilation of millions, causing dark suffering, and horror that happened at great depths and in colossal amounts, some of it still coming to light to this day, and showing that these conflicts were even worse than the people of those years even thought they were.

The most deadly battle of history was the Battle of Stalingrad in WWII. In that gargantuan engagement the loss of life was near 1,100,000 Russians, and nearly 900,000 German soldiers. Two million in one battle! The civil loss of life and intense suffering on both sides was incalculable, and all of this came about for the simple reason that Hitler (like Lucifer) had the personal wish to rule the world. The winter fighting was especially bitter and miserable for the largely trapped and over-extended German army. With only threadbare clothes, and trying to sleep and stay warm under the tanks, they faced cold and starvation without needed reinforcements.

The city itself, originally with over a million civil inhabitants, was reduced to rubble, with maybe a thousand of the original inhabitants, or less, left at the end. Witnesses who visited the scene soon thereafter saw horrors of every description; from piles of human bodies, open cess-pools, rib cages of horses with no flesh left on them, very young school-girls and small children strung up in ragged trees, homes and businesses left as nothing but hole-riddled structures, mostly gone, or burnt out, or destroyed. The scene of desecration was

⁵ (Douglas MacArthur, *A Soldier Speaks: Public Papers and Speeches of General of the Army Douglas MaxArthur*, ed. Major Vorin E. Whan, Jr., USA (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1965), p. 151)

unimaginable. Only an angry devil and his felons, not humanity, it would seem, could perpetrate such horror.

Having been part of an evangelistic series team in that city (now Volgograd) during the beginning of winter of the year, 2000, gave me appreciative sympathy for the victims of that conflict. The cutting cold wind off the Volga River, and the onset of winter conditions, have left me with a memory and a chill I will never forget. The gray of winter, the (unheated) visit to the battle memorial and the eternal flame, and a little old lady, too lightly clad, like a number of others, standing in -20 deg. all day, on the snowy street and side-walk near our flat, trying to sell but one tiny apple—is a scene that haunts me to this hour.

Any honest observer of earthly events will be forced to admit that our world is in trouble. The efforts to minimize the trouble, prejudice, and hate in our world, while noble efforts in many of the cases, are largely unsuccessful as a whole. Overall, we are still left with racism, homicide, riot, religious terrorism, and multiple wars being waged at the same time. (During the writing of these paragraphs I heard that Hamas has attacked Israel). Last year [2022], I had about a dozen high school students in my Bible class in the American northwest, because of the war in Ukraine). Armageddon-like events are not limited to one place on earth, but are spread across the globe in numberless quantity.

Some kind of Armageddon, one must see, is inevitable in the final struggle of planet earth. The problem of sin cannot be solved by politics, military control, peace-keeping missions, or even evangelistic or positive educational efforts. These massive problems of the earth can only be slightly minimized by these measures. The core problem of this world is found in the heart of man, beleaguered by a soul that is inherently selfish and evil, and this leads to unnecessary aggression and conflict.

The only fix for this central problem is the Cross of Christ, though that will only be effective for those who willingly accept its merits. General MacArthur was uncannily correct in his speech about Armageddon, when he said that what was needed was an “improvement of human character.” The solution to

human problems, he said: “must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh.”⁶ But since the enemy and his allies are constantly on the march, attempting to hold on to their dominion of this world, there will always be trouble, not only between the nations and their peoples, but especially between the forces of evil pitted against the forces of good and right. Armageddon will happen, it must, because the age of old controversy between good and evil must eventually come to a head in the last moments of time.

But there are various views as to the nature of Armageddon. Most moderns see it as a grand, climactic, apocalyptic confrontation including the nations of the world coming at the close of the age. But beyond that there are many various ideas about Armageddon.

Meaning of “Apocalyptic”

At the top, one term, that we might elucidate a bit is the term “apocalyptic.” Most views of Armageddon include a climactic battle that would according to the “military” view, include weapons, a clash of arms, bloodshed, and carnage. So, in the minds of many, *apocalyptic* has come to mean events that bring death, blood, and destruction. But while this term means such in the current world, as in a number of Hollywood’s movies—and that current understanding of the term we must recognize as being in the minds of most—the word doesn’t really, in the purest sense, mean that at all in *biblical* terms.

The book of *Revelation*, by its original Greek name, “The Apocalypse,” does not mean in its title, “death and carnage,” at all. The name simply means: “from hiding,” or “to open,” or “to reveal,” as found in the actual name: “Revelation.” Now, “apocalyptic,” a genre of prophetic exposition often includes opposing forces at odds with one another (referred to by scholars as apocalyptic “dualism”). But the books of *Daniel* and *Revelation* I would offer are not so much given to us to highlight future war and violence, or to promote any type of fear and horror—but rather, just the opposite. They are given to open to the faithful the mysteries of the present and future, and to give them practical and spiritual *help* and *insight* on matters of faith and give them warnings of danger.

⁶ Ibid.

They are written to inform them, *encourage* them, and *guide* them away from error; all against a background of the ultimate victory of truth and right.

This more accurate meaning of word: “apocalyptic” (to reveal or take from hiding, like a curtain being pulled aside), the present author, as a Bible teacher, would insistently place on quizzes and exams, over and over, until my students had thoroughly learned it. The *Revelation*, therefore, was not written to scare and terrify the faithful, or even the “wicked,” but rather to reveal to God’s people the fact that He will have His faithful in the hollow of his hand, He will see them through the inevitable times of trouble, they can know exactly what to expect, and know for sure that through Jesus, truth and right will triumph and emerge victorious.

Multiple Views of Armageddon

Unfortunately, the Christian world, and the world at large, promotes views of Armageddon that are at polar opposites to the correct or more-balanced view of the end-times and Armageddon, views sometimes placed at both extremes of the spectrum. Though the end will see troublous times, and this is undeniable, God does not want our focus to be on the trouble, but rather on the path through it and His faithful assurance of final deliverance!

Dispensationalist Views

On one hand are found the various military and dispensational views of Armageddon, presented as real combat between countries and nations, or the Antichrist, or the Beast, or active war between the righteous and wicked, or even armed battles between religious persuasions. Hal Lindsey, in the 1980’s wrote a best-seller that popularized such a view:

The impact of Hal Lindsey’s book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*,⁷ was huge. It was noted as the number one bestseller of the decade. It posed as a prophetic guide to Christian’s and non-Christian’s in light of the imminent Coming of Christ, and the unfolding future. It interpreted prophecy as being fulfilled in then- current events in world politics, and particularly in the Middle East. I’ve read it, but was left with limited edification as a result.

⁷ Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Zondervan, First Published, Jan. 1, 1970).

Lindsey dwelt on the reliability of Bible prophecy (which is good!), then interpreted events such as those found in the Middle East wars, the threat of Russia (Gog of the Land of Magog), increase in natural catastrophes, and the revival of Satanism and witchcraft. But Hal Lindsey definitely put a “dispensational” stamp on his prophetic predictions (some that didn’t turn out as thought—Armageddon coming in 1988), but like all dispensationalists, had Armageddon and the Coming of Christ after the “rapture” and the Tribulation in the future. As the promotion tag of the book promises: [World events] “portend the coming of an antichrist, of a war which will bring humanity to the brink of destruction, and of incredible deliverance for a desperate, dying planet.”⁸

Lindsey taught a literal and military upheaval that would involve a literal Jerusalem and Palestine, and bring the nations of the world into a huge clash involving the Antichrist (Armageddon) with arms, carnage, and death, but in the final end, deliverance for righteous Christians, from the evil forces.

More Positive Views of Armageddon

On the other hand, you have those who see Armageddon as a more friendly phenomenon. To those of this cloth, Armageddon is a welcome and necessary precursor to the process of the world gradually becoming pure and righteous. And all of us might hope for that in one respect. But Jehovah’s Witnesses joyfully welcome an Armageddon and millennium era that will bring a glorious change to planet earth. All other religions will be destroyed, and 144,000 select persons (JW’s, of course) will rule the world for 1,000 years.

Of interest, is the name of an article in the “WatchTower” magazine, that supports this theological leaning, typical of *Witness* thinking, entitled: “Armageddon—A Happy Beginning.”⁹ (!) This is an example of the proverbial claim that argues, that for every tenet or belief in Christendom, there can be found someone, somewhere who believes any possible variant of such, whether it be at one total extreme or at the other!

⁸ As advertised by the book-sellers description.

⁹ *The Watchtower*: 4–7. December 1, 2005.

The dispensational views often see Armageddon as a literal battle of some kind. But dispensationalism views of Armageddon are not the views of scholarship in general. Yet it must be observed, that in the general view of Christians you might meet on the street, you will likely encounter someone who believes in a dispensational view of the matter. If you search for literature at a Christian book store, it is very likely that you will find works of this persuasion. Television and popular preachers teach doctrines strongly immersed in “rapture theology,” which carries with it a certain attendant view of the Second Coming, and of Armageddon.

Christian Scholarship

In a later chapter, more will be said about the general views of Christian scholarship on the matter of Armageddon. While the details around the subject of Armageddon vary among scholars, the one unifying theme amongst most of them is that Armageddon is a “symbolic” name for a “spiritual” or “theoretical” battle between the forces of evil warring against the forces of God Almighty and of truth and right.

Most seem to favor the Megiddo location in Palestine, as the *figurative place of battle*, but treat the place as unimportant to the outcome and meaning of the passage. Christian scholars, and critical scholars tend to see the “battle” as a cosmic, “spiritual” showdown between Babylon, or the nations of the earth, and the King of Heaven.

In general, Adventist scholarship to date seems to replicate to a large degree the same conclusions regarding the *nature* of the battle as Christian scholars do. While this overall view is “safe,” and in a *comprehensive sense*, correct, it is the contention of this present author that Adventism has much more to contribute to the picture than this, and they have truth and light that even goes beyond the obvious and common conclusions given amongst scholars relative to the subject of Armageddon. But the Armageddon discussion in Adventist thinking, as well as the thinking of Christian scholarship, has a troublesome history, full of lessons for all regarding this difficult passage of Scripture. This will be reviewed and looked at more closely in the following analysis of the Armageddon problem.

3

CHAPTER 3:

ARMAGEDDON: THE FOUNDATIONAL BIBLICAL SETTING

The place referred to in John's *Apocalypse* as "Armageddon" is one of the world's most widely recognized biblical terms. Yet, at the same time, it qualifies as a geographical site in which practically nothing conclusive has ever been established.

Before processing in an analytical way the meaning of Armageddon, and attempting to separate the meaning from the myth, we must examine the passage itself, and acquaint ourselves further with the surrounding terms and context. The setting of Armageddon within the passage is very important to the final meaning one might derive.

The reference to Armageddon comes in the sixth and seventh plagues poured out upon the earth, the plagues starting to be poured out in Revelation 15, in the temple scene that features seven angels that are commissioned to pour out

their “vials” (bowls used in the sanctuary of Israel to transfer fire to the altar of incense) upon the earth:

12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East.

13 Then I saw three impure spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. **14** They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

15 “Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed.”

16 Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

17 The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple^d came a loud voice from the throne, saying, “It is done!” **18** Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake.^h No earthquake like it has ever occurred since mankind has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. **19** The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. (NIV)

The Setting

That the sixth angel pours his bowl on the great river **Euphrates** is an obvious, *symbolic* indication of the setting, or the general environs of where this plague or event is seen to occur. It does not occur at Megiddo in Palestine, it does not occur at Jerusalem, it does not occur in Egypt, or even Rome. It occurs at the *Great River Euphrates*.

The Euphrates was the “River of the East,” sometimes referred to as “the Flood,” or even just, “the River,” because everyone knew it was the central and most significant river of the lands of the east, flowing through the Fertile Crescent, and believed by many today to be the likely cradle of world civilization. Thus, the Armageddon context, itself, is indicative of the *formation* of world civilization, and is then *symbolic of the most ancient of times*.

In the time of Neo-Babylon, the time of Nebuchadnezzar, the River Euphrates flowed right through the center of the city of Babylon, and as a channel of travel and commerce, the river was in every sense of the word, the life-blood of the metropolis. The river brought commercial traffic into the city, bringing water for irrigation and industry, trade goods and wares, and necessary supplies and luxuries from all over the then-known world.

There is so much in the plan of Babylon that resonates with the ideal city of God, which we find in the closing chapters of the Revelation. Foursquare in arrangement, a “river of life” flowing through it and feeding a magnificent hanging garden (paradise), with trees on both sides of the river, towering and impressive edifices, broad streets, walls great and high, names inscribed (Nebuchadnezzar supposedly had his name imprinted on every brick), the city, itself was a vast depository of the gold and jewels of conquest. The city and the nation was known, like the holy city of Revelation, as the “golden city” and Babylon, the “golden kingdom.”

The ancillary reference to frogs has to be related to the reference to the Euphrates, which was, no doubt, full of them. Revered as gods by the Egyptians, frogs were synonymous with the attendant blessings provided by the Nile. Babylonian religion and culture were well acquainted with them as well. Though unclean, and really disgusting creatures in the Hebrew mind (works for me), they become symbolic for them of the noise of a crowd; of many tongues, confusion, and even demonic influence.

The spirits, or tongues that come from their mouths (the frogs), we are told in the passage, are demonic spirits, working miracles, that are instrumental in gathering earthly kings for the anticipated battle. They gather at Armageddon, likely a *foreign* location to geographic Palestine, because it likely represents things impure and apostate, because it is predicted that the place ends up “fallen.” In the final picture given in the passage, v. 19, the city, Babylon is still in focus, does fall as predicted, and is split into three parts, falling along in parallel with the disingenuous cities of all the nations, and accompanied by a once and forever earthquake, destructive lightning, and a violent hailstorm. The context firmly argues that this “plague” or “gathering” takes place at a symbolic Babylon, not in Palestine.

Battle Readiness

That the faithful are warned to keep their garments clad about them lest they find themselves unready for what we can believe is the “sudden” appearance of the Lamb, indicates that Armageddon *is* a “final” battle, not itself a continuous war (*polemos*), though it is certainly a climactic part of a continuous war, the “Great Controversy.”

The injunction to keep their garments probably can be best explained by the historical reference to a temple guard, who, when he fell asleep, was caught, and was then made an example of. As a punishment he had his proper clothes snatched from him. That, we would say, would foster motivation, for he, and all other like guards, to always stay awake while on duty!

A sportscaster (Cris Collingsworth), the present author once heard reminiscing, that at his high school the ball carrier who fumbled the football during a game or practice, was required in humiliation to carry a football everywhere for the week after, so that everyone, even the girls, knew he had fumbled the football! The would-be player on the gospel gridiron must not fumble the football! The unfaithful, all must know, will find themselves on the wrong side of Armageddon, if they will not stay awake, watch, and be ready.

The Place

The entire passage centers around the “place,” Armageddon. Most expositors tell us that the place is not important, that the outcome of the battle is what is important, and we can all agree with this claim—“up to a point” (as my father would often say—a typical phrase of his!). But the position of this author, and this book, is that the place *is* important, “up to a point,” or, “up to a place,” for the *place* largely informs and flavors the meaning of the entire passage.

Textual Analysis

The United Bible Society Greek text offers no significant variants of the Greek word for *Armageddon*. However, Bruce Metzger's *Textual Commentary*

on the Greek New Testament offers many listed manuscript variants. But these variants do not seem to offer any superior solutions, however.¹⁰

Harmagedon, or *Harmageddon*, is a Greek expression that transliterates a Hebrew word or words. What Hebrew word is represented in the Greek is the subject of diverse opinions. The majority of scholars it seems have accepted the view that *Harmageddon* is cryptic for the Hebrew word, "har," "mountain," and the Old Testament geographical site of Megiddo or Megiddon, a Palestinian locale lying at the base of the Carmel ridge in northern Israel. The literal plain of Megiddo, a strategic battleground over the centuries, is assumed by many to be the site of this famous battle. A small town, or tel, known as Megiddo, is situated on this plain.

Another possibility lies in the Hebrew expression found in Isaiah 14:13 which the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* says is possible, but not probable, yet doesn't explain why. But other scholars and critics do explain, and *complain*, as to why it is to be considered a problematic solution. The word "mo'ed," is the Old Testament word for "congregation," or "assembly." In Isa. 14:13 this word is joined by a *maqeph* (sort of a hyphen) with "har," הר, "mountain," and translated: "the mountain of assembly" (KJV). Other sources make reference to the expression in Isaiah 14:13, but generally reject it on the grounds of imprecise vowel correspondence, or due to difficulties with inconsistent transliteration problems inherent in the expression.

Joachim Jeremias describes the problems of an identification with Isa 14:13 as follows:

"The problem with b. (mountain of assembly), which would make *Har Magedon* the demonic counterpart of the mountain of God (cf. Heb. 12:22ff.), is that it is not an exact transliteration of the Hebrew of Isaiah."¹¹

¹⁰ Ἀρμαγεδών (a A E and about 95 minuscules), μαγεδδών or μαγεδών, (about 80 minuscules) αρμαγεδδών, αρμαγεδών, αρμεγεδδών, αρμαγεδω, αρμεγεδον, αρμεγεδωμ, μαγεδωδ, μαγιδών, μακεδδών.

¹¹ "Armageddon," *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Abridged, Kittel, p. 79.

There are other explanations beyond these two main ones, some which will be discussed in later sections. But most scholars it seems go with the “Mt. Megiddo” interpretation of the passage.

“Battle” or “War?”

It is the argument of some, that Armageddon is not referring to a battle, *per se*, but to an entire conflict or war, owing to the fact that the Greek word for “battle,” and “war,” are the same Greek word: *polemos*. Some authorities choose the word: “campaign,” or some other expression to translate it, in arguing this sense.

For some, this explanation lessens the enigma of *Armageddon*, and its identification or symbolism, because in that case, the place and meaning of the term becomes less crucial to the meaning of the passage. For those with this view Armageddon is only describing the ongoing “cosmic” war already known to many of our readers as: “the great controversy.”

And, of course, Armageddon, if taken in the “cosmic war” sense, also tends to favor or highlight the “spiritual” nature of the “battle,” because it is speaking of the battle in general symbolic terms, so then the physical or geographical place is not that important to the meaning. But while the matter is *connected* to the great ongoing conflict of earthly time, or has to be, all things considered, it appears that Armageddon is still referring to a particular place, intended to be understood, and familiar already to the reader, and carrying a specific name that is full of intention as to its use.

Adventist theologians of the last century, W. E. Read,¹² George McCready Price,¹³ and many others, within and without Adventism have insisted

¹² Read in his extended discussion in *Our Firm Foundation*, Volume 2, characterizes the battle of Armageddon as probably referring to the ongoing controversy of the ages, thus a “war.” W. E. Read, *Our Firm Foundation*, vol. 2, pp. 239-335, “The Great Controversy.”

¹³ Price says, that in calling it a “battle, it is: “miscalled.” George McCready Price, *The Time of the End* (Nashville, Tennessee; Southern Publishing Association, 1967), p. 160.

on this view. But the present author is inclined to ask what the cash value of the insistence toward this meaning is? It changes the matter but little, demonstrated by the fact that the word, *polemos* can mean either a focused battle, or a war. A battle is a war, and a war is a battle. The sustained manner of the great controversy between good and evil is a point few would disagree with, we all know that such exists, so we have that already. The only real benefit of seeing the battle as an ongoing conflict, and not a final battle, is that it somehow frees the term “Armageddon,” from any further definition, and absorbs this important battle into a non-eschatological reality and salts it away into a cosmic generality.

But the slant entertained in this book is that while the cosmic war of the ages is always behind the scenes, and every battle in it is a part of this ongoing saga spanning thousands of years, that *Armageddon*, in particular, is referring to a decisive, climactic clash of some kind. Even if it is symbolic, it comes at the end of time, and serves as a final, focal point in time, rather than describing a general and continuous, “cosmic war,” such as that found in the term: “the Great Controversy.”

This determination is based in the context and the words used in leading up to the “battle.” It speaks of the “great day, of God Almighty.”¹⁴ Usually when such terms as: “day,” or “hour,” are used in eschatological contexts, it is referring to a narrow window in time rather than an entire sequence of days, months, or years. “The Day of the Lord,” a familiar term from the OT prophets, is thus referring to a climactic point in time, expected in the final moments of a conflict or in anticipation of it. It is not limited to a literal “day” in time, and is sometimes broader in application, but it is not usually used of a long-time, millennium-long and continuous conflicts.

Examples where “day” can mean more than a single day, of course, is found in such expressions as: “the days of Antipas” (Rev. 2:13), or “a work in his days” (Hab. 1:5), which is not in those contexts limited to a literal 24-hour day, but meaning the general time parameters of the subject in question.

But the very context of Revelation 16, demands that a specific terminus is referred to, or is to be recognized in the *sequence* of plagues, the *sixth and seventh always* being the final ones in historical and probationary time, with the

¹⁴ Rev 16:14

seventh usually marked and announced with phenomena that happens quickly, suddenly, and with finality. Such a building *sequence* requires things to end with a “bang.” *Armageddon*, it would seem, *obviously*, refers to some final, strategic confrontation or showdown, one that is intended to bring decisive resolution to an ongoing war, and not encapsulating a description of the entire conflict.

It is probably safe to argue, that the transpiration of the sixth and seventh churches/plagues/seals/trumpets, mark the terminus in any series of the septets of *Revelation*. That terminus is always the Second Coming of Christ. The sixth plague in this case is really about the “gathering,” to the battle, and the seventh plague (Rev. 16:19-21) is the “battle,” or the outcome of the confrontation, where the forces of God win decisively.

Cardinal and Ordinal Numbers

The numbers in *Revelation* are very significant to the supposed meaning of its passages. The sequential, or ordinal numbers match the creation. The sixth in a series is consistently about *mankind*, and is poured out particularly on mankind. “Man,” was created on the “sixth” day, and the sixth day is the day of man. Six is the humanistic number of man. Christ died for man on the sixth day. The errancy and evil of Babylon, is the humanistic propagation of matters associated with the Babylonian number, given in multiples of six, which are associated with the machinations and plottings of man in political and religious affairs.

Six is not at the first of such sequences. Six just falls short of the perfect seven, the number of probationary completeness, reckoned in time. Six, for all practical purposes is at the *end* of the sequence, for when the seventh comes, it is over—“it is finished” (What Jesus said on the sixth day of the week, expiring on the Cross, which was the sixth “word” of the Lord [John 19:36], uttered only a moment before he died, with the seventh saying being “Into thy hands I commit my spirit,” —“and he died” [Luke 23:46]). When the seventh event comes in *Revelation*, there is usually a “storm theophany,” that marks the final end of the sequence. Armageddon, with the exception of the later “Gog and Magog,” is the “war to end all wars.”

In light of this, with Armageddon coming at the end of the “sixth plague,” upon Babylon, the context using *six* as the number of Babylon (Dan.

3:1ff.), and of *man*, owing to a host of other reasons, points to a veritable climax. It is a wonder of marvelous proportions that anyone would insist on the notion that Armageddon is not a final “battle,” but merely a general and ongoing one.

The seventh plague, a plague of an un-precedented earthquake, hail, and storm is the outcome of the confrontation and is parallel to the passages in Revelation 17:14 where those who make war with the Lamb are defeated by the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and in Rev. 19: 11-16, where the army of the Lamb, and the riders on the white horses defeat the opposing kings of the earth. This is the real, mighty, and *final* “battle” of Armageddon.

4

CHAPTER 4:

ARMAGEDDON: A SUMMARY HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION

A: NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

The subject of Armageddon does not clearly arise in the time of the early apostolic movements, though a final battle to close the age must have been in the thinking of the early church. We know the early church hopefully anticipated the return of their Lord, so much so, that Paul had to caution them that the time was not yet, that there should be the “man of sin,” and a “falling away,” first (2 Thess 2:1-4).

But largely their focus centered around the contemporary matters of the destruction of Jerusalem and around the current apocalyptic opinions that Jerusalem was really the “Babylon” of their day. John’s book of *Revelation* probably didn’t range that wide at the very first, probably coming late in the century, and having a limited circulation, early on. Rome, in the mind of the

apostolic era, though a worldly leader in terms of politics and rule, had not fully matured in the apostolic era as the wholesale persecutor of Christians, though Nero and others of the Roman State were beginning such persecutions.

B: EARLY CHURCH HISTORY

But by the last part of the first century, going through the second century things had certainly changed, capped off with the intense persecutions of Trajan, Diocletian, and others. The apocalyptic hope of the suffering church probably intensified the Christian interest in eschatological concerns, desiring and seeking relief, with a hope of deliverance, and the desired downfall of their persecutors.

But a search of the patristic writings, the early and later church fathers of Christendom, little is indexed as attached to the subject of Armageddon. A search of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, the Nicene Fathers, and even the Post-Nicene Fathers, bridging as far as the eighth century, yields little reference to Armageddon, though the Revelation of John was definitely a known writing in Christian circles and a point of discussion.

But those of the times leading up to 1,000 (A. D., or C. E.) were not oblivious to apocalyptic hopes and agitation. That time of history, like most every other, carried with it the anticipation of the close of the ages.

Views During the Early Christian Dispensation

Quotes Donald Mansell, (in the book *Adventists and Armageddon*, a priceless work he has compiled, and to which I am deeply indebted in part for this book's topic of *Armageddon*: and a must read for every Adventist!), citing Richard Lewinsohn, referring to the times just before 1000 A.D. reports:

The number 1000 oppressed Europe like a nightmare. A wave of fatalism seized the people: the great cataclysm was about to engulf the world.... Whole towns repaired to church as one man, or assembled round crucifixes under the open sky, there to await God's judgment on corporately bended knees.¹⁵

¹⁵ (Richard Lewinsohn, *Science, Prophecy and Prediction*, p. 78).

It sounds like Y2K!¹⁶ Except this was Y1K! The “watchfulness” of the saints was regularly encouraged by the events taking place in Christendom: the Moslem incursions and the Crusades, circumstances of an era where the “noon of the papacy, was the midnight of the world,” darkness of disease erupting in plagues such as the “Black Plague” that in the end decimated between a third to half of Europe, and numerous wars and rebellions picking off a fair quantity of what was left.

C: THE REFORMERS

But by the time of the Reformers, discussions of Armageddon, or at least the players in the battle, and especially the identity of the Beast came more clearly into focus. With nearly all the early Reformers, the Beast, or the Antichrist, one of the contextual targets in Armageddon (vs. 13), was identified by most with papal Rome:

Protestant view of the Papacy as the Antichrist

Sources of this general time in history compile long lists of Reformation giants and writers that held this view:

Protestant Reformers, including John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Thomas Cranmer, John Thomas, John Knox, Roger Williams, Cotton Mather, Jonathan Edwards, and John Wesley, as well as most Protestants of the

¹⁶ A friend of the author, in light of Y2K, and fearful about it, bought food, supplies, and staples in very large quantities. When the year, 2000 brought no real crisis, he was left with, among other things large bags of pancake flour, etc. I received *some* of the pancake flour, for which I was thankful, but there was so much that it seemed a fair estimate at the time, that it would take another 1,000 years to use it up!

16th–18th centuries, felt that the Early Church had been led into the Great Apostasy by the Papacy and identified the Pope with the Antichrist.¹⁷

Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other Protestant Reformers saw the Antichrist as a present feature in the world of their time, fulfilled in the Papacy. Like most Protestant theologians of his time, Isaac Newton believed that the Papal Office (and not any one particular Pope) was the fulfillment of the Biblical predictions about Antichrist, whose rule was prophesied to last for 1,260 years. Armageddon was the climax of these atrocities.¹⁸

D: THE GREAT AWAKENING

But during the Great Awakening period the eyes of prophetic expositors soon turned to the events happening in Turkey (near the Euphrates), especially because of writers such as Josiah Litch, who predicted from the times recorded in the Seven Trumpets section of Revelation,¹⁹ the fall of the Ottoman Empire in August of 1840.²⁰ Most prophetic matters at the time included exposes' on Daniel 11:40-45. When the Ottoman Empire seemed to be definitely waning, along with the pre-1844 Adventist expectations that the end of the world was near, then all these circumstances fueled the idea that Armageddon was on the doorstep. The Euphrates (the support of the Turco-Mohammedan kingdom) was "drying up," and Armageddon was just around the corner.

¹⁷ Johnstone, Nathan (June 2009). "The synagogue of Satan: anti-Catholicism, false doctrine and the construction of contrariety". *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 27–59.

L. E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Vol. III, pp. 244-45. "The reformers were unanimous in its acceptance. And it was this interpretation of prophecy that lent emphasis to their reformatory action. It led them to protest against Rome with extraordinary strength and undaunted courage. [...] This was the rallying point and the battle cry that made the Reformation unconquerable."

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ (Esp. chapters 8, 9—"an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year")

²⁰ Josiah Litch, in *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy*, Aug. 1, 1840. (E. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 234, 235)

The comprehensive, and voluminous work, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*, by L.E. Froom, summarizes the fact that the majority of conservative (non-Adventist) prophetic scholars believed that the last power referred to in Daniel 11 was the Turco-Mohammedan Empire, or the Ottoman Empire, primarily, the nation of Turkey. The drying up of the river Euphrates, equated with the general geographical location of Turkey, represented the waning of these powers. “Kings of the east” would gather at Megiddo, in Palestine. Armageddon would occur as a literal battle in the milieu of final events centering in Megiddo.

But when Jesus did not return in 1844, the prophetic map of expectations in Adventism, at least, was forced to change and be re-aligned. Yet early Adventists, along with a large number of religious authorities at the time, were still convinced that Armageddon would be realized in the physical and political movements in Turkey and Palestine. Adventist expositors, such as Uriah Smith, were immersed in the same thinking, and this leaning dominated Adventism for the next hundred or more years.

E: THE MODERN MILIEU: OVERVIEW—THE DIVERGENT, DISPENSATIONAL, NON-CHRISTIAN, AND OTHER MINORITY SECTS, AND THEIR VIEWS OF ARMAGEDDON

Christian Dispensationalism

No modern or current consideration of the subject of Armageddon in the Christian world would be complete without mention of the theological influence of modern Dispensationalism on the matter. While there is little in Dispensationalism that is that close to Adventist/biblical theology on the subject, it must be recognized that the Christian world is so immersed in Dispensational theology, that the eschatological leanings of probably the majority of the Protestants have understandings of the end-time scenarios that align similar to the typical paradigms of Dispensationalists.

Dispensationalism makes the giant (and illicit) leap in placing the 70th week of the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9, as occurring in eschatological time, and in the future, with the entire 2,000 or more years of the Christian “dispensation” coming in between the 69th and 70th week. Without dissecting

the thousand reasons (Let's make it about 2,000 reasons) why this violates every legitimate tenet of prophetic interpretation, and tragically displaces and "crucifies" the marvelous fulfillment of Christ's First Advent that was fulfilled in that particular prophecy, and gloriously points to Him as it should, it must still be reported that Dispensational theology is averse to this view and as a way of thinking is very much with us in the modern world.

Dispensational eschatology exists in profusion in popular Christian thinking, accompanied by: the generous adoption of "rapture" theology, Roman Catholic counter-Reformation futurism, seven-year, pre-and, post-millennial notions, along with the Middle-East, solitary Beast, Antichrist figures. Popular Dispensational theology is laden with armed, military-clashes and such baggage, along with the entertainment of all the other like scenarios, that regularly come with it.

The present writer is not an expert on Dispensational theology, and even has a difficult time in trying to understand the world of Dispensationalists, so he knows he is in danger of mis-representing it. But he will, in the interest of the present discussion on Armageddon, make a brief attempt to summarize the typical leanings of Dispensationalism on the matters around Armageddon.

One noted Dispensationalist writer, **J. Dwight Pentecost**, explains Armageddon as not a final battle, *per se*, but as a "campaign,"²¹ including several engagements expected in eschatological time, and probably after the "rapture." According to Pentecost, the main "campaign," mostly happens in the pre-millennial, last half of the *Tribulation week* (week=7 years). The "war," or "campaign" probably includes several Palestinian locales such as the "hill of Megiddo," "the valley of Jehoshaphat," the "Valley of Passengers" (from Ezekiel 38,39), Edom, Idumea, and finally, Jerusalem.

Pentecost envisions in the time of the end, using the prophecy of Daniel 11, an invasion by a northern confederacy, destroyed by the king of the South, with Jerusalem destroyed in the process. Then the armies of the Beast move into

²¹ This distinction is observed by Trench (see [Richard C. Trench](#), *New Testament Synonyms*, pp. 301–32) and is followed by Thayer (see [Joseph Henry Thayer](#), *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 528) and Vincent (see Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, II, 541).

Palestine, and only Edom, Moab, and Ammon escape. The Beast sets up his headquarters in Israel, there is some kind of altercations involving the Beast or the Antichrist, but then comes the Second Coming, destroying all the armies of wickedness.²² Finally, Jesus then sets up his kingdom, and the saints rule for 1,000 years. Then comes *Gog and Magog*, Satan is loosed, wars against the saints but is destroyed at the Great White Throne judgement, and the Lake of Fire.²³

Probably one of the most published scholars of standing of a Dispensationalist persuasion is **John C. Walvoord**. He has written a large amount of material on eschatological matters, and one would be likely to find some of his works or his *Revelation* commentary in most any Christian bookstore.

While more scholarly in his approach in comparison to other Dispensationalists, Walvoord still teaches a somewhat typical timeline and order of events as found in the general dispensationalist scheme. Walvoord has an extensive online library on religious works.²⁴

Jehovah's Witnesses

Witnesses are known for promoting the view that Armageddon is the means by which God will populate the earth with “healthy, happy humans,” free from sin and death. Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that the world, through God’s process of ridding the earth of those opposed to God’s Kingdom, will eventually become pure and righteous.

²² The present author is not an expert concerning Dispensational views, therefore this description may be suspect in its details. He asks forgiveness, if it is misrepresented. He stumbles over it, because the typical schemes found in these to him erroneous views are difficult to follow since they are confusing, and foreign in thinking to what he believes is the correct view.

²³ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Prophecy for Today: God's Purpose and Plan for Our Future*, Zondervan, 1961, pp. 341, 356, 555, etc.

²⁴ walvoord.com/article/304

The gathering of the nations of the earth, a gradual process, beginning in 1914, and noted in things like the League of Nations, The United Nations, and the results of the two World Wars, is indication of political powers that will end in an empire of false religions, or Babylon. These evil powers will be destroyed by the Beast prior to Armageddon.

After the other religions are destroyed, the governments of the world will persecute Witnesses, and God will intervene at Armageddon. The armies of heaven will destroy all remaining forms of false religion and government, and 144,000 select people (JW's, of course), will reign on the earth in peace for 1,000 years. At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan, who has been bound, will have a final opportunity, but will be overcome and destroyed.

Jehovah's Witnesses' eschatological scheme, has changed some in the view of certain authorities on the matter, from the original views of their founder,²⁵ Charles Taze Russell, who saw Armageddon as a giant struggle for domination of the earth. The current view (above) endorsed now, by the religion comes from the one-time president of the *Watch Tower Society*, J. F. Rutherford, who amended the view slightly in 1925.²⁶

²⁵ Wills, Tony (2006), *A People For His Name*, Lulu Enterprises, p. 154.

²⁶

- "Armageddon—A Happy Beginning". The Watchtower: 4–7. December 1, 2005.
- "Armageddon—God's War to End All Wars". The Watchtower: 5–8. April 1, 2008.
- What Does the Bible Really Teach pp. 215–218 "1914 – A Significant Year in Bible Prophecy."
- "The End of False Religion is Near".
- Mankind's Search for God, chap. 16, p. 371 par. 13: "the destruction of Babylon the Great will usher in a period of 'great tribulation' that culminates in 'the war of the great day of God the Almighty ... Har-Magedon.'"
- "Walk by Faith, Not by Sight!". The Watchtower: 19. September 15, 2005.
- "The Marvelous New World of God's Making". Archived from the original on 2015-08-31.
- "Flight to Safety Before the 'Great Tribulation'". The Watchtower: 18. June 1, 1996.

F. OTHER FAITHS OR RELIGIONS

Not every view, in the religions of the world on the subject of Armageddon are considered in this book, a task that would probably be a major undertaking. Various views of the matter of Armageddon are held by such persuasions as *Christadelphians*, or by the *Bahá'í* faith, the latter having somewhat unsettled views which are related to the world wars, and that are seen fulfilled in their indigenous surroundings, and sacred locations in the Middle East.

Islam

In the world of Islam, Armageddon is characterized in Hadith as Al-Malhama Al-Kubra, “the Greatest Armageddon,” or (the great battle).²⁷

Seventh-day Adventists

It may be of interest to the reader to see how internet encyclopedia, “Wikipedia” represents the views of Seventh-day Adventists, which we will consider in greater depth in the remaining chapters. Even though *Wikipedia* is not considered a reliable source of research, literally millions do read it. In the opinion of the present author it appears that *Wikipedia* (because it quotes legitimate SDA sources), represents the view of Adventists on Armageddon in a reasonably “fair,” way, overall:

Seventh-day Adventists

Seventh-day Adventist understanding of Revelation 13–22

The teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church state that the terms "Armageddon", "Day of the Lord" and "The Second Coming of Christ" all describe the same event. Seventh-day Adventists further teach that the current religious movements taking place in the world are setting the stage for Armageddon, and they are concerned by an anticipated unity between

²⁷ "Hadith - Book of Tribulations - Sunan Ibn Majah - Sunnah.com - Sayings and Teachings of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم)". sunnah.com. Archived from the original on 2020-11-12. Retrieved 2020-12-24.

spiritualism, American Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. A further teaching in Seventh-day Adventist theology is that the events of Armageddon will leave the earth desolate for the duration of the millennium. They teach that the righteous will be taken to heaven while the rest of humanity will be destroyed, leaving Satan with no one to tempt and effectively "bound". The final re-creation of a "new heaven and a new earth;" then follows the millennium. *Wikipedia*, "Armageddon" (taken from SDA sources).²⁸

G. CHRISTIAN SCHOLARSHIP-OVERVIEW

For the most part, Christian scholarship presents a reasonable consortium of opinion regarding Armageddon, seeing it as largely symbolic and spiritual, and a representative battle between good and evil. Adventist scholars of late have somewhat echoed the central thinking of Christian scholars in their larger views of Armageddon. In the following pages we will take a look at a few of the notable and respected professors and writers outside of Adventism, that are in print, and note their comments regarding the Armageddon passage:

Robert Mounce

Robert Mounce, a recognized authority on apocalyptic literature, in his valuable commentary on *Revelation* notes several examples of offered solutions to the Armageddon enigma, describing it as "one of the more cryptic and difficult problems of Revelation." None of the suggestions seem satisfactory to him, though, and as to the specificity of the location, he apparently goes with Joachim Jeremias²⁹ in saying that "the cryptic nature of the reference has thus far defeated all attempts at a final answer." His general summary of the matter, as an example of the larger and spiritual conflict view, is well stated and typical of the larger range of critical scholars:

²⁸ "Seventh-day Adventists believe" 1988, by the Ministerial Association General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, 2000, Review and Herald Publishing Association and the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

²⁹ "Har-Magedon (Apc. 16:16)," ZNW, 31 (1932), pp. 73-77.

Har-Magedon is symbolic of the final overthrow of all the forces of evil by the might and power of God. The great conflict between God and Satan, Christ and Antichrist, good and evil, which lies behind the perplexing course of history will in the end issue in a final struggle in which God will emerge victorious and take with him all who have placed their faith in him. This is Har-Magedon.³⁰

George Eldon Ladd

George Eldon Ladd, respected NT scholar, and long-time Professor of New Testament Exegesis and Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, describes the word “Armageddon,” as “difficult,” especially in consideration of the dichotomy between a mountain and a plain. But, apparently accepting the mountain of Megiddo idea as valid in terms of translation, he comments: “Why John calls it the mountain of Megiddo is not clear.” He suggests that Armageddon is “the place of the final struggle between the powers of evil and the Kingdom of God.”³¹

R. H. Charles

R.H. Charles, eminent British critical scholar of the last century, who amassed his 2-volume set on the book of *Revelation* over a period of 25 years, ends up by saying “no convincing interpretation has yet been given of the phrase.”³² Of course, Charles sees little integrity in the *Revelation* document itself, supposedly in his mind having multiple authors and editors, and spends much of his critical writer-ship translocating entire verses and even chapters and re-arranging the book to an order and organization he thinks would be true or original.

R. H. Charles believed that the book of Revelation was originally strictly chronological and that it was tampered hopelessly with, by a later editor. Of this person who supposedly re-arranged the order of the book he says: “The culprit

³⁰ Robert H. Mounce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of Revelation*, F. F. Bruce, General Editor (Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977) pp. 301, 302.

³¹ George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972) p. 216.

³² R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John* (New York: Scribners, 1920), II, 50.

was a ‘shallow-brained fanatic and celibate’ who took unwarranted liberties with the text.”³³

He says further:

John died when he had completed 1-20 of his work, and the materials for its completion, which were for the most part ready in a series of independent documents, were put together by a faithful but unintelligent disciple in the order he thought right (Vol. 1, p.50).³⁴

Of course, for most of us, we can find little sympathy with such a low view of Inspiration, and for the criticism of the *Revelation* masterpiece, just as it is. But the view of Charles is included here to demonstrate the wide range of views on the matters of Revelation, Armageddon, and prophecy, that are found in critical scholarship at times.

It is a point of interest to the present author, that the “foolishness of preaching” of the Cross, the simplicity of the Gospel, referred to by the apostle, Paul,³⁵ often turns out to be wiser than the wisest of worldly men and women, who are possessive of the greatest intellect, yet, who while mental giants, are yet pathetic midgets in the area of spiritual discernment and understanding. Jesus expressed His thanks that God had blinded the minds of the supposedly wise and understanding, and had revealed His truth to babes—i.e. the humble disciples.³⁶

Having plodded through the two voluminous, and intellectually impressive volumes written by Charles, I would have to say, that even after all of that exercise in research and writing found in that work, and impressive as it is; that the godly, gray-haired farmer in my church pew, and the little, simple, yet devout white-haired lady sitting next to him, knows more of the truth of the matters in Revelation, than Charles really ever did. It is truly a wonder and a marvel.

³³ R.H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh; Scotland: T.T. & Clark, Last Impression, 1985), Vol. 1, pp. xxii., xxiii.

³⁴ Ibid. (Vol. I, p. lv.) .

³⁵ (I Cor. 1:21)

³⁶ Matthew 11:25

G. R. Beasley-Murray

G. R. Beasley-Murray, for many years the esteemed Professor of New Testament Interpretation, at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary reports that “Armageddon, presents an even more perplexing puzzle than 666.” Citing the anomaly of the little town of Megiddo having no mountain, he sees nearby Carmel as an attractive option but laments that in historical writing it bears no such name as “Har-Megiddo.” He likes the themes in the *Har-Mo’ed* alternative, but finds the case unsatisfactory in explaining a supposed “corruption.” In his despairing opinion, the meaning of Armageddon, is now “lost to us.”³⁷

William Hendrickson

Hendrickson in his oft-quoted commentary describes the motif of Armageddon thus:

For this cause, Har Magedon is the symbol of every battle in which, when the need is greatest and believers are oppressed, the Lord suddenly reveals His power in the interest of His distressed people and defeats the enemy. When Sennacherib's 185,000 are slain by the Angel of Jehovah, that is a shadow of the final Har-Magedon. When God grants a little handful of Maccabees a glorious victory over an enemy which far outnumbers it, that is a type of Har-Magedon. But the real, the great, the final Har Magedon coincides with the time of Satan's little season. Then the world, under the leadership of Satan, anti-Christian government, and anti-Christian religion – the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet – is gathered against the Church for the final battle, and the need is greatest; when God's children, oppressed on every side, cry for help; then suddenly, Christ will appear on the clouds of glory to deliver his people; that is Har-Magedon.³⁸

³⁷ G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The New Century Bible Commentary, The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/London; Marshall, Morgan & Scott Publ., LTD., 1974) p. 245, 246.

³⁸ William Hendrickson, *More Than Conquerors*, p. 163.

Robert W. Wall

Robert W. Wall, author of the *Revelation* portion of the *New International Critical Commentary* quotes (Boring, *Revelation*, p. 176): “Attempts to locate Armageddon geographically are futile; in fact, no such place exists to the best of our knowledge.” He goes with Beasley-Murray who suggests that Armageddon stands “for the last resistance of anti-god forces prior to the kingdom of Christ” (p. 246). Essentially, in his opinion, the location is not significant, but what is significant, is John’s pastoral concern that believers not be surprised, as in the coming of a thief, and to know that God will eventually win over the forces of evil.³⁹

William Barclay

William Barclay, the Scottish writer and theologian, notes like others, the historical battles that occurred near the ancient town of Megiddo. He quotes H. B. Sweet, a commentator and theologian of the last century, who said of the battleground that it was of such a nature to be: “familiar to (any) student of Hebrew history.”

Barclay sees a possible connection with Ezekiel 38: 8, 21; 39:2, 4, 17 (*The Battle of Gog and the Land of Magog*), featuring a battle that was to be won on “the mountains of Israel.” But he also, to his credit, unlike most, mentions the *Har-Mo’ed* alternative as having possible significance.⁴⁰

Canon Leon Morris

Leon Morris, in the *Tyndall New Testament Commentaries*, comments that “no place of this name, is known, and the term is surely symbolic.”⁴¹ He revisits the historic battles in the area, and notes the “Megiddo” discussions.

³⁹ Robert W. Wall, *The New International Critical Commentary; Revelation* (Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., P.O. Box 3473, Peabody, Massachusetts, 1991) p. 200, 201.

⁴⁰ William Barclay, *The Revelation of John* (The Daily Study Bible Series) (Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, Revised Edition, 1976) Vol. 2, pp. 132-133.

⁴¹ Canon Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries) (Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981) p. 199.

He reports: “It is possible that ‘mountain’ should not be taken literally, but understood of the great mound on which the city stood.”⁴² (Some say the tel is not particularly that high at all, maybe 150 ft.).

G. K. Beale

Almost all current critical religious expositors outside of Adventism, and even many within, annotate with credits to Beale, regularly. Beale seems to be the current leading, definitive, authority on the book of *Revelation* (ca. 2000 ff.). Beale, is a very thorough, which is no doubt why his work is popular, and in that capacity he in many cases probably represents the views of scholarship (on Revelation) more comprehensively than most any other commentator.

Of Armageddon, Beale says:

.... so “Armageddon” does not refer to a specific geographical locale, but the whole world. The battles in Israel associated Megiddo and the nearby mountain become a typological symbol of the last battle against the saints and Christ, which occurs throughout the whole earth.”⁴³

Beale sides with those who point out that in OT prophecies, eschatological battles occur just outside Jerusalem and favors the view that Jerusalem is the typological setting, but that *Megiddo* and its history is sourced to symbolize it. He cites other “Megiddo” associations, and summarizes the various arguments of theologians, toying with and analyzing the “mountain of slaughter,” “gatherings of troops,” “mountains of Israel” motifs, and the possible “Zechariah,” *Magedon*” connections as well.

Beale even gives the *Har Mo’ed* alternative a glance, and admits with but a few others that the Hebrew letter ‘*ayin* is sometimes translated with a *gamma*.⁴⁴ He cites Rissi who argues for this view, but Beale rejects it on the basis of it being a “conjectural emendation of the text,” or that it is a “reading in vowels and

⁴² Ibid., p. 200

⁴³ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), p. 838.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 839.

consonants that have no textual attestation.” He lays it aside as “too remote a form to be a credible source of the name Armageddon.”⁴⁵

In the end, Beale, like scores of others, goes with the “Megiddo” passages, or the battles that occurred in the same area over history (Barak and Sisera [Judges 5:19], Josiah’s wounding [2 Chron 35: 20-22], the Ahab and Mt. Carmel episode, or even possibly the Zechariah “Megiddo” passages being in the author’s mind, along with several other OT references, saying that: “all of the passages mentioned above recording events occurring in the vicinity of Megiddo may stand behind the reference in Rev. 16:16.”⁴⁶

SUMMARY

The various views of Armageddon in Christian/Islamic/Other Sects/and certain others, are many and varied. All that is common among most beliefs is the idea of a campaign, war, or battle, that destroys the “anti-Christian” or “anti-Witness” forces to make way for a peaceful existence of the genuine or righteous. This general view, of God and His people winning a battle over evil, cannot be faulted. But the meaning of Armageddon, must go beyond this to be informative to us in the modern day. Adventists can thank God that additional light and truth has been offered them in the mystical and powerful word: Armageddon!

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 840.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

5

CHAPTER 5:

ADVENTISTS AND ARMAGEDDON

This chapter is about the history of Adventist theology on this topic, from the days of the inception of the Adventist movement to the present day. *Armageddon* has taken an evolutionary path in its theology and development in the Adventist sub-culture. Before we look at this process of debate and formulation, we must take a brief journey through this SDA developmental history before we can arrive at any definitive or improved conclusions as to its meaning. It is only against this background and process that I believe we can fully explicate and understand the significance of this famous topic, and come to accurate and informative conclusions about what it is.

Adventists do not have a consistent historical theology on Armageddon. This was true of early Adventism, and is even true today. The purpose of this section is to further clarify the issues, imagery, theology, and expectation about *Armageddon* among Adventists. In the later sections of the book I will offer an explanation that I hope will make sense to most. I promise to leave some resolution and a proposition on it. This is how I work, I argue for a particular conclusion. Jesus, it says, unlike His contemporary exegetes, taught with “confidence,” and that I wish to emulate, even though my “authority” is infinitely less than His! But I have a strong belief that while research should always be

non-prejudiced and open, the end-process should lead to a resolution; and that the reader or hearer is owed the privilege of knowing, at least, what the author ultimately believes.

Again, please keep in mind that what I am really attempting to do in my writing is to challenge the reader to study and digest their own version of events, and that I am not saying that if one differs in their views they are therefore wrong, or that I am the only one who knows it all (not even close!). My purpose in all my endeavors is not to particularly promote my personal theology, but rather to engage God's people in learning and dialogue on the issues that are relevant to our day. We as a people should be talking and praying about these things, now, and more than ever before. If I can but only in a small way stimulate the minds of a few Seventh-day Adventists into pure thought on these momentous and important themes--- I will consider it a success.

So, come to your own conclusions. But use wisdom in your study, and seek the Spirit about it. Unfortunately the careless or sensational approaches to this subject have only muddled the matter in the past. So I ask for caution and care as we proceed and as you proceed toward a conclusion as to the meaning of *Armageddon*. It is not a vital issue in itself. But it certainly is a relevant one.

Especially helpful, and worthy of significant credit for the large contributions of material shared in this chapter is taken from the book, already mentioned, by Donald Mansell, *Adventists and Armageddon*,⁴⁷ and also from the White Estate article on "Armageddon."⁴⁸ These works are invaluable beyond measure in the formation of this chapter's topic, and are cited often, and are greatly appreciated.

The largest issue that dominates the entire subject in the opinion of the present writer is the issue of the battle as being literal vs. spiritual. But this issue is not new, but has pervaded the thought realms of Christianity for centuries on end. It is called: "the battle about the battle." But the specifics of how to interpret symbols, and the literal, vs. spiritual debate about it, will be given fuller

⁴⁷ Donald Ernest Mansell, *Adventists and Armageddon* (Nampa, Idaho, Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1999).

⁴⁸ White.estate.org/Armageddon

treatment in the remaining chapters. But first, we need to trace the history of interpretation within Adventist circles, and in the time immediately before the Great Awakening and the rise of the Advent movement, for understanding this dialogue and history is part of the context pertinent to this whole discussion.

Adventist (and Other) Underground Predictions

Adventists from their inception have nourished tendencies to focus on prophetic predictions. They are a people of hope, and without that hope there would be no Adventist denomination. And all of this is good in the greatest way. But with that said, Adventists, in their evangelistic zeal, have not always had a worthy and defensible record, always exhibiting the best handling of prophetic themes, especially when it comes to the *times* of prophecy. This is particularly true of the matter of Armageddon:

In 1892 Ellen White wrote: “Again and again I have been warned in regard to time-setting. There will never again be a message for the people of God that will be based on time”⁴⁹ (1894).

She was referring, of course, in that case to the 1844 conclusion of the 2300-day prophecy. But some still today insist to predict dates leading up to Armageddon, and it is important to realize this recurrent milieu in the study of Armageddon and other relevant passages of Scripture, like Daniel 11: 40-45, etc.

Mansell reviews some of these more current predictions⁵⁰ made by Adventists, or by others who somehow found a hearing among the more recent (last 75 years) Adventist sub-culture. Listed below are a few of these “predictions:”

- 1944: Some SDA’s during WWII noted that 1944 was 100 years from 1844. Thus, Armageddon was perhaps on the door-step.

⁴⁹ (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Mar. 22, cf. also Oct. 9, 1894).

⁵⁰ Mansell, pp. 8-14.

- 1953 Some Adventists noted that the signs of the falling of the stars, the darkened sun and moon, were among the last of the signs of Matthew 24. The stars “fell” in 1833. The Coming is in Matthew 24 likened to the days of Noah: Jesus said: “This generation shall not pass”—So, Noah preached for 120 years. Therefore, 120 years after 1833 is 1953.
- 1964 (1964 was 100 years from when the church was organized, 1864)
- 1988 Israel or Palestine was where the plain of Megiddo is. (So, per: Hal Lindsay, *The Late Great Planet Earth*): A generation was 40 years, so Israel became a modern state in 1948, so, 40 plus 1948=1988, for Armageddon.
- 1994 (Some SDA’s assumed 1844 was a Jubilee Year, so the third Jubilee would be in 1994---etc.)
- 2000 (Y2K—Much could be said)
- Among Adventists and other Bible faiths, the 6,000 year theory and it’s apparent terminus or nearness, has produced an incredible amount of folklore and speculation.
- May 21, 2011— Per the notions of prophetic non-SDA enthusiast: Harold Camping.
- May, 2012 The present author remembers large interstate billboards near Roseburg, Oregon, predicting the coming of the Lord on a day, May 12, (I believe, it was), in 2012.

These errant predictions and many others have caused untold harm:

Writes Ellen White:

“Some have set a time [for the Second Coming], and when that has passed, their presumptuous spirits have not accepted rebuke, but they have set another and another time; but many successive failures have stamped them as false prophets.”⁵¹

⁵¹ FE, p. 335.

Early Adventist Views

Often during the early days of Adventism armed conflicts would erupt in the Middle East or in Europe. Sometimes this led Adventists to believe that they were on the verge of Armageddon. They saw the battle centering at Megiddo, the locale at the base of the Carmel Ridge in northern Palestine.

Daniel 11: 40-45

Another text that cannot be historically separated from Revelation 16:12-16 is Daniel 11:40-45. The passage at the end of Daniel 11 features the King of the South, and the King of the North saying:”And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help Him.” (KJV, vs. 45)

The voluminous and monumental work, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*, written by L.E. Froom, summarizes that the majority of conservative (non-Adventist) prophetic scholars about the time of the beginning of the Second Advent movement, believed that the last power referred to in Daniel 11 was the Turco-Mohammedan Empire, primarily Turkey. The drying up of the river Euphrates, therefore generally represented the waning of these powers. Armageddon would occur as a literal battle in the milieu of final events centering in Megiddo. The kings of the east would cross the “dried up” river, and meet at Megiddo.

So, most early SDA expositors insisted on the same views that included Turkey and the Ottoman power. This leaning, was from that time forward referred to in Adventism as the: “Eastern Question.”

Reports the White Estate article on Armageddon:

Politically and in the public press the Turkish Empire was referred to as “the sick man of the East,” and its demise was supposed to be imminent. Contemporary events were construed as part of the drying-up process to which Rev. 16:12 referred. The “Eastern question” occupied the continuing attention of

political leaders throughout the century, and of the interpreters of Bible prophecy as well. —History of Seventh-day Adventist Interpretation.⁵²

William Miller: William Miller believed that Armageddon would occur in Palestine; and that the *River Euphrates* was referring to Turkey.

Miller taught that the diminishing of the Turkish power (1836) was in fulfillment:

“. . . so that the way now appears to be prepared for the kings to come up to the battle of the great day”⁵³

But Miller’s view was different from now current Adventist eschatology in that he saw the seven last plagues as sequential, and mostly in past history. The nations of Europe were the “kings of the east.” (But Miller supposedly had a unique view of America figuring into the prophecy, which is a departure of interest.)

Josiah Litch placed the plagues in the future after the Second Advent, and that a literal Euphrates would be dried up so the kings of the “Eastern world” would then be able to come to Jerusalem and Palestine and gather there.⁵⁴

Joseph Bates held the view that Asian forces would cross over Euphrates, followed apparently by Armageddon. But then later Bates refined a view to include the seven last plagues as future, where Adventism and the Sabbath message were tests, and the wicked then slain at Armageddon.⁵⁵

Hiram Edson had early views regarding Armageddon which he altered some later:

⁵² White estate.org. Armageddon.

⁵³ “Evidence . . . of the Second Coming of Christ” [1836], p. 185).

⁵⁴ *Prophetic Expositions*, [1842], vol. 1, p. 175 and p. 183.

⁵⁵ Mansell.

In 1840: He first believed the Jews would return to Jerusalem, and Russia, the King of the North, would come and fight in Armageddon.

But, in 1850: Edson abandoned the earlier view, making Armageddon a battle over the Sabbath question.⁵⁶

1850 Original Views

SDA publications contained little more on the subject of Armageddon until the later 1850s. But at that general time, *most Adventists seemed to believe and teach that Armageddon was largely a “spiritual,” battle.*

As the 1850’s came around, **G. W. Holt** in an article in the *Review and Herald*, envisioned the plagues as “real and literal”⁵⁷ but interestingly, he saw the lead-up and the final battle, as between God and His people and the hosts of the wicked, much in character like Pharaoh and Israel at the Red Sea (thus a basic version of the original “spiritual” view).

R. F. Cottrell took a similar view in 1853:

“But the last work of the spirits will be to gather the nations to the battle of the great day of God Almighty (Rev. 16:14). They are now preparing the way, and gaining an influence over kings and subjects, and when the sixth vial of the wrath of God shall be poured out, they will gather them to the battle. . . . Notwithstanding men are crying peace and safety, while sudden destruction is hanging over their heads; and the spirits of devils are arrayed against God and his truth; yet that truth will triumph”⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ (RH 2:105, Mar. 23, 1852), WhiteEstate.org/Armageddon.

⁵⁸ (RH, 4:157, Nov. 22, 1853).

James White:

According to Mansell,⁵⁹ the earliest views of James White are unknown, but a little later on in his experience, James White changed his view making the seven last plagues in the future. He was among the first of the Adventists to do this, and no doubt the “visions” had some effect on this development. Along with this conviction came the idea that the Sabbath question would be involved in last day events, so Armageddon would be a climactic clash over such spiritual issues. Several pioneers followed this shift in the prophetic scenario (Bates, Andrews, Edson, Cottrell, Arnold, Holt, and others). So according to Adventist historians, the “spiritual” view, that this represents, could be considered to be the “official” SDA position at the start of the movement. But while many in the faith viewed things this way at the time, many didn’t.

Spiritualism:

Also entering the arena was the issue of modern spiritualism. Spiritualism arose in Hydesville, N.Y. in March 1848, when Margaret and Kate Fox heard mysterious knockings or rappings supposedly from the spirit of a deceased peddler buried in their basement.

The Fox sisters were subsequently involved with ambitious promoters, actually marketing these rapping sounds to the public, holding large gatherings where the tappings were supposedly heard by the crowd, with the ankles of the girls exposed (risqué at the time), to prove they were not making the sounds by clicking their ankle bones. The whole circumstance caused an incredible stir, and meshed theologically with the spirits of demons working miracles central to the gathering to Armageddon. This probably more than anything else shifted the argument about Armageddon toward the spiritual rather than temporal concerns.

The Civil War

When the Civil War broke out in the early 1860’s there were some who thought that the Battle of the great Day Almighty was already starting. However, there is no evidence that the leaders of the church as a whole believed so. James

⁵⁹ Mansell, *Adventists and Armageddon*, pp. 33-35.

White believed that the plagues were future and noted that the Armageddon didn't begin until the 6th vial. As editor of the *Review and Herald*, White wrote that:

. . . preparations for that battle do not commence until the time of the pouring out of the sixth vial, . . . and that battle is joined only as the Son of God, accompanied by the angel armies of heaven, descends to earth. "The great battle is not between nation and nation," he wrote, "but between earth and heaven," between Satan and Christ."⁶⁰

Uriah Smith (and others) and the Theological Divide in Adventism

Around 1853 Uriah Smith joined the staff of the *Advent Review* and at first was by outward observance a theological twin to the developing views of James White and others on Armageddon. But within about five years he began to amend his view, in opposition to the "spiritual" view now being promoted by White, for instance:

James White had said:

"the great battle is not between nation and nation; but between earth and heaven." (Above: *Review*, Jan. 21, 1862)

But Smith's view started to look very different. He began to express the belief that Armageddon was a war of nations, and that the Euphrates was the symbol of the Turkish Empire.

To summarize a large amount of data—divergent streams developed within Adventism—and the basically, the two opposing views soon emerged. We might call them Smith's view and White's view, though they didn't particularly call it that. An enormous factor that influenced Smith's stream of thought were current world events happening in the Middle East, in and around Turkey that seemed to have prophetic significance to many. In other words, he had a penchant for using the newspaper to interpret prophecy which typically came

⁶⁰ RH, Jan. 21, 1862 (19:61)

strongly into Adventism, a predisposition that remains to this day--- along with its perils. It is possible to promote any view, no matter how preposterous, by the use of “Newsweek,” or the newspaper, or as the present author would put it, by “watching the pope!”⁶¹

Uriah Smith and the Divide in Adventism (continued)

So, the influence of Uriah Smith, his editorship and his writings, greatly enhanced the literal/Turco swing that was taking place then and which dominated Adventism for the next 100 years.

In a series of articles appearing in the Review and Herald from June 3, 1862 to Feb. 3, 1863 (21:5), Uriah Smith characterized the drying up of the River Euphrates, basically the watercourse that flows through Turkey geographically, as “the consumption of the Turkish empire.” The Ottoman power would completely dry up under the sixth plague, just before an Armageddon occurred and that would be fought at Jerusalem.

The three “unclean spirits: “Paganism, Catholicism, and Protestantism,” would in Smith’s view, gather the nations to “an unequal warfare . . . against the Lord of hosts.” Babylon would fall in the 7th plague.

This general idea in Smith’s writings and exposition would appear in further books and articles for the next seventy-five years and largely became the standard SDA position. Smith changed his view from the “king of the north” of Daniel 11:40-45 as being the papacy⁶², to be Turkey, or the Ottoman Empire. Many expected the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878) would bring to an end the

⁶¹ As to interpreting current prophecy fulfillments by watching the pope and sizing up his actions, or even by watching the movements of the “religious right,” and theirs, one can never be sure about the outcome, until events unfold globally and transpire before us clearly without question. As for the popes, and Catholicism, they have been acting in the same, consistent fashion for centuries, so there is really little that is actually new. The prophecies in some ways can be made to fit almost any generation for the last 1,500 years or so. There were “Sunday Laws” in 321 A.D. Newspaper prophets often turn out in the end to be false prophets because they envision everything happening in their day, or use isolated events to attempt to nail down the fulfillment they have in view.

⁶² Review and Herald 19:192, May 13, 1862.

Ottoman Empire, and so Armageddon would follow immediately. In the *Review and Herald* for Mar. 28, 1871,⁶³ Uriah Smith wrote:

“All eyes are now turned with interest toward Turkey; and the unanimous opinion of statesmen is that the Turk is destined soon to be driven from Europe. . . Time will soon determine this matter; and it may be but a few months.”⁶⁴

It is obvious, by Smith’s treatment of the issue in *Daniel and Revelation* that he believed in the Ottoman/Turkey political and military answer to the Armageddon problem, and he attempts to back it up from several current sources in explaining why the site of Armageddon, which he believes to be Megiddo, would be of interest to the kings of the east, and of the whole world.

But to be fair to Smith, though, he wasn’t oblivious to the “spiritual,” or “great controversy” view on the big screen. In writing of the the spirits of demons and their influence, he says of Armageddon: “. . . before the spirits can have such absolute authority over the race as to gather them to battle against King of kings and Lord of lords, they must first win their way among the nations of the earth. . . .”⁶⁵ He says further: “To many it may seem incredible that the nations should be willing to engage in such an unequal warfare as to go up to battle against the Lord of Hosts.”⁶⁶

But it is also apparent that Smith saw the battle as literal in terms of this earth, and that he was greatly influenced in this interpretation with the contemporary geo-political world events of his time in the area of the Euphrates, in Turkey and Palestine (Megiddo), and while he saw the conflict as a war among nations, he recognized that it ended up being thwarted by the God of heaven.

⁶³ RH (37:116, 117)

⁶⁴ *Review and Herald*, Mar. 28, 1871 (37:116, 117). (Cf. also *Thoughts on Daniel and Revelation* [1881], pp. 361–372.)

⁶⁵ Uriah Smith, *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association [Revised and Newly Illustrated, 1944], p. 699.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

James White never agreed with Smith's view, before or after the 1870's, but due to counsel from his wife, and his own changing musings on the subject, he made no further open or public outcry against it after 1871. Later, he soft-pedaled his convictions:

"What will be the result of this positiveness in unfulfilled prophecies should things not come out as very confidently expected is an anxious question"⁶⁷

But the prevailing view (Turkey-Armageddon) held firm well into the next century, and was favored by Adventist leaders, even the church presidents, A. G. Daniels, and G. I. Butler.

1871 (Back to the Argument over the "Eastern Question")

In 1871ff. there were some political movements taking place between Russia and Turkey that Uriah Smith said "threw much light on Daniel 11:45." James White published a caution about making too much of Russia's desire to gain Turkey and the Dardanelles (islands). The Russo-Turkish war Smith thought would end with the Ottoman Empire (Turkey) collapsing (drying up), and followed closely by the close of probation.

The debate was intense. Finally James White openly confronted Smith saying that the last power of Daniel 11 was not Turkey, but by a look at Daniel 2, was clearly Rome. Thus the king of the North was Rome, or the Papacy, and not Turkey. However, White never finished his rebuttal and dropped the argument after this. Willie White later said the reason was because his wife, Ellen, received a vision that her husband erred in confronting Smith. The counsel was all about the Adventist leaders showing unity and that that was more important than the "Eastern Question." James took the advice and desisted in his writing on the subject.

However, Ellen White never did say whose argument was correct. Some subsequently assumed that by giving and relating the vision, EGW was endorsing Smith's view. But this is probably far from the truth.

⁶⁷ (Review and Herald, 50:172, Nov. 29, 1877).

Many years following her husband's death, Ellen White wrote regarding the matter:

“My husband had some ideas on some points differing from the views taken by his brethren. I was shown that however true his views were, God did not call for him to put them in front before his brethren and create differences of ideas.....Letter 7, 1887.

Smith's views however became ascendant: and were strengthened by Jones, Owen, GI Butler, and even AG Daniels. These views carried the day for decades thereafter:

Six years before the outbreak of World War I, **S. N. Haskell** wrote:

“Even the Turks themselves are looking forward to the time when they will have to remove their capital from Constantinople to Jerusalem. . . . All know that when the Turk steps out of Constantinople, there will be a general breaking up of Europe. They may not name the impending conflict the battle of Armageddon, but God has so named it.”⁶⁸

WWI

The onset of World War I brought renewed interest in the subject of Armageddon. **W. A. Spicer** referred to the evil spirits of Rev. 16: 13, 14 as stirring the nations to war, saying:

“Men who know the pulse of international affairs see just before us a world-conflict, which they describe as the Armageddon of the nations. . . . The sure word of prophecy says that it is the gathering to the battle of the last great day. . . . With express speed the world is rushing on to the great Armageddon. Before our very eyes the prophecy is fulfilling. Men of the world bear witness to it. The rest will surely come, and the time is near at hand”⁶⁹

⁶⁸ (*The Story of Daniel the Prophet* [1908 ed.], pp. 282, 283).

⁶⁹ (*Ibid.* 80:6, 7, Oct. 22, 1903).

In the Feb. 6, 1913, *Review and Herald*⁷⁰ **W. H. Branson** commented:

“It is astonishing to note how the idea of Armageddon is taking hold of thinking people of every country, and how the world is awaiting with fear and trembling the great crisis that Armageddon stands for, and that is so sure and so soon to come.”

In the issue for Dec. 25 of 1913,⁷¹ **F. M. Wilcox** asked and observed:

“What will be the end of all this great preparation for war?” and answered: “The end of it all will be that foretold by the prophet, the end looked for by far-seeing statesmen-the battle of Armageddon, the last great conflict of earth just preceding the coming of the Lord.”

About nine months later, just weeks after the beginning of World War I, Wilcox again commented:

“The Scriptures indicate that eventually the site of government will be removed to the glorious holy mountain between the seas, referring evidently to Jerusalem. . . . The river Euphrates, representing the Ottoman government, is rapidly being dried up that the way of the kings of the East may be prepared to take part in the great battle of Armageddon”⁷²

In the *Review* for Sept. 17,⁷³ **C. M. Snow** suggested that if Turkey should enter the war:

“then this [World War I] is the first stage of the Armageddon battle. But that is yet to be determined. The outcome of this war we cannot forecast. Its relation to Armageddon depends upon the aligning and shifting of the nations themselves. Will those shiftings and alignments so dry up that power designated as the Euphrates that the way will be prepared for the forces of heathenism and Mohammedanism to come up to the common battleground of the world? Time will tell. But if this war does not do it, another must follow soon that will.”

⁷⁰ RH (90:127)

⁷¹ RH (90:1240)

⁷² (*Review and Herald* (91:9), Oct. 15, 1914).

⁷³ RH (91:7)

Turkey did declare war about six weeks later (London times, Oct. 30, 1914). G. B. Starr wrote in the Review: “‘The Ottoman Empire in Europe will soon be merely a memory’. . . . For nearly forty years the writer has watched with deepest interest the movements in the Near East with reference to the fulfillment of the predictions relating to the Eastern question, and rejoices in the clear evidences that the last step, the last act of the drama, is at hand”⁷⁴

WW1 Discussions

With the build-up and beginning of the first World War, Armageddon and eschatological questions certainly came to the fore. It was if “the nations were gathered,” for the final conflict. SDA evangelists exploited this theme to a significant extent. Even though we can look back today and determine WWI was not Armageddon, it must be noted that SDA evangelists and theologians really believed it had the “look,” and they were honest to their convictions, and weren’t being disingenuous only to gather converts. That the preaching of “Armageddon” was effective is demonstrated by the numbers:

- In 1915 there were about 125,000 SDA’s (net gain was 10% that year).
- By 1917 membership had increased 43% (Obviously, the war, or the exploitation of an Armageddon theme along with the war had an incredible effect upon the growth of the church).
- In the 20’s there was a decrease⁷⁵

Cautious Detractors

But the coming of WWI did not elicit a wholesale adoption of the war as being the onset to Armageddon among all Adventist spokesman. In 1914, **A. O. Tait** counseled:

“The furious way in which this European war has broken out, and the rapidity with which it is spreading from one nation to another, is causing many people to ask the question, ‘Is this the beginning of Armageddon?’ “To this question we can clearly say, No, the war of Armageddon has not commenced; for it will be

⁷⁴ (Review and Herald [91:3], Nov. 26, 1914).

⁷⁵ Mansell, pp. 61,62.

observed, in the prophecy already quoted, that that war of Armageddon takes place under the pouring out of the sixth of the seven last plagues, and these plagues have not begun to fall, as everyone knows.”⁷⁶

Added: **C. M. Snow**: “The war now being fought in Europe is not Armageddon, but it is entirely possible that it may lead into that battle”⁷⁷

The seasoned and theologically particular **W. W. Prescott** wrote clearly and decisively: “This great war is not Armageddon. It is not surprising that that word appears in the papers, but it is not Armageddon. This war is not the end.”⁷⁸

But World War 1 and the preaching of *Armageddon* brought many SDA’s to the faith, many of who stayed by their faith to the end of their days.

But the church of the time did mostly have their eyes glued on the events in Turkey and Palestine:

Allenby of Armageddon

In the first world war (1917), the British failed to take Turkey, and turned to Egypt. General Allenby then invaded Palestine from the South. Adventists thought or hoped the Turks would momentarily “stop” him and thus he would “set up his tabernacles between Jerusalem and the sea, and would then come to his end” (Daniel 11:40-45). This circumstance would then signal the close of probation, and bring Armageddon. But it didn’t happen that way at all, and the Allies entered Jerusalem without firing a shot.

The 1919 Bible Conference:

When the war ended, and Armageddon had not occurred as expected by some, opportunity was afforded for the church to facilitate a meeting which included discussion of Bible topics and prophecy. Most authorities by this time

⁷⁶ Signs of the Times (40:7), Aug. 18, 1914.

⁷⁷ Review and Herald (91:7), Sept. 17, 1914.

⁷⁸ *ibid.* (91:6), Oct. 1, 1914.

avored the: papacy; king of the north, view, which countered the Daniels, Sorenson, Tait, and others, Turkey view. But despite the study of the conference, the “spiritual” view was effectively locked up, and not rediscovered until almost 1974.

“Yellow Peril” (and “Yellow Fever”)

With the close of WWI and the failure of the Turkey/Armageddon scenario to come to fruition in the form that was expected, the time that followed between the two wars saw a shift slightly away from the Turkey view to a focus on the Orient, and the political exercises happening there. With it came the idea of Armageddon being a battle between Eastern and Western nations.

The White Estate article on Armageddon lists several worldly and political developments that had come into the picture, even before WWI:

- The awakening of Japan under the enlightened rule of the great emperor Meiji (1852–1912)
- The Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895),
- The Boxer Rebellion in China (1900),
- A brilliant Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905),
- The Chinese Revolution (1911)

These and other pre-war and post-war developments led to the idea that Armageddon would be a battle between the nations of the Orient (the “kings of

the East”) and the West (the Occident). A more thorough treatment of this development is quoted from the White Estate article, below:⁷⁹

This view came further into focus for Adventists with the publication of several articles (4) by **R. C. Porter** in the *Review and Herald* in July and August of 1913. The title to one of the articles was: “The World’s Armageddon Battle in Prophecy.”⁸⁰ Porter noted several authorities that warned of the increasing role of Oriental nations, such as China, and Japan in world affairs, as a precursor to a possible Armageddon.

In the time after World War I, secular writer, Lothrop Stoddard, popularized such phrases as “Yellow Peril” and “the rising tide of color” in a series of books, including one entitled: *The Rising Tide of Color* (1920). Such developments had considerable influence on prophetic thinking among Adventists. This is an example of how current events can “color” prophetic thinking, instead of the more reliable cautions of the Spirit of Prophecy or the careful exegesis of biblical topics. This penchant has never left Adventism.

The well-known giant and respected theologian among Seventh-day Adventists, C. B. Haynes, even used both of the above expressions (“rising tide,” and “yellow peril”) in his book: *On the Eve of Armageddon* (1946, p. 54). So, the time between the wars saw less said about the role of Turkey in Armageddon, and

⁷⁹ The king of Sweden is said to have declared as early as 1896 that “the Occident will be conquered by the Orient” (see R. C. Porter, “The World’s Armageddon Battle in Prophecy,”). The Boxer Rebellion led to the coining of the popular phrase “Yellow Peril” (London Daily News, July 21, 1900, quoted in The Oxford English Dictionary, art. “Yellow”). A series of four articles by R. C. Porter in the *Review and Herald* during July and August 1913 was based on the idea of Armageddon as essentially an East-West struggle. In his Aug. 7 article (90:749) Porter wrote of the great world color problem as a challenge to the White man’s supremacy, and of “the battle of Armageddon as the probable result of present conditions in the East.” He quoted Archibald R. Colquhoun, F.R.G.S., as saying in the *Daily Mail Year Book* (1908), “There is no question that the victory of Japan over Russia [in 1905] raised the question of relations between white and yellow in an entirely new form, and moreover that a spirit of renaissance is at work throughout Asia, which is destined to challenge the vaunted supremacy of the white man” (emphasis his). —White Estate.org/Armageddon

⁸⁰ R. C. Porter, “The World’s Armageddon Battle in Prophecy,” *Review and Herald* 90:748, 749, Aug. 7, 1913.

more emphasis on the roles of Japan, China, and other Asian nations. The “Yellow Peril,” as a concept related to Armageddon, still continued some into the time following WWII, for the present author can remember (born in 1954) that evangelists and “lay-prophecy enthusiasts” were still occupied with the idea in even the 1960’s and 70’s. He can even remember evangelists that he listened to in his youth (in Washington State) that promoted some brand of this type of thing. For one: the rise of (communist) China, “the yellow plague,” as being the “kings of the east.” A slide showing military hardware and tanks still resides in his mind.

WWII

Post-second world war, other ideas were floated about, including north-south scenarios, others including France, Russia, Palestine, etc., etc. Some of these nations had even gotten the attention of Adventists leading up to the first world war (A. T. Jones). But WWII matters soon became the topic most related to Armageddon in the news and in prophecy.

But with the decisive defeat of Japan in World War II, this dominant emphasis on Armageddon being a battle between east and west, largely disappeared. Under the title “Japan and the Kings of the East” (Ministry 19:10, June 1946) Andrew N. Nelson, in 1946, using the title “Japan and the Kings of the East,” emphatically denied that Japan had anything to do with “the kings of the East.” “Japan” at the end of WWII went largely away, the same way as “Turkey” had, at the end of WWI.

The “War” in Adventism

With the early Adventist disagreements on the subject of Armageddon, for example, beginning with the heated discussions between James White and Uriah Smith, to the numerous spirited debates over the “eastern question,” to the argued Russian, Chinese, Japanese possibilities, or engagements with other such national players in their historical contexts; even East-West, North-South alignments, multiple World War discussions, and ideas of “national” conflicts vs. “spiritual” ones; the subject of Armageddon has been a battlefield itself in denominational ranks all through its history, known facetiously by some in retrospect, as the “Battle about the Battle!”

But these differences and arguments, all found among brethren, over the years, did not always yield a worthy record, behavior wise, befitting of Christian soldiers. There are huge lessons in this, even today, on matters such as Armageddon.

SUN. Dec. 14 7:30		“ARMAGEDDON”		Is This Great Battle Drawing Near? WONDERFUL SCREEN PICTURES
No Meeting Tuesday Night				
WELCOME to the PENDLETON BIBLE AUDITORIUM <hr/> Meetings Four Nights A Week SUNDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY		WED. Dec. 17 7:30	THIEVES RUNNING THE CHURCH SO — CHICKEN PIE SUPPERS = GRAB-BAG ANTIES TO SUPPORT THE CHURCH	
		THUR. Dec. 18 7:30	WILL PROTESTANTISM GO TO ROME? STARTLING STATEMENTS FROM PROTESTANT MINISTERS	
		FRI. Dec. 19 7:30	Does PETER Hold the KEYS to HEAVEN? SPEND YOUR EVENINGS AT THE BIBLE AUDITORIUM	

Above: The photo is copied from a family scrapbook: (An Adventist evangelistic flyer that was saved from materials owned by the author's parents and grandparents, who were living at the time in Pendleton, Oregon). (These pictures were submitted by his sister, Anita Beerman Shultz —[Thank you, Anita!]). The year date is not indicated on the news-flyer, but by context and day/month matches, it is believed to be December of 1941, and early 1942 (as of others below), during WWII.

For not all has gone smoothly and honorably within Adventism over the years regarding the subject of Armageddon. Sometimes the debates could be quite heated, or politically rife. And Ellen White was more than *probably* right in her counsel to her husband, that such prophetic matters are not as important as unity among the brethren. Considering all the discussion and rancor over “Armageddon,” one has to observe today that a lot of it was a pathetic waste of breath, writing, and cordiality among brethren, and much unity and brotherhood

was sacrificed, all for naught, and a lot of it actually contributing toward gospel and societal damage.

<p>Sunday April 12 "7 Women Taking Hold of one Man!" Marvelous Screen Pictures Don't Fail to Hear Lewie Kern Gospel Hymns on the Violin at 7:30</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">A G R O G R A M O F B I B L E P R O P H E C Y W I T H P I C T U R E S * * * A L L F R E E</p>	<p>Wednesday April 22 "A LION, A BEAR, A LEOPARD" A Beast With IRON TEETH Marching Through the Land Screen Pictures</p>
<p>Wednesday April 15 "Will The Jews Be The Rulers of the New Earth?"</p>		<p>Friday April 24 "Plagues Falling on Hitler and Mussolini" When and in What Form? Screen Pictures</p>
<p>Friday April 17 "The Holy Priest" Wonderful Prophecy Certain Screen Pictures</p>		<p>Sunday April 26 "TOJO and DEVIL SPIRITS at War with GOD" Wonderful Screen Pictures</p>
<p>Sunday April 19 "The Bloody Struggle of a Woman and a Great Red Dragon" Screen Pictures</p>		<p>Wednesday April 29 "A 25,000 Mile Horse Race" Don't Miss This</p>

- According to Donald Mansell,⁸¹ in the 1940's two teachers in a senior college actually engaged in a physical pushing and shoving match over their interpretations of the king of the north and south and Armageddon.
- In 1920 William T. Bartlett was replaced by Arthur Maxwell as editor of the *British Present Truth* and sent off or "exiled" to a distant mission field because he did not agree with the prevailing view of the last power of Daniel 11 and of Armageddon.
- Supposedly in 1959 a touring group of SDA ministers got in a heated debate while viewing the plain of Megiddo, arguing on whether it was too small to handle the armies of the world or not. By some reports, *the Battle of*

⁸¹ Mansell, pp. 21, 22.

Armageddon almost started right there!⁸²

Watchful and Patient Saints

The appeal is this, that when it comes to prophetic opinions, on subjects of prophecy, that have not been settled in our ranks, or are obscure, or are not

essential to our spiritual well-being, those things should never become a point of controversy and division among God's people. Variance of opinion on these matters, matters such as Armageddon, or the 144,000, or how many angels can fit on the head of a pin, should never be the cause of personal division among the remnant.



The present author knows that his parents thought that WWII was Armageddon. But I don't think of them less because they thought so. It made great sense at the time. But whatever we determine on this side of eternity on such matters, we must remember that they cannot reach their final and true fulfillment and

understanding until they happen. When they do, all will know. Until then, we must be friendly, and prayerful students of the Sacred Word.

⁸² We marvel at the bickering of Jesus' disciples, but really, are we any different?

1950 and Forward: The Shift Back

The 1950,52 Bible Teacher's Conferences. and the Bible Research Fellowship—The *Eastern Question* Debates and Papers

Following the war, some adjustments to prophetic exposition were needed, and spirited discussions began to be had on college campuses, in pastoral conclaves, at church conventions, and at General Conference venues.

The historical shift of perspective of this time on Armageddon, is credited to **Raymond Cottrell**, Secretary of the BRF (Bible Research Fellowship—forerunner of the Biblical Research Institute)—and often ascribed to him is the “discovery” that Turkey was not the traditional SDA view on Armageddon. Of course, the word “discovery” is not the most accurate way to describe the matter, for many (James White ff.) had never ⁸³ accorded to the “Turkey” view. But many not sympathetic to the older view, for the most part, remained silent, or officially caved in to the D & R view, or remained underground, relative to the matter.

•Apparently, stemming from the 1950 Bible Conference, where it was seen that perhaps a preponderance of the attendees had come to believe that the papacy was the “king of the north,” (James White’s view and the traditional view of several others) the matter called for resolution. But **W.H. Branson**, the newly elected GC president saw this departure as a challenge to the traditional, military view, and initially, sought arrangements to disband the Biblical Research Fellowship. As a consequence, also, Branson asked W. E.

⁸³ The present author, born in 1954, beginning his first pastorates around 1980 ff, found that the loyalty to Uriah Smith’s book, *Daniel and Revelation*, was still so strong, as representing the gospel and official SDA doctrine, that when he around 1990 only suggested a view of the “white horse” of Rev. 5 being perhaps a little different than Uriah Smith’s view, in a prayer meeting gathering, the mere suggestion made the saints so distraught, that one elder’s wife in his church went out and immediately called the Conference leadership in alarm.

Read, to study the “Eastern Question,” and to make a presentation at the upcoming 1952 Bible Conference.

•**In 1952, the Bible Conference opened** for consideration of several biblical matters.— The books: *Our Firm Foundation, volumes 1 and 2*, are the result of this conference and these presentations and papers in the end became valuable contributions to Adventist theology, because they represented a further SDA processing of the denomination’s major pillars and doctrines. Printed as they are in book form, with varied articles and subjects, they are good reading. These volumes arrayed the bookshelves of many SDA’s of the time, and thereafter, because they represent the then current level and focus of Adventist doctrinal apologetics.

The 1950, and 1952 Bible Conferences represent an important shift of perspective in Adventist thought regarding Armageddon. **W.E. Read** had been authorized to study the *Eastern Question* by Branson and W.E. Read’s presentation, printed under the title, “The Great Controversy,” basically balanced the two opposing views; saying it was both spiritual and literal, and to the result, Mansell reasons, that this is why most SDA’s hold that position today. This assessment may be correct, though the present author reasons that most take this view, because it *is, after all*, the balanced view of the matter.

Read was thorough in his stream of thought, supporting his research on Armageddon with point by point list forms of substantiation for his development of the matter and the surrounding passages. Read was insistent, though, that the Greek word: *polemos*, equalled “war,” so, Armageddon was not a single battle at all, but a series of battles, a *war*, the “Great Controversy.”

Voices of Change⁸⁴

George McCready Price

Over his career, holding professorships in Loma Linda University, Pacific Union College, Stanborough College, and Andrews University (then Emmanuel Missionary College), the theology and science of George McCready Price contributed enormously to Adventist thought in the mid-twentieth century.

Near to his death, ca. 1970, he published: “Time of the End,” a treatise on last-day events, where he gives a treatment of Armageddon in the latter portion of the book. Price clearly subscribed to the “newer” view of scholars, which we might call the “Great Controversy” view, that Armageddon is not a war between nations, nor between east and west, but is “the name given to the last crisis of the series” of “the war (miscalled ‘battle’).”⁸⁵

He praises the publication of W. E. Read’s “masterly discussion” in Volume II of *Our Firm Foundation*, though he goes beyond it, disembodimenting himself totally from the military view, saying that Armageddon is only military in the sense of the “turmoil and utter confusion after probation closes.”⁸⁶

Like his chief fellow professors of the time, he saw Armageddon being also described in both Revelation 17:14 (RSV) and Revelation 19:11-21. Price writes: “The name Armageddon is ‘symbolic,’ for it is an invented name and has no specific geographical location. Etymologically it has no connection with Megiddo except in assonance, a slight resemblance in sound.”⁸⁷ He saw the *drying of the River Euphrates* as “figurative,” and was insistent that a *God and His people against Babylon scenario* correlates best with the writings of Ellen White.

⁸⁴ A title borrowed from Mansell’s valuable book.

⁸⁵ George McCready Price, *The Time of the End* (Nashville, Tennessee; Southern Publishing Association, 1967), p. 160.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 161.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 162

Roy Allen Anderson

Pastor, evangelist, teacher: Roy Allen Anderson wrote Daniel and Revelation commentaries appearing in book centers, and often found amongst the literary venues of Adventists, which are a representative example of the more recent trending *toward* the “spiritual view” of Armageddon. His commentary was first published in 1953, with revisions coming in 1961, and 1974. According to Mansell, Anderson was a hold-out for the “military” view of Armageddon. But apparently, he amended his view, at least in the revised edition of his book on Revelation, for he doesn’t argue for such a view of Armageddon in the later edition (1974) of the book.

Anderson, as many others now in the more modern settings have done, takes a general and cautious view of Armageddon, represented in his revised book, shying away from the literal and military confrontation ideas. Of Armageddon Anderson says: “It is not the *geographical location* that the Lord is emphasizing as much as *revelation of issues* at stake.” He quotes the Ellen White statements, of course, and but also W. H. Branson, *Drama of the Ages*, p. 533:

The real issue at stake in Armageddon will not be so much the material and international as spiritual. It will actually be a struggle between the devil and the wicked nations on the one side and God and His people on the other.⁸⁸

Louis F. Were (early 1930’s and forward)

The effect and influence of Australian evangelist, pastor, and writer, Louis F. Were, toward the current preponderance of Adventist scholarship and theology in regard to Armageddon and such related eschatological and prophetic matters, can hardly be over-estimated. In a way, Were and his hermeneutical approach to such matters shook up Adventism to a large degree, and set in motion a domino effect, and a general turning away from the physical, military understanding of Armageddon. Unpopular at the time, because his views

⁸⁸ Roy Allan Anderson, *Unfolding the Revelation: Revised, Evangelistic Studies for Public Presentation* (Mountain View, California; Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1953, 1961, 1974) pp. 167, 168.

definitely tended back toward the “spiritual” understanding of prophecy, Were eventually earned respect for his dependence on Ellen White, and his theology which aligned as he claimed, with the original, and traditional view of all prophetic matters, such as Armageddon.

Were took the position that “*When passing over into the Christian era there is an automatic transition from literal to spiritual Babylon, from literal to spiritual Jerusalem, from the literal lands of Israel and Babylon to their spiritual anti-types.*”⁸⁹

Were published several books and writings between ca.1942-1951, titles such as: *The Certainty of the Three Angel's Messages: Proved by Important Principles of Prophetic Interpretation: What is Armageddon?*; *The Trials and Triumph of Truth*; *Before Probation closes*; *God Speaks and Israel Triumphs*.

Interestingly, Were predicted the fall of Communism, and the result that the papacy would emerge victorious from the Cold War. He argued strongly against the then popular view of the role of Turkey and the King of the North, and saw Armageddon as a “fierce conflict between the forces of good and evil over the Law of God.”⁹⁰

Were's views were at the time considered heretical, and he was later, ostensibly for other reasons, dismissed from the ministry. Yet in time, his hermeneutical approach was adopted and exonerated by many scholars and church leaders in the Biblical Research Fellowship, and beyond, and even still, his hermeneutic is favored by great numbers in Adventism to this day.

In Mansell's book, *Adventists and Armageddon*, Were is quoted in an excerpt from his publication, *Trials and Triumphs of Truth*, p.34:

⁸⁹ Louis F. Were, *The King of the North at Jerusalem* (East Malvern, Victoria, Australia: A. F. Blackman, 1949, p. 75. Italics his.

⁹⁰ Louis F. Were, *Before Probation Closes* (East Malvern, Victoria, Australia: A. F. Blackman, Printer, 1951, p. 6.

“[T]he new theory of the military Armageddon will yet be abandoned by Spirit-led believers in the closing days of the great struggle.”⁹¹

Whether all of Louis Were’s views were correct or not, the prediction he made concerning the “military” view of Armageddon has certainly, in a way, come true.

Raymond Cottrell

Raymond Cottrell’s name must be mentioned for his considerable influence in bringing a reasoned change of view toward the problem of Armageddon. As chairman of the Bible Research Fellowship in the late 1940’s, Cottrell, a noted professor, along with having acquaintance of many Adventist university professors and students, exerted a wide range of influence, having a large audience within Adventist circles.

R. F. Cottrell is credited with the “discovery” that the *Uriah Smith, D&R* view, we will call it, was not the original view of Adventism. He was not alone in discovering this, for several papers and research projects by other voices in Adventism were being feverishly discussed as to the matters in Revelation 16 and Armageddon. Some of these were prompted by L. F. Were’s writings, but the return to the so called original, James White, etc. view was being entertained by a significant number, which led to the actions within the Bible Research Fellowship to study the matter more. Cottrell gave voice to these concerns, concerns crafted within the confused state of Adventism on the matter, and at the time.⁹²

Cottrell says:

In regard to Armageddon, . . .there never actually was a place known by that name, in either the Hebrew or in any other language. Since there never was a place known in Hebrew as Armageddon, it must be that John was speaking symbolically

⁹¹ Mansell, p. 81.

⁹² Raymond F. Cottrell, “Armageddon: A Study of Historical and Prophetic Backgrounds,” a mimeographed paper presented to the Bible Research Fellowship, Angwin, California, dated in the author’s handwriting, May, 1945.” pp. 3-22).

In Cottrell's view, the kings of the east were Christ and His angels, the battle was a "spiritual" battle, between God's people and the forces of evil. Many students and professors soon adopted this general view, which led to a divide in the inner circles of Adventism, because it threatened the established D & R view, and eventually led to forums being called by Branson, the G. C. President, along with other efforts, to intercept and counter the "newer" view.

W. E. Read

We have already made reference to the contribution of W. E. Read to the discussion of the Armageddon passage. Commissioned to study the matter by the General Conference in 1952, Read represents the *beginning* of a "shift" by greater Adventism with some recognition given to the spiritual, view, thus a battle over the Sabbath and God's people pitted against the nations, but balanced against a some kind of a "clash of nations," view of Armageddon. In other words an attempt to balance both the old and new view seemed to be brought forth. According to Mansell, this is why many, perhaps the majority of Adventists today say that Armageddon is both spiritual and militant.⁹³

The results of W. E. Read's research appears in the book, *Our Firm Foundation*.⁹⁴ While Read did not go as far some of his colleagues, he, at least taught Armageddon to be a Great Controversy "war," so to speak, and brought more conviction to the idea of a spiritual struggle between God's people and the world.

Hans K. LaRondelle

Hans K. LaRondelle—"Chariots of Salvation." Dr. Hans LaRondelle is the most, semi-current exponent, of a symbolic Armageddon. This is really the "spiritual" view. The common views at the date this book is written (2020 ff.) have swung almost entirely this way. I, the present writer, with hundreds of seminarians, was a student of LaRondelle's, and sat at his feet at the seminary at Andrews University. I was only a name, I had no personal ties to him, for I was

⁹³ Mansell, p. 104.

⁹⁴ W. E. Read, *Our Firm Foundation*, vol. 2, pp. 239-335, "The Great Controversy."

just one of hundreds of students that came through the ranks in those days, but learning under his guidance was an unforgettable experience.⁹⁵

Hans LaRondelle was a masterful scholar, demanding stringent exegesis, who taught among other things the subject of *Biblical Eschatology* at Andrews University Theological Seminary, teaching there for about 25 years. LaRondelle has probably influenced more Adventist pastors, evangelists, and theology professors in recent years in the area of eschatology than anyone in recent times. LaRondelle was extremely thorough, and required his students to support thematic claims with a ream of Bible texts. On his exams he sometimes required entire lists of texts to accompany a point. But the discipline was good!

LaRondelle's greatest contribution to studies of prophecy were his insistence on sound hermeneutics, and these were also required to be memorized and written on exam papers, and cemented in the mind. I couldn't repeat them all today, but fragments of them still come to the fore. But the principles he espoused, have probably never departed from most of his students. I am thankful for having had the opportunity to learn under him. LaRondelle authored several books, but among the ones that are most appropriate to the study of Armageddon are: "Chariots of Salvation," and "Light for the Last Days." But there are others.

Among the best of LaRondelle's basic, classic, and fundamental materials, I believe, though, is: "*The Israel of God in Prophecy*."⁹⁶ Every Seventh-day Adventist, really every modern Christian, should digest the hermeneutical principles found there. If they would, so much misinformation and

⁹⁵ But He saved my paper on the *Son of Man in Daniel and Jesus*, (which the secretary said almost never happens, and could be taken as the highest compliment to be given to a LaRondelle student). But he didn't save my paper on *Armageddon*, or apparently didn't like it, where I probably took a little different angle than he wanted! He must not have really read it! It was really good! Ha! (So now, *you* have to read it!).

And, no boast, really here. Not at all. I know my place, a midget among giants! —S. Behrmann

⁹⁶ Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy*. Andrews University Monographs, Studies in Religion. Vol. 13 (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1983).

misapprehension about the prophecies found in both Testaments would be avoided, and light and sense would be put in their place.⁹⁷

One sample of the useful, but universal principles taught by LaRondelle and other expositors like him, is given below, this one taken from my class notes: one honoring the *principle of enlargement*, but the same principle along with several others can be easily found in LaRondelle's works:

"In applying Israel's covenant promises to the Christian dispensation and the future age, the New Testament extends them to believers in Christ of all races and enlarges the promised land to the whole earth, thus removing every ethnic and geographic binding, even when Hebrew terminology and Middle East imagery are retained." ---Hans LaRondelle—(Biblical Eschatology/ class notes)

LaRondelle was largely influenced in his thinking about matters of prophecy by the writing and preaching of Australian evangelist and writer, Louis F. Were. As to the matter of Armageddon, or of apocalyptic terms in literature of the same genre, Were was partial to what we might call the "spiritual" view, which he regularly claimed was based on the writings of E. G. White. LaRondelle's interpretation of Revelation's symbolism is general and comprehensive, looking at matters in broad sweeps, with a strict avoidance of narrow specificity or any brand of direct literalism.

LaRondelle, along with others, represents perhaps the apex of the modern swing from the military view of Armageddon toward the more spiritual view. Armageddon in its setting—as a place—appears not as important as what it represents.

That battle is not some nuclear accident that destroys the world. Nor is it World War III. In the Armageddon the Bible portrays, God is the protagonist and His people are at heart of the conflict.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ (There are other good, available works valuable in this regard also, esp. Vol. 4, of the older *SDA Bible Commentary*, "The Role of Israel in Old Testament Prophecy," etc.).

⁹⁸ Hans K. LaRondelle, *Light for the Last Days* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1999) p. 112.

And, few of us would now disagree with LaRondelle's overall characterization of the conflict today, or the general modern, popular Adventist position among scholarship, at least, that Armageddon is probably not a battle between nations, or between east and west, but rather a battle between the forces of evil among the nations (such as Babylon), pitted against God and His people living on earth in the last remnant of time.

To LaRondelle, the "kings of the east," are Christ and His army, Babylon is some kind of corrupted or false Christianity. What isn't clear to some of us reading LaRondelle's works, though, is what really his final opinion was re: "The Beast," or "Babylon," or even "The False Prophet?" LaRondelle taught a "wait and see" attitude regarding specific entities. But in the "spiritual view" anyway, these entities as identities aren't seen to matter so much. LaRondelle sees Armageddon as the battle that *liberates the followers of Jesus from Babylon*,⁹⁹ and that derived meaning apparently is enough.

Notable, though, is LaRondelle's treatment of "The Fall of Babylon in Type and Antitype," in the book: *Chariots of Salvation*. No Adventist writer or expositor is more definite or clear about the connection of the fall of Babylon with the Armageddon matter. This connection deserves robust commendation in the view of the present author. But LaRondelle's approach to the subject of Babylon's fall, in the context, then begs for completion, a voice pleading with him to close the circle, which, it seems, he never does completely.

Yet, LaRondelle is to be commended for centering pastors, educators, evangelists, and Adventism in general on stringent exegesis, interpretational responsibility, and in being a voice for returning Adventism to its roots in the matter of Armageddon and prophecy, and in steering us away from the earthly, military penchant that has haunted Adventism in the previous century or more.

C. Mervyn Maxwell

C. Mervyn Maxwell, in his commentary, after troubling over the difficulties of seeing merit in a world-wide battle on the plain of Esdraelon, or "Mount Megiddo," or in the unknown biblical location, called the "Valley of Jehoshaphat," or in considering other common suggestions or interpretations and

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 113.

translations, settles on a symbolic answer. Dr. Maxwell, the well-known voice in Adventism and its history, takes the matter of Armageddon as purely figurative. Thus Maxwell in his commentary (*God Cares*, Vol. II)¹⁰⁰ and writing, finally settles down in seeing “Armageddon as a symbol.”

“ . . . not as a specific place (there being no such place). . . being instead a symbolic *reminder* that in earth’s final rebellion against truth and right, the God of truth and right will utterly *destroy His enemies* and totally *protect and preserve His people*. ”¹⁰¹

Maxwell then turns the focus to the “kings of the east,” citing the servanthood of Cyrus, the Mede, in taking the city of Babylon by means of “drying up the Euphrates.” He makes the common equation, with several others like evangelist, Louis Were, in thus making Jesus and His Coming: “the kings of the east.”

The “River Euphrates,” Maxwell suggests: “is a symbol of the world’s population organized under human governments.”¹⁰² (P. 441)

In typical “Maxwellian” thinking, the battle is not literal, but spiritual, fought over the issue of God’s “character,” with the false Trinity of the Beast, the False Prophet, and the Dragon warring against God and ultimately defeated by the forces of good in the climax of the *great controversy*.

William Shea

Dr. William Shea, who toward the end of the last century became a powerful voice of stabilization in Adventist circles over several decades, especially during the 1980’s, became a respected scholar regarding prophecy, especially OT prophecy. A brilliant master of ancient languages, Shea has taught and greatly influenced Adventist theologians and pastors, at the seminary, and throughout the world. His views on Armageddon are conveniently summarized in

¹⁰⁰ Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, Vol. 2, 1985, Pacific Press Publishing Association, pp. 434-446.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 429.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 441.

Mervyn Maxwell's commentary.¹⁰³ Shea argued for the "Carmel" interpretation of Armageddon to his students and colleagues.

Writes M. Maxwell about Shea:

My colleague William Shea thinks that the Mount of Megiddo is Mount Carmel and as such provides a type or forerunner of Armageddon. King Ahab (like the demon spirits) gathered his entire nation (the world) to Mount Carmel (Armageddon) for a contest between God and Baal (the Lamb and the beast) to see who should be worshiped. God sent fire from heaven and won the contest (compare the "kings of the east"). The false prophets of Baal (like the beast, the dragon, and the false prophet) were slain.¹⁰⁴

Jon Paulien

Dr. Jon Paulien, renowned Adventist scholar on apocalyptic works, largely takes the same view of Armageddon as Shea, and several other more current SDA authorities, and after a long trail of discovery and learning about Armageddon, ends up with a strong leaning toward the Elijah and Mt. Carmel theme. The "Euphrates River symbolizes the civil, political, and secular powers of this world."¹⁰⁵ Thus, he takes Armageddon, then, as a literal place (Mt. Carmel), however, in that John, he believes, references the geographic place of Armageddon for theological purposes, but sees the battle as a spiritual contest between the forces of evil and the forces of good, or a battle of "cosmic character and spiritual significance."¹⁰⁶

But, unlike some others of his kin, Paulien does argue for a Palestinian locale, or geographical location (Mt. Megiddo as Mt. Carmel), but one that "transcends space and time." Paulien delivered a paper in this regard to the

¹⁰³ (Maxwell, (Per footnote references in *God Cares*, Vol. 2, p. 451)

¹⁰⁴ William H. Shea, "The Location and Significance of Armageddon in Rev 16:16," *Andrews University Studies*, 18 (Autumn 1980): 157-162.

¹⁰⁵ Jon Paulien, *What the Bible Says About the End-time* (Hagerstown, MD, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1994)p. 132.

¹⁰⁶ www.thebattleofarmageddon.com/revelation_translation_paulien.html.
"What is Armageddon?"

Society of Biblical Literature, entitled: “The Battle over the Battle of Armageddon,” in 1989. Paulien is to be commended in stressing that the “place” is still significant in understanding the meaning of the term, Armageddon.

Paulien is known for his notable work with the “allusions” found in the *Apocalypse* especially in the section of Revelation known as “The Trumpets.”¹⁰⁷ But Paulien has been a large contributor to the Adventist understanding and theology of the entire book of *Revelation* and of the entire Johannine corpus.

Ranko Stefanovic

Dr. Ranko Stefanovic has become one of the leading prophetic expositors among Adventists in recent years. He has written a lengthy commentary on Revelation. A disciple of Jon Paulien, he writes an informative work of value.

Despite the difficulties with the “Megiddo” association with Armageddon, Dr. Stefanovic definitely has no serious quarrel with the Megiddo battle site as the symbolic motif and reference standing behind the Armageddon pericope. He agrees with Bruce Metzger that the passage as it is used refers to the historical significance of Megiddo as “the scene of frequent and decisive battles in ancient times (Judges 5:19-21; 2 Kings 9:27; 23:29).”¹⁰⁸

Of course he makes no significant departure from his colleagues in regard to the spiritual nature of the battle and deals with some of the difficulties surrounding the passage. He says clearly: “. . . the final battle of Armageddon is not a military battle but a spiritual one—the battle for the minds of people.”¹⁰⁹ But it is clear he strongly supports the Elijah and Mt. Carmel episode found in I Kings 18 as the context in which to understand the battle of Armageddon:

¹⁰⁷ Paulien, Jon. *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets: Literary Allusions and Interpretations of Revelation 8:7-12*. Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 11. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1988.

¹⁰⁸ Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 2002) p. 494. (Sequence pp. 489-492)

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 495.

“Mt. Carmel hosted one of the most significant battles in Israel’s history—the battle in which the prophet Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal (I Kings 18). It appears that this spiritual battle stands behind the battle of Armageddon of Revelation 16:16.”¹¹⁰

Thus, the battle is between the “nations of the earth,” and Christ and His followers. Armageddon brings the victory over (Babylon), and delivers God’s people at the end of time.

Jacques B. Doukhan

Doukhan’s position, is not fundamentally different from other Adventist scholars in regards to Armageddon being a climactic, spiritual battle between the good and evil:

This shall be the last world war, one not fought among humanity, but between it and God. This last conflict shall unite the human race in a cosmic struggle against the holy mountain of God.¹¹¹

According to Dr. Doukhan, the “kings of the east,” “represent the forces of the saving God, the God of Jerusalem.” Noting the background of the role of the historical Cyrus as a God-sent deliverer in OT times, he sees the subtle association with a symbolically rebuilt Jerusalem and the renewed hopes of Israel. The “kings of the world” are on the other side of the conflict, “the forces of evil—Babylon.”

Doukhan ties Armageddon to Megiddo, but adds an interesting break from his fellow Adventist expositors, in taking the view that Armageddon, the “mountain of Megiddo,” is the subject of an allusion to *Hadad Rimmon* in Zechariah 12: 10,11, associated by means of a “game of assonances (paronomasia).” In other words, *Hadad Rimmon* is similar in sound to Armageddon, and stands in contrast to the “beautiful, holy mountain” (Daniel

¹¹⁰ Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 489.

¹¹¹ Jacques B. Doukhan, *Secrets of Revelation: The Apocalypse Through Hebrew Eyes* (Hagerstown, Maryland, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2002) p. 153.

11:45) (thus, Jerusalem). John contrasts the mountain of God to the mountain of evil.¹¹²

The mountain comparison is legitimate, most would agree, noticed often when considering Mt. Zion as the counterpart to Mt. Megiddo. But according to the present author, what is disappointing in Dr. Doukhan's exegesis is that while he definitely sees a connection between Babel and Babylon in Revelation's context, and mentions it particularly, he sort of later abandons it, and places the Armageddon battle as focused symbolically around Jerusalem. This is not invalid, perhaps, in itself, in that others have declared it so, but it just falls short of where one could go with the fall of Babylon themes, as this present author hopes you will soon see.

Angel Rodriguez

Rodriguez in his article "The Battle Over 'Armageddon,'" despairs that "sometimes we confront biblical information that is ambiguous and subject to several possible interpretations," and then summarizes the two main interpretations, *Magedon*, and *Har-mo'ed*.

Dr. Rodriguez has had a distinguished career among Adventists, and has held chair and leadership roles in the Biblical Research Institute. In the case of Magedon, he leans toward the Mt. Carmel association that would indicate: "Armageddon is Satan's last attempt to become the sole object of worship on Planet Earth."¹¹³

To his credit, he, at least, also argues the reasonability of the *Har-Mo'ed*, or "Mountain of Assembly" possibility, noting the typical difficulties with it, but saying that it nicely fits the context.

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 150-156.

¹¹³ www.adventistreview.org (<http://www.faithandvalues.com/tx/00/00/03/33/3334/ondex.html>)

“Even though we have two different interpretations of “Armageddon,” they both reach basically the same conclusion They are both compatible with the message of the book of Revelation.”¹¹⁴

Roy C. Naden

Professor of religion at Andrews University for about 15 years, and a research specialist, and a voice among Adventists relating to prophecy for many years, and also contributing with books and background materials for evangelistic Daniel and Revelation Seminars, Naden takes the larger view of Armageddon as a non-military battle against the Lord of Hosts.

The gathering of the ‘whole world’ is involved here, a fact that immediately eliminates any suggestion of a battle on a small plain in Palestine. *They will not gather to fight a physical war. They are united in their resolve to destroy God’s faithful followers and therefore will receive God’s wrath.*¹¹⁵ (emphasis his)

Naden takes the safer view, and most of us would say the largely correct view, as does many other of his colleagues, in making the battle symbolically “spiritual.” He believes the battle, along with a host of current authorities, to be symbolically reminiscent of the historic battles fought in the Megiddo area of Palestine.

Marvin Moore

It is not in the scope of this book to credit every SDA expositor that has written or spoken about Armageddon. But we would be remiss to not credit Marvin Moore, long-time book editor for Pacific Press; author of several end-time focused books and treatises; along with being a presenter at numerous seminars and forums; as as being recognized for decades as being a voice of preparation and reform, thus being, largely influential among Adventists.

In his 1992 book, *The Crisis of the End Time*, he supplies a chapter on Armageddon, but of course, Moore has written further on the matter in other

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Roy C. Naden, *The Lamb Among the Beasts* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1996) pp. 231, 232.

publications. But Moore, perhaps represents the conservative, or middle position of where many lay Adventists and armchair theologians would probably put the matter of Armageddon today.

By my opinion, for whatever that is worth, Moore seems to carefully handle the Armageddon matter and does so responsibly, and biblically, and does it in deference to what many call the Spirit of Prophecy writings. Says Moore of Armageddon: “The Battle of Armageddon—will be fought between heaven’s forces on one side and all of earth’s nations united against Him on the other.”¹¹⁶

Further, he says:

The two sides in the earth’s final battle will not be opposing nations on earth. Armageddon will be God and his people on one side against the entire world—Satan and his people—on the other.”¹¹⁷

So, while Moore largely and firmly sides with the established view of recent times, of the spiritual nature behind the battle, the disingenuous nations against God, he breaks from his contemporaries in highlighting the “physicality,” or the “reality” of the final battle. For this, the present author commends him, because as will be discussed in later discussions in this book, the tendency to stress the spiritual nature of Armageddon in recent decades, while important, may in a certain sense go a little too far now in that direction. In completely, and with commendation, laying to rest the military view, Adventism may have spiritualized away, to a degree, the reality of the conflict that is ahead for God’s people, and driven it off into the mist and the clouds.

While the present author knows not what to make of Moore’s suggestion that military arms in the hands of God’s enemies; now complete with drones, heat-seeking missiles, night vision hardware, and the like, would be used against God’s people (Ellen White speaks of “swords falling powerless;”), Moore says: “That’s real guns and bullets Ellen White is talking about,” [p. 240], I do think it responsible to side with Moore in a limited manner on the issue that “while earth’s final battle will be over spiritual issues, we must understand that it will be

¹¹⁶ Marvin Moore, *The Crisis of the End Time* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1992) p. 232

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 233

temporal in aspect, in a real sense.” In other words, physical, insofar that the final days will see an actual threat posed by the wicked toward the righteous. The hosts of the wicked characterized as going out with “drawn swords” to “slay the saints,” doesn’t sound like just a “spiritual” occurrence. It appears that the first circumstance of Armageddon will be the aim of “the nations” to blame and seek the harm of the faithful, but when they are exonerated by heaven’s intervention before the masses, the nations will then turn upon each other.

So, we might suggest, that in the interest of balance, that the military, or the spiritual view, is not all we have. There might be something in between, or rather, a more inclusive or *complete* view sitting out there.

DARCOM

While discussing Adventist views on the subject, any work on this topic must include the work of the Daniel and Revelation Committee (DARCOM). These volumes are a significant endeavor put together by a consortium of Adventist scholars, and represents an invaluable work of progress in Adventist prophetic understanding.

So, even though this is an incomplete and brief survey of Adventist views on Armageddon it is also deemed necessary to make reference to the research of the Daniel and Revelation Committee (DARCOM), which was in part organized as an ecclesiastical response to the “Ford” disaffection of the 1980’s. These valuable committees formalized and processed to a more lengthy and greater degree a centering of Adventist theology on prophetic themes. Most Adventists, and sadly even many disaffected ones, generally do not know how complete and doctrinally defensible are the reasons given in that seven-volume set of books for the traditional Bible/Adventist pillars of prophecy.

While it isn’t known by this author what views of the subject of Armageddon were held by all the members of the committee, it is at least clear which expositor was chosen as the authority to represent the committee’s determination on the subject. That authority was Hans K. LaRondelle, whose papers are posted for the subject: “Contextual Approach to the Seven Last

Plagues;” and, “Armageddon: Sixth and Seventh Plagues,” in Book 2, Volume 7.¹¹⁸

Of course, LaRondelle sees Armageddon as a thematic “cosmic-universal war of a world demonically united in rebellion against God.”¹¹⁹ Armageddon and the crises in Revelation are “Christo-centric” issues; Christ is “portrayed as the divine warrior who comes from heaven to make war on behalf of his threatened covenant people, His faithful remnant.”¹²⁰ With the “Christo-centric focus” there is no authorization for a “secondary application of apocalyptic war to any secular, political world war, or even to an anti-Semite war.”¹²¹

“He [Christ] will deliver His new-covenant, remnant people from the world-wide apocalyptic Egypt and Babylon and take them to the New Jerusalem above.”¹²² Babylon is the enemy of “Israel,” the “kings of the east” are the divine deliverers after the type of Cyrus, and the “‘Euphrates’ waters, the sustaining multitudes.”¹²³

Ellen White and Armageddon

No treatise on the subject of Armageddon would be complete to most Adventists without making reference to the writings of Ellen White and their influence constantly radiating in the midst of Adventist theology and life. Ellen White has enormous authority still in Adventist circles, and if metered right, this is a good thing. A prophet should have precedence always, and while Adventism

¹¹⁸ *Symposium on Revelation: Exegetical and General Studies*, Book 2 [volume 7] (Silver Springs, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992) pp. 133-149, and 373-390.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 147

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 148

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 147

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 149

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 387.

is not based on Ellen White, no subject viewed within Adventism can sensibly leave out the guidance and counsel found in her pen and voice.

The most popular current view is that Ellen White paints a mainly spiritual conflict over the Sabbath, and that the final war is about the forces of evil vs. the forces of God, that some say is clearly the “spiritual” view. But I, the present author, personally do not agree that Ellen White takes the “spiritual only” view in the total sense. “Spiritual view ” exponents claim that she is only using the “language” of war to express the spiritual nature of the battle. But I suspect from the biblical precedents and various types in the history of religion, that she could still be describing, rightly understood, a literal confrontation; a religio-political clash or altercation between God’s true people on earth and the forces of apostate Christianity, which, of course, while tangible in a sense, has the greater cosmic overshadowing and spiritual implications.

Statements:

The Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White (now outdated because of computer technology) gives only five references under the heading "Armageddon," and in one of these she refers to the battle without using the word. But the website search gives little more of consequence.

So, it would seem to some that Ellen White has but little to say about Armageddon. But also as stated by Marvin Moore, “However, this does not mean that she had little to say about Armageddon. She just didn't always refer to it by that name. She more often spoke of it as "the final conflict, "the battle of the great day of God Almighty," "the last struggle," etc. (*Crisis of the End-Time*, p. 233).

Ellen White does see and describe in a powerful way, Armageddon as a “spiritual” battle, but one also using temporal human agents. The following statement is typical of many that she made about the Battle of Armageddon and the final conflict:

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.... The power of the Holy Ghost must be upon us, and the Captain of the Lord's host will stand at the head of the angels of heaven to direct the battle (Ellen G. White Comments, SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 982).

Comments Marvin Moore: "Ellen White wrote these words in 1890, when the notion that Armageddon would be a physical battle between Turkey and the world's Christian nations was at a fever pitch in Adventism. Yet she clearly ignored all of this and stated that it will be a spiritual battle between good and evil. In the first part of the statement she speaks of "every form of evil," "evil angels," and "evil men," and then she says that "they will not yield the last great final contest without a desperate struggle" (p. 234).

But in the above statement EGW makes it clear that the battle is more than a theoretical idea, but that it will be fought, and God will help the righteous targets of evil by directing the defense through the exploits of the Captain of the Lord's Host: Again:

The battle of Armageddon will be fought. . . . [and] that day must find none of us [the righteous] sleeping. . . . "the power of the Holy Ghost must be upon us," [and] "the Captain of the Lord's host will ... direct the battle."

Two more statements are also representative of Ellen White's position. One appears in *The Great Controversy*, which was first published in 1888, and the other was written in 1901:

The spirits of devils will go forth to the kings of the earth and to the whole world, to fasten them in deception, and urge them to unite with Satan in his last struggle against the government of heaven (*The Great Controversy*, p. 6240).

Two great opposing powers are revealed in the last great battle. On one side stands the Creator of heaven and earth. All on His side bear His signet. They are obedient to His commandments. On the other side stands the prince of darkness, with those who have chosen apostasy and rebellion (Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 982, 983).

A Battle of the Nations

Yet, some of Ellen White's statements seem to clearly suggest that the nations of the world will play a part in the Battle of Armageddon:

We are to see in **history** the fulfillment of prophecy, to study the workings of Providence in the great reformatory movements and to understand the progress of events in the **marshaling of the nations** for the final conflict of the great controversy (*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 441, 442) (emphasis supplied).

The nations of the world are eager for conflict; but they are held in check by the angels. When this restraining power is removed, there will come a time of trouble and anguish. . . All who have not the spirit of truth will unite under the leadership of satanic agencies. But they are to be kept under control till the time shall come for the great battle of Armageddon (Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 967).

As yet the four winds are held until the servants of God shall be sealed in their foreheads. Then the powers of earth will marshal their forces for the last great battle (*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 14).

Another statement or two might be entered to the discussion as well:

The earth is to be the battlefield—the scene of the final contest and the final victory (*My Life Today*, p. 308).

We need to study the pouring out of the seventh vial. The powers of evil will not yield up the conflict without a struggle. But Providence has a part in the Battle of Armageddon. When the earth is lighted with the glory of the angel of Revelation eighteen, the religious elements, good and evil, will awake from slumber, and the armies of the living God will take the field (Ms. 175, 189) {7BC, 983}.

In solid fashion, it seems, Ellen White paints a carefully crafted and moderate position on Armageddon. The position is perfectly balanced between the two extremes, the theoretical and spiritual, as opposed to the temporal and literal. If one is to take a position on this issue, they would consistently be safest to use the prophetic testimony (EGW) as an interpreter's control. What God showed her is both pertinent and important. If the Turkey, Russia, Japan enthusiasts of the past had only listened to her characterization of the battle as

she paints it, and toned down their rhetoric to the now obvious understanding of a battle between God and his people, and the apostate world, much conflict, extremism, and even error in the matter would have been greatly avoided.

But Ellen White did not promote the idea that the conflict would be super-cosmic, or out in the clouds only. She consistently taught the conflict as real, climactic, and having direct effect on God's people on earth. So while she certainly saw the over-arching theme of the *Great Controversy* war waged with the forces of evil, she also included the reality of the struggle involving the inhabitants of the earth, of which the remnant people were a part.

Lessons to be learned

Regardless of one's modern position on Armageddon, there are found in the Adventist experience regarding the battle, great lessons that should be learned by all of us, wherever we are in time relative to issues such as these. Some of these are listed below, some drawn from Ellen White, others admittedly the opinion of the present author, or the thinking of other fellow-Adventists; yet they are large lessons, I believe, that many sincere Adventists should now consistently relate to, relative to the Armageddon discussion and others like it.

Lessons for Adventists from the Past:

1. *Armageddon* is not a "testing truth," or a matter of salvation, and should not be a matter of sharp contention between God's people. Unity, and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, is truly more important than one's view of *Armageddon*.
2. Historical events can always be made to look like a fulfillment of prophecy. Therefore, we should use God's word alone in determining its meaning---not the newspaper—"Turkey" has let us down too many times—we must be as the ten virgins, who when finally whittled down to five in the end, were both *patient* AND *prepared*.

3. The most published views are not necessarily the most correct or most accurate ones. Adventism went with Uriah Smith, largely to their own detriment, for almost 100 years.

4. Evangelism and teaching should be based on what we know, and not on what we hope to see, or think.

5. In regard to understanding matters like *Armageddon* one should not amass too much stock in remote biblical connections, or in ancillary material that is still vaguely understood, such as is that found in prophecies like Daniel 11, and the local, Palestinian literality found there. Daniel's prophecies are centered on the pre-Christian era, the world into which the Messiah would be born. Though they reach to the end-time in their latter portions, it is true, and we should compare Scripture with Scripture; yet the rules for properly utilizing OT types, must be strictly honored or else one will be easily misled down a wrong path. Adventist history in this regard, relative to the *Armageddon* discussion, is replete with numerous such examples of error or misinterpretation.

6. Another personal recommendation is that professors and students should listen carefully to the Spirit of Prophecy writings and *testimony*, and use them as a control on interpretation. If this had been done by all Adventists from Uriah Smith's day down to ours, much agitation would have been avoided. It is the opinion of the present author that he will always listen to the (genuine) prophets, especially the modern ones, before going rogue with any interpretation. The interpretation entertained must be in harmony with, and align with the prophetic guidance limits we are graciously given, and we should respect them above any scholar or interpreter, no matter how gifted the expositor is, or how tempting the idea is to believe.

7. Finally, we should interpret according to “trends,” and not from individual or sole incidents. Regrettably, evangelistic incidents or examples¹²⁴ of this nature on the matter probably number in the thousands. Private, or even public venues of interpretation must have a solid basis that cannot be confused with any other fulfillment than prophecy allows. This way we will not be mistaken, and thus we will not ourselves turn out to be “false prophets.” Adventists, of all people, should have learned this lesson from the events of the last two centuries.

¹²⁴ Please, this is not to say all evangelists do this or that I am in any way against evangelists. They are necessary to our cause, and many, if not most, are very responsible proclaimers of the gospel, and of the prophecies, and their labor for souls is appreciated beyond measure. They are the greatest of heroes for what they do. Without them, there would be fewer Adventists to discuss Armageddon!

6

CHAPTER 6:

WHAT IS ARMAGEDDON? MEANING AND MYTH: TOWARD MORE RESPONSIBLE SOLUTIONS

What is *Armageddon*? Well, that is the question, isn't it?

In this chapter we will further analyze the term: “Armageddon” at greater depth in an attempt to better understand why inspiration uses it as a focal point in prophecy. While some seem to be satisfied with the typical “Megiddo” understandings, or others to allusions to nearby locations like Carmel, or others choosing to dismiss the term as “lost to us,” and thus to ignore it and focus rather on the general and spiritual backgrounds of the passage, this writer is not fully satisfied with these positions (though he is with the general, larger outlook and meaning), thus this book and this quest.

While no one, including the present author, should claim too much wisdom about this admittedly difficult passage, it still seems that there are unexplored pathways to follow in solving the enigma, and that the typical explanations are at best inadequate. There has to be meaning still to be extracted from this troublesome passage, for it is the conviction of many, including myself, that inspiration uses such terms for specific reasons; there are no accidents, or mistakes, and the expositor must prayerfully dig deeper until the golden ore shines back.

It is the belief of the present author, that the God of heaven wants modern believers to understand all of the book of Revelation to a profitable degree, and that inspiration and the Spirit always promises to provide understanding if the learner is open to it. That has been the prayer of this writer for many decades, to better understand the elements of this passage. While most might be satisfied with the apparent meaning of the passage surrounding the “Armageddon” battle, in as far as scholarship or study has now taken it, I must admit, again, I am not.

While the general outcome of “the battle,” whatever or wherever it is, is clear; that it describes divine victory in the final moments of history, assuring the believer that the Kingdom of Heaven wins, the real meaning of the passage is still somewhat locked in the term: *Armageddon*. So, while others may see the term as largely irrelevant and non-essential to the passage, many of us would disagree that this is the case. Understanding the specific term is the key to fully understanding the passage. Without the meaning of the term fully understood, the meaning of the passage is not fully understood, and it still cries out for explanation.

In the forward going chapter(s), the attempt will be made to unlock the passage further, using a symbolic “key.” One can never force interpretive agreement on such passages, but it is the hope of the present author that a way will be opened for not only expanding the meaning of the passage to the reader, but to also remove some of the difficulty around it, and to demonstrate that the term really is not as difficult as once thought, and that it is infused with such bountiful riches of meaning, that it inspired the writing of this treatise. As we approach the final days of this earth’s history, God’s people need to understand their role and have clear expectations and relevant instruction. Some of that

resides in this very term: Armageddon. So, I would argue, the word and its meaning is quite important to us!

Textual Variants

In the opening chapters a modest effort was made to establish the foundational biblical setting of the passage and the word: Armageddon. Armageddon is not only a modern enigma, but has puzzled biblical students for centuries. This can be attested to by the many variant spellings in the manuscripts of the *Greek New Testament*. Bruce Metzger's *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* offers many listed manuscript variants. The many variants, do not seem to offer any superior solution, however, but rather extends the confusion.

Translation Possibilities

Further, in review, most authorities have settled on the premise that *Harmagedon*, or *Harmageddon*, is a Greek expression that transliterates a Hebrew word or words. What word is represented in the Greek is the subject of diverse opinions. The majority of scholars it seems have accepted the view that *Harmageddon* is cryptic for the Hebrew word, "har," "mountain," and the Old Testament geographical site of Megiddo or Megiddon, a Palestinian locale lying at the base of the Carmel ridge in northern Israel. The literal plain of Megiddo, a strategic battleground over the centuries, is assumed by many to be the site of this famous battle.

The second, less-favored possibility lies in the Hebrew expression, "mo'ed," found in *Isaiah* 14:13 which is generally explained as possible, but not probable. Most scholars and critics consider *mo'ed* a problematic solution. The word "mo'ed," is the Old Testament word for "congregation," or "assembly." In Isa. 14:13 this word is joined by a *maqeph*, (sort of a Hebrew hyphen) with "har," הַר, "mountain," (Greek: *magedon*: thus translated: "the mountain of assembly" (KJV). This is the only place in the entire OT where the word: "mountain" is joined with another word with similar consonants to "magedon." A large number of exegetes make reference to the expression as found in *Isaiah* 14:13 as thematically fitting, but generally reject it on the grounds of imprecise vowel correspondence, or because the expression is laden with other difficulties.

They reject it because it carries with it inconsistent transliteration problems inherent in the expression.

Joachim Jeremias describes the problems of an identification with Isa 14:13 as follows:

"The problem with b. (mountain of assembly), which would make *Har Magedon* the demonic counterpart of the mountain of God (cf. Heb. 12:22ff.), is that it is not an exact transliteration of the Hebrew of Isaiah."¹²⁵

Difficulties with the "Megiddo" Translation

But the enigma remains, that whether *Armageddon* represents *Mt. Megiddo*, or *Mt. Mo'ed*, or neither of these at all, it must be recognized that just about any view offered to date is problematic. The traditional view (the plain in Palestine) really has no more to recommend it than the others, if not even less in the opinion of some, except its sensational nature and traditional popularity with free-lance expositors and evangelists who have kept it alive for centuries, if not longer. But the *plain* of Megiddo as the site of a future battle leaves several difficulties and problems:

1. The point must not be missed that *Har-mageddon* lexically means "mountain of Megiddo," and not, "plain of Megiddo." There is no possible way, respecting any textual responsibility, to make a mountain out of a plain.
2. Though the plain of Megiddo is a famous battleground and could in this case be reminiscent of Israel's victory by the "waters of Megiddo" (Judges 5:19) or with the sword of Gideon, or Josiah's wounding, it is not an overwhelming choice by the Seer of Patmos, considering it stands for the grandest and most climactic, apocalyptic, battle of sacred history.

Megiddo, instead, is perhaps most famous in the Old Testament for a rather embarrassing *defeat against* the hopes of Israel. Josiah, (against prophetic

¹²⁵ "Armageddon," *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Abridged, Kittel, p. 79.

counsel) went up to try to stop the advance of Pharaoh Necho of Egypt, was there mortally wounded, and the battle, as a consequence, occasioned his tragic and subsequent death, and brought embarrassment, sorrow, and mourning to all of Israel.¹²⁶

In addition, this battle (pre-Carchemish), can best be interpreted as a gesture of friendship to Babylon by Israel (allies in this venture), which is totally antithetical to the purpose of the book of *Revelation*. The Revelator intends to picture Israel as victorious *over* Babylon. Needless to say, one encounters a difficulty if one tries to place, at least, this connotation of Megiddo into *Revelation* 16! The plain of Megiddo, then, appears to be a weak, almost “mythical” symbol of God's climactic, and signal victory over the Beast, the Dragon, and the False Prophet.

3. If Megiddo is truly the meeting place for the nations of the modern world, then by some measures the valley, maybe 20 square miles by some estimates, is arguably too small to muster all the armies of the world. Arguments have previously erupted between pastors and theologians over this issue, some reportedly quite heated. But this is only a problem if a traditional, military view of Armageddon is retained. If Mt. Megiddo is referring to the *tel* of the small city of Megiddo, known as only a few feet high even today, the Megiddo mountain sort of collapses as a worthy symbol.

4. The tenor of John's reference to the place called in the Hebrew, *Armageddon*, is given as part of the evidence of where the place is. His explanation he considers adequate. The place then should be well-known and not obscure. This in itself demands a search for superior types. The plain of Megiddo and the history connected to it is not clearly *that* prominent—biblically speaking, or even eschatologically, or contextually speaking.

“Mountain of Slaughter” Interpretation:

Another popular explanation for *Armageddon* is that the expression represents etymologically, “mountain of slaughter.” This is gathered from an incidence of usage in the LXX (Septuagint). Three times in the LXX translation

¹²⁶ 2 Kings 23: 29, 30; 2 Chron. 35: 20, 24.

of the OT, Megiddo is transcribed as typically rendered in the Armageddon passage in Rev. 16:16.¹²⁷ But then, in Zechariah 12:1 "magedon" is thus transcribed, but a few verses later (12:11) the same word is used, but not transcribed, but rather translated: meaning "to cut down," taken from the Heb. root, *gadad*, "*to cut down, or slaughter.*" Thus, it could be taken from *Zechariah*, that *Armageddon* is cryptic for "cutting down," or "slaughter."

The explanation is a reasonable one, in that the idea of slaughter is appropriate for a battle setting, and also when compared with the terms in Rev. 9:11, *Apollyon* and *Abaddon*: (destroyer); it there finds there appropriate parallel, where both a Greek term and a Hebrew term are found respectively, and thus each meaning: "destroyer." It is likely then, following this reasoning, that the Hebrew expression in that context denotes also the character of the place, a place of cutting down, slaughter, and destruction.

But this explanation, given further consideration, is not entirely satisfactory either. First it tells us very little, in fact, nothing that we wouldn't assume already by examining the passage. It still leaves the geographic "place," a mystery. In addition, it doesn't explain why John doesn't give an alternative Greek expression as he does in Rev. 9:11. If the name is merely a term denoting the significance of slaughter, why not use one of the other many appropriate Greek terms to accomplish the same thing?

Further, by referencing the synonymic parallels brought to light in the author's *Days of the Seventh Angel*¹²⁸ series of studies; under the systematic parallel patterns of words noted in Revelation for: "harming, hurting, and destroying," we find that John has several other appropriate words for "destruction" at his command. It seems fair to assume that the writer is *interested in a particular Old Testament source or locale*, and because of this he uses a specific term. The expression must have a richer significance, and the apostle is likely referring to a specific, biblical locale, not an obscure one, one that will clearly and easily symbolize types that are particularly pregnant with sacred meaning and history.

¹²⁷ (2 Chron. 35:22; Judges 1:27; and Zech. 12:11)

¹²⁸ Steven E. Behrmann, *The Days of the Seventh Angel*: Vol. 4, "Synonymic Parallels:" "Harm or Destroy," pp. 147, 148.

Mount Carmel Interpretation:

One of the most compelling and more recent suggestions to date is offered by Dr. William Shea, Dr. Jon Paulien, and several others, who see correlations in the Mt. Carmel/Elijah episode, to *Armageddon*. The allusion could certainly add richness to the symbolism. Mt. Carmel is in the *general* geographic area of the town or plain of Megiddo, and could have perhaps born the name of Mt. Megiddo. Though, however, it must be mentioned that the specific locales are actually separated by the distance of miles. According to one source, separated at least eight miles, or more. In the small scale of the entire region of Israel, this is a significant distance.

The most compelling digression from the Mt. Carmel explanation is that according to common knowledge among scholars, there are absolutely no biblical or even secular instances where Mt. Carmel is known by the name: Mt. Megiddo. The connection between Carmel and the Plain of Megiddo is tenuous at best. Carmel may have been referred to as the Mountain of Megiddo in the past, but there is no record of such an association in archaeology or history.

Further, another problem would be why John doesn't simply refer to Mt. Carmel, as Mt. Carmel, as the name reads in the usually reliable Masoretic, Hebrew text of the Old Testament books. In addition, *there are no definite markers or obvious contextual allusions to the Elijah story in Revelation 16*. However, the eschatological nature of the personage of Elijah, and his message is found elsewhere in the book (Rev; chapters 2, 11, 13), and the typological showdown between religious powers demonstrated at Carmel could make a compelling symbol for a final eschatological battle. It is an attractive option in many ways. But as we will discover from further dialogue, in the opinion offered here; it is not the best, overall, contextual solution to the enigma.

BABYLON and ARMAGEDDON

Another suggestion or direction in regard to Armageddon is represented as follows: While the *har-mo'ed* alternative of Isaiah 14:13,14 has been given a general glance by scholars in the past, the trend of scholarship, because of the surmised difficulties, has been to reject it. The suggestion we will now argue is related to the *har-mo'ed* alternative, but takes a fuller view of the whole matter. The present author feels certain connections have not been promoted, developed, or pursued adequately heretofore, beyond perhaps, general allusion. In this amended view, we now attempt to explain Armageddon in a fashion that also aims to favor the effort to be exegetically responsible to the context of the passage. Admittedly, there is also an interpretive side to any solution, but the reader can be the judge.

But, first, let us observe some key hermeneutical points concerning *Revelation 16:12-21*:

1. First: It is important to note that the prophetic setting in *Revelation 16* and in its even more local context (the sixth plague), is more clearly made in reference to the city and location of Babylon, (symbolic), and not at all to the region of Palestine.

From the "drying up of the river Euphrates" (vs. 12), (a symbol taken most likely from the conquering of Babylon by Cyrus the Great of Persia, which was accomplished exactly this way), to "the city (Babylon the great, v.19) fell into three parts," the description has never left the location of Babylon! (Nor does it for almost the last half of the book of Revelation, for that matter, where the theme is clearly committed to *the fall of Babylon*).

There is really no particular or corollary hint that *Armageddon* is even or ever was located in the land of Israel at all. Instead, we find a gathering of forces at a "place" where the forces of evil experience the wrath of God against *their* city (and cities of nations, neither of which would be in Palestine), and that by hailstorm and earthquake. There is not even one allusion to the "Megiddo" area, or even Jerusalem, in the Armageddon window, but there are several ties to a Babylonian location: with "the Euphrates," "Babylon," etc. Context is the golden rule of biblical interpretation. There seems no reason to abandon it here.

Even the general context of nearly the entire last half of the book of Revelation is about the *fall of Babylon*. It shows up clearly in *Revelation* 14:8, as the second angel's message, and continues prominently up through chapters 18 and 19.

2. John, the author of *Revelation*, would most likely find allusions to Babylon in the Old Testament types of Babylon.

It would seem logical that John, the author of Revelation, would prefer in this context to use an Old Testament idea within the parameters of a "Babylon"(Babel) motif, and not that from another prophecy about any another nation or city (Though, he admittedly does this in certain contexts, but never as a matter of preference in the last half of the book). But the writer of the *Apocalypse* we must suppose, normally stays true to his purpose, and does not let go of his theme, right up to the final chapters. *Chapters 17-19, where the writer immediately goes next, post the sixth and seventh plagues in Rev 16, is all about Babylon and its fall.* The thematic thread wound through the entire eschatological sections of the document is consistently about THE FALL OF BABYLON. *Isaiah* 14, in particular, is one of the prime oracles about the nation of Babylon, its pride and anticipated fall, and is among the most conspicuous and notably recognized passages of this sort in all of the *Prophets*.

3. John often calls upon the prophet, Isaiah, in particular.

Those who have studied the biblical sources for the allusions found in the *Revelation* have identified clear allusions from 24 of the 36 books of the OT. There are probably many more allusions than these when rightly understood. Direct quotes are not typical of the *Revelation*, in essence, there are none. But obvious sourcing and allusion from the OT is massive. Swete, for one, in his commentary on the *Apocalypse* states that of the 404 verses of the *Apocalypse*, 278 refer to the OT (cf. Tenney, p. 101). According to M. Tenney, and his

analysis, the books quoted most often are Psalms, Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Zechariah.¹²⁹

By far, the sourcing from the prophet Isaiah far out-performs all other books alluded to in *Revelation*. Almost half of the allusions (noted below) from the major prophets section are from *Isaiah*. The next closest number to Isaiah's (79) is the (53) attributed to the "OT Apocalypse," *Daniel*. There is plenty of evidence then, that *Isaiah* was one of John's favorite sources.

Therefore, it is a fact that we know that the writer of the *Revelation* alludes to the writings of the prophet, *Isaiah*, more than any other biblical source.¹³⁰ The writings of Isaiah form a background for the apostle's theme, over and over, woven all through the Revelation document.

Since John alludes widely to the book of *Isaiah* it should be no surprise to find that a text already referred to (Isaiah 14:13) is within one of the most conspicuous oracles against Babylon in all of the Old Testament. This same and

¹²⁹ Dr. Merrill Tenney in his useful and systemized interpretational commentary [Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957) p. 100, 101.] provides a telling list of the clearest of these allusions in a chart. To reproduce the entire chart as it is given there might be valuable, but is a little difficult for this venue. But in the chart, Tenney divides the OT into sections, which we will try to summarize here in horizontal form; with the books as they are followed up with the number of allusions in each book. But the major prophets section where the large majority are found, are listed vertically below: (following footnote)

¹³⁰

Pentateuch: Genesis, 13; Exodus, 27; Lev. 4; Numbers, 3; Deut. 10/ TOTAL **57**

Historical: Josh., 1; Judg. 1; II Samuel, 1; II Kings, 6; I Chron., 1; Nehemiah, 1/TOT. **11**

Minor Prophets: Hos. 2; Joel, 8; Amos, 9; Hab. 1; Zeph. 2; Zech. 15; Mal. 1/TOTAL **28**

Poetry: Psalms; 43; Proverbs, 2; TOTAL **45**

Major Prophets

Isaiah	79
Jeremiah	22
Ezekiel	43
Daniel	<u>53</u>

TOTAL **197**

very oracle contains the singular expression “har-mo’ed.” The transliteration problem has (falsely) steered investigators away from this passage, but it does not seem impossible that John is transliterating this very expression. The consonants correspond reasonably well with the Hebrew and we can never be sure of the vowels, for in Hebrew there weren’t any written ones. It is a strong candidate, and is the only place in the OT where somewhat appropriate consonants are connected with the word: “har,” or “mountain.”

In addition, *Isaiah* 21:9, only a few chapters forward of *Isa* 14:13,14, is where the prophetic warning, and the thematic motif of *Revelation*’s final chapters: “Babylon is fallen, is fallen,” is found, virtually, *word for word*. Conservative scholars believe that *Isaiah* was written just a century or so before the fall of the second Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar, and at the time when the second Babylon was slowing growing in power and worldly influence. *Revelation* 16, the very context of the *Armageddon* enigma, is largely focused on Babylon as well, and is historically, timely, and thematically connected with the prophecies and world of *Isaiah*, the prophet.

Isaiah, chapter 47, is almost a word for word treatment of the material found in *Rev* 17, and especially 18, where the fall of Babylon is the dominant theme. It is clear that the apocalyptic writer of *Revelation* is well acquainted with the *Isaiah* document, and sources it repeatedly. If we are going to get into the mind of the prophet, John, we must pay attention also to the minds and words of his prophetic sources.

The thinking of Joachim Jeremias (along with numerous others) dismisses the validity of the transliteration possibility for *Isaiah* 14:13, or the *har-mo’ed* alternative, on the basis of certain vowel/consonant correspondences. But is this not imposing the more modern “Hebrew” system, or even the Masoretic system, on the earlier writer? We need to be following the author’s (John’s) own rules, and not the stringent and choking demands of later language experts, or even those particular writers among *Isaiah*’s own peers, in his case. Though inspired writing, it is not fair to make the humble fisherman, and apostle, a modern language expert, or even a Hebrew scholar. Perhaps he just didn’t know the rules of transliteration. Patmos had no university library.

However, in the opinion of this writer, John probably was not remiss at all in his work, but had a purposeful design in the way in which he wrote his

document, and due to our views of the inspirational process we must be open to all possibilities and not be influenced away from a particular word association because of the inflexible opinions of a few modern exegetes. The reader is particularly encouraged to examine the following points before entertaining the wholesale dismissal, and the opinion followed by the majority, of the integrity of the *har-mo'ed* expression used by Isaiah.

4. The next question, the interpreter should ask is: “Why would the writer of *Revelation* refer to the Hebrew in the first place?”

So, to follow, the specific question is, or to say it in another way: “Why does the writer of the *Apocalypse* prefer the Hebrew expression in this particular passage?”

A look at the LXX, or the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament (thought to be the *New International Version* of the early Christian church), may indicate why. The LXX translates the phrase based on an entirely different word: “great” (ὕψηλα), mountain, rather than taking the Masoretic, or traditional version of Isaiah 14:13 read as: the “mountain” of the “congregation,” or “assembly.” This departure creates a wholesale difference in translation!

In addition, the LXX seems to treat the description of the “mountain” in question mainly as generic and with an adjective, thus: “high,” or “great;” in contrast to the Masoretic reading which seems to treat the place as a particular mountain, or name-place, thus, noting it as a proper name: the “Mountain of Assembly.” “Places,” in biblical times are usually connected with a proper name for the locale.

The expression used by the LXX translators gives a similar sense as in the NT description of the angel’s song heard by the shepherds at Christ’s birth: “Glory to God in the *highest*, (ὕψηλα)[or anglicized: “up-say-la,” with the word “up” in it], and on earth, peace, good will to men” (Luke 2:14 NKJV). The forms of the word attached to the “mountain,” used in the LXX of *Isaiah* 14:13,14, are taken from the same word, or lexical, or root forms:

ὕψηλω,
τα ὕψηλα,
ὕψιστω.

Thus:

vs. 13b and 14:

- I will sit upon the “high” mountain,
- upon the “high” mountain toward the north
- I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the “highest”

It appears possible that the LXX translators might have thought perhaps that *mo'ed* was the Hebrew or Aramaic: *mged*, *great*, (or when they heard it read to them orally, they thought they heard the word: *great*¹³¹) and thus translated it as "high mountain," or "great mountain." But the Masoretic text



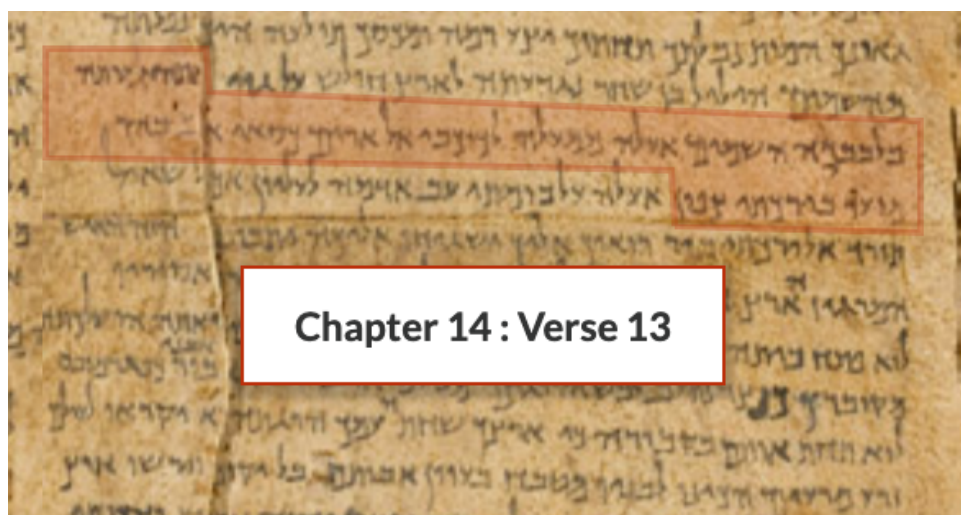
Above: Image of the famous Isaiah Scroll found at Qumran.

¹³¹ Folklore describes the process of transcribing or creating the Septuagint (meaning: “70”) as carried out in this way, with 70 translators, perhaps using an “oral transmission” process of rendering Hebrew to Greek.

retains *mo'ed* and this same configuration is attested by the great Isaiah Scroll of the Dead Sea Scrolls. This textual anomaly, I would suggest, is incredibly significant to the *Armageddon* discussion.

When this is considered the transliteration problem with the use of *mo'ed* may be somewhat altered, at least. But there are other pertinent matters about the *mo'ed* possibility, and the use of the Hebrew letter: *ayin*, that need to be given further consideration. These matters in the past, generally in most regards, have not been properly studied or entertained.

Below: *Isaiah* Scroll slightly magnified from previous image: The word: *mo'ed*, is the first word on the right, and bottom corner, of the highlighted selection.

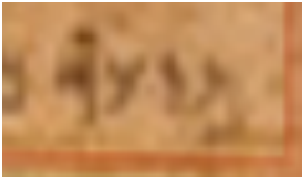


But it would appear likely that John was acquainted with the variant Greek word used in the Septuagint: *upsayla*, or perhaps was aware that it had been mistaken for Hebrew/Aramaic word: *mged*. John, and his peers, were likely readers of the Septuagint, or the Theodotion (Greek) version (regrettably we have no complete copy) which was generally favored among the common Bibles for early Christians. But John likely spoke Hebrew, or more specifically, Palestinian Aramaic. To tell the reader the source of his idea he, perhaps, simply

transliterates the word back into the Hebrew tongue as he thinks it *would* appear in the Hebrew text. Or, even more likely, he seems to have been aware that the Hebrew text, at least, in some versions, used the word *mo'ed*, “assembly,” instead!

The best case then to be made, we would argue, then, is that John, or the writer of *Revelation*, is openly disagreeing with the Septuagint or LXX (or even Theodotian, if that was the more popular text the early church used), and is referring back to what he considers is the “correct” reading to be taken from the “authentic” Hebrew text. This circumstance would provide the reason for referencing the Hebrew. This is significant, because the correction would make sense if the common Bible of the early Christian centuries was indeed from the LXX stream of translations, and that it was known particularly by them that it differed in this regard from the traditional Hebrew texts. Jesus, himself, may even have been aware of this textual departure, in His teaching.¹³²

Below: mo'ed further magnified: The *mem*, *waw*, *ayin*, and *daleth* clearly say “assembly,” or “congregation.” The “ink-dot” above the *daleth* is curious. (It's tempting to make it is a *dagesh forte*, or doubling dot, thus pre-dating the two d's found in Armageddon, but such marks are later phenomena, and this one is in the wrong place, anyway). **The word: “mo'ed,”** is enlarged, and the pre-fix, “upon-Har,” is on the previous line above, left.



This perhaps makes it reasonable that the Revelator inserts a Hebrew reference when otherwise he might have been comfortable with the Greek Old Testament. At least, this difference might be seen to influence the translation problem, to a certain degree.

In any case, it is the position of this writer that Isaiah 14:13 is what John, the prophet definitely has in mind, which we will momentarily establish. When re-translating from the LXX, for instance, if one thought that the real Hebrew term used had been *mged*, the term “har-magedon,” then basically finds nearly

¹³² Jesus was well-acquainted with the Isaiah document. Cf. Luke 4: 17-21; Isaiah 61:1-3.

perfect consonant/vowel correspondence. But even so, it seems that John, or the writer of *Revelation*, was aware of the “mis-translation” found in the current Greek texts, which favored only a general adjective: “great” or “high,” and he did not prefer it; and this is why he refers the term back to the integrity of the terms as they are found in the original Hebrew text.

Several (three) further matters regarding the *mo’ed* alternative, too readily dismissed in the past, are profitable to consider also; and these will be discussed one at a time, in the following order:

1. First, consideration of the Hebrew root: “mged.” (מגד)
2. Second, noting the pronunciation variances of the Hebrew letter: “ayin.” (ע)
3. Third, in considering the similar Hebrew consonants in the word: “tower,” or “mountain.” (מגדל)

1. The Possibly Related Hebrew Root: *mged* ; (מגד)

First, it is true that the basic form: *mged* is not an oft-used Hebrew language construction found in the Hebrew Old Testament, so the full meaning is somewhat obscure. *Strong's Concordance* [*Strong's*, Hebrew, 4022], notes: “(8X) *megeḏ*, from an un-used root probably meaning: ‘to be eminent,’ or ‘distinguished.’”

But what does seem clear, however, is that this root is consistently used to express the idea of something of height, top quality, or greatness. The central concept is one of eminence, abundance, or being raised up. The meaning, again, is opposite that of a plain, or land-breadth, but instead, notes something high, or with a raised top, like a tower or a mountain.

This prevailing idea of eminence or greatness, seems to survive in the later languages, even today, in the “mega,” and “maga” roots, such as the Greek: *megale*, “great,” or “large;” or in modern words; like “majestic,” “magnificent,” “magnify,” “megalith,” etc. So, the idea of eminence is likely found embedded in

the expression used for “the Mount of Assembly,” no matter what it is ultimately judged to mean.

2. The Hebrew Letter “Ayin”

The charge made by J. Jeremias and numerous other critics, is that the *har-mo’ed* translation is flawed because the “ayin” (ע), in *mo’ed* does not transliterate consistently with the hard “g” sound in *har-mageddon*. But in looking further into the matter pertaining to the rules of transliteration in this case, some interesting anomalies are to be discovered. When looking at very ancient languages there are always new findings that appear and re-write some of the problems of translation. And this may be the case in the present matter.

In fact, what may be behind the entire problem of which terms in this case are to be considered the genuine ones, may actually be something that pre-dates even Isaiah, the original writer, himself. And that, is the possibility that the writer of Isaiah may have had a transliteration or translation challenge of his own, or one that goes back, perhaps, as far as the original “confusion of the languages” at Babel!

So, what is emerging in ancient language studies is that there were actually multiple ways of pronouncing or translating certain particular letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and especially to be noted here, was the Hebrew letter: “ayin” (ע), the central consonant as found in “mo’ed. And there are additional practices and matters pertinent to the whole matter that can be added to this, would we take the time.

The entire matter is complicated; and puzzling still to a degree; and yet, at the same time fascinating and instructive in terms of the present discussion regarding *Armageddon*. What seems to be coming to light is that there were at least two ways in which the Hebrew letter: ע (*ayin*), was translated in pre-Christian times. Especially would this be relevant in the circumstance of words and place-names *crossing from one language to another*.

So, one pronunciation of the “ayin” was sometimes made in a soft, quiescent, way, basically silent; *yet at other times, this same letter was translated with a hard, guttural “g” sound*. In a fascinating internet article written and

posted by Jeff A. Benner, entitled: *Changes in the Hebrew Alphabet*,¹³³ numerous examples are given. His fuller treatment of the issue is quoted in the *Appendix*.

The entire matter would best to be left and represented by certain of the language experts (of which I am not, though I have studied Hebrew), but what can be gathered and assessed relative to the words in question, might be fundamentally explained according to the following criterion:

—That some problems of translation (and especially in the case of the letter “ayin,”) are traceable to the fact that when crossing from one language to another there were not in Bible times always firm rules or even appropriate words, letters, vowels, and sounds that connected the two or more languages.

One example that is given, is that it is traditionally known that the Hebrew alphabet had only 22 letters, at least in later Judaism. But a nearby, Canaanite language, **Ugarit**, for instance, almost a twin to the Hebrew language, had **28** letters, and had other letters that came with sounds appropriate to its unique culture, ones that did not always marry perfectly when crossing the language barrier to Hebrew or Greek. In fact, **Ugarit**, the aforesaid neighbor language of Hebrew, had letters which were called, both: “**ayin**” (“y”), and “**ghayin**,” (“g”), but **Hebrew, had no such letter** (*ghayin*), at least in later history. A number of examples are considered. Examples even exist where the *very same word* could have two entirely different meanings, even *within* the same language, because of the prior crossing from one language, to another, etc.

Writes: Benner:

When we examine Hebrew names that contain the Hebrew letter *ayin*, we find two different methods of transliterating the letter. Table 1 below contains Hebrew names where the *ayin* is not transliterated (the Hebrew letter *ayin* is silent and is represented by an apostrophe in the English transliteration). Table 2 contains Hebrew names where the *ayin* is transliterated with the Greek letter *Gamma* (Γ or γ).

¹³³ <https://ancient-hebrew.org/ancient-alphabet/changes-in-the-hebrew-alphabet.htm>

Table 1

Hebrew		Greek		English
בעל (ba'al)		Βααλ (Baal)		Ba'al
בלעם (bil'am)		Βαλααμ (Balaam)		Bala'am
עשתרות ('ashtarot)		Ασταρωθ (Astaroth)		Ashtaroth

Table 2

Hebrew		Greek		English
עמרה ('amorah)		Γομορραν (gomorras)		GomorraH
עזה ('azzah)		Γαζαν (gazan)		Gaza
פעור (pe'or)		Φογορ (pogor)		Peor

Benner also shares a quotation from a noted Hebrew language expert named Horowitz. The same is presented as formatted in the article, and given below:

“Edward Horowitz

The following is an excerpt from Edward Horowitz's book *How the Hebrew Language Grew*, by KTAV publishing:”

Ancient Hebrew had two different ע; sounds. These sounds were represented in our alphabet by the letter ע;. One was a harsh, heavy ע;. This is now lost, and no longer used in Hebrew. The other was a soft, mild ע. When the Greek Jews translated the Bible into Greek, they had to transliterate Hebrew

names having the harsh ע; in it. They used the Greek letter gamma for it - so you can just imagine how hard a sound it must have been. This "ע; gayin" has even come all the way down to English. The Hebrew place names עמרה and עזה both of which have this strong ע; were transliterated into Greek as Gommora and Gaza. Didn't the odd forms of these place names in English ever puzzle you? In medieval times there was exported from Gaza a thin fabric which was naturally named "gauze" after the city of its origin.

Incidentally, Arabic a close sister language of Hebrew, still pronounces these two ע;'s differently, and what's more writes them differently.

This simple piece of knowledge about the existence of two different ע;'s, should clear up a great many puzzling different meanings that you will often find in a root that has an ע; in it.

Interesting! In more than one way. (And, I [the present author] will never think of "gauze" in the same way again, either!)

What may very well be the case, in Isaiah 14:13,14, is that the "ayin" in "Har-mo'ed" is *not quiescent at all*, but is supposed to be pronounced with a hard, "g" sound, maybe translating something like a "ghayin" rather than an "ayin," or the like, and the writer of *Revelation*, and even the writer, *Isaiah (or Baruch)*, perhaps, understood more about these things at the time, accommodating more than many modern language experts might know even today, on how a certain word was to be pronounced or even transliterated.

In addition, Isaiah, the writer, is likely referring to a proper place-name that was known across the world of his time, regardless of his or any other native language. And if this place was not a Hebrew locale, but say, a Babylonian locale, for instance, where it had appeared in the beginning, *then the name would, therefore, come from another culture and language*, and this crossing of languages seems to be ascertainable or even demanded by the context of Isaiah. In Isaiah, chapters 13 and 14, *it is the king of **Babylon**, that is said to speak these prideful words.*

So, the original ancient word, or place, was likely, at least, or at first, a pre-dated, non-Hebrew word, or place, and so then any later foreign writer would have had to cross a language barrier to express it. Plus, if it was likely an acknowledged famous place with a particular given name—then it would be to the typical Israelite, a **foreign** name, maybe even a thousand years old, already. So, we can't be sure what the "official" name of say, the tower of Babel itself, was, for instance. But it may have been close to "har-maged," or, at least, it was so pronounced in the Hebrew culture. It may even be possible that the roots or words that associate a "congregation," "church," or "assembly," with a "mountain-tower," received their original lexical association with the original Babel story and location itself.

But possibly also, the reason one does not find reference to the tower of Babel prominent in Babylonian history is that the circumstance would be an embarrassment rather than something to boast about. There are no monuments built to "Watergate," or "Teapot Dome." But to Israel, the matter of the tower was viewed differently, and thanks to the writer of *Genesis*, we have the story.

When crossing languages, words and name places endure significant change. This happens still today. If one in the English-speaking United States of America refers to the city of Moscow, in Russia, he will likely say it in the afore-said, American, or typical way. But on the Russian map, it says Moskva, or even Muscova, or the name is expressed in some other colloquial way, depending on one's language and culture.

The likely possibility is that the "Mountain of Assembly," was a purely Sumerian or Babylonian word describing the proper name of an accepted, famous, historical site.¹³⁴ The knowledge of this "place" was known by all, and would have been known about in most every nation, perhaps, yet would have to be understood and locally expressed, pronounced, or recognized in one's own, particular, and local language. For a modern, present example, when referring to the semi-modern famous place known to us in English/Western cultures as: "The Leaning Tower of Pisa" (located in Italy); the same place, as expressed

¹³⁴ Dr. Merrill Tenney seems to think that the form, Har-Magedon, is an **Aramaism**, or an Aramaic word or form (thus related, or even the same as *Babylonian*), showing that the John who wrote the *Revelation* knew Aramaic. The other Aramaism he notes is *Abaddon*, (9:11). Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957) p. 103.

differently in Italian is: *Torre Pendente di Pisa*, and the name is understood in an etc. manner in numerous other languages. (So, then, which of the terms would one use today to best translate such a proper name as the *Leaning Tower of Pisa*, back into Hebrew, their's, or any other language?)

3. The Hebrew consonants in the word: “tower,” or “mountain.”

Another matter relative to the case that will presently be made, concerns the basic consonants in another Hebrew word for a “tower,” or “mountain:” the Hebrew word: (Migdol) (מִגְדָּל). The consonants are:

- *Mem*
- *Gimmel*
- *Daleth*
- (Final *Lameth*) (Note: Yet Greek words commonly will not usually end with a *lambda* or “L” sound). (מִגְדָּל)

The usual word for a tower is: “*meg-dal*” or “*migdol*.” *Mem*, *Gimmel*, and *Daleth* are also the basic consonants required for a Hebrew spelling of: “*magendon*.” Is it happenstance that the consonantal sounds in: “*magendon*,” are the same, minus the final “*Lameth*,” as a known word for: a “tower,” or, “mountain?”

Migdol is a word, or descriptive name-place, that occurs in several places in the Old Testament, and seems to be associated with places where there were towers, or tall structures. It is not essential, to the case, but arguable, that the phonetic sounds found in *mged*, (great, high, or of eminence), or in *mo'ed*, (high place of assembly), or in *migdol* (tower or height), are all consistently associated together with the idea of “height,” or “eminence.” (High places, mountains, and towers)

So maybe, and also likely, the place: *Har-magendon*, is actually cryptic for “mountain-tower” or the “mountain-tower of assembly,” in its complete meaning. The term could give both ideas, a high eminence, but also, a tower or mountain *gathering-place of meeting*, a *church*, a place for assembling for temple worship of the gods.

5. What really was: the "Mountain of Assembly in the far north?" (or the "Great Mountain"). What is this "place" referring to?

Most commentators or authorities the author of this document has read, in reference to Isaiah 14:13, are steeped in explaining the cultic significance of this expression: (*in the far north*), saying, that "the sanctity of the north as the dwelling place of the gods is widely attested among the Semites," but the text often referred to for support is the same Isa. 14:13. The result for us, at least, is only circular reasoning. The idea that the ancient peoples of Mesopotamia and Palestine believed that the gods dwelt in the high mountains in the north could very well be true.¹³⁵ But this may not necessarily be the entire significance of this phrase. In addition, this was probably believed of all significant eminences, not just those in the north.

Babylon and the North:

"The mountain of assembly in the far north," could mean or include the northern mountains of Asia, of course, but it could also mean: "far north," from the perspective of an Israelite living in Palestine. The oracle against Babylon in Isaiah 13 and 14 is written from Israel, and is about Babylon where it is believed to be from an Israelite's perspective. To the prophets, the king of Babylon in Isa. 14:13 would have been thought to be actually ruling from the direction of the north. While to the modern reader, Babylon is east from Jerusalem, this was never considered to be so to the typical, Israeli resident of Bible times.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Reports, W. Barclay: "The Babylonians believed that there was a mountain called Aralu in the north country, which, rather like Olympus in Greece, was the home of the gods; it has been suggested that the Mt. of Magedon is this mountain, and that the picture is of a last battle against the assembled gods in their own dwelling place." II. p. 133.

William Barclay, *The Revelation of John* (The Daily Study Bible Series) (Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, Revised Edition, 1976) Vol. 2, pp. 132-133.

¹³⁶ (*SDA Bible Dictionary*, s. v. "north," says, "see East.") (See Jeremiah 1:13,14,15; 4:6; 6:1,22; 10:22; 13:20; 15:12; 16:15; 23:8, 25:9; 25:26; 46:6; 46:10, 20,24; 47:2, 50:3 which usually refer to Babylon. (See note on Jer. 1:13,14, in SDA BC). Cf. also Ezekiel 26:7; Zech. 2:6.



The prophets picture the enemies of Israel, the Babylonians especially, as coming from the north. The invaders invaded from the north, and were conceived of as being from the north due to the customary travel route via the Fertile Crescent. Many Bible texts confirm this OT view of direction, or orientation.

A good example is Jer 46:6, where it is said of the armies of Egypt, who would meet their fate in battles such as at Carchemish in the northern regions of Palestine proper, and who fought against Babylonia and Assyria:

“Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape, they shall stumble and fall toward the north by the river Euphrates.”

Vs. 10b: “for the Lord God of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.”

"Sides of the North"

This particular expression appears another place in the Bible, namely Psalm 48:2. Which reads:

"Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great king."

Roland R. Loasby, in his diminutively-bound book, *What is Armageddon?*¹³⁷, stands as one of the few commentators, who in the last century or so, strongly and openly favored the "har-mo'ed" alternative, and, at least,

¹³⁷ A book I found and read in the stacks at the James White Library, at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, almost half a century ago. I assume it is still there. Other than that I no longer have any further bibliographic or publishing information. I also assume Loasby was likely an Adventist pastor, evangelist, or writer.

approaches some of what is discussed in the following pages.¹³⁸ However, because of the above text and the centrality of Jerusalem in the biblical/prophetic wars, he envisions *Armageddon* as unfolding at Jerusalem. This fits very well with the "valley of Jehoshaphat" description of *Zechariah*, which in itself is, perhaps, a plausible scheme, though we don't know for sure where the *Valley of Jehoshaphat* actually was. Some teach that it was the Kidron Valley, or the valley between the temple and the Mt. of Olives, or somewhere southwest of Jerusalem. But Loasby, among only too few others, saw light in the *Har-mo'ed* alternative.

However, from an exegetical standpoint we don't seem to find Jerusalem as a local subject in *Revelation* 16, and the passage in *Psalms* 48 is likely referring to more than the temple complex which was somewhat situated in the northern (northeast corner) side of Jerusalem. His description may be an example of an idealized future Israel.

Another name for the highest mountain in Palestine was Mt. Hermon, known as such by Israel, and which was situated in the direction of the far north, and was also called "Mt. Zion."¹³⁹ Compared with the other heights in Israel, Mt. Hermon's height was impressive. The thought in *Psalms* 48 may be that the Mt. Zion of Jerusalem, or David's royal city, is visualized as ideally being or becoming in the prophesied future as high as Hermon in the north, in God's and Israel's estimation. (Cf. *Isaiah* 2:1ff.)

It is possible, then, that to *Isaiah* in his oracle against Babylon, the "far north" reference for him, is taking into consideration the direction of distant Babylon.

So, in momentarily considering this as being established, let us think typologically of such phrases as found in the traditional reading of *Isaiah* 14:13:

¹³⁸ There are a few other scholars, including [C. C. Torrey](#), [Kline](#) and [Jordan](#), that have argued that the word, *Armageddon* is derived from the [Hebrew](#) *moed* (מועד), thus meaning "assembly". [James B. Jordan](#), *Biblical Horizons*, No. 85.

¹³⁹ (There exist some common equations between Mt. Hermon, the highest mountain in Israel, [in the north] and "Mt. Zion." *Isaiah* 14:13 may also bear some contrasting relationship with this "Mt. Zion of the north.")

Other verses that equate Mt. Zion with Mt. Hermon are *Deut.* 4:8; and *Psalms* 133:3.

- *The Mountain/Tower of Assembly*
- *I will ascend above the heights of the clouds*
- *I will be like the Most High (note Most High) (cf. Isaiah 14:1, 13,14)*

It is paramount to remember that in the OT biblical messages, Babylon is never really the anglicized or Greek: "Babylon," but is rather, and always, Babel. Babel is the Hebraic spelling, and Babylon is simply "Babel," with the typical Greek ending. The "mountain of assembly," appears in this verse to be synonymous to the ancient, "Tower of Babel."

The Meaning of Mo'ed

Another related matter is the greater meaning of the word, *mo'ed*, itself. The usage of the word is not limited to: "assembly," or "congregation." In the Jewish writings it is sometimes translated as "festival" or "festivals," or is used as a title to the feasts, or the practices of worship rituals. It is obviously a religious expression, indicative of religious expression and worship. This is one more piece of evidence that the "mountain of assembly" is thus noting a "high" place of worship and ritual, similar to "Mt. Zion."

Old Babylon

It is easy to reason that in the Hebrew mind such a name as: "Babel," could not even be mentioned in Jewish circles: without recalling with it, its ancient significance as described in the *Torah*, itself (*Genesis*; Chapter 11:1 ff.). A reference to it would naturally call the mind to focus back to Babylon's origin and roots. This would be especially true of *Isaiah*, who could only look forward to the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar--Neo-Babylon. If this text is not a distinct echo of the old Babylon situated on the plain of Shinar, and that built a tower "to ascend above the heights of the clouds," and "be like the Most High," then there

could hardly be a more perfect allusion coming by accident. *The characteristics of Babylon remain the same from its origin.*¹⁴⁰

It is a point of interest that the aim of the Babel builders was to build a city and tower, for the purpose of *assembly*: "lest we be *scattered* abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (Gen 11:4, the phrase repeated twice in the passage). There was both a political, and religious/ecumenical purpose in their building. As well, there was exhibited in the whole project a distinct element of pride and rebellion; "Let us make a name for ourselves," by building "a city and a tower with its top in the heavens," "above the heights of the clouds" (Cf. Gen 11:4). Their purpose was, therefore, to arrogantly, religiously, and politically, engineer assembly. "Assembly," "congregation," "church," or "gathering," is the very meaning of the word, *mo'ed*. At Babel, they were after a result, just the opposite of the later scattering, but rather one of gathering and forming a one-world order, unification accomplished through congregating in one place, and through manufacturing and establishing their own super-religion and government.

Religious Centralization

That religious revolution was part of their purpose is made clear in Isaiah 21:9 ff., because it is reported that when God intervened, *their gods were cast to the ground*. The temple was no doubt at the top of the structure, there for them to serve and worship their false gods, and thereby, like the later Belshazzar, defy the worship of the true, living God. They apparently wished to standardize religion for everyone, and establish one common government; however, both of these purposes came at cross purposes with God's original plan. They employed false doctrines and humanistic corruptions, and probably a degree of force, instead of God's pure and orthodox ways, of achieving their goals. It was essentially an illegitimate marriage between the church and state.

¹⁴⁰ Some may have to be reminded that there is an historical meaning to this text. It is speaking of the king of Babylon. It has been popularly applied to Satan himself, to whom it ultimately points, of course (the Dragon), and so this is a valid *application*. But this text was not commonly thought to so apply directly to Satan in pre-or NT times. The first time it was so applied according to the writers we have on record today was by Jerome in the fourth century, A. D. But since Satan, the Dragon, is prominent as one of the triune powers gathering at Armageddon, this text certainly seems to be in the mind of John, the apostle, because it serves as background allusion or connection to the themes we are discussing.

Numerous times in the ancient rabbinical literature, the story known to us as the “Tower of Babel” story, is referred to uniquely as “the age of the dispersion,” the “generation of separation,” or the “generation of the division.”¹⁴¹ *Genesis 11* repeatedly reads: [and] “the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.”¹⁴² Assembly, or congregation, is the opposite, of course, of separation or division; the difference being due to perspective and purpose. Man's purpose in that case, was to group together and organize *against* God, and apparently to standardize a popular, idolatrous, politico-religion; and thus, to assemble for that reason. Yet, God's purpose was for them to serve Him in unity; yes, but physically and missionally, to scatter, replenish—or ruralize, and to “fill the whole earth.”

Babel and Lucifer

This purpose of organizing rebellion against God and His Law is directly mirrored in the rebellion of Satan (Lucifer) in heaven, and this is why Isaiah 14:13,14 while speaking of the king of Babylon, has been freely applied to Lucifer, or Satan. Theologians tell us that these words were not applied to Satan until the fourth century by the cleric, Jerome. But the corollary attitudes of Satan, and the kings of Babel and Babylon, are identical; and this argues for the passage applying also to *Armageddon*, Satan's (the Dragon's) and the “nations” last earthly attempt to *storm* heaven.

Temple Towers as Mountains

Temple towers, known as ziggurats, are still found in the Mesopotamian plains in abundance. Unfortunately, not enough, perhaps, is known about the significance of these.

Some things have been determined, however. The first thing being, that is, that they were primarily made to represent *mountains*.

¹⁴¹ *The Babylonian Talmud* (AZ 18b-19a; Pes 505, Ta 145, BM 262, etc.)

¹⁴² Gen 11: 8, 9.

Nebuchadnezzar's and Nabopolassar's temple complex in Babylon had the respective names of the temple of the sun-god, Marduk: *Esagila*, "**house of the high raised head**" (how could "pride" not be an element associated with that?!), and the temple tower, a very impressive structure at one time, which was called: *E-teman-en-ki*, which translates, "house of the foundation of heaven and earth." It is believed that these towers were conceived of as mountains, since the plains of Shinar offered no heights from which to worship and meet with their gods. These towers were all about worship, thus we know for certain that religion was usually very much involved with them.

The Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the wonders of the ancient world, and complete with what is thought to be artificial mountains, were built by the Babylonian king for his wife and queen who missed the northern mountains and likely then the worship venue of her "gods." "If you couldn't bring Mohammed to the mountain, you had to bring the mountain to Mohammeda!"

It is not an obscure idea among the ancients of the Near East to associate the ziggurats or temple-towers with mountains. D. Ford's commentary on Daniel cites some pertinent information on this account:

The sacred edifices of Babylonia were intended as a matter of fact to be imitations of mountains. . . . (This was the) . . . ideal of the Babylonian temple. According to Babylonian notions. . . the earth is pictured as a huge mountain.

Jensen has shown that the Babylonians regarded the earth as a huge mountain. In fact, the earth was actually called "E-kur," "mountain-house." Later they began to identify one particular part of the earth, a mountain peak preferably, as the dwelling of the god, so that temples which were built later were known as "mountain houses." The height of the temple which formed the dwelling-place of the god thus symbolized the mountain which formed his original home.

All great civilizations continued the fundamental symbolism of orientation and the total cosmic imagery in their temples. . . .

The temple-tower of Enlil, the chief of the Babylonian gods, was called also Ekur, "the mountain house." This tower was located at Nippur, the tower for centuries equated with the tower of Babel.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ Desmond. Ford, *Daniel* (Nashville, Tennessee; Southern Publishing Association, 1978) pp. 85,86.

As just cited, the famous temple tower completed by Nebuchadnezzar was called: E-teman-en-ki; and meant: "House of the Foundation of Heaven and Earth,"¹⁴⁴ representing the cosmic mountain. Babel and Babylon endeavored to claim that they were the "navel of the earth," and that the earth was *centralized* around them.

This concept was propagated in Babylon and other places, because the earth was conceived of as a "hemispherical mountain with gently sloping sides."¹⁴⁵ It requires no validation to claim that the ancient authorities of most every religion claimed the tops of mountains as the dwelling places of the gods and religious temples to these gods graced the significant mountain eminences across the earth. The Egyptians sought this via the pyramids, the Greeks and Romans, and the peoples of Asia Minor and Palestine of later history, glorified their gods on the tops of mountains throughout the entire Mediterranean cirque. These structures are even found scattered throughout the ancient Americas.

Israel and Samaria, were even caught up in the "mountain-temple" craze, and when the three disciples of Jesus witnessed the *Transfiguration* on top of Tabor, or whatever eminence it was, Peter suggested that the event called for three sacred temples on the site. The woman at the well (John 4:20) in Samaria questioned Jesus on this theme. "High Places," that are referred to throughout the saga of the kings of Israel and Judea, were honored as places of worship, orthodox or otherwise. Mt. Zion was ideally imagined as being miraculously raised up over the highest of these mountains, and the whole world, therefore, being subject to their Messiah King (Isaiah 2:2).

In the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar, the towering ziggurats, were part of the total temple complex, called: Esagila, i.e. "house of the high raised head." If these words and titles don't exhibit an element of pride, as described in Isaiah 14:13, 14, then nothing does! These ziggurat temples were made for the intention of church congregations and assemblies, and for the worship of the gods. They were the popular super-churches of the time.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

As we must quickly note, from the above references, there is an easy association made between the spirit and idea found in these later Babylonian towers, and the one we know as the ancient "Tower of Babel." Furthermore, it takes no stretch of the mind to find the same inferences and thought when referring to the "mountain of assembly in the far north," mentioned in the prophecy concerning Babylon in Isaiah 13 and 14.

The Jewish *Talmud*

The writer of this study believes that difficult, biblical problems can be sometimes greatly elucidated or refined in their meaning by referencing the ancient Jewish writings. The Jewish people have been the custodians of the oracles of God for thousands of years. The value of these writings are not in that the ramblings and fanciful conversations of the rabbis were always accurate to reality, but that they are informative when considering how old the believed dates of some of the Talmudic discussions are, and how they can supply considerable light on how people closer to these traditions and events viewed such historical matters. And in this case, in particular, we find astonishing light upon the subject at hand. So, the reader is encouraged to consider the fact also, that some of these discussions and traditions are likely thousands of years old, and even likely pre-date Christian, or Common Era times:

Dating of the Talmud

The Babylonian, and the Jerusalem Talmuds, are generally dated between the third and the fifth century, C. E. ¹⁴⁶ This time in the early Christian centuries makes it near to the final formation of the New Testament canon (ca. 325 C.E., the Council of Nicaea), and near to the apostolic era. But the Jews had been the guardians of the Torah and the Prophets for a thousand years, and more, before that.

While they often strayed from the truth sometimes, in their favoritism to Judaism, and edited many matters of history to their favor, Israel *was* the chosen race, and the records of the past, though certainly biased at times still were

¹⁴⁶ <https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/Talmud>

discussed and passed down through a string of tradition that goes back to the Exodus and even before. So the Talmud certainly represents traditions that go back into OT times, traditions that are often directly paralleled with the writings of the Old Testament, and with Josephus, Philo, Herodotus, and others.

The Talmud and Isaiah 14:13

The *Babylonian Talmud*, of note and interest, *applies* Isa. 14:13, in several places to the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar. This was because the rabbis felt that Nebuchadnezzar, due to his excessive ego and ambition, comprehended by his pride-filled acts a fit demonstration of this very text. In referring to the same text (*Isaiah* 14:13), Nebuchadnezzar is basically *co-identified* in spirit with the ancient, Nimrod, as well, and so the *Talmud* connects both kings thematically to the tower passage found in Genesis 11, and especially, for our consideration, to the same Isaiah 14 passage we are considering. To quote:

"I bestowed greatness upon Nimrod, and he said, Come, let us build a city, . . . upon Nebuchadnezzar, and he said, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds."¹⁴⁷

Nebuchadnezzar is then considered as re-incarnating the “spirit” of Nimrod, and the Tower of Babel is equated directly with Isaiah 14:13 and associated with “ascending above the heights of the clouds.” Both figures in history, Nimrod and Nebuchadnezzar, are believed to have been struck down for their pride, pride as represented and associated with high towers and edifices, and the surrounding cities of their own making.¹⁴⁸

Again, notice the thinking of the rabbis who lived nearer to the same time, and also who represent traditions that come even before the *Revelation* was written:

(Prior note: A *Bath Kol* is the Hebrew way of denoting a voice from heaven.)

¹⁴⁷ Hullin, 89a.

¹⁴⁸ (Thus: Gen. 11; “a city and a tower,” and “this great Babylon I have built,” [Daniel 4:30, 31]).

“Come and hear: For R. Jahanan b. Zakkai said: What answer did the *Bath Kol* give the wicked man (Nebuchadnezzar) when he asserted "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High?" A Bath Kol came forth and rebuked him: "Thou wicked man, son of a wicked man, descendant of the wicked Nimrod, who incited the whole world to rebel (*himrid*¹⁴⁹) against me during his reign!"¹⁵⁰



At the very least, we find here in Jewish thought, a striking continuity between the characters of Nimrod and Nebuchadnezzar. And to be noted, in particular, is the obvious and then-common opinion, that Isaiah 14:13,14 was appropriate to apply to these kings, and had association with both the former, ancient Babel with its tower, but also with the newer Neo-Babel(on) as well. It is also starkly obvious, that

the rabbis clearly applied Isaiah 14:13 to the “Tower of Babel” tradition. And meanwhile, the reader is asked to consider how old the foundations of the Talmud are, being over two thousand years closer to the original story than we are.

And in addition to this, conservative scholarship attribute the writings of Isaiah to a century or more before— (ca. 800 B. C. E.)— the complete rise of the Neo-Babylon empire of Nebuchadnezzar (ca. 605 B. C. E.), therefore the prophet Isaiah, is flavoring the prophecy with the original tower episode, and predicting thereby the second fall of Babylon in the future. That is in part why Babel is said to fall twice: “Babylon is fallen, is fallen . . .” (Isaiah 21:9)[or more accurately, *Babel fell, fell!*]

To the Hebrews the episode on the plain of *Shinar* was not forgotten and the new Babylon only reiterated and comprehended the old. Even within the book of *Daniel* we may find direct allusions to the old Babylon that

¹⁴⁹ *himrid*, Heb. “to rebel,” is made into a word-play with *Nimrod*.

¹⁵⁰ Pes. 94a, b; (notes accompany passage on the word-play).



Nebuchadnezzar and his predecessors revived.¹⁵¹ Writes the author, Herman Veldkamp:

“The author of the book of Daniel deliberately uses the old name *Shinar* (Dan. 1:2) to remind us of the origin of this world power that arises in opposition to God. It was on

the plain of Shinar that mankind declared, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens" (Gen. 11:4). Shinar was where man sought to make a name for himself by building the great tower of Babel."¹⁵²

And perhaps it might even be re-echoed in the "to and fro" expression itself, used in the book of Daniel:

In a Midrash on Gen. 11 one rabbi applies Ps. LIX. 12 to the scattering and the "generation of the separation of races:"

"Israel said: Slay not the generation of the separation, lest my people forget. Make them to wander to and fro by thy power." "Cast them away, and bring them down from above to below (i.e. top of the tower.)"

Again, the original Babylon (tower) is remembered for its famous scattering "to and fro," and such expressions are appropriate symbolism for the future scattering of similar forces in the final days of this earth's history. The purpose of Babel was to "congregate," or "gather" in opposition to the true God. God ended their purpose by "scattering" them. The opposite of "gathering" is to "separate" or "disperse." And this would be why a "mountain-tower of assembly"—that is brought to naught by an act of dispersion—describes very well the very essence of what happened at Babel, and at the later Babylon as well. And we can

¹⁵¹ Some traditions even credit Nebuchadnezzar as repairing and finishing the damaged, and likely, original tower, at Borsippa. He dedicated it to Nebo, and called it: "Ezida" (Enduring Temple or House) and it had seven stages or stories—(The "Borsippa inscription"). Cf. <https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/2279-babel-tower-of>

¹⁵² Herman Veldkamp, *Daniel* (?), p. 9.

see, that through this symbolism, we have permission to see in this the anticipated scattering of apocalyptic Babylon in the future.

Daniel 2

In the great prophecy of Daniel 2 there is seen at the end of the narrative a "stone that smote the image (and) became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Dan. 2:35).

The Aramaic word for "mountain" (this appears in the *Aramaic* section of Daniel) is *tur*, similar to the modern word: "tower." (In fact, if one considers the "waw," in the middle of the word, pronounced with a "w" sound, it will match the very same word used in English and other languages). Lexically, this word has two alternative translations, one: "mountain," the other: "tower," or "round tower, height."¹⁵³ This mountain, or tower, in God's supreme idealistic design rises—and then "fills the whole earth" (Cf. Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:1). So, obviously God is not against urbanization itself, or, "assembly," itself, especially if that gathering is assembled with a righteous purpose. But, God is certainly against "assembly," when it is based on mutiny and rebellion.

It is interesting to note that God's original purpose and the most significant command given to Adam and to Noah was the same from the beginning: to "fill" and to "replenish the earth."¹⁵⁴ On the other hand, the purpose of apostate Babylon was and is: to rebelliously congregate in one place, "lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth." It is twice repeated for emphasis in Gen. 11 that God thwarted this purpose at Babel and "scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth" (11:9). In God's restorative kingdom, the earth is again to be peopled and governed, as it should be. This kingdom, i.e. this city and tower; this "mountain-house;" shall never be destroyed, in contrast to the fate of the "shaky," "evil", and "doomed" course of those building on the plains of *Shinar*.

And when considered in this light, the holy city of *Revelation*—four-square, and high as wide—is probably, in verity, describing a "ziggurat-like"

¹⁵³ *Young's Analytical Concordance*, p. 675.

¹⁵⁴ Gen. 1:28; 9:1.

structure¹⁵⁵, but one in every way superior to the pathetic and make-shift Babylonian attempt at perfection, with its phony and artificial effort in reaching and building itself to heaven.

The *City of God* ultimately fulfills God's final purpose of "filling" the earth, whereas man in opposition to God uses urbanization and assembly to wage war against Him (Like Nimrod, a "mighty hunter against the Lord"). Through his own building and work, man has tried in history to religiously and politically usurp the sovereignty that alone is God's; thus, like "Nimrod, a mighty hunter, against (prob. meaning: "in the place of") the Lord." The more accurate idea is one of humanistic usurpation, and substitution—the very spirit and meaning of *antichrist*. The Babel motif is therefore used to point to Babylon as the instigator and prime example of blasphemy, and purposeful usurpation and rebellion under a religious guise.

The City Fell into Three Parts

The apocalyptic writer, John, reports that "the great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered great Babylon" (Rev. 16:19) RSV

What is really meant by this phrase is almost entirely ignored by commentators and has remained difficult to exegete. However, it is felt that a great debt is again owed to the ramblings of the rabbis, who have strangely been ignored far too much by Christian and other scholars, at least, perhaps, in referencing these relevant passages we are considering.

Because, again, on this subject some fascinating light emerges out of passages taken from the rabbinical writings concerning the falling of the "tower of Babel" *into three parts*. Some quotes follow. These quotes are removed from their contexts and are inferential in nature since the Talmud chronicles rabbinical

¹⁵⁵ Incidentally, there are many similarities functionally, architecturally, and dimensionally, between ziggurats and John's description of the Holy City: Square; and high as wide, i.e. the perfect pyramid, walls with names inscribed, a "river of life" flowing through it, etc. (That the tower was itself considered as a city or part of the city, see discussions forward on Gen. 11).

arguments that we are not fully inside of. But the reader is called to examine these closely for their relationship in thought to the Babylonian tower, which, by the way, is easier to see as *falling* into three parts as explained by the sages, than is a typical city as we know it, so explained by moderns:¹⁵⁶

"And they said: Come let us build a city, and a tower (xi.4). R. Judah said: The tower they built, but they did not build the city. An objection is raised: But it is written, And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower (ib.5)? Read what follows he replied: And they left off to build the city (ib.8), the tower however not being mentioned. R. Hiyya b. Abba said: **A third of this tower which they built sank (into the earth), a third was burnt, while a third is still standing.** And should you think that it (the remaining third) is small----- R. Hura said in R. Idi's name: When one ascends to the top, he sees the palm trees below him like grasshoppers." Midrash, Vol. 1, p. 307.

•Midrash on Genesis xxxviii.7-8. (emphasis supplied)

(Also in this passage's context, the "generation of the separation" is referred to)

"The generation of the dispersion have no portion in the world to come, What did they do?-- The scholars of R. Shila taught: They said, "Let us build a tower, ascend to heaven, and cleave it with axes, that its waters might gush forth." In the West (Sc. Palestine academies) they laughed at this: if so, they should have built a mountain! . . .

R. Jeremiah b. Eleazar said: **They split up into three parties.** One said, **"let us ascend and dwell there;** the second, **"let us ascend and serve idols;** "and the third said, **"let us ascend and wage war (with God).** The party which proposed, "let us ascend and dwell there----the Lord scattered them; the one that said, Let us ascend and wage war were turned to apes, spirits, **devils, and night demons;** whilst as for the party which said, Let us ascend and serve idols--for there the Lord did confound the language of all the earth. It has been taught, R. Nathan said: They were all bent on idolatry. (For) here it is written, Let us make a name; whilst elsewhere it is written, and make no mention of the name of other gods: (Ex 23:13) just as idolatry is meant, so here too. R. Johnathan said: **A third of the tower was burnt, a third sunk into the earth, and a third is still standing.** R. said: The atmosphere of the tower causes forgetfulness. R.

¹⁵⁶ In Gen. 11, the meaning of the expression: "city and tower" is unknown. The particular expression is an "hendiadys," meaning it happens only once in Scripture, and so there is no similar expression elsewhere to compare it with. Even the rabbis of old were puzzled by it.

Joseph said: Babylon and Borsif are evil omens for the Torah. What is the meaning of Borsif?---R. Assi said: An empty (shaft) pit (*bor*)."¹⁵⁷ (emphasis supplied)

Where the rabbis received this tradition that the tower “fell into three parts,” or came the idea of the three confederate parties that were represented there, with, one, being, at least, particularly satanic, and demonic (as in: “unclean spirits”), another an idolatrous one (images to the beast), and another false and rebellious and against the Torah (the Law): “confused and scattered,” is a mystery. So, is some of the reasoning of the rabbis! But it seems compelling that we find similar elements in *Revelation* 16, both before and after the reference to *Armageddon*; the city falling into three parts, and “unclean spirits (**demons** and **tongues**) coming out of the triune mouths of the Beast, the Dragon, and the False prophet (16:13).

The Tower Motif, and the Euphrates, and the City of Babylon, Stand Directly Behind the Armageddon Passage

But what is most significant in our discussion, is the sense, that these ancient rabbinical arguments directly tie the Isaiah 14:13 passage with the *tower of Babel*, and the tower of Babel is described as *falling into three parts, and therefore, in the end associates the tower with Revelation 16's use of the term: Armageddon.*

It cannot escape notice that thematically in *Revelation*, chapters 13-16 ff, three similar parties are also denominated: the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet. In the above quotes from the Talmud, basically the same three parties appear, having demonic or Satanic purpose. It seems quite obvious that the three parties, the demonic spirits, the confusion of tongues, the ignoble seeking to ascend to heaven, **and make “war,”** and especially the ultimate reversal of the rebellious assembly, all would clearly relate the passage in *Revelation* with the original **tower** of Babel, and with the subsequent fall of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, as well—but not *particularly*, we will state, “**flatly**,” with a **plain** somewhere in Palestine!

¹⁵⁷ *Sanhedrin*, 109a.

The three unclean spirits, well represent three philosophies or powers at cross-purposes with the God of heaven. "Spirits" are synonymous in ancient literature with "tongues" and "languages." The concept of the confusion of language (religions) is prominent in Genesis 11:1ff. And the most significant characteristics of frogs are their **tongues** (languages-religions), and how they come out of their **mouaths**. Frogs were also considered: "unclean," and "abominable" (by the Hebrews); and even some were, and currently are, "poisonous;" and, frogs, as we know them, are known to: "babble." Frogs were even considered as gods to the Egyptians, and probably the Babylonians as well.

The confusion of languages is probably best illustrated by the cacophony of croaking one hears at night "down by the pond," or, in the "noise of a motly congregation or crowd." What is most certain, is the ready allusion and identification toward the gathering at the Babylon of old, and the confusion of tongues at Babel. The Hebrews conveniently twisted the Babylonian word "Babilu"¹⁵⁸ (gate of the Gods), to "Balal," Hebrew for "confusion."

So, John, of the Revelation, we contend, throughout this passage, is powerfully and consistently using "Babel," "Babylon," and "mountain/tower" imagery, and not, particularly, the imagery of a "plain," or even that of a "mountain," in Palestine! Plus, the original meaning of Isaiah 14:13, 14 has to be primarily tied to Babel and Babylon.

Babel Symbolism

This modified perspective of Babylon being directly connected to the name place: Armageddon, is manifestly important to realize to last-day Christians. The themes correspond quite well with last-day issues and with the fall of Babylon motif; mountain-towers (super-churches), the confusion of tongues (different religions), unclean spirits (demons working miracles, spiritualism), human pride, blasphemy, false religious worship, sun-centered idolatry, images and idolatrous worship, war against God, church-state merger, religious ecumenism, rebellion, and purposeful gathering with corrupt design. The tower of Babel is the polar opposite and the contrasting counterpart to the true Holy City and mountain of the blessed Israel of God, Jerusalem—the true and holy: "Mountain of Assembly," *Mt. Zion*, or "*Mt. of the Seven*," (thus; the

¹⁵⁸ "Bab," gate; and "ilu," God.

'seven' religion or mountain'¹⁵⁹). Mountains in prophecy are consistently associated with *religion* and *worship*. And "Zion" is also symbolic of the "Return to Zion" ("Zionism;" i. e, the Second Coming), Sabbath worship, religious purity, and Lawful orthodoxy.

In separate studies, this author has demonstrated that in each section of *Revelation*, are found mirroring symbols of comparison or contrast. These I have called: "Synonymic Parallels," and have catalogued scores of these that are placed in predictable patterns, or are used as parallel symbols placed with roughly chiastic, or mirroring consistency. One prominent theme throughout the book is found in the consistent symbolism of "high places," "thrones," "mountains," or "agoras;" and in this section (Rev 13-16): *Mt. Zion* and *Mt. Armageddon* find a knowing, systematic, and contrasting chiastic relationship.

Seventh-day Adventists have taught for over a hundred and more years that a form of religious ecumenism that unites against the tenets of God's sacred Law, and especially, the Sabbath, is expected in the latter struggles of Christianity, and that such is taught by passages such as *Revelation* 16:13,14. Not so strangely do we then find further evidence then, even from the rabbis of old, this same truth confirmed. The Beast, the Dragon, and the False Prophet, in the modern forms of apostate forms within the divisions of religion today: in Roman Catholicism, also apostate forms found now in Satanic demonic influence and doctrines, and found in such popular, apostate Protestant powers as those we anticipate will be manifest in the United States of America and elsewhere, are expected to unite in their efforts against God at the close of time. But the meaning of the Armageddon passage is to teach us that the result or expected end will be the downfall of Babel confusion, out of which God's people are now seriously and earnestly, called (Rev. 18:4).

¹⁵⁹ A phonetic allusion to the number "7." The seventh letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which used letters as numbers also, was *zayin*, thus a similar sound to "Zion," modernly known as the Temple location, *Tziyon*. Mt. Zion was believed to be the center of seven surrounding "mountains." "Mountains" in prophecy consistently equate with "religion," or religious worship, as in "mountain-top" high places of worship, so the allusion in Rev. 14:1 ff., is that it applies to a religion that is associated with the number seven, and is complete with "Jewish" associations, and, therefore, also relates it to the Sabbath (seventh-day) and Zion being the specified place of Sabbath celebrations and rituals. Cf. *The Days of the Seventh Angel*, vol. 5, for an extended treatment.

The Babel builders at the Great River Euphrates sought a rebellious conformity, with one language and one people, based on the premise of sun/Sunday-worship, subversive forms of idolatry, and man-made forms of religiosity. This characteristic culture of ancient Babel and Babylon can be proven by a close study of Babylonian history, culture, and religion. But Babel of old “lost the battle” and was finally confounded and scattered. In fact, it can be observed that both “Battles of Babylon,” were never really ever fought in the end. There was “assemblage,” and “gathering;” but both cities basically fell without an extended battle. The anticipated battle never really developed as a typical “battle,” but came more as a cut off “confrontation.” The anticipated climax never fully transpired, because the defense of Babylon was “dried up,” or “struck down,” and in each case God’s purposes blocked and discomfited the enemy, and the forces of Heaven struck down the rebellious conspiracy in a quick, decisive victory. It seems that in this matter is found great instruction about the meaning of Armageddon, in exposing what is myth about it, and what is liberally given us as to its meaning.

The Gathering Motif

Another matter intrinsic to the *Armageddon* passage is the “gathering motif” found there. Immediate in the context of the term: *Armageddon*, is found the concept of “gathering.” “Gathering” phenomena is thematic throughout the OT, and the idea is especially associated to eschatological matters in both Testaments.

If the *Mountain of “Assembly,”* or the *Mountain of the “Congregation”* idea, is the gathering idea inherent in the description of the *Armageddon* conflict that we are supposing, then it is most fitting:

“And he *gathered* them together in a place called. . . *Armageddon*.” (Vs. 16).

The gathering motif is replete throughout the *Apocalypse*:

It starts in the messages to the churches at the beginning of the book. In view, are all the nations gathered, and: “all the kindreds of the earth mourn, and wail because of Him” (1:7). And, there are repeated references to the “Synagogue of Satan,” a gathering, or congregation, or assembly of false

believers. False prophets and false beliefs are a central theme recurring throughout the book of Revelation. The basic word: “synagogue,” is taken from the Greek, *sunago*, “to gather.”¹⁶⁰ The synagogues were the Jewish churches or congregations that formed between the Testaments as a result of the Babylonian Captivity, and the circumstances following it, of inadequate access to the temple precincts proper in Jerusalem, and the scattering during the Diaspora.

In the intervening chapters in *Revelation* are heavenly gatherings before God’s throne (Chapters 4-7), and immense gatherings in the *Trumpets* for war (*polemos*). *Polemos* is the same word as is translated in *Revelation* 16 as: “battle.” And in Chapter 14 there is found the four-square and universal “gathering” of the congregation of the saints on Mt. Zion (same four-square arrangement; cf. ziggurats; cf. also E. G. W., *Early Writings*, p. 16), the likely anti-thetical counterpart to the “gathering” at *Armageddon*. Several more such thematic motifs of this nature appear as well, in the systematic comparison/contrast of these “high places,” in the book of Revelation.

Antecedent of the Gathering to the “Battle”

With the “Synagogue of Satan” motif; or the “gathering of Satan” idea that is given us here and elsewhere, these ancillary gatherings may provide light on the question whether the “he” that gathers the assembly at *Armageddon* is God, or is Satan. Arguments ensue on whether it is God, or Satan that musters the battle at *Armageddon*. Or, it is asked: “Who is the antecedent, to the “he gathered” (vs. 16), in the gathering at *Armageddon*?”

While a good answer to that question is both, since nothing happens outside the sovereignty of God and His ultimate control, the call to the conflict probably comes in the most direct sense from Satan. A literal translation of the “synagogue of Satan,” would be in effect: “the gathering of Satan.” Satan has been doing these “gatherings” for some time, if you know the story—from way

¹⁶⁰ Notice the *phonetic* sub-root, “gog” in the word, as found in “Synagogue,” and compare with the “Gog and Magog” phenomena taken from Ezekiel 38,39 and Rev. 19, where we find another specified gathering and climactic “battle” at the very end of time (Advent II), which bears a strong thematic relationship with the “Armageddon” phenomenon, and is in the opinion of some the real Armageddon.

back! *The passage even says clearly that it is the three evil spirits that go out “to gather” the kings of the earth.*

The record of the most prominent “holy wars” in the OT, if looked at carefully, reveals that God and His servants rarely, if ever, initiate the conflict. God even sends Israel in detour around certain countries to honor promises He had formerly made, rather than engage with them in actual battle, or to harm anyone unnecessarily. Most of the time, in the OT, Israel was on the defensive. Saul and Israel are afraid in the story of David and Goliath because the Philistines had come out against them. They were not anxious to engage. And thus it was in a number of cases. Even with the conquest of Canaan, when carefully evaluated, it is readily made evident in every case, that it was Israel that was first attacked by the enemy.

Even up to recent times, battles were pre-arranged, or even agreed upon before-hand, and scheduled by the challenger or the opposition. The opposing forces would agree to the appointment and the battle would start, even on time! So, in that way the “he,” in *Revelation* 16:13 could apply to both army’s generals and make some sense. In the time of the kings of Israel, the aggressor would come and challenge, and Israel would then draw up to them in battle array. But God is not a God of aggression. “With loving kindness have I drawn thee,” describes His preferred approach. The Cross was the ultimate passivity. “In *righteousness* doth He judge and make war.” God goes to war, but his chief weapon is *righteousness*.

The few times that God orders war in the Old Testament, is when pay-back was due for a previous over-step by the enemies of Israel, or when there was an issue that was unrequited or unvisited, or when in a sense the confrontation was “deserved.” Such was the case with Amalek, a nation that had mercilessly attacked Israel on their way out of Egypt, a circumstance totally unprovoked by Israel. God ordered King Saul that all the Amelekites and their property be destroyed—not in order to be brutal, but to demonstrate that the motives of Israel and their God, was not to kill and to fly upon spoil for selfish purposes, or to experience conquering glory, but to administer justice in order to requite the previous wrong. God and Samuel were upset with Saul, because Saul’s actions in saving the king and some of the animals would have it made it look to the other nations that Israel warred rather with the motive of aggression,

eyeing the booty, and having the glory of conquest in mind. God's reputation and character was thus being tarnished and misrepresented.

The same was with most of David's escapades. He always tried to make peace with Saul, and later, the nations around him. In ordinary cases Israel was to offer peace to the enemy. The enemy almost always picked the fight, yet often God did bless Israel in the innocent defense of their families and country. But "holy war," directed by God, was usually defensive, or passive-aggressive only. Yet God will not always stand idly by, and let His people get "walked on," and so He would customarily defend and protect the innocent, should they trust Him.

Therefore, *Armageddon*, or any of the acts of God in the last great conflict, are probably not even God's *preferred* way of ending evil. He would rather see changed hearts and minds, enemies turned into educated loyalists, people that learn to love and appreciate Him, instead.

The first battle or war in heaven was 100% instigated by Satan and his angels, and not at all by God and His angels. But this does not mean that God was not "battle" ready. So finally, there could be found no more a place for Satan's forces in heaven, with the evil forces waging guerrilla warfare against the righteous angels, harassing them, and troubling them, so God at last stepped in and pruned off the offending branches.

It is insurgency, mutiny, *coup de etat*, rebellion, and revolution—waged by the lost, that, no doubt, occasions even the final battles. In *Revelation 20*, we notice, that *it is the hosts of the wicked that later come up and surround the holy city, not the other way around.* It is the false religionists who usually are the ones who aggressively seek to destroy the faithful, and not the other way around (like Cain and Abel, and Jesus Christ, and the martyrs, of course). *Only false religions persecute others.* It will be the same way with *Armageddon*. God will come down to see what the sons of men have built. Because there is no other way, God will stand up to intervene for the sake of His people, and destroy the tower of sin and hate that is now corrupting the earth—and thus, in the end Babel will fall, but largely it will be the result of man's own making.

Humanistic and Rebellious Religion

What a magnificent illustration of man trying to save himself through humanistic design that infiltrates religion, through lawlessness, through prowess; or through man-made forms of worship, or through false religion—"teaching for doctrines the commandments of men;" is found in the Tower of Babel episode! Likewise, in the latter times, the same aim is manifest. When corrupted Christianity (even now all around us), or the kings of the earth, come together to war against God and His people once again, God will strike a scattering blow to make their plans come to naught. Their tower will be split, and earthquake and lightning (Rev. 16) from God will end their designs for the present. It will be the "age of the dispersion" all over again. It will be the "fall of Babel" all over again. Both Babel, and the second Babylon are included in the symbolic narrative surrounding Armageddon.

The real and final battle, if there really is one, is postponed or delayed for a thousand years later at *Gog and Magog, and there will end the conflict forever. This will be another decisive victory for God, and a devastating loss for the false powers*. But before us today, is the scenario that "lightning from heaven" will again, and very soon, descend and strike down the "steeple and towers" (false churches, once pure; now *Babel-on*) that man, working in the hands of Satan, have built.

Armageddon, therefore, is more: about a "place" of confrontation, and not so much about an extended, military "campaign," or "**battle**." But the *place* is important, for it informs the meaning. It is a symbolic place where men seek to wage war with God, to make their own day, name, and number: (6—**666**, Babel's and Babylon's number [Daniel 3:]).¹⁶¹ Six is the number of *mankind*, for man was created on the **sixth** day, and is brought to encounter God at the place: being called: *Armageddon*, a term found nestled in the description of the "**sixth**" plague.

Babel tried to build their own spiritual "mountain" (church) and kingdom. But Babylon, through the drying up of the Euphrates (a symbolic reality only, of course), will be dealt a surprising and decisive blow. Babylon,

¹⁶¹ The dimensions of the great image, the "image of the beast," was 6 x 6 x 60 cubits.

whose sins "are heaped as high as the heaven" (Rev.18:5; Isaiah 14:13,14), "shall be *thrown down* with violence" (Rev 18:21).

The Place

Largely overlooked by most expositors is the very word: "place," in Rev. 16:16. The typical generic sense of the word is reckoned differently by modern readers who are unaware of the word's ancient sense and significance.

The word in Greek, is "topos," from whence the modern word, "top" is later derived. It denotes a "high place," therefore, an acropolis, known anciently, as the "top of the city."¹⁶² There are replete examples of these temple mountain agoras throughout the entire Middle East and Asia Minor. In this word alone, the idea of *Armageddon* being a "low" plain in Palestine, reaches its complete demise.

The parallel and righteous counterpart to the false system of religion, Babylon, is that found on Mt. Zion, the high place, *topos*, that is "beautiful for situation," also situated "toward the north," the "*true*" one. In attempting to substitute false religion in the place of the true, the rival power attempts to build, through its own humanistic and idolatrous power, a "high-mountain" of its own. It is pathetically minuscule, corrupt, imperfect, and inadequate. Derek Kidner substitutes the description of the Babel tower in Gen. 11 with the word: "makeshift." It is made of earth and asphalt. It is called *Armageddon*, the "tower-mountain of assembly," or in a sarcastic sense: the "great mountain" (Ha!). It is a humanistic "high place" whose builders say, "We will ascend above the heights of clouds, we will be like the Most High." "We will trample down the Law of God, assemble rebelliously, and do religion and worship our own way, and on our own terms, and on our own day."

The warning that "Babylon is fallen," past tense, is first found in *Isaiah* 21, and therefore, was written before the demise of Neo-Babylon, in pre-exilic times, and before its full resurgence and reestablishment was yet a full reality. It is obvious that the writer of this prophecy (God through the prophet, of course) is giving warning on the basis of the previous and historical "fall" of Babylon at

¹⁶² acropolis: *acro*: top; *polis*: city.

Shinar. The horse-rider is pictured as a messenger bringing news from afar. Any reader in the time of Isaiah could not have avoided the direct allusion to the *fall of the Babel tower*, especially when the Old Testament word for Babylon was not *Babylon* at all, but was the pure Hebrew, BABEL. Thus, "Babel fell, Babel fell!" It is reported in past tense, because it is reporting in the style of what the "news" would eventually be, when like the first, the second Babel (Neo) also, had fallen.¹⁶³

Tower/Euphrates Imagery

Expositors trouble over the fact that John does not use a "Greek" name or form to match the *Hebrew* name: *Armageddon*, as he does in Revelation 9:11, with the names: *Apollyon* and *Abaddon*. But the fact is that John *does* provide both types of names in the *Revelation* passage. *Armageddon* is the Hebrew name, and *Babylon* is the Greek name, for Babylon is a but a Greek form of the name, Babel, with the typical Greek ending. Both terms are referring to the same place and are in parallel. Armageddon is Babylon. Babylon is Armageddon. The "Tower of Assembly" is referring mostly to the older and original Babylon. But the latter city on the "dried up" Euphrates was located in the same basic place as Babel, and on the same famous river. Both Babylons, Babel of old, and the Neo-Babylon that later fell due to the "drying up of the River Euphrates," are found in the mind of the prophets. Both fell, and the modern apocalyptic counterpart is determined to fall as well.

¹⁶³ The historian Herodotus (484-425 B. C. E.):

[Cyrus] posted his army at the place where the river goes into the city, and another part of it behind the city, where the river comes out of the city, and told his men to enter the city by the channel of the Euphrates when they saw it to be fordable. Having disposed of them and given this command, he himself marched away with those of his army who could not fight; and when he came to the lake, Cyrus dealt with it and with the river just as had the Babylonian queen: drawing off the river by a canal into the lake, which was a marsh, he made the stream sink until its former channel could be forded. When this happened, the Persians who were posted with this objective made their way into Babylon by the channel of the Euphrates, which had now sunk to a depth of about the middle of a man's thigh. *The Histories*, 1, 191. 2-4.

Armageddon Not Fought in Literal Iraq

That this interpretation steers the expositor away from Palestine to Babylon does not mean that Armageddon is now therefore to be fought at literal Babylon, in Iraq. Literal Babylon was according to God's prophetic view, never again to be inhabited, a place of destruction and nakedness (cf. Isaiah 13:24: "It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation. . . ." and, Jeremiah 50:39: ". . . it shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation."). And it still is largely uninhabited and desolate. Plus, the location of the original tower has never been established with certainty.

*Babylon, or Babel, as a term, is safe to be used in Revelation in **symbolic** fashion to represent a similar power or powers, yet is not bound by the same geographical and cosmological restrictions as the Old Babylon.* The "once-removed," or "metaphorical" and "direct" principle of symbols does not allow Babylon to be the *very same* as the old, yet it would also constitute a mistake to make Babylon "only" a "spiritual " non-entity, and remove it entirely from the real world and put it out "in the heights of the clouds." More of the actual identity of modern, apocalyptic, Babylon, which is also key to the total understanding and the fuller meaning of modern *Armageddon*, is addressed in succeeding sections.

The consistent themes found in both of Babylon's historical falls, we would insist, though, are best represented in the "*Har-mo 'ed*" expression and context. The many century long "Megiddo" *detour* is probably mostly a myth, since there are no other contextual markers of such a place, in the chapter. This is the best understanding we would offer, for this passage. Included are a multiplicity of thematic correspondences that almost demand a favoritism toward Isaiah 14:13,14, and the *Mountain of Assembly*, and to all of the Babel and Babylon super-stories:

- The "Falls of Babylon" (found prominently in both contexts).
- Multiple Babel and Babylon terms and motifs (Euphrates, frogs, etc.)
- Tongues and languages (frogs, tongues, and Babel motifs)
- Confusion of religion, nations, and languages

- Demonic manifestations and unclean spirits
- Religious high places, mountains, and towers
- Ideas of gathering, congregation, and assembly
- Judgment motifs
- Usurpation of God's sovereignty
- Scriptural and Talmudic testimony
- Three-part plot, and then three-part disruption
- Evil, ecumenical design and purpose
- War, *polemos*, against God
- The non-separation of the church and the state
- Humanistic effort and design
- Salvation by human works and human institutions
- The name and number issues of Babylon, 6, etc.
- Insurgency, Satanic rebellion (Heaven—Isa 14:13)
- Pride and arrogance attached to edifices
- False religion, and erroneous doctrine
- Idolatry and pagan corruption
- Sun-centered worship
- Spiritualism and its tenets (miracle-working demons)
- The attempt toward a universal kingdom (one world order)
- Babylonian confederacies
- Multiple "Great Controversy" themes
- Lightning, hail, and earthquake
- Decisive, and sudden Divine victory

SUMMARY

We therefore conclude that "Armageddon" as a term, is largely reminiscent of the very expression given in the prophecies concerning Babylon, especially *Isaiah* 14:13,14. The supposed textual and transliteration difficulties with this passage are found to be largely resolvable. This passage and others recreate in the newer Babylon the very spirit of the original Babylon on the plain of *Shinar* (and notably, the Babylon that fell to Cyrus as well). The Babel story typifies characteristically and historically—Babylon; and all like earthly powers that through the centuries have said, "I will be above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High." *Armageddon*, at least in part, has to be symbolic of the original *Tower of Babel*. In this way it symbolizes the rallying point, the

"assemblage," the "gathering," of the super-mob, of last day apocalyptic Babylon. The "gathering motif," is clearly evidenced in type and anti-type. And this is why the enemies of God are "**gathered** together to a religious high place called. . . . *Armageddon*."

We do not think the plain of Megiddo interpretation, or even the Mt. Carmel motif, carries themes as large, and as significant, and as contextual, as Babel and Babylon, though the themes and evil resistance in them are much the same in both stories. In all such conflicts, the lawless and false powers, and God's victories over them will often look alike anyway, so in that way they are representatively included, because prophetic symbols are usually inspired on purpose to be broad and super-comprehensive by nature. So we can't say that the Mt. Carmel associations are not there—but so much is left out if the Babel/Babylon motif is ignored and is simply replaced by only the Carmel associations.

That the very term, *Armageddon*, can mean "mountain of slaughter," or, "destruction" may not be accidental, either, for the symbolism is perhaps broad in its meaning, by design. Inspiration often accomplishes several facets at once, leaving interpretational tracks, so that no ultimate mistake can be made in understanding its central meaning.

And again, in returning to the Mt. Carmel interpretation, there can be found threads and theoretical associations in the passage to the Elijah and Mt. Carmel incident as well, where fire fell from heaven as it did at Babel, and people were congregated in a showdown. But largely left out would be such things as direct allusion to expected religious ecumenism, the confusion of languages (religion), the fall of a city and tower, common reference to demonic and unclean spirits, thematic reference to human pride, the thematics to the number "6," the earthquake and lightning, and a host of other themes found with the Babel/Babylon motifs. With the prominent references to the Euphrates, and frogs (the Euphrates was full of them, don't know about Megiddo. . . ?), and demons, the "mountain of Assembly," and the clear reference to the fall of Babylon in the climactic verse in Rev. 16; all seem to point to a *Babylonian* setting.

Other than a few thematic commonalities found in both the Babel and Carmel episodes, not one distinct allusion or mention of Elijah or that event is found in the Armageddon passage. It seems unlikely, that if "Megiddo" is the

actual background of Armageddon, that Inspiration would leave us little more than almost nothing. But as just stated: since all of God's victories pitted against man's contrary devices are always somewhat similar anyway, such stories will always find many appropriate and legitimate echoes, and in that way may be providentially included in the interpretational bank, and so in that way are valuable to the case.

It appears that what could be called the "Megiddo detour," is probably a thousand year-old + departure from the genuine context, having attached to it more "myth," than "meaning." But the reader may decide the matter for themselves. It is not a paramount matter, nor a "salvation" issue.

But the symbolic base of *Armageddon* is infinitely larger than a mere term, or Palestinian, or even Babylonian locale. It is wrought out most clearly in the whole, storied history of Babylon, the spirit of its arrogant claims in the face of God and its consequent falls, at *Shinar*, and later when Cyrus, the servant of God, dried up the Euphrates river, and the city and its blasphemous king, took their punishment according to the prediction of the prophets. Modern Apocalyptic Babylon is reminded of the fall of the former Babylons, as found especially in the statement: "Babylon is fallen, is fallen." In this phrase can be seen the fall of at least two Babylons.... Because: the expression: "is fallen, is fallen," is mentioned twice, and the Bible history records the falls of two distinct Babels. As well, the two Babylons, ancient Babylon and modern, apocalyptic "Babylon," will meet the same dualistic fate in the end.

Conclusion

In this interpretation we find in "Armageddon" a metaphorical motif symbolically worthy of its place in Scripture. It is definite and specific in scope. It is suddenly much richer in meaning than before. It is, therefore, not obscure, or puzzling as once thought. It is connected as it is to the whole history of Babylon (*Revelation's* theme) incorporating its story and character, its attempts at ecumenical religious and world order, its blasphemy and Satanic pride, its worldly affluence, its humanity, its worship of an image and images, its utter confusion, and finally, its fall.

Babylon's character has not changed with the rising up and falling of many earthly kingdoms. Its character is found in all humanistic and earthly powers; even in the modern churches at times, unfortunately; the spirit of *rebellion against God and His Law*. This spirit of pride and rebellion will soon be crushed when the Rider on the White Horse comes to earth to set up His kingdom that will never be destroyed. The stone will become a great mountain/tower that will fill the whole earth. The time is near. As another prophetic writer so appropriately warns:

*"The time of God's investigation is at hand. The **Most High** will come down to see that which the sons of men have builded. His sovereign power will be revealed; the **works of human pride will be laid low.**"* E. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 124.

We are living in the time of that *investigation*, mentioned above—the investigative judgment hour! The news-rider of the Apocalypse is speedily approaching, and the modern religious world is addressed with the same and final message of warning: "*Armageddon* (Babel) fell, it fell!...." So, should, and may, all, Jew and Greek, rich and poor, free and bond, give ear, and heed the urgent message: "Come out of her, My people, lest you be partakers in her sins and that you receive not of her plagues." This is the clarion, gracious, and ever-pleading—gospel call!

Further References

"Lightnings from heaven, as an evidence of God's displeasure, broke off the upper portion of the tower and cast it to the ground." PP 120

"The existing confusion of conflicting creeds and sects is fitly represented by the term "Babylon," which prophecy (Rev. 14:8; 18:2) applies to the world-loving churches of the last days." PP 124

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CHAPTER 7:

ARMAGEDDON AND THE ESCHATOLOGICAL FALL OF BABYLON

In this chapter, let us take a closer look at the Babel narrative found in Genesis 11: 1-9: The claim argued in this book is that the Babel/Babylon back-story is foundational to the whole subject of *Armageddon*.

So, if it is true that the place known as *Armageddon* is connecting us to the falls of both ancient Babel, and its later Neo-Babylonian form, we might argue that since it is, that it would be informative and profitable to take a more thorough look at the details of these storied times of the past; which can in turn open to us a view of the future.

Things that have happened before will happen again. “The old is in the new contained, the new is in the old explained.” And when this look into the past is studied, it becomes more and more apparent why the Seer of Patmos was encouraged to write what he did, and why he clothed it with the words, symbols,

and figures which he did. For they fit like a glove what is anticipated in the immediate future, and they exonerate a thousand-fold the eschatological/future view favored by Seventh-day Adventists.

Let us take a more thorough look at the Babel story:

“Now the whole earth had one language and few words. And as men migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.’ And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.’ And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the sons of men had built. And the Lord said, ‘Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; and nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.’ So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth” (Gen. 11: 1-9 RSV).

After the global flood, God renewed his covenant with Noah and his family. For a brief moment of history there was one language¹⁶⁴ and one faith. With the exception of the first days of Adam and Eve, this was the only time in the history of mankind that the faith was relatively pure, and there was one true denominated church. But it did not take long for sin and rebellion to burgeon and grow again, probably starting with Noah’s own son, Ham, and probably with his sons and daughters. Sin flourished with Noah’s other sons’ offspring, as well.

Genesis 11:1-9 is one of the most important historical documents in all of religious and secular history. It gives clear information regarding the purposes of God following the Flood; and it marks the cradle of world civilization, and most importantly in our study, *it documents the inception and rise of false religion.*

¹⁶⁴ Verse one reads, “one language and few words.” “Few words” falls short of the Hebraic expression which is literally, “one [set of] words” or “one kind of.”

As men were moving in a nomadic fashion about in the country of the east¹⁶⁵ they came to the plain of Shinar. There, in the Fertile Crescent, civilization soon flourished.

The time here considered was probably the first centuries after the flood or a little beyond. Historically, according to the Genesis account, the tower episode occurs approximately 100 years or more after the flood, if one is willing to correlate the birth of Peleg (whose name means “division.”----- “For in his days the earth was divided” (10:25), with the traditional date of the flood (1656 A.M.). Calculation makes Peleg’s birth come at around 1757 A.M. Therefore, the passage represents and describes the development of civilization just following the Great Deluge.

There has been a discussion of late in Christian circles that the era of Peleg, of whom it is said, that “in his days the earth was divided” (Gen 10:25), refers to a physical cleavage of land masses; the North American Continent, from the European and African Continents, separated along the Trans-Atlantic Ridge midway in the Atlantic Ocean, from an original *Pangaea*. But the timing of the “division,” whatever it is referring to, roughly coincides with the likely timing of the dispersion of races at Babel. So, which circumstance occurred, or which scenario is meant in the statement, is the subject of debate.

Or, there is the supposition, that according to God’s purpose for men to “replenish the earth,” and to be “scattered,” both ideas were simultaneous realities that led to the same purpose. It would be helpful to know more of the details of just what did happen at this important juncture of history, especially in the areas of history, religion, biology, geology, and other such things. But in terms of the records and written testimony that are available, such ancient times are dark of knowledge, and the testimony is sparse. Thankfully, we do have the Word of God, the Bible!

The structure built on the plain of Shinar has been called “The Tower of Babel” only by later traditions, but appears nowhere in extant Jewish and

¹⁶⁵ Umberto Cassuto, *Genesis*, wishes to opt for the translation “and as men wandered about in the east,” as from the perspective of an Israelite, thus east from the land of Canaan.

Christian literature with this exact designation. The narrative itself is repeated in *The Sybilline Oracles* (2nd century B.C.), the writing of Alexander Polyhister (1st century B.C.), *The Book of Jubilees*, and the writings of Moses of Chorene (5th century, A.D.). But the tower is never the central focus, and so there never really appears a name for the tower such as the “Tower of Babel,” which is popular today.

The indication is that traditionally the emphasis was not (and rightly so) on the building of the tower but rather, on the boasting and absurdity inherent in the dreams and ambitions of godless or rebellious man. The tower building, and even the language explanation are “asides,” and “incidental” to the main purpose of the passage.

The terms used in this pericope fit the geographical setting with accuracy. Babylon is indeed on a plain. That the builders used bricks rather than stones is demonstrative of the simple fact that the area of Babylon is essentially devoid of stones. The “slime” or “asphalt” used for mortar in Gen. 11:3 is archaeologically attested for in great abundance. Numerous towers and public buildings excavated in recent times are so constructed. Oil, a part of asphalt is still abundant and sought after in the Middle East. The asphalt was likely brought from pitch wells 120 miles north of Babylon, at [Hit](#).

The ruins of several temple-towers (called [ziggurats](#)) existing from ancient times are still to be found distributed throughout the region of Mesopotamia. Certain of these [ziggurats](#) have become well known by their association with the biblical tower of Babel.

The archaeological question concerning the identity of the historic tower has never been fully resolved. For centuries, the remains of the large tower dedicated to Nebo at Borsippa ([Birs Nimrud](#)) were identified with the famous tower. Leupold in his commentary (1956) favors this view but shies away from certainty. But the general majority, especially since the excavations at the newer Babylon, are quite convinced that the actual tower was located there. Within the compound of the temple of Marduk at Babylon (The temple was called Esagila—“house of the high raised head”) lie the remains of the temple-tower that bore the name “E-teman-an-ki,” which is translated, “House of the Foundation of Heaven and Earth.” This is then believed to be the most likely candidate for the site of the original tower, though none of the original building materials are yet to be

found. Andre Parrot in his book of the last century: [The Tower of Babel](#), opts for the temple tower at Babylon also as being the genuine site.

The passage contains several instances of subtle and derisive sarcasm directed toward those at cross-purposes with the God of heaven. This argues that the point of the passage is to emphasize the futility and evil that is found inherent in godless humanism, or that which comes from a dangerous morphology of religion.



Particular note is made in this passage of man using “bricks” instead of “stone,” and “asphalt” instead of “mortar.”¹⁶⁶ Man’s puny devising, “Come, let us . . .” is contrasted with the much superior planning of God who answers back: “Come, let us . . .” etc., etc.

These ancient references are really quite modern in aspect. Amazingly, the technological revolutions of modern times are really nothing new. In some ways, little has changed. Man still attempts to create lasting and significant monuments and towers with brick, stone, asphalt, and iron, mined from the earth. The cities of today are little more than “asphalt jungles,” pathetic attempts to rival the beauties of the true creation. Humanity is mixed into every brick. Supposedly, Nebuchadnezzar had his name imprinted on every brick in Babylon. In like manner, the towers of our time are still built to glorify man, who is the

¹⁶⁶ These substitutions create a striking irony. D. Kidner uses the word “makeshift” to translate the idea intended.

builder. Yet the doom of all these actually fragile buildings is set, as was the tower of old, to crash into ruin at the touch of God's hand.

Modern Cities



It is of relevant notice to point out that the city and tower of Babel in Genesis is actually strikingly correlate to the plan and configuration of modern cities. The ancient metaphor of the *Tower of Assembly* is therefore appropriately revived in the eschatological descriptions of modern apostate Babylon. Such a comparison is inspired, and it is

indicative, for a number of reasons, to believe that the Prophet of the *Apocalypse* chose the perfect symbol at God's command, and that we are on the right track to identify *Armageddon* with ancient Babel, Babylon, and its later manifestations and falls.

Modern cities are so situated, with towers in the middle, and the city spread out around it. The materials used are miles of asphalt, an innumerable number of bricks, and colossal structures of various kinds piled up to the heavens. In Daniel's vision in **Daniel 2**, the modern day (the feet of the image) is characterized as being made of part iron and part clay. Concrete, reinforced with iron, provide the main building materials utilized in these broad cities; with man creating roads, bridges, overpasses, buildings, utility lines, rail systems, and pipelines out of them. No other time like the modern time compares better with a "tower culture" as does our day with ancient Babel, and with the central temple towers and metropolis of the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar. The passage in Genesis is ancient, yet appropriate to our times, and thus the reference to it providentially shouts of: "inspiration," and "relevance."

The true churches of Abraham and Israel of old were faced with the same worldly and even religious environment, as is the modern Israel. It is important to see in the story of the tower of Babel a precursor of what is to come. This

story, given and recorded to remind Israel¹⁶⁷ that God was still in charge, should speak even louder to us today as genuine prophetic material indicative of an even greater modern fulfillment.

The City and Tower

The passage offers one particular anomaly that is discussed at length by rabbis and theologians. It is said that these men attempted to build “a city and a tower.” The puzzle is whether a city with a tower in its midst is meant, or if the city and the tower are to be considered one and the same.¹⁶⁸ Even the rabbis of the Talmud, referred to in the last chapter, were puzzled by this expression, and argued over it. Yet the structure on the plain of Shinar, may have been the first

¹⁶⁷ In this passage comes another inference of the purpose for Moses in writing of the book of *Genesis*. It was likely written to encourage and inspire Israel to break their ties with the Egyptians and to leave Egypt. The children of Israel would have been interested particularly in the subject of making bricks, for this was their specialty. Brick-making was one of their major tasks in the Egyptian bondage. This subject particularly resonated with them because they were at forced labor, were similarly slaving to achieve the selfish and grandiose dreams of the kings of Egypt. They needed to know that Elohim had power to break their bonds.

¹⁶⁸ As in the parallel phrase, “one language and one word,” a “city and a tower” could be understood likewise; being understood in the sense of a parallel structure serving the purpose of both (see EGW). Verse eight says they left off building the city but omits “the tower.” Expositors reason that the word “tower” is not used here because it is superfluous to mention that it is also abandoned. Variants add “the tower” which seems to be an obvious attempt to edit and harmonize the passage and was not probably in the original text. Verse eight, as it stands could argue for the corresponding identity of the city and the tower. However, the argument need not be forced, for one can well envision the necessity of both elements in the enterprise, which history has born out in the neo-historical city of Babylon.

high-rise, or the first skyscraper. And it may not have been crude and ugly.¹⁶⁹ Likely the tower was the central locus of the city, but not just a city in itself. This is how the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar was situated, and in a definite way, is the way modern cities are configured.¹⁷⁰

The inherent idea today we find is that the many modern buildings have not merely been built for practicality, but as well, for the glory that comes out of successful commerce and sophistication, with pride-filled motives inspiring and driving the building of them. This is truly echoed in modern times. If in doubt of this, one should read, for instance, the history of the modern skyscrapers of America. The ever growing height of skyscrapers in the last century was, and is now, well chronicled, where the straining efforts were made by commercial magnates to create the highest tower. The efforts to build the highest or most ornate structure (for example, the Chrysler Building being one of them) became hugely competitive, with rivals competing to have their tower, and their name, lifted the top-most.

At any rate, the attempt at religious and political standardization, assembly in rebellion against God, is the theme that clearly shines through the rest of the passage in Genesis, and just as clearly with the second Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar, with his nearly fatal boast: "Behold, this great Babylon that I have built." Secondarily, comes a theme of warning concerning these man-made edifices and the cities that surround them. Like the ancient city, modern ones

¹⁶⁹ Supposedly, (likely an exaggeration) six hundred thousand men ("Sefer ha-Yashar," 12a) were engaged for forty-three years (Book of Jubilees x.) in building the Tower. According to certain historians, the actions of the foremen and taskmasters was so abusive, that loss of life was common, and lightly regarded, and that women about to give birth were forced to keep on working. Cf. <https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/2279-babel-tower-of>

¹⁷⁰ We might add, that to live *in* the tower might turn out to be rather inconvenient and impractical logistically. If you lived near the top, you would have a long climb back up every day, to bring home your food from your fields outside the city, and to transport water. You would have a room with a view, and you would get in *your steps for the day*, perhaps, but at considerable cost. (One dubious claim was it took a whole year to get a brick from the base to the top!) It makes most sense that the tower was there for supposed safety, symbolic pride, and as a locus for religious worship, but the rest of the city-dwellings and markets were arranged around it on the level, like a modern city, and like the newer Babylon was.

have the towers in the middle, and the city laid out around them. Thousands of these aggregations of humanity, brick, machinery, and asphalt are today most certainly doomed to destruction. God's people are to work for these cities, but for the most part not live in them. The principal reason is that these cities (even thousands of them) are to receive the same judgment, as did Babel of old.

Purpose of the Tower

History is not absolutely clear on what the real purpose of the original tower was. All that is stated is that the builders wished to build a tower "with its top in the heavens."

Again one might here pick out yet again a note of derision, a laugh at an ill-fated attempt to reach heaven. There is a hint that the writer of *Genesis* seems to know they were attempting an impossibility. Those who see this as a crude, mythical story, though, only conclude that the Babel builders actually thought they could reach heaven, and that the writer of the narrative also reflects this mentality. But the tower may not have been that crude at all, and its builders may not have been as moronic, or as technologically inept as many suppose:

- a) Tradition has equated the tower to an attempt by men to avoid another universal flood. This may well be so. But denying the larger context of the flood narrative, there is no hint of this in the text itself and sympathy with this being the *chief* motive represented in the passage is largely unfounded.
- b) Some have interpreted it as an attempt to storm heaven. The rabbinic literature speaks of trying to cleave the heavens with axes "that its waters might gush forth" (*San* 109a). Some even surmised that every 1656 years, the heavens tottered, and dumped rain, and so they needed to build pillars to prop it up,¹⁷¹ and avoid another deluge.

¹⁷¹ (Gen. R. *l.c.*; Tan. *l.c.*; similarly Josephus, "Ant." i. 4, § 2).

- c) Most attribute it as an attempt toward world fame, “to make a name.” Though this has a certain validity to be sure, it does not say enough, at least, to stop at this point only.
- d) The most astute observers, however, note that building of a tower and the passage points chiefly to the motive of an *insurgent, political and religio-ecumenical spirit*. They wished to make a name (organize) and band together, lest they be scattered. The word “kingdom” now appears with Nimrod (Gen 10:10). This kingdom proposes to oust theocracy. There seems to be an open attempt to overthrow the rule of God and substitute self-government with its inherent dangers. Thus “making a name” could imply not so much just the pursuit of fame as the pursuit of central control— a unifying *Machiavellianism*, established under one name.

As S.R. Driver comments:

“The city, and its famous tower, were to form a center and rallying-point, which would hold mankind together.”



e) **The Tower was built to wage war against God.**

As we are seeking to determine the reason for the tower, it appears that the tower may have been built for several reasons, as approached to this point. But our interest is more focused on why John of the Revelation, and even Isaiah, the prophet, chose Babel symbology to connect with Babylon’s king, and the final battle of Armageddon. And in

citing the ancient traditions regarding the Tower of Babel, the choice of the prophets exonerates the theological connections we are pursuing. In several passages (some already noted in the last chapter)—the motive of “war,” or “battle,” is attributed to the Babel enterprise.

Reports the Jewish Encyclopedia:

A later Midrash records that the builders of the Tower, called דור הפלגה, "the generation of secession" in the Jewish sources, said:

"He—God—has no right to choose the upper world for Himself, and to leave the lower world to us; therefore we will build us a tower, with an **idol on the top holding a sword**, so that it may appear as if it intended **to war with God**" (Gen. R. xxxviii. 7; Tan., ed. Buber, Noah, xxvii. *et seq.*).¹⁷² (bold emphasis added)

War, *Polemos* (Rev. 16:14), the Reason Attributed for the Babel Tower

This polemic and military motivation and purpose by the Babel builders fits the Armageddon passage perfectly. While these “imaginings” of the rabbis may not be accurate to reality in every sense, the motives attributed to the Babel enterprise may, at least, leave us with us a shadow of the original event, with some truth behind it. The Talmud, Mishnah, and Midrashim, all record a similar theme of “rebellion,” the “worship of an image,” a “gathering” that was intended to blaspheme and usurp the position of the true God; and the argument that the builders, and Nimrod, were *gathered*, in particular, to **war** against God:

"Some among that sinful generation even wanted to war against God in heaven"¹⁷³

In the rabbinical discussions noted in the previous chapter the purpose of the third party at Babel is described:

¹⁷² <https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/2279-babel-tower-of>

¹⁷³ (Sanh. 109a, and the passage from the Sibylline Books iii. 100, cited by Josephus, l.c.).

“... and the third said, "let us ascend and wage war (with God).”

Therefore, it is entirely plausible and defensible to theologically equate the “Battle of Armageddon” with the “Battle of Babel;” or as given in Isaiah 14: 13,14: “Har-Maged.”

Religious and Political Purpose

In addition, it must be added, that the passage in Genesis is definitely religio-centric, and is not merely an invective against metropolitanism, but is more about the exploitation of this means to bring to realization organized criminality against God and His just purposes. These same efforts and motives are no different than some of the religious and political elements we deal with today, in modern politics, in national government, and in civic actions, and in religious departures from pure biblical practices.

The attempts made today are the same, to keep God (the true) out of government, school, and, if possible, out of society. While the establishment clause in the U.S. Constitution is important in order to maintain a healthy division between the church and state, it is not on the other hand, right to persecute Christians and their ideals, or deny religious freedom of expression to Christians, which often is what actually turns out to be the case.

What is informative to the present day when looking at ancient Babel, is that apparently there, both government and religion over-stepped their roles as guardians of civil and religious liberty. Government is good and necessary. But when government exceeds in its authority, and resorts to force, or the purposeful exploitation of others in opposition to God’s Law, the Powers of Heaven at some point choose to come down and to stop it.

Babel and Communism and Socialism

In thematically connecting Babel to our modern day it occurs to our minds that the governmental and social experiment of the Tower of Babel (and typical of the later Babylon, of course) was a first attempt toward, or the introduction of, socialism or communism in our world. When one thinks about it the tenets and aims carried out at Shinar are identical to the Marxist ideologies popular in modern times. Such things as governmental control of the masses—

the denigration of true and free religion—the promise of supposed democratic fairness that in the end is never achieved because of mankind’s evil heart—the attempt to standardize living conditions for everyone yet at the same time taking away capitalistic incentives with its personal freedoms and goals—promotion of chosen secular education—and certain regulations that are applied toward urbanization—all can be found in the description of what happened at Babel. If ever there was a “commune,” and a “socialized society,” in the making, the tower certainly answers to such a formula. The high rise flats of the former Soviet Union come to mind.

It is this scenario that is anticipated in the reflection of the Babel story/ and the Babylon image story, in the expected forcing of Sunday legislation in our modern day. God’s faithful commandment-keeping people can be assured that when “Babylonian” forces press such things upon them and the world, that the ire of Divinity will be ignited into action, to bring down the oppressive forces of evil. This will lead to tower-demise, and to Armageddon.

It is most important to remember that the biblical “Babylon” is for all intents and purposes identical to the OT “Babel.” “Babylon” is simply the later, Greek form of Babel.¹⁷⁴ But consistently the Old Testament refers to Babylon by its original name, “Babel.” Thus, when the book of *Revelation* refers to apocalyptic Babylon, it is finding solidarity with the old Babel, and its neo-Babylonian counterpart, for both were always associated with the Euphrates. *It is attempting to tell us that the spirit and purposes of the Old Babylons are most surely destined to reappear at the end of time.* This commonality, this distinction, is terribly important to those looking at eschatological or end-time events.

Religion and Babel

What is typically assumed, is that the building of the Babel tower was largely a secular endeavor. But we must hasten to point out that the primary purpose exhibited in the whole project was largely religious as well. Says the famous passage in Isaiah 21:9: “Babel is fallen, is fallen, *and the images of her gods are cast to the ground.*” So, clearly the Bible paints a picture of Babel as being largely a religious or idolatrous endeavor, with idols to their gods at the top

¹⁷⁴ With the typical Greek ending: “on.” Babel-on, and Har, mged- on.

of it, and the tower was a situation where man went to war with the true God, but God intervened and struck down their religious shrine, and scattered its builders.

What has happened before will happen again. As Babel sought to standardize and force an insurgent form of confused religion, so will the modern Christian world attempt to do the same. As Babel sought to “ecumenize” the religious world, so will apocalyptic Babylon do the same in the latter times.¹⁷⁵ As the principles of sun-worship in science and religion were promoted by Nimrod and his adherents, so will attempts be made to program the identical principles into those participating in the final end-game. As Babylon sought to urbanize society, and control the masses, so will its end-time counterpart encourage urban living rather than country living, and even seek to assert governmental control over the elements (lest they be scattered across the face of the earth!). In the Babel story may even be found, perhaps, reactions to the fears of climate change, to humanly build a hedge against it, just like today (their world had just recently “experienced” climate-change, big-time, hadn’t it?).

Towers in our Time

The events of September 11, 2001, saw the fateful demise of one the world’s most famous and important symbols of modern economic glory. The enemies of America, I believe, chose the World Trade Center because it represented much of what was intended in the original tower of Babel. Thought to be a safe building, a glory to its owners, and a symbol of the commercial and political dominance by this “Christian” nation in the world, it quickly fell, killing thousands. (They [Muslim extremists] also intended to destroy the Capitol, and did damage to the Pentagon). The motive was both religious, and polemic.

Like so many man-made projects, there are enormous lessons in the fall of towers in our time. They are indications of greater and similar events soon to come. They are warnings also to our people to leave these doomed cities before

¹⁷⁵ “When the leading churches of the United States, *uniting upon such points of doctrine as are held by them in common*, shall influence the state to enforce their degrees and to sustain their institutions, then Protestant America will have formed an image to the Roman hierarchy, and the infliction of civil penalties upon dissenters will inevitably result.” EGW, GC 445.

it is too late. They should leave immediately, if possible. Rural living is the practical part of the message to leave Babylon. Unfortunately, some of God's people, ignoring the counsel, or encouraged by others in choosing to ignore it, have fallen along with these "towers." In this is a very direct warning. Though attention to such warnings is considered unpopular and sensational by even church leaders today, and such an attitude is reprehensible, it does not change the importance and relevance of these warnings. The calls to leave "Babylon" are not given as a "threat," or a "scolding," but rather given as a life-saving call of mercy given for holy and righteous families to escape the dreadful corruption and doom of a fallen society, **both** physically and spiritually.

The original Babylonian doctrine was counter to God's stated evangelistic/missional purpose which was to "multiply and *fill* the earth." But history records that Babylon is the original source of a panoply of false doctrines: including the doctrines of Sunday sacredness, the immortality of the soul and spiritualism, the veneration of the *prima donna*, the use of religious images for worship, the veneration of holidays mixed with pagan dogma, the selfish side of the gospel of prosperity, numerous immoral practices, irreverent worship and the perverted use of music, the erroneous gift of tongues, etc., etc. The star god of Babylon, Marduk, translated means: "solar calf," or "calf of the sun." The day of worship toward this god, was, of course, "Sun's-day." The list of pagan and "Babylonish" departures from genuine Christianity goes on and on, for the list is even more extensive today, and excessive beyond measure.

The veneration of the sun, and its trappings, remains with us in modern society in many ways. As an amateur astronomer, I have noted in my astronomy research and writing, that modern scientific endeavor is over-infatuated with the sun, or suns, making our sun a million times larger than our earth, and making the universe as made up of trillions of gigantic "suns." While the universe is vast, the over-reach and exaggeration apparent everywhere in science on solar dynamics and other astrophysical and astronomical issues, blesses the sun extravagantly; and suns appear everywhere, and solar dynamics and Einsteinium physics are taught and promoted in such a way to award the sun and its resident energy as being responsible for our survival on this planet, rather than with the God who created the sun to bless, warm, and enlighten our earth He had created. I am strongly convinced, in a score of ways, that even in modern times, "sun worship" is actually, still very much with us.

There are even echoes of Babylon in the modern secular attempts to establish forced forms leading to systematic urbanization, abusive measures aimed at political control, and attempts to control weather in regard to climate change, by reaching heaven and “cleaving the vault of heaven with axes,” when the real reason for climate change may really be due mostly to the results of man’s own greed and wickedness, and their denial of God as the source of our blessings.

The many famines, draughts, and other weather events that came repeatedly on Israel in the Bible, was not due to the “carbon footprint,” but usually because of their deep apostasy. Most of us have no objection to the reasonable and ecological measures for the protection of our planet. But the moral relationship of apostasy to climatic and other natural conditions should be recognized. The occurrence of famines, draughts, plagues, and disasters that are blamed numerous times in the biblical record as due to moral failure, should startle modern Christians, lest they should become participants in the same ancient sins and errors, and voluntarily receive of Babel’s plagues. The echoing call: “**Come out** of her (Babylon: Rev. 18:4), my people,” confronts us verily, today.

“Come, Let Us go Down” (A “type” of the Second Coming)

None of these evil and abusive practices are overlooked by the God of heaven. “And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the sons of men had built. (vs. 5).” God (*Gods*; plural) said: “Come, let us go down” (vs. 7).

It must not escape our notice that in the phrase, “Come, let us go down,” (God) is echoing the “Come, let us” phrases used by the tower builders. Counter to the builder’s scheming (“a man to his fellow”), God is engaged in what is modernly termed: divine deliberation, or an “investigative judgment,” if you please, before he acts.¹⁷⁶ God is pictured in the passage as physically coming down to take a look, study the matter, call counsel, and investigate the situation.

¹⁷⁶ The divine “let us” fits the usage of “divine deliberation,” better than Leupold’s “fullness of the character of God.”

OLD BABYLON



At any rate, verse four (Gen. 11) should probably be viewed as reflecting a strong intent or divine interest, with God coming down to investigate or take a closer look, *anthropomorphically* speaking. God is given human characteristics to help us understand the greater issue. The point is not to detail how the physical movements of God from heaven to earth transpire, or to suggest that God is so naive that he does not know what is going on from heaven, but rather to see God as first judging responsibly, and secondly, in acting or intervening for the good of man.

Rashi, a noted medieval Jewish cleric, in his translation of the *Pentateuch* refers to a Midrashic statement, which adds an astute perspective to this strange expression of God coming down to look, and which, in addition, shines a practical and judicial light on the situation as well. To quote:

“He [God] did not really need to do this, but Scripture intends to teach the judges that they should not proclaim a defendant guilty before they have seen the case and thoroughly understand the matter in question.”¹⁷⁷

The truth is, that it is a solid and fundamental biblical doctrine that God, in fairness, almost always investigates or holds inquest before He acts in executive fashion, or in retributive judgment. There are several cases of this “divine deliberation” phenomenon in Genesis and elsewhere. God so reasoned with Adam and Eve in the garden following their sin. He carries on a similar inquisitive conversation before pronouncing a verdict on Cain. In Noah’s time he comes down *before* the flood and openly and painfully deliberates what to do. He does the same and even discusses and even takes counsel with Abraham before he gives up Sodom to fire and brimstone.

It was never that God did not know the facts, or suddenly discovers them, or that He even didn’t really know what to do. God knows all things and knows exactly what to do. But it is that He wishes to share with humanity, and the universe, when appropriate, the reason for His acts, and to reveal in it His character of love.

More than simply carrying out an “investigative judgment,” God rather, first and foremost, sets up a “town hall,” or “public inquest.” All parties are given informational rights, and are given a free chance to appeal or explain their own actions, lest there be a mistake or misunderstanding. God often transparently opens up his decisions to the scrutiny of those involved, though as God, He really never would have to.

This important doctrine of God’s noble transparency, His fairness, His openness to audit, His practice of prior judgement and fact-finding, or “investigative judgement;” while vilified by Christians against Adventists across

¹⁷⁷ AND THE LORD CAME DOWN TO SEE — He really did not need to do this, but Scripture intends to teach the judges that they should not proclaim a defendant guilty before they have seen the case and thoroughly understand the matter in question. This is to be found in Midrash of R. Tanchuma.

Rashi on Genesis 11:5, M. Rosenbaum and A. M. Silberman, London, 1929-1934.

https://www.sefaria.org/Rashi_on_Genesis.11.5?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en

the globe, is in verity very biblical. God's use of investigative or pre-judgment makes an important statement about His character, who He is. and how He acts, and why. Those who so easily denigrate God's perfect, manifest system and methods of judgment are themselves standing on shaky Babylonian ground. They may just as easily be partaking of the "Babylonian" spirit that says, "We will preempt or correct God, despite His perfect and noble practices, even His Law and His Word, and we will do religion and politics our own preferred way."

Righteousness Through Human Works and Human-made "Structures" and "Institutions"

At the foundation of every false form of religion is the idea that by one's own works, or through one's own vain, human opinions, one can supersede God and His immutable Law, and can save oneself in one's own way. This was the very character of ancient Babel. The men of Babel thought vainly that they could by their own human works, or institutions, or religion, or ideas, build their way up to Him. They created a rival church system built on this premise. They may have even reasoned that they were worshipping the true God in doing so. But it was all to come to naught. So will it come to naught in the future. It was popular and humanistic design that corrupted the church then, and so it will corrupt it again in the last remnant of time. It has been the case for much of the last five thousand years and we are again in modern times headed right back to Babylon. From the look of things, most of the "fallen" churches of the modern world are already there, and sometimes our own churches, inviting in the same models, methods, worship styles, and music, are included, or are very close behind.

Today, we already recognize the modern counterpart of ancient Babel, or Babylon. The confused tongues of Christendom, the multiplicity of conflicting Christian religions, bring us out of the past and forward to the present moment of fulfillment. "Babylon," though a kingdom of the past, exists everywhere in symbol, today.

At the Gate of Heaven

The final and climactic word-play between the word "Babel" and the Hebrew "*balal*" (to confuse), is open mockery. The Babylonians themselves believed the name to mean: "the Gate of the Gods," from the Akkadian, *Bab-ilu*. But, the gate to heaven is never reached with human achievement, or through

human popularity, or due to human strategy. The height of the irony is that indeed Babel made a name for themselves, but the name serves as an embarrassment, rather than a title of distinction. The grandiose dreams of man ended in his being scattered, to and fro “over the face of all the earth.” God ultimately struck down the tower with lightning and earthquake and thereby effectively stunned and ended this ongoing religious, apostate, rebellion.¹⁷⁸

Armageddon, as a counter-form of resistance, in its context and timing, in preemptive fashion happens right before the real “gate of heaven” is promised to be opened for the saints. Like Babel of old, the efforts there to reach “heaven” didn’t even come close to getting there, nor will ever such human institutions built and made to honor an “idol sabbath,” and other such things, get any higher than a steeple—a few, measly, feet, and then crumble in the dust. But the faithful and righteous experiential “doers” of God’s Law will enjoy the opposite and coveted privilege: “Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and *may enter in through the gates*, into the city.” Rev. 22:14 KJV (emphasis supplied).

Likewise, the “Beast-Worshippers” of the modern day will wish to make a “name,” and “number” for themselves (the “number of his NAME; Rev 16:2), and demand all to unify under their Babylonian “name,” and “number,” and “mark,” or else be killed.¹⁷⁹ But the blasphemy that has continued over almost the last four, even “six” millennia, will soon and finally be brought to a sudden end.

¹⁷⁸ It is of interest, that the fact of **lightning and earthquake** being a part of the fall of Babel episode, is not at all mentioned in the *Genesis* passage, but is clearly understood and clearly claimed by Ellen White (PP 120), who likely never read these same rabbinic arguments and discussions. The same circumstances apparently were also understood this way by the rabbinic traditions, because they mention the third of the tower being “burnt” (thus, apparently struck from lightning and hail), and that a third “sunk into the earth,” and thus it became necessarily situated, most likely, because of subsidence during an earthquake. And, such an earthquake, and storm, a super one, is part of the fall of Babylon description at the end of Revelation 16.

¹⁷⁹ The name I predict will be something like: “The Universal Church,” or “One World Church,” or something similar to the “Lord’s Day Alliance,” or the *Coalition of Christian Churches*, or the “World Council of Churches.” Ecumenism is not a bad thing in itself, but prophecy tells us it will turn out to be dangerous and compromising in the end.

As the rabbis state, and as recorded from the Talmud referred to in the last chapter, the city and especially the tower will be split into three parts, or as we might re-state: the three-fold religious powers in Christendom today, Apostate Catholicism, Apostate Protestantism, and Inherent Satanic Influence found in the “doctrines of devils,” and celebrated in common religion, will all fall completely apart in the last moments of time. Christianity, Judaism, or any like religion of the world has always had a false, disingenuous side—large parts of it full of hypocrisy, demonstrating shallow and weak integrity, holding erroneous doctrines, and employing practices mixed with the world. The fall of Babylon comes simultaneous to the days of the voice of the seventh angel of *Revelation*, chapter 10, in which, by all appearances, we now live.

Babel *will* fall! But God has faithful and true disciples in all faiths, and these He calls out of this Babylonian confusion. The symbolism is ancient, and the names and monuments of ancient Babylon are no longer standing. But the message and intent is today as real, as relevant, and as transparent as the morning sun. The precious remnant of Israel must come out of the forms and the high places (steeple-towers) of apostate religion, and be fully on the side of the true God.

The modern Christian can gather from this story confidence that the false systems now in place will most certainly receive the same judgment. God’s system will win. The ultimate victory of good over evil will come. God will win in the Battle of *Armageddon*. God’s people are called to come away from “Babylon” lest they be partakers in her sins and receive of her plagues. The call is for everyone, but should never be mistaken by Adventists. Each sincere adherent of God’s true faith, wherever they are, should align themselves clearly with Christ and the old vanguard truths. They should take note of these truths, honor them, live them, be sanctified by them, and be guided by them. These true, and ancient way marks, remain relevant to us even today, and the light that clearly shines upon them, most surely marks our modern pathway.

8

CHAPTER 8:

REVELATION'S SYMBOLS: LITERAL VS. SPIRITUAL

(This chapter some may wish to skip over. But I, the author, thinks the matter of how to interpret symbols is greatly and manifestly important. Proceed as you wish).

The Literal and Spiritual Symbolism in Revelation

So, the issue that presents itself is: Is *Armageddon* a “real,” “temporal,” event, or is it a “spiritual,” “imaginary,” or “allegorical” battle that occurs only in the confines of the human mind; or even is limited in its purview to the supernatural mind and heart? Is it, in theory, exclusively and simply, a battle between the unseen or supernatural elements; the forces of heaven, against the forces of hell, or is it in any way grounded to this earth with its people, places, and experiences?

The answer to this enigma, no doubt, lies in how the prophetic symbols were purposely designed, and how such terms were understood by apocalyptic writers, and what they meant by using them. In the case of the book of *Revelation*, we would do best to ask the writer, himself, what might be the key to interpreting the figures and expressions appearing in the book.

The real meaning of *Revelation*, of course, should be sought directly from the author, or its ultimate author, the Spirit of God, who we assume to be the real author. Such things are not dependent upon the personal opinions of you, the reader; or me, the writer that is addressing you; or the commentators and scholars, or anyone else. They are primarily dependent upon the intent and purpose expressed by the author, who we believe was in turn guided by the inspiration of the Spirit.

And in the case of the *Revelation*, we are given a direct answer to this question at the very portal of the book. The writer reports that the things expressed forward in the document are written in “sign language,” or as the KJV expresses it: they were “sign-i-fied,” or signified, for us (Rev. 1:2). This clear admission is the key and guide to *Revelation’s* understanding. Signs, pictures, illustrations, or actors, and actions are presented to us as symbols of the truths thereby directed to the hearer, or reader. To try to state it as clearly as we can, the words and descriptions employed there are acting as pure symbols. The document is written through the use of signs and symbols, or through direct symbolic language. One objective figure represents another particular reality, and thus in this way the material is written illustratively, symbolically, and in “code.”

In order to make sense of the symbols one must have a uniform method for translating the symbolic code to bring about an end in understanding. Because interpreters do not use the same rules in explicating the symbols, we are left with so many various conclusions, and this is largely why there is so much disagreement about prophetic materials, and so much conflict over them. “Too many cooks spoil the pudding.”

There are various levels to understanding prophetic symbols and these levels must be honored to determine the clearest meaning of them. Whether they are directly related, or more loosely, distantly, or philosophically related can make an incredible amount of difference on how they are to be taken, or how they are meant to be understood. In the following pages, we will try to break down these various levels of association and suggest a uniform way of understanding these apocalyptic expressions:

Iconic or Uni-phorical Symbols

Icons or images are generally symbols of the first and closest variety. They represent or resemble the very thing they are made to look like.

If there is found a small figure of a house 🏠 on a topographic map, one will easily determine that there is an actual house sitting at that location. If a road sign shows a “curve” ahead, or a bent arrow on the sign, it will follow that the road will immediately take that direction. An *invented* term for such representations we might call “uniphoric,” thus having: “one meaning,” or one translation of meaning. In other words, they are a symbol of the very same thing that is meant, or they are a related image of the very same thing.



All symbols are really just *different levels of association*. They are representative “comparisons,” but we must add that they are given at various *levels*. And it is in a careful and proper understanding of these levels, that prophecy is best to be understood.

Levels of Symbols:

1. **Uniphoric, or Literal Equation.** The first level is then, as approached above, is the iconic or uni-phoric level (a word I invented, not found in a dictionary! If you wish, use the words: “literal,” or “actual,” or “the same”). In this level of representation, a house, or the figure of a house, represents a house. A house for a house. (So, it is not really a significantly *extended* symbol at all, it is pure, close, and absolutely direct, and more of a label or name tag of identity). The symbol of this sort cannot have a later identity or meaning, but is absolutely meaning the same thing it is a figure of. It is one and the same. Thus, uni-phorical—one figure only. It compares, as a *stone* given to represent a *rock*. It is exactly the same thing always, then, but may at times be described with different words. The term, *Babylon*, therefore, at this level, would be the same nation as of old, the same city as the original Babylon, or is just a newer, updated Babylon. Taken this way, the term, “Babylon” would be a direct symbol or name-tag of identification. It is an attached label of identity, rather than a typical symbol. But this is not how “Babylon,” is used in prophecy.

2. **Metaphorical:** The next close level in our suggested scheme would be the “metaphorical” level. *Metaphors* are *not the same thing at all*, but apply to a directly-related object, and may have SOME, similar characteristics. For example, we might say: “He is a night owl 🦉,” or, “She has a heart of gold 💛.” The man is not an owl, he is just a person that stays up late. She does not have a heart made out of gold, she is just kind and generous. To have a “heart of gold” would actually be quite impractical as hearts go. But we know what is meant in these cases. Though not at all true in the most direct sense, we know from familiarity that the symbolism goes another step, and directly represents another related truth or object.

3. **Synaphorical** The next level we might call one of looser similarity or of “somewhat close association,” something *like* it, sometimes called a “simile, that is, a close sister or cousin, but not the precise same thing. Similes are not the same thing *exactly*, but have many similar traits, or have terms that relate them, such as, a *cap* to a *hat*. A synonym usually has physical likeness, or represents a somewhat close *sister*, or *cousin* relationship. A cap 🧢 is not exactly what one calls a “hat,” 🎩, or it is not exactly like every hat, but it is generally classed in the same genre. So, in this case, any kind of headgear might be used to symbolize any variety of caps, hats, berets, fedoras, sombreros, etc.

4. **Philosophical** The final level of association, to be consistent with our terms, we will call the “philosophical” level.

This final level of symbolism or association is more remote than the others, philosophically similar only, but having even more *distant* characteristics: things that are *spiritual*, and *parabolic*, or *allegorical*, but not always totally specific to the symbol, such as a quality like “gentleness.” But there are many things that could be classified as “gentle,” such as any “docile” type of animal, or any calm and kind person. But not all animals are gentle, and not all people are gentle. So, one might use a *lamb* 🐑 as a symbol of *gentleness*. But further, a *lamb* could also be taken to represent “domestic types of animals,” or maybe every “woolly type of creature,” or perhaps, even, things that are “white.” The allegorical level is usually more loosely distant from what it represents, and often

needs more association, or given qualities, to define its particular relationship to the subject.

The Customary Symbolic Level in Prophecy

So then, what is the typical level used in the prophetic sections of Scripture? This matter is intensely important to understand correctly.

The biblical books of *Daniel*, and *Revelation* we will suggest, have chief symbols that are *almost always* of a metaphorical nature. They are most often intended to be that of pure metaphor, which we will prove shortly. The symbols found in them, will at times borrow parts from almost all these levels to further define them, but the symbolism is usually very direct, almost always, when it is used in the primary sense of a “code object,” standing in for another, person, organization, trait, or quality. *Recognizing these levels, and especially the metaphorical one, is infinitely important* in the case of prophecy.

Because interpreters don’t follow consistent rules, the precious symbols in prophecy, are often variously determined. The frustrating penchant of some expositors is to self-determine the meaning of the symbol, without context or Scriptural witness, which leads to all kinds of abuse. The symbols are interpreted so wildly and irresponsibly, that they can be made into almost anything. Interpretations vary into the thousands, and the prophetic writings are interpreted erroneously, variously, and therefore rendered quite useless in the end. Or, in a multiplicity of cases, the opposite extreme becomes the situation, where the symbol is so generalized, made so vague, or is so “flattened,” to the negative result that the true intent embedded in the symbol is largely lost.

So, to test this conclusion, of the appropriate levels of association to be honored in interpreting a prophetic symbol in *Daniel* and *Revelation*, we will apply our measures to a term that most all would agree on as to its meaning, and utilize it as an example of the direct, *metaphorical principle*. So, allow us to use the definitive and specific and familiar symbol of: “**The Lamb**,” found in *Revelation*.

A Prime example: “The Lamb” (in *Revelation*)

1. “The Lamb,” we will quickly observe, is not a *uniphorical* symbol—one and the same as, because we know that in the *Revelation* when Jesus is the subject, we are not talking about an actual lamb. The lamb in this case is not to be taken for an actual lamb.
2. But, “**The Lamb**” is used: “**metaphorically**”—because Jesus, though not really a lamb at all, or not even just the same as any lamb, is still considered to be: the living “Christ;” So, *the* Lamb, we know serves as a direct representation of the person of the Lord, Jesus Christ—right?
3. Synaphorical— associative—Christ in some ways is *like* a Lamb, yes, but not in *every* physical or characteristic way—we assume He doesn’t have four legs, have wool, and live in a pasture. Nor is Christ conceived to be precisely similar to another similar or woolly animal, like a typical sheep, llama, goat, or any other domestic animal *like* a sheep or goat. As *the Lamb* he is not **totally** similar to any certain type of animal: bear, cat, or fowl. He is a divine person, of somewhat divine and now human form, living now in heaven. (He is compared to a lion also, but that is another line of representation, being a comparative, and contrasting symbol, that needs to be considered on its own).
4. Philosophical—A lamb does have characteristics that are further removed from the primary representation: i. e., such traits as: domesticity, gentleness, goodness, self-sacrifice, innocence, etc. Yet, other animals have some of these traits too, so the Lamb in *Revelation* doesn’t refer to these traits or characteristics *in exclusion* of the primary symbol of *The Lamb*, being there employed. A lamb might be all of these things, yes: but these lamb-like qualities are defining the character of *The Lamb*. But the symbol in *Revelation* is not in the primary sense pointing only to the Lamb’s qualities; of gentleness or goodness. It is rather celebrating Christ, who has all these other things as part of His character—but the extenuating characteristics are a more distant connection, a general symbolism of attitudes and actions only.

For instance, at this final level, one might choose to use a lamb as a symbol representing “Christianity,” or “religion” in general. The Lamb of God is associated with Christianity, it is true, but a lamb is not necessarily unique to it, for a lamb could also be related in a way to: “Judaism,” or even perhaps, “Islam,” or even to the vocation of “sheep-herding.” Students of prophecy seem to get into trouble when they stray too far from the principle of direct symbolism, when direct identification is what was intended. The interpretations as a result become many and various, and as was once said of the rabbis: “that if you have 12 rabbis, you will have 13 opinions!”

Example of a “Beast” in Daniel and Revelation

Especially must one honor this *metaphoric* principle when considering prominent and thematic symbols in the study of the books of *Daniel* and *Revelation*. As a second example, the Bible tells us simply and clearly, that:

The “four beasts” equal four NATIONS (Kingdoms) *DANIEL* (7:17)....

The angel, in that context even tells Daniel what nations they represent. The apocalyptic symbol of a *beast* is a *corporate* symbol of a king, kingdom, or nation, yet popular *dispensationalism*, for instance, does not honor that meaning or specificity—often making “the beast” into a solitary individual, or a final, single antichrist. This constitutes a great violation of valid prophetic symbolism.

To further comment, the Christian world seems truly infatuated with the idea of this single, solitary *antichrist* at the end of time. Yet in prophecy, a single human being is not usually the same as a whole nation or kingdom, especially a dynastic one, and multi-generational one, except when a single human being represents the entire nation as its *founder* or *king*. When we talk of “Israel” today, we are not really talking particularly about the patriarch, Jacob, as a solitary individual, though Israel was his divinely-given, personal name, but rather we are talking about the nation he founded. So, it is first and foremost today, a *corporate* symbol. A great mistake is committed in *dispensationalism*, and in popular faiths, in this regard, which results in a huge violation of simple prophetic symbolism, and leads to totally wrong conclusions.

So, to return to our argument, let us look more closely at this common symbol of a “beast” in the book of *Daniel*, and in the *Apocalypse*. The Beast is a central symbol, and like all the symbols must be understood at the right level of association in order to determine the genuine meaning. This is true of nearly all the apocalyptic books of prophecy. But according to prophecy, Daniel clearly tells us what a beast represents: **A beast, represents a nation, and its indigenous people.**

So, a “Beast” = Nation. Now let us apply the correct level of symbolism, to validate its consistent application of meaning:

1. “The *Beast*” of *Revelation* then, and the beasts of *Daniel* are not really actual beasts or wild or domestic animals, as we know them, of course, so the symbol cannot really be *uniphoric*, or *iconic*, nor is *the beast* an example of the first dimension of symbols. The animals, or different beasts in prophecy, are not representing the animals themselves, or the real animals that they are pretending to be. We aren’t really to expect an actual, leopard-like beast to “come up out of the sea” (Rev. 13:1).
2. However, the prophetic beasts can be seen as being directly **metaphoric**. A nation, and an animal are truly not the same thing in life, but a beast can, and does in fact, metaphorically represent a whole nation, even in the current world. Today, for example we often find a bear for Russia, an Eagle for the United States, and so forth. These nations are corporate entities, not really single individuals.

As shown us in the prophecies of *Daniel*, a *he-goat* stands in for Greece, a bear raised up on one side stands for Media and Persia, and so forth. The identity there is direct and purely metaphorical. God through Daniel tells us so. While a nation or religio-political power is certainly not an animal, a particular animal is made to represent a certain nation.

3. A certain animal can be *like* a nation, or roughly relate to a nation, such as fierce lion, an angry leopard, or a choleric ram. But the symbol to be a pure **synonym**, needs to be representing certain animals that are strikingly close to each other: like a lion, or leopard, or tiger, or cheetah, or in other words: all “cats.” But most or all kinds of cats don’t represent all nations. They are kinds of cats. But the different animals in prophecy are synonyms only when

considered as animals only. Animals in prophecy are varied; some domestic, some wild, some exhibiting anger, but not all of them. *Revelation* 17 even has a nation, or power, represented by a profligate woman. Therefore, the character of the primary symbol of a beast, or creature for a nation, is not purely of the synonymic nature, but the various characteristics given through them, only defines further the nature of that kingdom.

4. **(Philosophical)** The traits of an animal like a lion, for instance, are that they are living things, with several common characteristics: they breathe, they live, they might be docile or fierce, they grow or mature, they might live a while, and then die. But such general things are only more distantly further defining the original symbol. The beasts in *Revelation* are not generally representing all living things, or all things that breathe, or all things that live or die, or all things that are *docile* or *fierce*. Many things could fit those categories. So, these aspects, while perhaps true of *some* beasts or animals, are only more distant connections or characteristics that *may* be applied when needed. They are philosophically related ideas. Thus, the symbolic level of a “beast,” is only in part: a “philosophical” representation.

So, typically in prophecy, beasts or animals represent specific nations, or visible governments or organizations. It is no mystery. Prophecy is self-explaining in this regard, and we can decipher what nation or the visible organization is represented by its characteristics, or through the given, various articles of identification often provided in the context.

Babylon as a Symbol

Probably no symbol has endured more interpretational torture or yielded more varieties of identity, than the symbol: “Babylon.” But in applying the direct metaphorical principle, let us consider how one should understand a term like: “Babylon?”

Babylon, in our Revelation prophecy, we should agree, is not *uniphorical*, or being one and the same with ancient Babylon, because that Babylon fell off the world stage long ago, and prophecy does not expect the historical Babylon to ever rise again (Isaiah 13:19 ff. “It shall never again be inhabited”).

But prophetic “Babylon” is consistently used as a direct **metaphor**, because while it is not the same entity as ancient Babylon, revived and growing from the original trunk, it stands for a modern counter-part power that acts in the *same way* as did ancient Babylon. It isn’t a part of the ancient city of Babylon and the near-eastern culture going by that name. But it stands in *for an actual religio-political power or coalition of powers that exists on the earth today, that mimics or describes a certain named power, or government, or a unified group politic, that acts modernly as did Babylon of old on the world stage, and particularly does so in relation to God’s people.*

So, *Apocalyptic Babylon*, in symbol, is similar to the old Babylon and is representative of it; in that it is an organized national or religio-political power, that acts the same as did ancient Babylon, is prominent on the world stage, is affluent and prosperous, and treats God’s true people the same way as ancient Babylon treated the Jewish people.

While modern “Babylon” has similar characteristics, and is, for instance, perhaps, “proud,” like Nimrod or Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon is more than just a symbol of “pride,” or even general, “false religion,” or “sin,” or some “political construct of imperialism,” or any other general “form” of government. While *Apocalyptic Babylon* has all of these *traits*, perhaps, it is reference to more than the general philosophical values or the non-values found there.

To be consistent to the representative base of apocalyptic symbols, the equation is meant to be more specific and direct, at least, initially. *Apocalyptic Babylon* needs to be identified with a specific construct, or visible group, or organization in the modern world, or one in the past, that directly reincarnates a similar reality to the old Babylon. In other words, it is a “real,” “temporal,” kingdom or religio-political construct, that could be described like Babylon of old was. *Babylon of old was not just a “philosophical construct” in the mind.* It was a kingdom, complete with borders, peoples, cities, government, all under their universal religious and political sovereignty, that in turn, was idolatrous, organized into 120 united states or provinces, that made an image to worship, forced people to worship it, and persecuted and held captive the true, denominated people of God. So, Babylon, to be consistent, is more than remote philosophical values, or spiritual concepts, or general attitudes. It is a distinct

reality that exists in the world, and in the modern world, that re-incarnates those similar purposes, policies, and actions as Babylon enacted in the ancient world.

The common mistake made by modern interpreters of prophecy is that *they do not honor the direct relationship of symbolic representation*. To make a symbol like Babylon meaningful and informative to the modern believer, one should not merely get lost in the airy, non-specific, miasma of only the spiritual or philosophical, expressed as vague, and subjective representations such as: “sin,” or “evil” or any of the “isms” of *no particular identity*. Most everyone knows there is sin in the world. But no one will likely admit to it, nor will others be able to apply and measure it without specific definition. Ancient Babylon wasn’t “sin” itself, for sin was found in *every* nation, or even in every church. Babylon, while symbolic, is never-the-less a modern actuality of some kind, and is pointing out a particular error, or false body, or organization, or distinct confederacy of such organizations. One cannot avoid sin, or a dangerous power, if one doesn’t know what it is, or what it looks like, or what it acts like. The symbol must be specific and direct to a point.

Thus, Babylon was, and now is, or will be, through symbolic representation, a literal kingdom, or power, or, a combination of such types that acts appropriate to the description in religious history. The Lamb is a literal, divine personage, Jesus Christ. The Beast is a literal religio-political government, organization, or visible church power, that has existed for almost the last two thousand years, exists today, and has several other definable characteristics. The Dragon (Satan), though unseen to the mortal eye is not just an idea, or fiction. He is a real being who is on the track of every Christian. He walks about as a “roaring lion”¹⁸⁰ (another metaphor) seeking whom he may devour. The symbols of prophecy are personified and characterized the way they are to emphasize the serious reality behind them. But the warnings of prophecy are about real, specific entities, encounters, and circumstances. To be consistent, it has to be no other way.

So, *Babylon* is not, as often taught, *all* of “false religion,” or *all* “evil,” or “communism,” or “atheism,” or really any of the over-general “isms.” Those things may be a definite *part* of Babylon, but they are not the sole meaning of Babylon. These ambiguous definitions of the symbols watered down, or treated

¹⁸⁰ I Peter 5:8 (technically a *simile*, but the lion itself is used metaphorically).

vaguely with the typical academic sterility favored by commentators, make the warnings inherent in exposing these false powers, and their directly identifiable errors, essentially a useless endeavor. It does not tell us what is false in false religion. If that is all we have, then all we do is point at someone else, or everyone other than ourselves, therefore, is “Babylon,” or false. And, regrettably, this is the very thing has been done for centuries.

Therefore, while “the” *Beast*, or *Babylon*, or the *False Prophet*, or the *Dragon*, are *parts* of “false religion,” or “the world,” indeed, they are not *all* of “false religion,” or are they representing all possible evil, “world powers.” The beasts and figures are semi-specific powers that are **major players**, or geomagnates of defined falsity in the modern world, or they were such in past history. But there are various other major players: “Roman Christianity,” “Satanic” control and influence, and the “False Prophet,” “The Ten Kings,” etc. And beyond this comes pure secularity, general wickedness, and godlessness of all kinds. Sins, or false beliefs, are the traits of any false power, but in prophecy *Babylon* or the like is not the total conglomerate of all “the” false powers, except, perhaps at the very, very end, where it will be just one side or the other. Prophecy teaches that *several*, and *particular* of these definable entities, acting foremost as major movements and as strategic leaders, will collude together against God’s people and their God in the last great conflict.

Direct Literalism is Never a Valid Interpretational Direction Either

Afraid of “literalism,” or denominational targets, modern expositors emasculate the direct understanding of prophecy. But on the contrary, absolute literalism is not truly legitimate at all either, because absolute literalism would make “Apocalyptic Babylon” to be one and the same as “Ancient Babylon,” come back to life. But, if that is what is decided, then apocalyptic Babylon is not a symbol at all, but is then no more than a tag, title, or recent update of the original Babylon in the Middle East.

Most of *Revelation’s* and *Daniel’s* apocalyptic symbols, we must argue, are consistently of a representative, and symbolic nature, thus they are necessarily of a “metaphorical” nature. Therefore, Babylon is a modern power that looks like the original Babylon, but it is not *uniphorical*, the one and the same as ancient Babylon. Neither is it purely synonymic, for while Babylon was a city or kingdom, not every city or kingdom is or was exactly just like Babylon

in every way. And it is not “confusion” considered by itself. It is confused, yes, but it is not “confusion” alone. It is not merely something philosophical or generic, like general “falseness,” of all kinds (the modern leaning), either.

Babylon, then is representative, therefore, in its purest sense, and is to be treated as metaphoric. It is a “symbol” of a modern-counterpart organization, or a confederacy of organizations, or a confluence of compromised religion that looks and acts like ancient Babylon in the appropriate ways. But it is not *general evil*, for there are other magnates, such as the Beast, and the False Prophet, etc. that have evil in them too. Not all in Babylon are evil, at least, yet; for the faithful invitees that are yet to be found in it are urged and called to come out of it. Babylon is not the only evil power at the latter end, either. It is one of them, though, which according to the details of the prophecy, prominently leads out, and politically and religiously draws others down a wrong-ward path.

What many fail to realize is that there are levels of symbolic representation, and prophecy is usually very consistent on how these symbols are to be understood. While it is never fair to choose and publicly denounce denominational targets because they resemble the description, too many expositors blur or spiritualize away the specific, directly needed truth and understanding, which the prophecies are meant to convey. Prophecy is there to do this so we don’t have to. It is not always expedient in the interest of political correctness or kindness, to intentionally dilute, blur, soften, or change the clear message the world so much needs to hear, but, of course, to hear in the right way.

A Three Dimensional Understanding of Symbols

A Simple Example of Metaphoric Symbolism: “The American Flag”

To use another secular example of how the metaphoric principle works, we might use, for example, the familiar, but non-biblical example of an “American Flag,” to denominate these aforesaid levels of symbolic representation. But this time, we will view them with a different tool, yet it will come to the same result. Instead of the *metaphoric*, *similar*, or *uniphoric* principles we have just described, or the like, we can advance the idea instead through first, second, and third *dimensions of representation*.

So, take for instance the specific example of an American flag:

An American Flag: (the “First Dimension”)



The American *flag* is itself a *flag*, usually made with colored fabric, but its greatest common purpose is not to be only a symbol of itself, or of all flags in general. An American flag *could be* used that way as an *example*, if we wanted to; to symbolize all flags in general. We could point it out to a child, and say it is just a flag, for that is what it is. This would be the “first dimension,” of association.

(The Second Dimension)

But when we add the word “American,” all this changes to another dimension. “Old Glory” is made to be specifically an “American flag,” donning the appropriate colors and standardized configuration of stars and stripes commonly used to represent a certain and specific nation, the United States of America.

But, an American flag is certainly not a nation, and a nation is not a flag, in fact, they are two very different things, yet this particular flag (the U.S. flag), everybody knows, directly represents a nation, the United States of America. An American flag, as a flag, is somewhat similar in form to other flags of other nations, it is true, but that is where the comparison stops. It isn’t completely similar to any other flag. It is unique, and intended to stand for no other country on the face of this earth. It is the U.S. flag. It is thus metaphoric, or a type of the *second dimension of symbols*. (If you are from another country substitute your country’s flag for the comparison).

(The Third Dimension)

But further, an American flag is sometimes associated with more distant or philosophical matters, like: *democracy*, *freedom*, or *states that are united*, etc. But first and foremost, the flag is recognized as standing for the U. S.—a particular nation that does have further characteristics like freedom and

democracy, but the flag is not the flag of *democracy*, but only of “a” democracy. So, these more distant modifiers or associations would constitute a *third dimension* of symbolic representation. In all, there can be then, several dimensions of association for the American flag.

The different levels of association:

To repeat the illustration, in the first dimension: the American flag is a textile of sewn red and white stripes, with stars on the blue background, that could be merely taken as an example of any flag. That would be the first dimension of association.

But the next representative dimension for the “American Flag,” “Old Glory,” is that it is a specific flag, a flag that is the recognized symbolic representation of the United States of America, a real nation, of people, governed by states, bound together in a federal government, and found in North America. This is the second and metaphoric level of association.

But the American Flag might be used to represent much more than the fact that the United States is only, in general, the American nation. For that nation has a number of characteristics tied and associated with it. First of all, it is an “American,” nation, signaling its location on earth. It is also a representative democracy, and thus the American flag sometimes can philosophically represent to other nations of the world its local system of government. Or, to immigrants of the past who have come to American shores, the American Flag might have represented to them: “freedom,” or any number of aspects of the American culture: Yankee ingenuity, power, affluence, opportunity, or prosperity. But all these aspects are not as directly tied to America as a nation, as directly as the American flag is. These aspects are a “part” of American culture, but there are other nations with ingenuity, power, or prosperity. But they are aspects that are generally associated with the United States of America. So, these aspects are in the “third dimension,” common traits of this particular nation, but ones that are not 100 % necessarily unique only to it.

How to apply the different levels of association in prophecy

Prophetic materials may use all of the above aspects to a degree, but most commonly it uses the second and third dimensions, but rarely the first, or

for that matter even purely, alone, the third. *Apocalyptic literature is written mostly in metaphorical “sign language,” symbolic representations of realities and objects that have familiar or known associations*—straight across from it. Blood represents war and violence. Water represents populous territories. Wilderness represents unpopulated territory. Angels represent messengers and ministers. White hair represents age and wisdom. Etc. etc.

Metaphorical representations are still often denoting specific realities

But remember this, for this is very important! *This does not mean that the events or objects that stand behind the symbol are not real, identifiable, or specific.* Unfortunately, the abuse of the principle of direct association is greatly dishonored by interpreters who twist the meanings of the symbols away from their intended office. And that, in part, is why there are so many interpretations, and vagary, leading to great confusion as regards prophecy.

Most symbols in prophecy are presented in the second dimension, with some aspects of the third dimension added in only for further refinement or clarity. A prominent example we will return to, is: “The Lamb” of *Revelation* (for most expositors agree on what it means or who it represents). Obvious to all, *The Lamb* of *Revelation* serves as a “proper-name identification” for Jesus Christ, “the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.” But the Lamb is not a symbol written, in purpose, for the “first dimension,” because everyone knows that *Revelation* isn’t really talking about a real lamb, with wool, that says: “baaaa,” and walks on all fours. If that is what was intended, then it isn’t really a symbol, but rather a stark reality, or a direct equation. We can then expect to get to heaven and there find sitting on the throne at the right hand of God, a *bleeding*, and not meaning to sound disrespectful— for that matter— *bleating*—lamb, with *seven eyes*! (As we find in *Revelation*, chapter 5).

Prophecy *almost never uses symbols as exact name-tags* of what it is representing. Things are purposely written in code. Any code-breaker or code-writer knows that the symbols used should not betray the communication and be *too* obvious. The code must be broken. The name, Jesus Christ, as a person, is never used in the *Revelation* as a straight symbol. Jesus’ name is only used 7X in *Revelation* and that mostly as an adjective or modifier, as in “the faith **of** Jesus.”

This has led some rather blind expositors to determine, or make the ridiculous claim, that Jesus Christ has no prominent place in the Revelation. But this documental circumstance is actually purposeful and deliberate, because Jesus must be consistently referred to **only** in symbolic fashion, *which is the custom* in Revelation's prophecies. Jesus is the Lamb, the Word of God, an Angel, a King, a Judge, a Farmer, a Warrior, and many other such things in multiples of seven. They are all symbols of Jesus. But when the metaphoric and symbolic principle is understood correctly, then Christ is *everywhere* in the book of Revelation!

But the primary association of "the Lamb," in *Revelation*, chapter 5 ff., is with a **real**, heavenly person, or being, we believe came to earth, lived among men, was crucified, rose from the dead, and as our Savior, is sitting at the right hand of God, ruling the universe, and preparing a place for us. He is called: *The Lamb*, an earthly animal we as humans are familiar with, because such an image represents for us God's saving work called salvation. But Jesus is not really a lamb, and lambs as we know them are not commonly found as gods in heaven! So, even though the person of Jesus, and the animal known as a lamb, are entirely two different things, one can represent the other because of the numerous associations that Scripture and tradition give them. One "directly" represents the other. There is no question, and in that case it is plainly obvious. The Lamb is straight *metaphor*; a figure that represents the Lord Jesus in this context and refers to no one else.

But the Lamb does not represent an "abstract" reality *in the primary sense*. God and Jesus are not just abstract or philosophical ideas. They are as real as anything in the universe is real, and the claims of their work on our behalf are equally as real, for if they are not, "we are of all men, most miserable!"

Thus, the Lamb, as a symbol, is clearly represented to us in the second dimension at the very least. The Lamb is Jesus, the Son of God, the Christ. The second dimension is a simple trading of realities, but exchanged via code using symbolic terms.

But, of course, the symbolism does exceed the basic fact that Jesus is the Lamb. He is the Lamb, because He is "lamb-like." This moves us into the third dimension. The Lamb has the characteristics of a lamb in a number of ways: Lambs are gentle, and harmless. Lambs are innocent. Lambs are lovable. Lambs are sacrificial. Lambs are precious. And the list goes on, for this is why

the symbol was chosen, and these aspects are all part of the picture for the symbol that is used. But the meaning of the symbol is transparently clear, and not swallowed up into some airy and non-specific, academic fog.

But the annoying and exasperating penchant of certain academics and other interpreters of prophecy is the tendency to *deny any direct identity* with the symbol that is used, and apparently afraid of literalism, these expositors get lost in the third and even fourth dimensions, and ignore the primary intent of the symbol.

So, for example, one might sort out the same symbol of the lamb, and claim that it represents innocence, or righteousness, or sacrifice, or gentleness, and that these individual or corporate traits make up the total meaning of the symbol.

So, now then in that case, it would not now be Jesus, particularly, that is the Lamb, but rather the *essence* of gentility, or humility, or innocence, or whatever. This determination of the matter would be most unfortunate, because the greatest and most significant and obvious use of the symbol is to identify the work of a personal, definite, factual— and loving Savior, who, by the way: is gentle, lovable, precious, sacrificial, and so forth. But the main idea is that the Lamb is Jesus, whom we all know also has all these adorable traits. But the traits and characteristics aren't the main focus, or are they the greatest heroes of the plot. Jesus, in His person, is!

Symbols of Direct Realities

The point in all this discussion, if you are still with me, is to argue that much of the symbolism in prophetic works like *Revelation*, is representative of direct realities, not just philosophical ideas, or third dimension over-generalities reduced to a limited fashion, like: “sin,” or “atheism,” or “falsity,” or generic “evil.” The symbols represent patent realities, real powers and nations, real organizations, real and particular doctrines, and so forth. The Serpent is Satan, or the demonic, or the very *earthly* and *visible* powers that Satan “speaks through.” These all have attendant characteristics that are associated with sin, or unrighteousness, or repressive governments, or certain temporal actions, it is true. But the purpose of the symbol is to clothe in a parabolic way real situations and encounters in history and relevant matters in the contest between good and evil.

Otherwise, the descriptions and counsel embedded in the warnings are quite useless and way too ambiguously defined. Modern Christians need to learn more from prophecy than that there is sin or evil in the world. Hello! This is not news! They need to know, rather: what the evil **is**, who propagates it, when it will appear, what it looks like, and how to avoid its inherent danger.

The Reasons for Symbolic Representation in Scripture

The reasons that prophecy relates these important matters in code language are many and several, yet the reasons are quite divinely ordered and necessary. First, if the actual powers they represent were named specifically, **efforts would be made to destroy the warnings** found in them by the powers they point to. Even as it is, the prophecies have endured such efforts through the centuries, encouraged by the enemy of souls, and his sympathizers. Second, they are clothed in such illustrative language to **make the truth clear and understandable**. Third, they also take such a form in order to **add interest and curiosity** to the seeker and draw attention to them. Fourth, they are also thus made **memorable**. These are all the same reasons Jesus taught in parables and stories, themselves symbolic and parabolic representations, told by Jesus in such a way as to (fifth) **bypass human prejudice**, make them memorable, clearly illustrate truth, and (sixth) **ensure the literary preservation** of His timeless lessons of faith.

While we can't go often with absolute literality in the symbolism, or the first dimension of symbols; in other words, that the moon will actually turn to genuine blood, or that we will actually see angels with trumpets flying in the mid-heaven, or that Satan truly looks like a red dragon, or that ancient Babylon will actually re-appear and be rebuilt as of old—we must not at the same time dismiss the direct **reality** and outcome that stands behind almost every symbol, and the powerful help and knowledge that is made available to the honest in heart, through them.

The Importance of Recognizing Direct Symbolism in Prophecy

It is manifestly important to recognize how symbols are then to be understood in prophecy. The paradigms and aforesaid examples are largely the key to understanding. The symbolic, metaphoric principle cannot be emphasized

enough. Reality to reality, type to antitype, symbolism to identification, are the operative modes.

There are hundreds of code symbols in the Daniel and Revelation prophecies, and there are correct ways of determining what they all mean; matters too wonderful to discuss much here and allow a worthy treatment of them. There are the symbols of: blood, fire, crowns, water, angels, clouds, eyes, creatures, stars, wine, branches, boats, colors, animals, tastes, occupations, stones, horns, numbers, and, at least, close to 200 separate synonymic thread lines placed in an ingenious fashion in the Apocalypse where one defines the other in such a way to refine and narrow their meaning in a systematic fashion. The Revelation with all things considered, is probably the greatest literary and prophetic document ever written, greatly under-appreciated, thoroughly inspired, and worthy and meritorious enough to be the capstone of Scripture, and the seal of the whole Bible. When the principles of interpretation are properly applied to it, its message can be clearly understood, and the believer can be both informed and sanctified by its content.

Symbols of Reality

The symbols in Revelation are symbols of realities written through signs and representations. They stand for relevant and instructive realities:

The writer of this book at present owns (after many payments!) a *Ford* F-150 pickup truck which has the *Ford* name and insignia placed in the front grill. That sign, really a “symbol,” represents that a *Ford* vehicle stands behind that symbol. That symbol itself is not a *Ford* truck, not at all, it is just a piece of metal with paint and raised letters that say: “Ford”—so while the insignia itself is not a real *Ford* truck, it most certainly and directly represents a real *Ford* truck.

And indeed, to my benefit, a *Ford* truck, stands behind that symbol and thankfully for me, it is a real truck, which I use constantly, that is complete with engine, bed, passenger seats, and a steering wheel. It is not a ruse, or a philosophical, or “spiritual” idea. It is not atheism, or democracy, or sin, or evil, or heaven, or nirvana. It is the actual *Ford* truck it claims to be. And the realities that stand behind the symbols of *Daniel* and *Revelation* are real too, as much as anything, and the exponents that spiritualize away every symbol into the philosophical mist and clouds are doing the purpose of inspiration a great

disservice. The spiritual and philosophical tenets are there, yes, and they are manifestly important, but they are merely the characteristics that further define the original and greater symbol.

Armageddon: A definable reality

This is why I would argue that *Armageddon*, or the “battle” associated with it, is representative in some way of real circumstances in the area of religion and final world events. As a symbol, *Armageddon* matters. It is meant to be identifiable to an extent. While it is first and foremost, most would agree, a spiritual battle of minds; for the Great Controversy is really and ultimately a battle for the minds of men, there will be also some kind of definable, temporal alignment of forces that will assemble or are today assembling (though likely not militarily) appropriate to the description in some way.

We are told by inspiration that the array of forces in the invisible world beyond us in the contest between good as evil are as real as any contest fought on the battlefields of this earth. While *Armageddon*’s physical nature may be different than any earthly battle with tanks and guns (which never actually enter the discussion in Rev 16 anyway, we might observe), the array of forces, the configuration of the confrontation, is as typical and as momentous as any battle that has ever been fought on earth, in scope and breadth—matters of consequence at a level far beyond battles like the Battle of the Bulge, Waterloo, D-day, Gettysburg, Stalingrad, or Verdun.

The problem with the recent Adventist (and others) tendency to make *Armageddon* a “spiritual battle only,” and to totally “de-literalize” it, is that the reality of the war carried on in heaven and its veritable shadow on earth fades into an inconsequential fog, and many would leave it there. I would reason that to leave it there is dangerous, errant, and that it cheats the intent of prophecy to an extent. While *Armageddon* for sure isn’t a typical, military battle, with fighter jets, missiles, drones, and bombs; the particular alignment of religious and political forces, and the organization of these forces is real enough, and definable enough, that prophecy says that it can be, and will be, clearly identified and recognized in the real world, and in the final, historical, geo-religio-political end-game.

The war in heaven, and the one carried on earth for centuries according to our own earth's history, is described as a *war*, and probably the Spirit characterizes it this way for a particular reason. But angels probably are not affected by earth-made missiles, fighter jets, and bombs. Nor do they probably battle with light sabers as in the Star Wars dramas! But the rebellion carried on in heaven was more than a small argument or casual variance in philosophy. In whatever way heaven prosecutes war, it was a serious and mighty conflict that affects the whole universe today.

In the original rift in heaven, there was disagreement, argument, fierce exchange, blame, scorn, hurt, division, and perhaps some supernatural form of temper (?) for Satan is characterized as having "great wrath." The weapons in heaven were probably *words*, but the climate of division finally became so strong that Satan and his angels had to be forced and removed from heaven. And the process of being cast out (lit. "thrown out,") was not peacefully, and in all probability easily carried out, we might expect, with bitter complaints, cries of unfairness, and negative resistance all the way. The point insisted on though, is this: that while it wasn't a battle with earthly weapons, it nevertheless was a real confrontation, as real as anything, in fact, it was, and is, an ultimate "reality," tragically hanging with us still, actively remaining, and even at this moment being "fought" at super-cosmic proportions.

Two Ditches

It is true there are always ditches on both sides of the road. The first ditch is to "over-spiritualize" the matter. The other ditch would be some kind of absolute literalism, the kind conjured up in the popular, sensational, military scenarios, such as dramatized in *The Lord of the Rings*, or out of popular views where we get such extravaganzas as taught in the Late Great Planet Earth, and the like, where *Armageddon* becomes a secular battle in the Mid-East, or is described in other scenarios as a contest between Christianity and Islam, or in other descriptions some real flesh and blood war, and we are suddenly back to the Crusades shooting at each other, with no actual or greater spiritual issues to process. If the battle is merely Christian against Christian, or any other religion or faith, then there is no true winner, because the Christians then obviously never learned to be "Christians."

The spiritual issues which are sure to come as legitimate matters of faith, are issues which are much more substantial: issues such as the final showdown over the Law of God and the Sabbath, the deceptions regarding the State of the Dead, the final call to leave Babylon, the proclamation of the message of Righteousness by Faith, or any of the necessary "sealings" and preparations required of God's people.

Adventists themselves have fallen into similar traps in the past, with the *Eastern Question*, or with a preoccupation with political events in Turkey, or Russia, or China, or Japan. The arguments that erupted over the "earthly views" only distracted or divided the ranks of God's people, and led to little progress in faith and preparedness. If prophecy fulfills its purpose to Adventists, and all other Christians who are interested in such things, it must somehow be found in a wholesome balance between pure temporal, literalism on one hand, and an "airy," ambiguous, academic, or gutless mirror form of "spiritualism" on the other.

Satan Wars Against God by Directly Attacking His People

The trend of recent years to see Armageddon in a responsible and "spiritual" light, is for the most part a refreshing, safer, and more accurate view of the matter. Especially important is the correction afforded today amongst Adventists that the "battle" is not so much between the nations of the earth, or between the east and west, but a battle between God and His people on the one side aligned against the confederacy of the evil forces in league with Satan on the other side. But to leave this final, decisive, battle in probationary history as merely theoretical in nature, or one exclusively fought somewhere out in the universe, or one being merely a philosophical clash between true and false ideologies (where most theologians leave it today), falls way short of completeness or reality when looking at it from the viewpoint of humanity or in view of the temporal reality of our earthly ground and experience. A more candid, careful, and realistic view of the whole matter is necessary to prepare God's people on what to expect, and how matters will affect them.

What needs to be recognized, is how typically, Satan is known to go to war against God, and which, and when properly entertained, can be informative material witness on how the battle of Armageddon will be waged. While the

battle is a “spiritual,” and “universal” battle in dimensional terms, it is more than just a spiritual idea out in the clouds, especially when taking in the whole picture.

To complete the view more comprehensibly, we should consider that it is an incontrovertible fact, that Satan wars against God, not by physically attacking God’s throne, or by storming heaven. In that case he would lose badly. But Satan works rather by attacking God’s faithful people, the “apple of His eye,” or attacks those who are unsure of their allegiance, but are leaning in interest toward God’s true spiritual ideals. Satan cannot win a battle of strength, or argument, or wit or wisdom, against God and the heavenly host, and he knows it. The only way that Satan can make any headway in his quest to retain dominion of this world, and his ongoing quest to rule the universe, is to try to solicit allies on this earth and the surrounding universe if possible, in order to gather adherents to his charge, and to persecute and attempt to force those who adhere in loyalty to God and His Commandments, to abandon their loyalty to God and to come over to his side.

Writes the prophet:

It is the purpose of Satan to cause them [God’s people] to be blotted from the earth, in order that his supremacy of the world may not be disputed.¹⁸¹

The above is a direct and sobering statement. Satan wants to blot you and me from the face of the earth, and he doesn’t care how he does it. The malicious intent attributed to our enemy hit me, when I read this statement, like a punch in the stomach. It represents a “down to earth,” and direct piece of “battle intelligence,” not at all expressed in any impenetrable code; but describing a patent and stark reality, if ever there were such. The threat is tangible and real, and not just “spiritual!” The reality of this intentional attack should send every Christian to their knees, there to pray and claim the promise that they will be held safely in the hollow of God’s hand, which prayer God will honor. But the naked intent (“blot from the earth”) exposed in the statement precisely describes the very reason for the Satanic gathering at Armageddon.

Historical, Spiritual Conflicts of the Past, That Had Physical Markings

¹⁸¹ Ellen White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 37.

The best balance, in the opinion of this present author is to recognize the total and comprehensive nature of all of the directly religious conflicts fought down through human history. In the case of the most prominent ones, there can be seen **both** literal and apparent markings in the showdowns, but always shadowed behind these we know were the real, attendant, spiritual forces working toward good or toward evil.

Plagues of Egypt

A prime example of both the temporal and the spiritual aspects apparent in history is the typological saga of the plagues of Egypt and the Exodus (believed by this author to be real events) that took place in the midst of that struggle. We would ask, was the “battle” then, a physical one or a spiritual one? And, were the plagues of Egypt “spiritual” plagues or “real” plagues? I would like to suggest that in keeping with our belief in the integrity of the Bible narrative, that the plagues were indeed quite real.

If you could talk to those who experienced the Egyptian plagues, and that witnessed them, and felt them, I’m sure they would argue to you convincingly that they were absolutely literal and real. They fought with blood, lice, disease, darkness, storm, even death, and plagues of every description. It was as my friend, Walter, from college days used to assert when he encountered an unpleasant or soberly apparent circumstance (such as bemoaning the fact of an imminent, and perilous exam we expected on the very morrow!), about which he would observe in his droll, and inimical way:—“This— is *very* real!!” I use that identical expression almost everyday as I meet tangible threats in the battle of life! “This is very real!” I say! And, yes, in most cases related to what I am experiencing—it surely seems it is!” So, I’m sure to the Egyptians, at least, the plagues were indeed, quite real and of a very tangible nature!

But what was ultimately behind the *Battle of Egypt*? It is very easy for us today to recognize, in looking back, and to determine even as mortal humans from the light we are given, that there was a very direct *spiritual* confrontation taking place behind the solidly *real* confrontation of the plagues—a pitched battle between Pharaoh—along with his so-called gods of Egypt; and the true, Jehovah, God of Israel. In fact, the plagues were directly aimed at Egypt’s false gods: the sun, the water, the frogs (and their tongues!), etc. If ever there was a “spiritual”

battle, that battle was such a battle, or at the very least, it was certainly one of them. But it had notable organic and temporal markings, as well, and took place in the course of earthly, historical events. It is so described in the book of Exodus.

The same scenario will be largely repeated at the close of time:

The **plagues** upon **Egypt** when God was about to deliver Israel were similar in character to those more terrible and extensive judgments which are to fall upon the world just before the final deliverance of God's people.¹⁸²

The nature of things from a human perspective makes a military battle as we understand it a physical and temporal thing. But as we are counseled, battles are usually much more than this. In the great controversy between good and evil we are encouraged to believe that the supernatural forces behind them are actually the real forces that order the battle. The Devil, speaks *through* a “serpent,” a visible, earthly agent; as he did through the Dragon to Eve in the tree in Eden, and thus he and his angels work in this manner today, working behind the scenes to bring earthly carnage and destruction. The hosts of evil use as pawns those who take sides with them on earth, and aids and assists those who carry out his and their designs by utilizing their tainted hearts and evil human hands. Supernatural motives and intents find an outlet through sympathetic human instrumentality. Behind every war is the greater spiritual manipulation and background spurring men on by a powerful supernatural impetus. This too, as my friend, Walter would say, and we should say with him: “is very real!” And maybe the “spiritual aspect” of the battle, is even *more* real than the other parts, if you please, because it takes in the *whole* picture, not just the earthly and obvious one that we see.

This was certainly the case at the Cross of Christ. The cross was real, the wood was real, the nails were real, the suffering was real, and the people involved were real, and most of us believe that the person of Christ, the Son of God, was real. The circumstance was actually real and momentous beyond our greatest thoughts, in fact, it was at a greater, cosmic, supernatural level; a level that humanity cannot even conceive of. Prophetic insight reports that Satan and his demons were at the Passion, and in the unruly crowd, and in the counsels of

¹⁸² Ellen G. White, *Maranatha*, https://whiteestate.org/devotional/mar/09_16.

the priests and rulers, inciting, agitating, and plotting. The stakes were universal ones, but those on earth could only see the humanly visible actors, those visible about them.

The missing factor that must be admitted to the equation is made manifest in the question:

When did ANY of the attacks by evil forces against God's people in history occur with no physical threat attached to them, or arrayed against them, and with only "spiritual" elements found with them alone?

- Did Abel only die "spiritually" at the hands of Cain?
- Did Israel leave Egypt with no real army at their heels?
- Did David fight against a "spiritual" giant, or a real one?
- Did Hezekiah and all Jerusalem only imagine *spiritually* that Sennacherib and his army was posted outside the wall?
- Did Jehoshaphat only imagine a triumvirate of "spiritual" foes marching upon his kingdom?
- Did Jesus receive a "physically, abusive beating, and cross-nailing," from real people, and enemies prompted by Satan, or did He not?
- Did the 50 million martyrs of the Christian dispensation experience only a *spiritual* death?

And the list could be quite endless. I am not intending to dwell on the persecution factor or market threat or fear. Prophecy actually has the opposite purpose. God will see us through those things and we should not worry one moment about them. But the point I am making, is that Satan attacks God, by attacking His people. Why, then, I would argue, would Satan, after gathering every possible force and ally loyal to his command, preparing for his last and grandest stand and finale of this world's probationary quest, and filled with angst to the greatest measure ever (Rev. 12:12), attempt anything different?

Writes Ellen White of Armageddon:

"The earth is to be the battlefield—the scene of the final contest and the final victory." (*My Life Today*, p. 308)

"I saw the saints suffering great mental anguish. They seemed to be surrounded by the wicked inhabitants of the earth . . . Next came the multitude of angry wicked . . . to slay the saints." *EW*, p. 282.

While the larger issue is definitely “spiritual,” it is probably erroneous to teach that there will be no earthly or temporal issues as well. It has never been so for the entire history of the earth, and won’t be so at its final and climactic phase. While Adventism, thankfully, has for the most part shed the notion of a military engagement between nations of the earth, they should not dispense with, on the other hand, the reality of the conflict ahead,. They should not spiritualize away into the clouds the carefully-crafted symbolic expressions found in prophecy and thereby obscure their intentional meaning, and sideline the relevant battle intelligence given to God’s last-day faithful.

Supernatural Direction of Earthly Conflicts

A case can be made today that most wars and conflicts are actually supernaturally brought about for “spiritual” and “unseen” reasons. Such was probably even the case in the recent gulf wars and the attacks by Muslim extremists and the outbreaks of terrorism. Most wars in history, even in consideration of such as Hitler, Mussolini, and WWII, traced to their basic cause, were actually holy wars inspired by or related to religious/racial issues, and were brought about, no doubt, by men acting in concert with direct demonic influence. Modern political authorities seem to have a numb stupidity about the real cause of some of these conflicts today, because their minds are blind to heavenly realities, and therefore, they stand ignorant of the large religious and spiritual reasons behind them. In a sense, one could probably even justify and argue the concept that almost all politics, are really in the end, the politics of religion.

The “Great Controversy” is truly the ongoing war between good and evil. On the good side were often found the armies of Israel. On the other were the allies of Satan.

Numerous times throughout history, through “Baraks” and “Gideons,” “Jehoshaphats” and “Davids,” the soldiers of the Cross wrought victory. But they did not achieve victory primarily through their own human efforts, but rather with the supernatural assistance from heaven. Thousands fell at their side, and ten thousand at their right hand. David marvels how God “trained his hands for war.”¹⁸³ As with Goliath, David recognized that the battle and strategic ability

¹⁸³ Psalm 18:34; 144:1

wasn't really his alone, or dependent upon his human strength and prowess, but was almost totally wrought in dependence upon God's divine assistance. So, of course, "the battle is the Lord's," and it is primarily a spiritual one in that way. But visible to our view are always temporal kings, commanders, and soldiers, and even pastors and prelates, who serve at the behest of either the forces of good, or the forces of evil, whether they know it or not, or believe it, or not.

Armageddon a Certain Kind of Reality

So, the battle of *Armageddon*, one might argue, is both spiritual, and to a degree, then, physical, literal, and "very real," too; for it is a contest between heaven and certain, *identifiable* world powers, as well. *Armageddon* is at the very least a climactic "confrontation" of some sort. Satan will not give up without a fight, and God's people will be caught in the middle. The players are the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet, and the wickedness of the nations, pitted against God and His remnant people. The battle stakes are as real and genuine as any there have ever been, stakes with super-cosmic implications.

"The battles waging between the two armies are as real as those fought by the armies of this world" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 176).

The problem in taking a purely "spiritual" view is that the symbolism, while it is symbolism, has standing behind it a direct reality. Remember the metaphorical principle? The battle in that sense becomes awesomely real. If *Armageddon* is only a fictional, or a theoretical battle in the mind, then to be consistent, the seven plagues in the same context, are not to be taken as real, but are only "spiritual" plagues—though the original type in Egypt after which they are patterned were earthly, literal, and real.¹⁸⁴

And to go further then, to be consistent, the Second Coming (that comes about in almost the next verse or verses in *Revelation* to the one that refers to *Armageddon* [16:16—vss. 17-21]), is then not a literal, visible one, but a "spiritual" coming, only. Such thinking is actually very dangerous, and the

¹⁸⁴ "The **plagues** upon **Egypt** when God was about to deliver Israel were similar in character to those more terrible and extensive judgments which are to fall upon the world just before the final deliverance of God's people." Ellen G. White, *Maranatha*, https://whiteestate.org/devotional/mar/09_16.

present author, for one, won't go there. Yet a "spiritual" Coming, exclusively, is not the teaching of the *Revelation* (or the rest of Scripture, or of Adventism, for that matter), making every eye literally see it (Rev. 1:7), thus meaning, it is real enough and literal enough, to be humanly, and optically recognized.

Armageddon is a real confrontation of some kind, or perhaps more accurately, a preparation and gathering of religious forces for a clash, a threat, and clash between the Satan-led forces on this earth moving against the Divine-led forces of God, where God, in turn works decisively, and defensively, and intervenes for the sake of the humble, trusting remnant of His people who are living on the earth at the end of time.

In this way we might argue will come the battle of *Armageddon* in however we are given to understand it. Its approach will likely take a temporal look, involving real powers or religious constructs, and be seen in an obvious, temporal, or human intent to harm and destroy God's true people. The Beast power, in the forms of the apostate forms of Catholicism, and the same of a finally corrupted Protestantism as found in the United States and elsewhere, along with the deceptive forms of Satanism, introduced by Satan himself, the greatest of all of the apostates (who will use as ammunition a common arsenal of the "doctrines of devils," and his ability to personate Christ and the Apostles) will all combine and gather together at the imaginary yet politically and religiously active super-church: the "Mountain/Tower of the Congregation:" found at modern, apocalyptic "*Babel*."

The woman, Babylon, in Revelation 17 has a cup of blood in her hand, and she is represented as being thirsty for its contents. The thirst is not fake. These confederate forces will conspire together, using false articles of war, and dishonest propaganda, and will work to encourage insurgency against the true remnant of the Christian religion, and to storm heaven in an effort to take it.

The battle odds will initially seem, to the view of humanity, to be enormously in favor of the numberless majority, who declare themselves to be "Christian," but that in reality have positioned themselves to be on the side of Satan.

But like the many trembling, and largely inferior, minority armies of Israel, and the lowly David standing before Goliath, or the insignificant Mordecai

standing in the gate, or the lonely Elijah on Mt. Carmel, or the but three marked, and trembling, Hebrew youth refusing to bow to the image of the Beast; the battle will at last turn in favor of the true God and His remnant people. God is always a majority, and David, and all the faithful in their time knew by faith, that this is ever the case.

So, will it be in the last great conflict. The proud tower of insurgency will fall with but a small stone, cast out of the sling of the righteous soldier of the Cross, yet guided to its mark and made effective in the hand of God. That Stone will strike the feet of the great image of Babylon, the great. Babel will fall, the cities of the nations will fall, and every evil force will be scattered. Heaven will triumph. Then, the Kingdom of Heaven will welcome home the victorious parousia of the saints, with Christ at their head! And finally, that Stone, will become a great mountain-tower and city, luxuriantly blessed by God, that will gloriously, and righteously, fill the *whole* earth!

9

CHAPTER 9:

THE GRAND CLIMAX: UNDERSTANDING RELIGIOUS HISTORY'S ENDGAME

Coming Out of Babylon

Since it is the conclusion stemming from the last few chapters that *Armageddon* and the *Fall of Babylon* are essentially identical figures, the call to “Come out of Babylon” (Revelation 18:1 ff.) has to be the most relevant and momentous matter of our time. The three great religious powers in our world today, Roman Catholicism, mainline Protestantism, both clasping hands with Satanic Spiritualism, are today in the process of “gathering” at the “Mountain of Assembly.” “We, my friends, because of the obvious maturation of these bodies in Christendom and the world today, are poised, it seems, on the very eve of *Armageddon*.” All indicators seem to point out the “hand-writing on the wall,” and that the time is near.

The end of the Babylonian confederacy is defined in Revelation 16:19 as separating or “falling” into, or as being composed of: THREE PARTS. Even the rabbis of old, we have recently chronicled, recognized that Babel was composed of a confederacy of three similar constructs that fell into three parts at the first fall of Babylon. The same transpired at the second Babylon. The effort to consolidate religion and government into one apostate council of religion and politics, was instead “divided,” and scattered over the earth.

Babel, Babylon and Three Parts

In a sense, at the second fall of Babylon at Belshazzar’s feast—where came the simultaneous drying up of the River Euphrates and the dramatic “handwriting on the wall”—the kingdom of Babylon likewise was sentenced to its doom with the three-fold battle cry:

1. *Mene, mene*—
2. *Tekel*—
3. *Upharsin*—

This, we are told by the prophet, Daniel (chapter 5), was interpreted to mean:

1. Numbered: “Your days are numbered”
2. Weighed: “You are weighed in the balances and found wanting”
3. Divided: “Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians”

Or, as can be summarized:

- Investigated
- Judged
- Punished

(Just as ordered, warned, and “themed” in the Three Angel’s Messages, by the way. A three-part message from angels, aimed at the three-part evil confederacy of our day).

One part of Babel and Babylon was that it was particularly associated with **idolatry and images**, as symbolized in the modern expected corollary of an “image to the beast,” which we know today to be the propagation of an “idol Sabbath” among other things. Another distinct part of Babel and Babylon was its

particular association with the unclean, “spirits of demons,” thus, exhibiting a breed of **spiritualism**. Christendom is immersed in the belief of a conscious state in death, a form adopted as a result of spiritualism. Another sector of Babel and Babylon seemed to be occupied with the usurpation of God’s fatherly, divine prerogatives, taking the role of Nimrod, and seeking to rule in the **place of “the Father,”** thus having the spirit of *papal* usurpation, and antichrist.

These particular parties were originally broken and “divided” at Babel by God’s intervention. The same was “divided” in the later Babylon. The only safety at the time was for the true and faithful to leave Babel at once, to come away, and have no part in the popular, upstart, religio-political *rebellion*, though we can be sure that at the time it wasn’t billed that way, nor would it be today. The only real: “assurance of salvation” available today, is to be found in avoiding the same thematic conditions, dangers, and subsequent actions, that were found at Babel.

At the fall of Neo-Babylon these same elements are to be identified as the cause of its fall. Nebuchadnezzar and the kingdom of Babylon made much of their images and **idolatry**, and attempted to force the three Hebrews to bow to an image of the nation, and enforced it with a death decree. Nebuchadnezzar spent seven years of hardship, to finally discover and admit that the true God, reigned, and not his false idol gods, and especially in terms of the “god” he, himself, claimed to be.

From its earliest times, Babylon was steeped in **spiritualism**, no doubt led on by direct demonic influence. Babylon, even today may still be considered in Satanism to be one of the four major capitols of witchcraft.¹⁸⁵ Revelation 18:4 highlights the demonic culture found in Babylon, as a “the habitation of demons,” and the “cage of every foul spirit.” Where you have demons, you have spiritualism, and doctrinal error. Particularly to be found, is the erroneous belief

¹⁸⁵ According to some individuals I have worked with that were trapped in the occult, these capitols according to them were: Babylon, Cairo, San Francisco, and some occult city in ancient Scotland that I can’t remember the name of. I haven’t confirmed this, nor have a need to. Unfortunately, as the “god of this world,” pretty much everywhere here on earth is now one of Satan’s “capitols.” San Francisco is the acknowledged home of organized Satanism, and home of Anton Livey, their prominent leader. Cairo and Babylon were both such evil places that Israel was counseled to flee from them, and they came out of them at God’s direction. Scotland is the home of J. K. Rowling, the modern writer of the Harry Potter series, and the whole area has a dark history of occultism and Satanism.

in the immortality of the soul. On this front the worst of this dangerous circumstance of subversive spiritualism is still ahead.

And, finally, the boldness of Babylon and her kings, was to openly assume the role of “gods,” thus in measure blasphemously usurping the role of heaven’s only true God, and thus taking the vicarious role of an **antichrist**. It was in drinking to their invented and/or modified gods, by drinking from and abusing the sacred vessels of the Temple of Israel (like the profligate woman in *Revelation* 17), claiming their representation of “God” as superior, and thus disdaining and replacing the true God and changing His Law, that the prophet, Daniel, told Babylon’s king was the last straw that brought about the hand-writing on the wall, and the fall of Babylon.

The Three End-game Players

The last warning message to go to the world is found in Revelation 18:1 ff: “Babylon is fallen, is fallen. . . . Come out of her, my people, lest you be partakers in her sins, and receive not of her plagues.” So, the questions to be asked are: “What does it mean: to ‘Come out of Babylon?’” and, “What, exactly — is modern Babylon?”

Since this is a book that focuses on *Armageddon*, noted as some kind of a final, climactic “confrontation,” a full development of the precise identity of Babylon, the Beast, and the Dragon, is necessary in order to script a final scenario. But for this book’s purposes we can only take a skeletal look at the matter of these three unclean spirits in the religious world.

A better and more complete treatment of the prophetic identity of “Babylon,” is dealt with by this author elsewhere.¹⁸⁶ But in order to best understand the climax of history, both political and religious, it is still necessary to identify all the central and final players in the eschatological end-game. The reckoning of the identities of the last three great religio-political powers in the world today, is paramount, in making total sense of the final and expected showdown to come.

¹⁸⁶ One is invited to please read the book: Exit: Examining the Fourth Angel’s Message. (The Call From Babylon) S. Behrmann, 2021.

Three Great Powers (the False Trinity)

In the late 1800's and into the early 1900's, Adventist theologians, and the prophetic writer, Ellen G. White, offered a clear and definite answer to the identities behind the symbolic representations of these three great and final global entities. What is incredibly stunning is that more than a century later, the bold suggestions that she and her Adventist associates made then, and the risk they took in directly identifying them as such at the time, though dangerous predictions in themselves that could have turned out to be wrong and anything but popular in the world of their time or even now, still remain accurate and even more relevant than ever in modern times. They are cogent and applicable to our day in every sense of the word. They have developed as prophetically expected, and are now marked in clear lines, just as was predicted:

Wrote Ellen White in the late 1880's:

"The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of Spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this **threefold union, this country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience."** (GC 588) (ca. 1888)

"When **Protestantism shall stretch her hand across the gulf to grasp the hand of the **Roman power**, when she shall reach over the abyss to clasp hands with **spiritualism**, when, under the influence of this threefold union, our country shall repudiate every principle of its Constitution as a Protestant and republican government, and shall make provision for the propagation of papal falsehoods and delusions, then we may know that the time has come for the marvelous working of Satan and that the end is near."** (5T 451)

The Protestants of the United States

Fifty or more years ago (today, 2022) the modern world was enveloped in the fear and dominance of widespread *Communism*. Most anyone at the time would have placed the threat of *Communism* then, at the top of the list, as totally necessary to address in any final, prophetic scenario. But almost as quickly as it

appeared it has disappeared, at least, as compared with the visible threat it once was considered to have been. But socialism, its somewhat modern form, is strong and evident among us, and we see a distinct “reaching across the gulf” manifestation in Protestantism in America today.

Historically, Protestants have typically always been reluctant to submit to any religio-political control, especially as it was used by the church of Rome, or even through forms of Anglicanism. This is why America became America. But this has changed. Politically, the US is in some ways becoming more socialized and communistic than even communism once was. At the same time the government of the United States has become very friendly to Rome. Presidents, Congressional dignitaries, Supreme Court justices are practicing Catholics. And this is not to condemn in any way Catholics for being Catholics. The point is that America has completely changed in its attitude relative to the time of its founding. So much for the once “Protestant and republican government” of the Constitution. But only prophecy properly predicted this unexpected reach across the gulf.

One hundred years ago, the United States was still a frontier nation, fragile after a bloody revolution for independence, followed by the troubling war of 1812, and soon thereafter divided by a momentous, and deadly, civil war. It was not a world player then, but rather a child-like colony in the New World. But after becoming an experimental democracy, and welcoming the down-trodden to her shores, she has become a capitalistic giant, winning two world wars, and leading the world in commerce, military might, and world dominance. Who could have seen that coming, even a century or more ago? But prophecy was right.

Catholicism

Catholicism and Rome, by all accounts, wounded to death and damaged by the Protestant Reformation, discomfited by the subsequent break-up of the Holy Roman Empire—and the Papacy’s “king of the world” status being then almost totally broken—was then followed by Rome and its pope being finally humiliated, and even taken captive. Circumstances had finally changed a “religious world” to a society characterized with the rise of secularism, as found in France, and in atheism as found later in communism, and Rome’s

ecclesiastical and political position was expected to fall away forever into complete disintegration.

But, no—modern Catholicism is today one of the most powerful, if not the most powerful of Christian faiths, with enormous religio-political influence, ruling the world from the papal chair, and yet again bringing presidents and statesmen to their knees. There goes prophecy again, two for two!

Satanism

Satanism, measured in the vessel of false doctrines and real demonic influence, with the doctrines of devils as exhibited in the non-biblical belief of the immortality of the soul (borrowed largely from errant Roman Catholic doctrine, and now **engulfed** and owned by most Protestants), and accompanied with the rise of multiple, popular versions of spiritualism, actually thrives more today in our informed, modern, and relativistic world, when one would think that modern enlightenment and reformation truth would have cast Satan and his ways out of modern religious thinking and practice forever. Instead, the Dragon has come to earth with great wrath, and he has the Christian church, helping him instead of hating him. The modern church sees no threat in him and his angels to deceive in this way, which is exactly the guise he wants, and the sins of Babylon he encourages and establishes even in the church, are bringing our world to the brink of *Armageddon*. Three out of three!

Without question, these three forces are the greatest global determinants of religious, and even secular policy (in a way), in the world today. How anyone can sensibly deny the modern fulfillment of the prophetic map through the activities of these three great powers in the current world, would have to spring from only the willingly blind, or the pathetically ignorant.

As suggested and concluded in the previous chapters, prophetic symbolism demands a definite reality behind it. The symbolic representations of beasts, or (the Beast), the Great Immoral Woman of *Revelation* 17, or Babylon, and the Dragon and his cohorts, all represent real, identifiable entities. These are not to be isolated as “individuals” we must emphasize, over and over again—or even to be classed “denominationally,” in a way. But these corporate powers should be understood clearly for what they are in terms of beliefs and practices, and should not be so generalized away from straight metaphoric representation,

that they are shielded from clear exposure, or conveniently lost to honest seekers of truth, and then shrouded in a deep, academic fog. Otherwise, the purpose in giving the prophecy is diluted to nothing, and nothing much can be assessed out of it as being beneficial, or can such be taken from it.

The Beast

The Beast, with the definite article, is to be argued as consistently representing Romanism, imperial and papal, as it has acted historically in the last almost two thousand years since the time of Christ and the apostles. No other power will fit the prophetic requirements, denominated with at least 8-14 clear identification tags as given in the prophecies of *Daniel* and *Revelation*:

1. **The power described in Revelation 13 is a “religious” power, because it demands worship.**¹⁸⁷
2. **The power blasphemes** (speaking blasphemies, vss. 5 and 6).

Blasphemy is the illegitimate claim to be able to forgive sins. This has been the open claim of the papal system for centuries and to the present day. Said the late, Charles Everson: “For a man to claim to have the power to forgive sins is blasphemy.”¹⁸⁸

In the presence of Jesus, “*The scribes and Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?*”¹⁸⁹ *KJV*

¹⁸⁷ Revelation 13:1-10

¹⁸⁸ Charles Everson, *The Mark of the Beast*, p. 16.

¹⁸⁹ Luke 5:21

"The Jews answered Him, saying, For a good work we stone Thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God." ¹⁹⁰ KJV

The Pope openly claims to be the vicar of God, "in the place of God," the very meaning of "vicarious." His priests openly and daily claim the power to forgive sins. No other power has openly, consistently, and continually claimed this power over the last 1,500, or so, years.

3. The **papal power was to be given his seat (throne) and authority** by the pagan Roman Empire. This is an elementary history lesson (*Revelation 13:2*).

Emperor Constantine moved out of Rome, and moved his capital to the east. In so doing he gave the city to the bishop of Rome. Said Charles Everson, many years ago:

"If you were to go to Rome tonight, you would find, right in the Vatican itself, a large painting, possibly about seventy-five feet across, depicting Sylvester I, one-time pope of Rome, receiving a little figure- a statue of a warrior. Constantine is passing this little figure of a warrior into the hands of the pope just as he is getting ready to leave Rome. And underneath the picture is written, "The Donation of Rome From Constantine to the Pope."¹⁹¹

4. The **papal Roman power, like no other, persecuted the saints**, labeling them as heretics. (Some estimate 50,000,000 martyrs. One need not ask if that is enough to qualify for this dubious distinction)(v. 7). Only false powers, persecute.
5. This **power held authority over many nations over a period of 1260+ years** (year-day principle). This again limits the "organization" outlined in prophecy to an organization and not an individual, and narrows the field to only a remote few possible continuous powers, if not the only one.

It rules for 3 1/2 prophetic "years" or 42 prophetic "months" or 1,260 prophetic "days" ---all of which signify 1,260 literal years (namely, A.D. 538-1798: Daniel 7:25; 12:7; *Revelation* 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5).

6. The **power received a deadly wound and entered into "captivity."** This prophetic marker can find actually several clear fulfillments, from the "Babylonish Captivity" or

¹⁹⁰ John 10:33

¹⁹¹ Everson, p. 15.

the *Great Schism*, the death and captivity of Boniface VIII, ca.1303, the Protestant Reformation with its impact, or then the captivity carried out by Napoleon's general, Berthier, in 1798.

7. **The power would “think to change times and laws.”**¹⁹² (Perhaps interpreted the times of the law, but the Hebrew doesn't seem to support this. Therefore, it means seasons and laws, in general). The church power is the creator of a “mark” (Rev. 13).

“The Catholic Church for over one thousand years before the existence of a Protestant, by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday.”¹⁹³

“And from a letter written for Cardinal Gibbons by his chancellor, Nov. 11, 1895, (we) read:

“Of course, the Catholic church claims that the change was her act. It could not have been otherwise as none in those days would have dreamed of doing anything in matters spiritual and ecclesiastical without her. And *the act is a mark* of her ecclesiastical authority in religious things.”¹⁹⁴ (Italics and emphasis supplied)

8. **Another indicator is the typical titles of the Pope, and several other titles (“Names of Blasphemy”), typical of the Roman system, numerous ones that add up to 666**

¹⁹² Daniel 7:25

¹⁹³ *Catholic Mirror*, Sept 23, 1893. (Has since been expunged)

¹⁹⁴ Everson, pp. 25,26.

(example; VICARIUS FILII DEI).¹⁹⁵ (Vicar of the Son of God), Vicarius Christi, etc. etc. The most blasphemous of all is the Divine name; “The Father,” “Papa,” “Pope,” which the Bible says must never be used by a man as a “religious” title.

9. **The Beast has descriptive continuity with the beast described in Revelation 13:1-10 and then connected again in verses 17 and 18.** It is then an earthly power.
10. **The Beast (always the same power in *Revelation*) is the continuation of the beasts of Daniel 7, and 8, and shares the same characteristics.**

In *Daniel* 2, 7, 8, these are clearly paralleled to the kingdoms of the image, and the clear descriptors given in the book of *Daniel* that identify these kingdoms.

Particularly in play is the “little horn” development of the great and terrible beast of *Daniel* 7-9. Horns are emblematic in prophecy of a kingdom or power that *emerges* out of another power, for this is what horns do. This is precisely what happened in regard to papal Rome as related to pagan Rome. The little horn is blasphemous, persecutes the saints, changes times and laws, and so forth.

In prophecy the beasts, or nations, are particularly those which have “persecuted God’s people in the past,” and who are the subjects making up this conglomerate beast having seven heads and ten horns. Because of the timing of Daniel’s vision, the first nation is the head of Babylon, then comes the head of Medo-Persia. Then Greece contributes four more heads. Then comes the seventh head of Pagan Rome.

Out of this seventh head comes the little horn, clearly pointing to the rise and emergence of papal Rome, or Catholic Rome. Of the other nine horns, three of them disappear out of the ten divisions of Rome, or the barbaric tribes. The one that prospers, grows, persecutes the saints, and changes times and laws can be none other than Papal Rome. There is no other world dominant candidate and the entire matter is really an “easy read.”

¹⁹⁵ This claim of this said title appearing on the mitre is now argued by many to be disingenuous. If true, it changes the general facts but little. The title and claim that the pope is the “Vicar of Christ” is replete in Catholic literature over the last several centuries. Probably the term, *Vicar of the Son of God* [*Vicarius Filii Dei*] (and other similar epithets) have been used in the thousands of times both publicly and privately. Research specialist, Jerry Stevens’ in his book, *Vicarius Filii Dei*, lists nearly 200 times where the title is used, usage spanning more than a thousand years. The blasphemous nature of numerous titles is alone enough. No other church system, and their pastors or priests, even dare to claim such outright and open blasphemy.

- 11. The first beast comes up out of the sea (Old World) and the second comes out of the earth (New World, wilderness), a perfect historical development of the nations of the earth to modern times.**

The first beast precedes the more modern beasts, in the historical description that matches world history. This fits with the rise of Papal Rome, dominant for centuries, then the rise of the Western democracies.

- 12. The “beast” power had “global” influence, requiring that it could not be only a lonely individual, for it had power to demand the worship of nations, and through the Middle Ages especially it could be said that it: “reigned” over the kings of the earth. (Rev 17, v. 7; cf. v. 3b)**

The requirement of the prophecy is that this world power has global significance. This is the very meaning of “Catholic,” thus; the universal church, the boast of papal Rome being its open ecclesiastical claim for centuries on end.

- 13. The power has uniqueness that asks the question: “Who is able to make war with him?” This fits a religious and politically benign power with such a nature.**

Any typical secular nation is able to make war, or to be the subject of war. But a church is shielded militarily, due to its non-political nature.

- 14. It has a mark, and that mark is in association with a “man’s” number: 666**

There are numerous statements made by even Catholic Rome themselves, the claim being that there is such a mark, and that mark is the Sunday institution. Much more is the Bible’s identification of that mark, and its truer counterpart, the seal of God and creation, the seventh-day Sabbath. The identification is thus complete.

Therefore, it is clear, in consideration of all the characteristics, that the persecuting power represented by the first beast in Revelation 13 is the papal power. Efforts to show otherwise wreak havoc with the whole system of prophetic truth and the genuine rules of prophetic interpretation. There is no reason to deny the interpretation of these texts held by the Reformers, and thousands of honest Bible students for centuries. Those who attempt to do so willingly identify themselves as ignobly sympathetic with the false power here so clearly delineated.

The Dragon

The identification of the Dragon, is clear and concise, as given in prophecy (Revelation 12), and is really no mystery. Though unseen in the physical dimension, the spiritualistic delusions carried on by the Prince of Darkness, that Old Serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, are greatly manifest to the careful Bible student, and to the sensible and spiritually aware, modern Adventist Christian. The work of Satan in the troubles of our world are so obvious, so overwhelmingly apparent, that it staggers the mind that so many seem to be unaware of it. But the work of demonic spirits and doctrines of evil origin, are an undeniable reality. That Satan would give up the matter of the Great Controversy without a significant fight cannot invite any reasonable logic.

It has been noticed by several current scholars that the Revelation identifies the three great powers of false Christendom as representative of a false Trinity, like the trinity of the Godhead: The Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit. Though expositors aren't always unanimous on which each division of Christendom is represented as corollary to the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet, they almost always agree that they relate to that very same heavenly and rival trio to the Trinity in the heaven of heavens. Two of the false trinity are visible to humanity on earth, the Beast and the False Prophet, but the the third, which is the Dragon, or Satan, is analogous to the Spirit of God (invisible and mysterious to humanity) and is speaking of the forces of evil, Satan and his angels.

The direct work of Satan is today largely overlooked by Christians, and greatly underestimated. In fact, because there is no clear understanding of Satan's sophistry and cunning, many treat his existence as a figure as only representative of general and local evil, and deny his active and direct study to corrupt the church of today. Many assume he and host are not real. Satan, and in his teaching of spiritualistic doctrines, laughs at them, and finds them an easy prey. But as an invisible but powerful master of temptation he is, in his guise, and leadership, the chief and most dangerous of the three powers.

The world has no idea of what is coming in the area of spiritualistic delusions. But Scripture is clear that Satan will work in this way to deceive and destroy and deceive, even the elect, if he could. Satan will try everything in the last great struggle. He will personate apostles and prophets, and even Christ himself. Not impersonate—but personate—a distinct difference. Only those firmly grounded on the true Bible position of the work of demons and the work of spiritualistic powers will be safe in the last great conflict.

The most dangerous spiritualistic delusion in the Christian world today is the belief that the dead are not dead, opening up to the agency of evil spirits a gaping door of opportunity to sew heresy, false doctrine, and discord. The second most dangerous belief taught throughout Christendom is that God's Law has been abrogated and changed. Many other false beliefs come under the guise of spiritualism, but these aforementioned are the greatest delusions marketed by the enemy of souls. They are the doctrines held most common by all Christians, a belief that already unites Protestantism and Catholicism. Enormous will be the Satanic influence in the last moments of history, much of it unseen, yet dangerously effective.

The Great Profligate Woman/Babylon

The identification of Great Immoral Woman, is where modern students of prophecy often go awry, and especially as she is to be identified in the modern world. In spite of the fact that the Beast she rides upon is a real identifiable power, a real religio-political organization, and the other prominent figure of the triumvirate, Satan, who is also a real power and a force that is not only manifest globally, but in a way, universally—many “illicitly” and “illogically” make the woman, Babylon, into no real system or power at all like the others, but make her a “city,” like metropolitan Rome, or more currently make her into a “catch-all” for: “sin,” or “false religion.” Or even others make her into Catholicism, or “**Romanism**,” thus *making her the very same thing as the Beast Power*, when she is corporally a figure *separate* from the Beast, and modernly is an independent power in herself (Rev 17). In the end, she becomes the target of the Beast when it

comes into league with the ten horns, and so Babylon, or the woman, cannot consistently be the same as the Beast, and thus turn upon herself!

What is commonly ignored, or momentarily forgotten, even by Adventist expositors, is that the sections of *Revelation* overlap, or recapitulate, much like the cyclical beast appearances in the book of *Daniel*, recounting history repeatedly, and using similar figures, but expressed in each series with a new parabolic scenario. In Daniel 2: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, etc. appear on the world scene, but in the next series, the prophecy does not start over with an entirely new series of nations, but the previous ones are recapitulated, with new or added details, details that update the same, objective, "Beast," to the newer, "metamorphic," or current model.

Relationship Between Revelation 13 and 17

But, strangely, many Adventists and prophetic interpreters do not consistently honor the same principle in the *Revelation* series of symbolic figures. Many Adventist expositors correctly teach that the first beast of *Revelation* 13 is Pagan and Papal Rome, and agree that the second and separate two-horned beast is the United States of America and its Protestant undergirding. They, therefore, also accept that the second beast enforces the dogma and authority of the first beast, and causes the world to be "marked" with the *mark* of the first beast.

But the same obvious relationship is not taken as true regarding the woman of *Revelation* 17, a corporate and national figure, *physically separate from the Beast* she rides in concert with, who is allied with the Beast Power which supports her in her policies (and she the same with the Beast) in the very same way that the first and second beast in Rev 13 relate to each other in their alliances and policies. She, a great world buyer and seller of commerce, who lives in the lap of luxury, is not a horn or limb growing out of the original Beast, or old world, as in all the others heretofore, but is corporally separate from the beast, yet works religiously and politically in league with it. She rises "independent," of it, which is more than even the first clue given about her.

The list that follows clearly identify her with the United States of America and the Protestants of the world found in her midst that will eventually

turn apostate, or religiously immoral. Both powers, though devotedly religious, the first beast and the second beast are both tied to national, secular powers of state, who are aligned with their particular political “seats” of authority.

Prophetic Updates

Another important prophetic tool utilized in prophetic exposition is the modernization of prophecy that is astutely built into the figures of Revelation. Revelation was exquisitely crafted to make itself useful for Christians in all the times of the Christian dispensation. While prophecy cannot have too many fulfillments, and thus a “wax nose,” it does have at least two facets, backed by inspiration, of type and anti-type. There are many examples of this, but for the sake of time, we will not step aside on that and extrapolate fully. But one example we will mention is Jesus’ words in Matthew 24, which we are told is applicable to both the destruction of Jerusalem, and the time of the end—both at the same time.

All of us, I would assume are acquainted with the modern phenomenon of “updates.” My computer, my phone, my iPad is in an almost constant state of updating. Current changes of digital circumstances require adjustment for it to work properly. The point is, that updates are not really a new thing.

The world of prophecy can sometimes be seen to present itself in the same way. The beasts, that represented the nations of the world in Daniel’s day and forward, are seen to morph or change with the passage of time, appropriate to the current historical changes taking place. It is even sometimes the same original beast that goes through metamorphosis, changing over time. The beast first looks like a leopard, then gets the feet of a bear, or the mouth of a lion, has various heads, wings, emergent horns, and horns that pluck out other horns. Toward the end, it has become a rather ungainly creature, to say the least, but it is miraculously representative of the changes to the world map. Prophecy is ingenious, because it even *predicts* the updates, regularly.

Therefore, what might have been “Rome” in the Middle Ages, read very appropriately to the times, might show up a little different when attached to our current and modern world; with very large adjustments to the world map coming in the current day. The discovery of the new world, is certainly part of this major adjustment, but miraculously, the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation seem to

update quite perfectly even in this circumstance for prophetic purposes. Only God and His Spirit could script such a plan and so package the accurate unfolding of truth.

In Revelation this beast (that is taken from Daniel's prophecies) appears in Revelation 13. It is the first beast, which we have just established, that takes us to the final form of Roman Christianity, in its papal phase. But that Beast power is followed by a *second* beast power, but NOT ANOTHER HORN OR APPENDAGE COMING OUT OF THE FIRST BEAST, or the European nations, but a *second* beast, arising out of the earth or the uninhabited world, that works in league with the first beast and promotes its dogmas and marks. The Lamb-like beast eventually changes its actions and becomes repressive and threatening in its policies, and in its collusion and cooperation with the first Beast. Most Adventists recognize the first Beast as papal Roman Catholicism, and the second Beast clearly as the United States and its eventual actions as an apostate form of Protestantism.

Thus in Rev. 13:

- The first beast of Rev. 13 has his seat in Rome (waters (13:1); old world)
- The second beast has her seat in America: (wilderness; waters; new world)

But when we come to the parallel sequence of matters, recapitulated in Revelation 17, expositors abandon all sense of propriety and order, and make Babylon, or the Great Profligate Woman, who is a separate figure, and correlate to the same FIRST and SECOND beast of Rev. 13, into the papacy, or the city of Rome, or whatever. The city of "Babylon," or the Rome that may have been in the picture in the Middle Ages, is now, in the newer and broader world, another thing altogether in Revelation 17. Rome is no longer the same woman, or the city, that it once was.

Instead of Rome, one should see in this new figure, of the Babylonian woman, the rise of America, just as you have in Revelation 13, with the First Power followed by the Second Power, which work together. But, interpreters don't follow the same obvious relationship in Revelation 17, with the first Power that is in cooperation with a distinct, second Power. This inconsistent and disorderly interpretational departure for how the matter should be applied in the



prophecy, is reprehensible scholarship of the worst kind, and constitutes a total disregard of the prophetic UPDATE.

Let us list the characteristics of the profligate power, Babylon, to seek the parallel identity of this “new” world power that appears on the scene:

The Great Profligate Woman (Characteristics):

1. **She Comes From the Wilderness.** The Second Beast of Rev. 13, or the “Babylonian Power” rises from the “earth,” (Rev. 13:11-18), comes from new or “uninhabited portions of our globe,” or the “wilderness.” The Apocalyptic Babylonian Woman, is seen by John, riding on the Beast (in league with, but steering, and supported by), as coming *from* “the wilderness (17:3).

The common definition for “wilderness” is “a tract of land uncultivated and uninhabited.” This woman does not come from the Old World, but from the New.

Even in the passage, Isaiah 21, where the “Babel is Fallen, is fallen” phrase is based and is found, has the heading in most Bibles as “the *Oracle Concerning the Wilderness of the Sea.*” The woman obviously represents a power that appears from outside the European and Asian cirques, makes a separate beginning out of nowhere, springing up out the earth or from sparsely inhabited wilderness territory, much like the American continents. It is like the Beast goes “across the gulf” to meet his escort, picks her up, and comes back.

2. She sits in the midst of MUCH water.

As we are told, the waters represent the nations of the inhabited earth,¹⁹⁶ and she, Babylon, is characterized as situate among or in the midst of them. This could be true of any nation on the earth, but is not true of all nations, that they are sitting directly in the midst of the MOST prolific waters of the earth, *visa vi*, the Atlantics, and the mighty Pacific. She is



¹⁹⁶ Revelation 17:15

laid out from “sea to shining sea.” Remember, in the movements of apocalyptic prophecy, the symbols move from local, to world-wide.

3. **She is an incredibly rich and prosperous commercial power,**

... affluent, and beautiful. Modern students of prophecy sometimes do not understand the full meaning of the word: “harlot,” or “whore,” as it is used at times in biblical settings. It does not always mean in an *exclusive* sense, an immoral woman, in every situation.¹⁹⁷

The common word in Greek for the idea: “to sell,” is “porne” or in the nominative form, *porneo*. So, some sentences in which this word is used might have actually nothing to do with feminine prostitution at all. In that way, anyone selling most anything, would be practicing “prostitution.”

It is true of prostitution, that a woman “sells” herself, and this meaning of immorality is not lost in the prophecy. But a particular aspect that is prominent in the passage, and added in several clear definitions given in the text, is that this nation is particularly rich and affluent as a consequence, and is engaged mightily in commercial ventures with the other nations, nations coming to her shores with commercial wares, especially the ones listed in chapter 18. Vatican City is not known as a commercial giant! But America is.

The list in chapter 18, (28 things, 4x7), is not given to equate with religious doctrines, (a hard sell, to me!) but to highlight her commercial standing in the world. All of the items are luxury items, except things like wheat, which is a luxury item there, because Babylon has so much of it. Even a few years ago the only nations that had more wheat than they needed were the U. S., Canada, and Australia. She is prosperous beyond measure, and she can boast that she is living in luxury, and is no widow.

In the list are cosmetics, and everything “dainty, and goodly.” In the last century (ca. 1980) it was estimated that Americans spent 22 Billion annually just on cosmetics, an amount that would have fed the hungry in the world. That figure today would likely be 100 billion. Americans treat their pets far better than the third world treats their human needy. We are not against cosmetics, or

¹⁹⁷ Or, at least, it has an extended meaning. Cf. Isaiah 23:16-18 where in a passage very similar to Revelation 17, the “harlot,” i.e. the city of Tyre, returns her “wages,” to “the Lord!”

pets, but a country that is able to place pace-makers in cats, by the multiplied thousands, is not a third world country!

4. She reigns over the kings of the earth, but not with imperial power, or force, but by her wine, and her wiles, and her beauty.

This nation described is different in her form of government, because she “reigns” over kings, but yet she is not a “queen,” though she lives like one. From the prophecy of Daniel 2 we know that no nation will ever again reign in absolute and despotic and imperial fashion, for the part iron and part clay representation of the world map sees no true government that has absolute and kingly power over a world and global society. But she, Babylon, reigns, obviously, in respect to social and political influence, commercial alliance; having a softer, non-aggressive, Monroe doctrine type of seductive power, that appears attractive and desirable in its initial form.

5. She is nevertheless “great,” and is a “global” power.

That the great profligate woman represents a global power, needs comment on its own. This designation, of “great,” and “reigning over the kings of the earth,” places this nation as a nation with the greatest global influence, particularly with the mention of “kings,” a political influence then which narrows the field considerably as to the possible identity of this power.

There is only one nation on earth today that holds this title and position. That is the United States of America. The president of the United States is sometimes called the president of the world. Yassir Arafat, in 1991, referred to Washington D. C., as: “the New Rome.”¹⁹⁸

6. She is a separate power from the “Beast” power.

Though the profligate woman “rides the great and terrible Beast,” she is corporally *separate* from it. This important factor is ignored by commentators left and right, but is nevertheless a distinct and specific marker that should be recognized in the prophetic identity. Most expositors, clump all general evil into the one woman, Babylon, or adulterate or generalize the symbol into Roman Christianity, or the place, Vatican City, or to the Roman Empire, and such.

¹⁹⁸ *Newsweek*, Aug. 12, 1991, p. 33.

The woman, which obviously represents a nation with political standing, who “reigns” over nations, does not rise as a horn, or appendage out of the European landscape. She rises out of obscurity, is a body *separate* from the Beast, and the other nations, because these all turn against her in the end. She is a “new” and separate force upon the world scene, yet becomes dominant, and in the end, becomes both seductive, and manipulative, in her policies.

7. She declares and boasts of her “independence.”

In the descriptions given in Revelation 18, the woman, Babylon, is not only an affluent, commercial giant, living with all things “dainty and goodly,” and dressed in the most expensive fashion, but she is quite proud of it, as well. She is no widow. She not only “declares” her independence, but she even “boasts” about it.

In biblical times, a woman had no standing, left to herself. Women had no occupations, no rights to own property, and no vote in politics. For sustenance, they either needed to have a husband, or, if not, they must beg, or turn to prostitution for their living. The greatest fear to a woman, in those days, was to be left a widow, for such a woman had no sustenance, or living.

But this woman, is both rich, and desirable, and is even courted by kings. She well represents the American nations, independent, resourceful, and admired, resting securely between their shores, safe from war and hardship, and living in luxurious comfort, and at the same time being the envy of the world.

8. She is a represented by a woman.

The fact that this nation is represented by a woman is interesting from several angles. All the other nations of prophecy, the kings of the earth, are usually represented as animals: leopards, bears, lions, and the like, even angry goats with horns, or strong rams, and such, that are the normal characterizations.



But the woman, just as a woman, seems to speak of a gentler, kinder, softer and lamb-like creature or nation, one that one would think would not really rule over others, with ill-intent. I know the modern feminist would not like this characterization,

they prefer an Amazon-type, a powerful, and liberated woman, but I am only speaking here of the prophetic and cultural setting of the Bible, the view of women then, and why this woman is different from women of the past..

Women do have incredible power, power they are given to use in every appropriate aspect, and in their role they are essential to our world in the greatest of measures. The hand that rocks the cradle indeed rules the world, and their contribution and vote should be equal in every way possible. But what is surprising here, is that the woman seems to be gender appropriate for our modern era, is liberated, and successful, but other than that, on the flip-side, “profligate” and “selfish.”

But what is also to be noticed here, is that a woman is chosen to represent what seems to be America, just as a woman has even been chosen by other nations to represent America, as it stands in New York harbor, innocent like- and lamb-like, hospitable, inviting the tired and huddled masses, the poor, longing to be free, to her shores. The woman at first is lamb-like, and innocent, before she changes to entirely something else, just as in the second beast of Revelation 13 so changes as well.

9. The United States is the Modern Home of Confused Religion

Another reason a woman is used in prophecy is that a woman represents a church, or the religious aspect in prophecy. A pure woman (Rev. 12) represents a pure church, a profligate woman represents an impure one.

The United States, because of her traditional stand in her constitution, that ensures the rights of religious liberty, and separates the church from the state, has also set up the circumstance where all facets of religion, good and even illicit, can be given license to thrive there.

In the Middle Ages in Europe and even in the Reformation era there was little choice of religion. It was either the church of Rome, or, if one dared, one could go with the various Protestant developments that came into Christendom. But pure, biblical religion was largely driven underground for centuries.

But with the American continent opening up and offering religious opportunity or freedom, every religion was allowed to flourish. Meaning well, America is in a large measure the cause of the proliferation of hundreds of religious faiths. Though faith should never be forced, and this is right,

nevertheless the light of prophecy is correct in assigning to the American freedoms and ideals, the circumstance where religion has also become adulterated and confused, and this confusion of religion is very much attached to the great prostitute, the great profligate woman, and the “conflicting creeds of Christendom.”

10. The United States, will eventually attempt to force “Babylonian” doctrine upon the world.

The role of the United States making the world drunk, and thereby seducing it into confusion, and enforcing and encouraging the world to worship the image of the beast, and to drink the intoxicating “wine” of Babylon, is described in *both* Revelation 13, and 17. The nation, apocalyptic Babylon, the Revelation tells us, will act similar to ancient Babylon, as required by the metaphorical principle of prophetic symbolism.

Babylon, attempted to force the three Hebrews, and the representatives of all the nations, to worship the “image of the Beast (Daniel 3),” and thus break God’s True Law. Babylon (Belshazzar) attempted to drink from the sacred cups of the temple and thus blaspheme Heaven’s True God. Apocalyptic Babylon, same cup in hand, will fall because of these same violations toward God’s Law, through forcing the world into honoring an “idol”¹⁹⁹ Sabbath.

11. When the plagues fall, the nations of the world will turn on Babylon.

At the end, the nations of the east, will have “buyer’s remorse,” or the “walk of shame,” and see they have been misled. This is what is described in Revelation 17.²⁰⁰ God’s people will at first be blamed for the trouble, and the nations will seek to destroy them, but in the end Babylon, in reflexive manner, will be “burnt” with fire, and national apostasy will spell national and world ruin. This will be Armageddon. This is the only scenario of the details of Rev. 17 that makes sense. The nations of the world and Europe (ten kings), and even the Beast, turn on the woman at the end. This precipitates Armageddon.

Writes, Ellen White:

When our nation, in its legislative councils, shall enact laws to bind the consciences of men in regard to their religious privileges, enforcing Sunday observance, and bringing oppressive power to bear against those who keep the

¹⁹⁹ EGW, The Signs of the Times, May 26, 1898; also Last Day Events, p. 145.

²⁰⁰ Revelation 17: 14-18.

seventh-day Sabbath, the law of God will, to all intents and purposes, be made void in our land; and national apostasy will be followed by national ruin.²⁰¹

Babylon, then, is in the **national** sense, speaking of: the United States of America.

The 2nd Angel's Message, and the repeated message found in Revelation 18:1 ff. is:

Babylon is fallen, is fallen, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. (Rev. 14:8)

Her fornication, it says. The “her” is the identical figure as found in Revelation 17. Revelation 13, 14, and 17 and 18, are all speaking of the same thing. It is just another parallel series starting in 17:1 and forward.

So, who is this Babylon it is speaking of? It is not a conglomerate of all evil, or the symbol for sin, or for all false religion or Christianity—nationally speaking, at least. Sin exists everywhere on earth, not just at Babylon. By pure, metaphoric symbolism, it is speaking of a particular power, that many Adventist theologians refuse to identify, leaving obscure the identity of Babylon, sending it into the clouds, and lumping everything into “sin,” and “falsity,” when prophecy intends to identify an apocalyptic and real counterpart to the real nation of Babylon, that in the end-times will, in turn and in like fashion, act like Babylon did of old.

America and Babylon

There is no real way to consistently make any other power than the United States and its Apostate Protestantism (Not yet, today, yet, but in her final manifestation, of course) as antitypical and apocalyptic Babylon. Especially, is this true, when processing this conclusion in consideration of the following quotes:

²⁰¹ SDA Bible Commentary 7:977.

“As America, the land of religious liberty, shall unite with the papacy in forcing the conscience and compelling men to honor the false Sabbath, the people of every country will be led to follow her example.” (6T 18)

“She made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” (Revelation 14:6-8). How is this done? By forcing men to accept a spurious Sabbath.” (8T 964)

“The Sabbath question is to be the issue in the great final conflict in which all the world will act a part.” (6T 352)

“Foreign nations will follow the example of the United States. Though she leads out, yet the same crisis will come upon our people in all parts of the world.” (6T 395)

Who, is it who forces all nations to drink of the wine? Answer: **Babylon**

Who will lead out and force all nations to drink of the wine? **The United States**

What is the name of the power that the Bible says will force the conscience and cause all nations to desecrate the Sabbath? **Babylon**

What is the name of the power that forces the earth to force men to accept a spurious Sabbath? **The United States of America.**

Therefore, we can build a simple syllogism:

- America is the nation that forces other nations to drink the wine of passion. (6T 18)
- Babylon is the nation that forces other nations to drink the wine of passion. (14:2)

Therefore: **America is Babylon.**²⁰²

We are told that: “national apostasy will be followed by national ruin.” The “ruin” describes the fall of a “national” power. These words are describing

²⁰² In the end this would include all Protestants or religionists who are allied with her in her actions and policies.

the “fall of Babylon,” and is doing so in the context and time of the last, final message to the world.

Note also that we are now living in the time where the U.S. has world dominance. Not that long ago, she did not. She reigns over the kings of the earth, not imperially, as the nations in the Daniel 2 image, but in influence and luxury. So logically, Babylon and America (nationally) and “apostate Protestantism” (religiously) are somewhat synonymous. The Beast is the influence and standing of papal Catholicism, another current and modern reality. We are living in the last times, it would certainly appear, by the developments seen within both of these national and religious entities. Add Satan’s spiritual delusions already on the march, and the three-fold conspiracy is well afoot.

The General Spiritual Degeneracy of Protestant America

Babylon, therefore, has a definite identity. In the modern prophetic scenario, it is identified with the United States of America. The United States fits the prophetic description, with her affluence and list of luxuries, to a tee. But also is her fast-sliding and moral fall, evident today in a thousand ways. Mainly responsible for the fall of Babylon, are the “Protestants of the United States.” As the capitol of Protestantism, but welcoming a “Babylon” of religions, the prophetic scenario works out fatally clear.

Note that the figure of the “woman,” is described with feminine pronouns, (of course) but what we are trying to see is that this makes her notably different from the previous **king**doms, that are more masculine, or given wild-animal descriptions—kings of the earth, and so forth. She is not a horn, or appendage, that rises out of the metamorphic Beast. The newer nation that comes to light is gender modern, religiously modern, and politically modern. She appears attractive and harmless—at first. She is not a queen, or of the monarchical sort, in the purest sense, because the modern world has few kings and queens anymore. But her affluence and dignity is revered and respected by kings and presidents, and she has become a very commercially prosperous woman, popular, and powerful, both politically and religiously. But in the end she will be fallen, and corrupt, and especially as a result of her eventual religious in-toleration, she will finally be punished.

“Babylon” and “Babylonian”

But one will naturally ask, “Which is it?” “Is Babylon apostate Protestantism, or is it the United States of America?” The answer is both, or as Ellen White says it; “The Protestants of the United States.” This is both. The same is said of the two beasts of *Revelation* 13. Sometimes it is said that the second beast is apostate Protestantism. Other times it is written, or is claimed to be, the United States of America. But the truest answer is that it is in a sense both, because each major corporate power in the end has both a “religious side,” and a “political side.”

The same can be said of Romanism, or Catholicism. As an organization or construct, Catholicism is both “religious,” and “political.” It is a global church, yet it is also a nation, and has a political capital, Vatican City State. The United States is a nation, politically, but religiously, it is known also as the home of Protestantism, and America as a nation was founded on largely Protestant values. The Puritans and Pilgrims fled to America from the old world, to find the religious and civil freedoms found in America. So there are elements of both.

But this doesn't mean that the US is all there is of apostate Protestantism, or in a sense is the US now even exclusively Protestant. As a nation, America has for many years now been reaching across the gulf. And not all Protestants are found in Babylon, and not all of Babylon is Protestant. Anyone, no matter where in the world they live, if they have “Babylonian” allegiances are to be included as “Babylonian.” But they are not specifically “Babylon.” The apostate Protestant leaders of America are Babylon, at least at first. But Protestants, world-wide, that will be led on by leaders in the United States will have become “Babylonian” in their sympathies and loyalties, and be part of Babylon.

There are Catholic believers, as individuals, living throughout the world, no doubt, most, in fact, are found scattered throughout the nations, but their capitol is located in Europe and Italy. And there are multitudes of Protestants living in other countries of the world; but America is the modern capitol of Protestantism, a free country created on republican, Protestant, and constitutional, bill of rights principles; and thousands came to America and still come there because of these values and the civil and religious freedoms America offers.

And we must hasten to add, not all Catholics are apostate, nor are all Protestants apostate. As organizations, corruptions are coming into them, and are expected to reside in them in the future, but at this present writing this is not complete in any of these bodies; because God is calling elect ones out of them.

One doesn't have to live in the US to be "Babylonian," but the United States as a nation seems to be synonymous with prophetic Babylon in its *leadership* role. But that is the difference. Once a predominant bastion of Protestantism, a land of freedom, and a religious refuge, especially from Rome and failed mainline religion, prophecy determines that America will nationally turn from the once, innocent, and welcoming lamb-like nation, to being of a nation acting like a "repressive" Dragon, working in league with, or "riding upon the Beast." But while "riding the Beast," she is at the same time steering it through her seductive powers, but yielding to the direction the beast (promoting its image) is taking, because both powers have now reached across the gulf (the ocean of separation [the Atlantic?]) and religious philosophy), and are largely in alliance and agreement.

But the point we aim to maintain, is that modern Babylon in prophecy has a semi-definite identity. It is not only a conglomerate of generic evil. There is evil all over the world. The penchant is to make Babylon only a generic description of all "evil," or a total melting pot of all "false religion" in general. This almost totally dilutes the prophetic intent into nothingness.

Babylon, even in Old Testament times was not the only place that was evil or had false religion. There is no way! Apostate forms were everywhere. But Babylon was a specific, dominant, national entity, or a conglomerate of "united states," called satraps, that acted significantly, publicly, and historically in regard to the church of Israel. Babylon made an image to be worshipped, issued "Sunday legislation," persecuted God's people, forced upon them Babylonian dogma and propaganda, and attempted to rule the world both religiously and politically against them. Babylon did this with little respect to their religious freedom and values, or regard for the necessary and vital separation between the church and the state.

The Fall of Babylon

The question emerges, “Does this mean that America, as a nation, will fall in a temporal sense, in the future?” In some form, in the last moments of time, it seems, it will, and especially because of its apostate Protestant actions, its spiritualistic delusions, and through its sympathies with Rome, it will fall, at least in the last remnant of time. “Babylon” does fall in some way, for Scripture and prophecy are vividly clear on that. But we will have to wait and see when the time comes, to fully understand what is included in “Babylon’s fall.”

But we must hasten to report that Babylon will not fall alone, but will be accompanied in its fall by all of the other earthly, apostate forms as well, along with the sympathetic, or wicked cities and villages of all the nations. This is why the final message to come out of Babylon is so important, for all to be warned of the intents that will lead all nations into apostasy, and calling all to escape and avoid Babylon’s demise.

The “National” Identity of Babylon is Inside Information

As for how complete will be Babylon’s fall, and what actual events will happen in America, and in other world locations, this author will not personally predict or attest, or place in print. He does not want to be known for calling down judgment on anyone, or particularly, his beloved country. Treason and doomsdaying are not his goals. Far from it! *No one should probably ever go out and announce to the world publicly that the United States is Babylon and it will fall.* They should instead go out and warn the world that the false forms of religion will fall if they do not reform and come away from those forms. That is the message we are told to give to the world. The call for spiritual renewal always comes before any such thing can happen, anyway, and spiritual reform is always the goal, and the focus. But God wants us to know what to expect, he wants us to know the answer when asked, and He wants us to know who the players are, so we can be ready for the future. But in knowing the facts, our outward focus should never be seen to the public as treasonous, or unkind, for really it is not, but rather and always, it should always be a redemptive one.

All we can know for sure, is that the Scriptures have never been misleading and false about anything, rightly understood. The Scriptures, authored by the Spirit of God, are responsible for these predictions and warnings, and my

only desire and purposeful conviction is to point out to all men and women their serious import, appeal to God's people to repent of wrong beliefs and false dogma, and come away from it, and stay near to Christ and His truth until heaven intervenes.

Order of Events

After the false revivals of Christendom, after the Loud Cry of the Latter Rain, and after the former times of trouble, and when the final Sabbath test is finally forced and completed upon the inhabitants of the earth, probation will close. Then will come the seven last plagues. It appears likely that the ultimate fall of Babylon, and the Babel scattering will happen near the final end of the Plagues, and during the last waning moments of the great "Time of Trouble."

Actually, the first of the super-triumvirate to obviously and visibly fall will likely be the apostate, organizational form of Catholicism. At least, this is hinted strongly in the 5th and previous plague, to *Armageddon* (6th plague), described as an attack particularly aimed at "the throne of the Beast." This is probably representing a real event.

The next and almost immediate follow, will be the fall of apostate Protestantism, and its home, or "seat," The United States of America. Prophecy seems to indicate that a cloud of infamy may cross the continent in last vestiges of the struggle. The world will turn in anger at the woman, Babylon, for they are incensed at her, because of the policies that she deceived them with, and thus she is finally blamed for the outpouring of the terrible plagues (buyers remorse). But the final verses of chapter 16 seem to indicate that the fall of Babylon is coincident to the fall of **all** the nations. With the outcome of the terrible plagues decimating the earth, one place will look pretty much as bad as the other. It will not be where one is, that matters. It will be with Whom one is, that matters.

"National Apostasy will be followed by national ruin." This seems to mean that the fall of Babylon is more than a spiritual fall, or a general spiritual declension. It means what it claims, national *ruin*. Apostasy is the "spiritual" part, but ruin, is the "physical" part. And God may use the non-Christian caliphates of the east to be His "servants," just as occasioned the fall of Neo-Babylon in Bible times, and thus allow them to accomplish certain aggressions on American shores and in other places. But we will have to wait and see if this is what is meant.

The Nations as God's Servants

In the Old Testament, in a multiplicity of instances, God allowed Israel and Judah, to be razed and punished because of their sins, yet brought it about not by direct divine intervention, per se, but through the agency of these similar, “un-sanctified,” “uncircumcised,” “non-Israelite” forces (Babylon, Assyria, Syria, Edom, Moab, Egypt, Midian, and Philistia). These are mostly non-Judeo-Christian nations still today [many devoted to Islam?], etc.). Almost all of these nations in Israel’s day were “kings of the east,” because the Mediterranean was west, and in the modern world, the “West,” is still *west* from the “fullness of ten” national groups of Europe and Asia. So the nations of the east, Europe and Asia, remain largely eastward in direction: especially when considering the position of the American continents. The representative highways of commerce, therefore, in the new, updated world, would be in the physical sense, the great oceans, the Atlantic and Pacific, as it were, and not the literal *Great River Euphrates* in the Middle East. Due to the principle of enlargement the river is symbolic of the “commercial and spiritual alliances,” of the nations, trading their wares on the modern world map..

Referring to Christ and His angels as the “kings of the east,” has always seemed like an awkward comparison, and not a true metaphoric representation of symbols, to the present author. Cyrus, Darius, and the Medo-Persian “kings of the east” were the “Servants of God,” but they were not: “God.” But there is no theological danger in thinking of the “kings of the east,” as Christ and the angels, for at the end Jesus will come from the east, and all the nations of the earth will fall at the same time, anyway, and God’s people will be delivered.

The Euphrates would appropriately and symbolically refer to the modern, trading highways, such as the Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans (So, the great immoral woman is be situated in the midst of “much water,” indeed). In *Revelation 18*, the merchants of the earth mourn that they can no longer trade their luxuries and wares with the fallen, and “burning,” city/state, and commercial giant, which is described as “sitting in the midst of much water, or among the nations, and therefore, is laid out “from sea to shining sea.”

Hope for America and the World

It is not the purpose of this expose' to make a prediction, or even to entertain a pre-disposition of the failure of American Christianity or nationality, or to castigate America particularly, or to encourage or celebrate in any way its future demise. I have every hope and wish that this prophecy would never be fulfilled, or ever come true in that way. This author is as patriotic and hopeful for the American nation as any American on the face of the earth. He does not wish for the prophetic predictions to come true, or to contribute in any way to its fall. His love for this nation is powerful and strong, and his solicitude for its survival knows no bounds.

The same goes for any religion, Catholic or Protestant, or any in their midst. It is the love of all that makes us Christian, not hatred or animosity toward them. But God calls all away from corruption and error, wherever it may be found. That is the message of mercy that goes out to all, to come away from the error and danger that exists in Christianity and religion today. Those in love with the world, or with falsity, the love of sin, or mere popularity, cannot be ready to pass safely through the days ahead.

Apostasy Leads to Ruin

But there certainly can be found little cause for rejoicing in regard to the general moral direction of America, or any modern nation that has turned its back on the true God of heaven. By all means, "God bless America." But it is "righteousness that exalts a nation,"²⁰³ and when any nation tramples with their unholy feet upon the Commandments of God, and they like Belshazzar, drink of the sacred vessels (notice the woman in Rev. 17, like Belshazzar, holds a golden cup in her hand, full of blasphemy) it cannot as a nation succeed long after that. It cannot. Apostasy leads to ruin. It did in the time of the Judges, it did for Israel, and it did for Judah, and it did for Jerusalem, and it did for Babylon. It has always been that way, and is a rule and principle that never errs. It can be no other way, and history exonerates this conclusion over and over again.

²⁰³ Proverbs 14:34

These three, the Beast, the Dragon, and the False Prophet, someday, should they become totally apostate, will be the *major* players, as directed in this message (*The Bible*) which is especially given to the Judeo-Christian world, which world is that most connected with the religion of the Bible, and its prophecies. Prophecy teaches that one nation or kingdom (Prophetic *Babylon*) is in the final days to be recognized as a leading player in these movements. In the case of “Babylon,” it is largely the United States and her once Protestant government authorities, and its ecclesiastical leaders that are predicted to do this.

But one doesn't have to be from the United States to be “Babylonian.” False Protestant religion is not only found in America. It is found throughout the world. It is even found in Adventism. The same is true of Catholicism. One doesn't have to live in Rome to be Catholic. Nor do most Catholics even live in Rome. But, all of apostate Babylon, or apostate anything, wherever it is found in the world, will ultimately come to ruin.

Organizational Entities, Not Individuals

God has His faithful in all bodies, and this we must strongly emphasize. So, while the larger, supervising powers and movements are the ones clearly identified to us, we cannot emphasize enough that condemnation or judgment must always be withdrawn from the *individuals* of any faith. This is why the identities are for the most part not denominationally specified, and are only semi-specific and non-individualized. God has faithful ones in every denomination or faith system, yet they are invited to come out of them in the end, and stand up for truth when the real tests come. But before then, they must always be free of any condemnation and censure, for God never saves on a denominational basis, but on the basis of personal and living faith. But how can one come *out* of Babylon if one does not know what Babylon is?

Exiting Babylon

The call to leave Babylon does not mean one should come out or leave America, or any specific nation, or that the God's judgment falls exclusively on “Babylon.” It does not mean that America is alone in its fall, and that everywhere

else would be a safe haven from the final holocausts. All falls at once. A case can be made, that *Babylon*, **in the end**, is everyone that has “Babylonian allegiances,” both leaders and followers, so in the end, all such are included then in *Babylon*. The sympathizers with false religion assemble as a confederate force of all false Christianity. But the call to come out of Babylon, is of a most serious nature, and the Bible infers that coming out of Babylon is a life and death issue. The call is not trite, casual, or light. Only those who have true faith in Christ, and have responded to the call, and decided to keep all of God’s Commandments, and have safely made their exit from *Babylon*, will receive the privilege of eternal life.

Heaven can never accept the person who is in rebellion against God for any reason, for if such enter the kingdom the problem of sin would remain, or would re-appear. Those who are not willing, when instructed, to keep ALL of God’s Commandments, cannot receive salvation. They cannot. Heaven is not secure if people that come there are hesitant, or on the fence about the Law of God. Only those who would rather die than knowingly commit a direct breach of God’s Law, will have right to the Tree of Life (Rev. 22:14). The Law of God is the perfect test separating the faithful from the unfaithful. And that Law can only be kept by an abiding trust in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by His grace and His blood makes it possible.

The counsel and call to come out of Babylon, this author believes, is two-fold:

1. First, to separate oneself from the false Babylonian doctrines and false religious movements, that openly trample on the Law of God.
2. Second, to wisely leave the strictly metropolitan areas, if possible, and seek, with the help of God’s directions, rural retreats of safety.

Leaving the Cities

It has become a norm, in recent decades, to treat the counsel to leave the cities as an extreme and unnecessary measure. But the prophetic call is not put this way at all. The call to leave Babylon is treated as being of an urgent nature, not to be disregarded. The call is both spiritual and physical. The “partakers of

her sins,” is the **spiritual** part of the call, but to not “receive of her plagues,” is the **physical** part of the message.

The writer, Ellen White, gives repeated counsel and warning regarding the need for rural living in these final hours of this world’s history. If there is any warning given in clearer terms about preparing for the end-time, then I don’t know what it is. No physical preparation for the future time of stress is called for, except in this one regard. Seeking rural retreats and country settings for our families and children, though, is strongly recommended.

Adventists, becoming weary of waiting for the coming of Jesus, forget, or may choose to ignore these warnings; reasoning perhaps, that circumstances have changed, or the counsel is likely antiquated, or that it no longer applies in the modern world. This would likely be the same reasoning as the five foolish virgins in the parable. But the counsel may apply to our day, now, more than ever.

Says Ellen White: “As God’s commandment-keeping people we must leave the cities. As did Enoch, we must work in the cities but not dwell in them.”²⁰⁴ This is plain enough, and only one of many such recommendations.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Ellen White, *Last Day Events*, p. 96 (Ev pp. 77, 78; 1899).

²⁰⁵ “Out of the cities, is my message at this time. Be assured that the call is for our people to locate miles away from the large cities....” (*Last Day Events*, p. 95; MR 1518, May 10, 1906)

“The Lord calls for His people to locate away from the cities, for in such an hour as ye think not, fire and brimstone will be rained from heaven upon these cities....” (*Ibid*)

“The time is near when the large cities will be visited with the judgments of God. In a little while, these cities will be terribly shaken.” *7 Testimonies*, p. 83.

“Erelong there will such strife and confusion in the cities, that those who wish to leave them will not be able. We must be preparing for these issues. This is the light given to me.” *General Conference Bulletin*, April 6, 1903

“If in the providence of God we can secure places away from the cities, the Lord would have us do this. There are troublous times before us.” *2 Selected Messages*, p. 359

While one should not make extreme and unwise moves, the matter should be a prayerful one. The counsel is clear, that while the cities must be worked, they are to be worked, as we are told that Enoch did, from the outside, or the suburbs. God's people are to work for them, but not live in them. This is how Jesus modeled it, even commuting from Bethany, and growing up rurally as a child and youth (90% of his life in rural settings) and predominantly ministering in small towns and rural settings found in Galilee.

The original call for Israel to leave the city of Babylon, after the captivity, was largely ignored by God's people, to their great detriment. This circumstance is where the "Come out of Babylon" idea actually comes from. Most were comfortable where they were, and were later largely absorbed into the world at large.²⁰⁶ Lot's wife is a great example of refusing to really leave the city and its environment when God says to leave.²⁰⁷ God not only wishes us to be saved, but He wishes us to be safe. The failure of Adventist leaders to repeat the warnings that are given mercifully, to leave the cities, and to ignore the counsel that recommends rural living, and to say nothing of it, and teach only a spiritual coming out of Babylon and the cities it represents, is dangerous really, as well as being both disheartening, and reprehensible.

Nothing else can be done, except putting one's total trust in God and His angelic agencies. God is a majority. Jesus is our only "refuge, and strength, a very present help in trouble."²⁰⁸

It is at this climactic moment of history, during the seventh plague, that Jesus will come, and when Armageddon, as it were, is probably really "fought." This is when God's true church is threatened, and the nations are angry at them, and will seek their hurt. But this is also when Babylon will fall. At the same hour, the "cities of the nations" will fall, as well. Babylon the great, will "come into remembrance before God."²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ This caused huge problems for them later on, such as in the time of Esther and Mordecai.

²⁰⁷ Genesis 19:1-28; Luke 17:32

²⁰⁸ Psalm 46:1

²⁰⁹ Rev. 16:19

The Battle Cut Short

But it is of note that while Babylon falls, and the kings and other nations fall as well, there is no further description of an actual battle, with tanks and guns, as popularly conceived in Christendom. More of a “military” confrontation, perhaps, comes later, at the end of the Millennium, the passage sometimes called, the “Great Chicken Dinner,” described in *Revelation* 19 (except the chickens are the ones doing the eating!). Many believe this is the “real” Armageddon, and in that way they are probably largely right.

Anyway, the threat by the apostate forces, then, at the end of the millennium, as at the beginning, though real and earnest, is equally unsuccessful, and their rising to confront God and His people is proof to all that their repentance and characters are invalid or unchanged. The God of heaven will intervene once more, and rescue his beloved and faithful, Commandment-keeping church.

But these unsuccessful “battles” or “gatherings,” of the lost, are a perfect description of what happened at the two previous “falls” of Babylon. At Babel, there was a “gathering,” but the “battle” never really matured, or happened, because God intercepted and pre-empted their plans, and struck down their tower and city with one decisive blow.

Even at the second fall of Babylon, the Babylon of Belshazzar, the death blow came in one night, similar to how the book of *Revelation* describes it: “For “in one hour is thy judgement come.”²¹⁰ The Persian army dried up the Euphrates River (by partially diverting it), the inner gates stood wide open, and the city was taken “without firing a shot.” The pairing of the term: “Armageddon,” with the falls of the two Babylons in history, is an interpretation most informative to last-day Christians, because what we see is not a battle so much of the earthly sort with drones, guns, missiles, and grenades, as popularly conceived, but rather a gathering or confrontation from the hosts of darkness, aimed at the faithful, but

²¹⁰ Revelation 18:10 (KJV)

one that is quickly dispersed through a strategic attack of “shock and awe,” instigated by the God of heaven.

God’s People Delivered

While the enemies of God’s people may hold weapons in their hands, or as the book, “Great Controversy” describes it, “raised swords,” the threat will be only be a threat (though not a fake one, I would think—being similar to Israel pinned against the Red Sea, or the three Hebrews facing the furnace), but the “gathering” of Satan’s forces will be rendered ineffective. Loss of life for God’s people would accomplish nothing. The impending threat and doom exhibited by the forces of evil will be stayed, and providentially interrupted by the approach of the Lord from heaven. Their “swords” will fall powerless as straw. This will be the glorious outcome of the “battle” of *Armageddon*.

Armageddon comes at the end of the sixth plague, and feeds into the final seventh, in fact, it probably is in effect the seventh plague, because lightning, hail, and earthquake is what brought Babel down in the first confrontation, and what brings down Babylon in the end. So, we know that *Armageddon* is really the last “worldly” event to take place on this earth before Jesus comes and the earth is destroyed and is eventually made over new. This is why the saints are enjoined to keep their garments.

The *Fall of Babylon* and *Armageddon* are synonymous. While destruction goes forth upon this now evil, apostate power, it will not be alone in its demise. All the nations, all the disingenuous, all secularity, all wickedness, will fall together. Probation for this earth will have closed after the first plague, but at the very last, all the evil powers of this earth will fall at once, and then Jesus will come.

The Scattering at Babel (Armageddon)

Throughout sacred history the enemies of God's people have largely fallen as a result of their own choices and basically through their own instrumentality. It has become a study of the author to note how many times in "battle settings," the enemy confederacies that have beset God's people, have in the end turned on each other and destroyed one another, leaving actually little warfare for the sacred armies to do. The list of these encounters is growing. It was the case with armies arrayed against King Jehoshaphat,²¹¹ with the Moabites, the Ammonites, and those of Mt. Seir. In that case all the other *ites* turned on each other. It was the case with Gideon's sword. It was the case with Jonathan and his armor-bearer. It was the case with the Syrian armies in the time of Elisha. It happened with the papal armies against the blind general, Ziska, and his faithful army in the Hussite revolution, and has happened in a large number of other engagements.

"And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbor; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom." Isaiah 19:2

It is similar to what is described in the final chapters of the book: *The Great Controversy*, that when God's people are delivered, the deceived and apostate hordes, will in like manner turn against their former friends, chiding them for misleading them. Especially bitter is the reproach heaped upon false ministers, leaders who have disdained the Sabbath, and the true religion of the faithful. In like manner to these examples of the army of Mt. Seir destroying the Moabites, and the Moabites, turning against the Ammonites, or their former

²¹¹ 2 Chronicles 20:26

allies, and destroying each other (in three parts),²¹² so will the apostate of all faiths and religions turn on each other at Armageddon. The Great Apostate Woman also, is turned on by her former lovers (Revelation 17:16-18). They will all be scattered, until not one of them is left.

Though God could be just and actively work to destroy the wicked, it is not His preferred work and method. God is not willing that any should perish, but He, as a gentleman, stands back and lets men receive the rewards of their own making. It is largely the result of their own choice. The wicked fall into the snare of their own net. Saul seeks the witch of Endor, which makes him vulnerable to the armies of the Philistines. Haman hangs on the gallows made for

²¹² One wonders if this miracle of deliverance, fought in the “valley of ditches,” (the *Valley of Be-ra-cha*: 2 Chron: 20:26) might be what is being referred to as the “valley of Jehoshaphat” in the book of Joel [Joel 3:2; 12]. 2 Kings 3 describes the incident a little different, which includes Jehoram, the king of Israel, allied with Jehoshaphat, but with the same valley of ditches [2 Kings vs. 3:16, wrought through the agency of the prophet Elisha] filled with needed water for Jehoshaphat’s army, which looked like blood the next morning to the opposing armies, and which caused the threatening confederacy to strangely fly upon one another. But both accounts feature Jehoshaphat, a valley, filled of ditches, and both descriptions cite Moab, an eastern enemy, as one of the parties. If two different events, the place apparently was still the same.

At any rate, the circumstance is a notable example of where the “nations” turned on each other, and Israel (Judah), simply fighting with a choir of praise to God (reminiscent of the *Red Sea* singing; Rev. 15; Exodus 15), were miraculously delivered. This happened probably somewhere some distance from Jerusalem, in the southwestern regions of Palestine, the actual location (largely debated: proponents range from the Kidron Valley, to the Dead Sea, to most anywhere) not needed to appreciate the real significance of what happened there. The Chronicles narrative reports a three-way alliance between Mt. Seir, Ammon, and Moab (kings of the east) that came against Jehoshaphat (2 Chron 20:22,23): “*And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mt. Seir . . . For the children of Ammon and Moab stood against the inhabitants of Mt. Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them, and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another.*” NKJV

One can’t help but wonder what type of “spin” the “press secretaries” of these nations had to manufacture in answering the questions of the wives and families back home of why these three attacking armies had lost the battle, and had largely disappeared as a result, and why! “Well. . . the armies of Israel and Judah were singing, and . . . and —there were these ditches. . . and we thought. . . and. . . .”

Mordecai, Daniel's enemies put themselves in the Lion's den. They all made their choice, and they had to abide the consequences. Sin, by nature, brings its own dreadful end. Fearful will be the final, apocalyptic day of infamy, Armageddon. "This is very real," my friend, Walter, would say.

The War to End All Wars

After the millennium, will come the ultimate fall of the last remaining power of the unholy Triumvirate. The Beast and False Prophet (the disingenuous parts of Protestantism, and Romanism) are now gone, as entities cast, as it were, into the "Lake of Fire." But Satan and his host remain. The Great Apostate will be the last to receive his final reward. But at the end of the Millennium, Satan, and all "Satanism," will be thrown into the Lake of Fire, too, "where the beast and false prophet are;" a symbol actually for eternal death (not eternal torment). But we must notice that it is only the organizational entities that are prominent as "eternally burning" in the "hell-fire." They experience permanent annihilation in the Lake of Fire. According to the "perfective force," it is the entities themselves that are destroyed, never to appear or act again. Individuals are destroyed as well, but they don't burn forever. The point is they will never come back to life. It is their "smoke," the last vestige of their prior existence, that goes up forever. In other words, sin and sinners will be no more, dispensed with in permanent fashion. The defeat at "Gog and Magog," (Rev. 20) will end the last great "assembly" of false religion. Hallelujah!

This will be the last vestige of this world's tale of woe. But it won't be the last vestige of the Cross, and the story of Salvation. Those scars remain on the hands and feet of our Redeemer. "Salvation to our God," will be the song and science of the redeemed throughout all eternity. As the ending of that grand poetic climax of the book: *Great Controversy* reports: "One grand pulse of harmony will beat throughout the universe. The great controversy will be ended. Sin and sinners will be no more." Every knee shall bow, and tongue confess the Jesus, Christ, is Lord. All the holy and cleansed of the universe will declare that God is love! This will be the glorious and final outcome of the "Battle of Armageddon!"

10

CHAPTER 10:

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION FOR ARMAGEDDON

An Appeal From the Author

It may be going beyond the permission granted me, as author of this book, to address the reader on how to spiritually prepare for the end times, and the times of Armageddon. Such things are really personal matters, and it can be assumed the each person knows the drill, and most of you reading this do, and I don't want to sound condescending about it. Perhaps it is the "preacher" in me that cannot remain silent. But it seems inappropriate to close this Armageddon discussion without, at least, addressing the need to be spiritually prepared for the coming times. It is really the issue that is most important.

Spiritual preparation for the time of the end is the subject of books, not just a post-script, but with that being said, preparation is not at all that complicated. It is really a simple concept. But being prepared becomes complicated because of the complicated lives we all live, in the day and hour in

which we do, and because of the efforts of our adversary. So allow me make a few points relative to preparing for the future, though I would never pretend to be an expert on the subject. I covet and need these counsels as much as anyone. But I do, desperately, want to be ready.

The Need for Preparation

First of all, let me make the statement that preparation *is necessary*. This concern is largely overlooked today. The common adage given is that if you know Christ, you are saved, in that moment, and you are prepared for Jesus to come. And such a statement “can” be 100% correct, rightly understood. But the startling truth is, that the same statement “can” also turn out for some to be 100% false, and this is why:

In the famous *Sermon on the Mount*, Jesus warned that many will come to the end of their life, one in which they professed a relationship with Jesus, and practiced Christian ways their whole experience; even casting out demons, and performing miracles, and still will be found unworthy to enter the kingdom. To some of these folk, Jesus will sadly have to say: “I never knew you!”²¹³

There is a *Sermon on the Mount*, the one we just quoted from, given near the beginning of Christ’s ministry, and a *Sermon on the Mount* given at the end of His ministry, shared on the Mount of Olives, and also known as the “Olivet Discourse.” It is found in Matthew 24 and 25, and is especially all about how to be prepared. Chapter 25 gives three parables that Jesus told about such preparation, and all of the parables demonstrate how to prepare for Jesus’ Coming, and what to do in the meantime—while we wait for Him.

The lead parable is about the 10 bridesmaids, all representing the church. Five (half of the church) were not prepared for the coming of the Bridegroom, *and yet they all thought that they were*. But the Bridegroom came and the five “morons” (yes, the Greek word is *moros*, from which we get “moron.”), missed the wedding. So, there *is* a work of preparation that must take place, and because the wise knew this, and came prepared, and brought extra oil, they went safely into the wedding.

²¹³ Matthew 7:21-23.

Esther, spent several months of purification and preparation (oils), maybe even years, to prepare to be called by the “king.” Every type we have in Scripture about the Coming of Jesus speaks of preparation. The example in the Armageddon passage speaks of keeping our garments, and watching, staying awake, and being ready. So the watchword is: PREPARE. PREPARE. PREPARE!

Know Jesus Personally

The best way to be prepared, actually the only way to be prepared, is to learn to love and trust Jesus now. This may seem to be simple, and elementary, in word, and in a way it is. But really it is everything. Knowing Jesus is not just going to church, having a mental assent of His existence, and working hard at doing good to those around you. I strongly recommend all of these aspects, but knowing Jesus is practicing His presence every day, maybe spending time in the Bible and in Christian literature, surrendering to Jesus from morning to evening, and spending time in prayer each day.

These are things that all Christians know to do, but actually very few actually *do* them. Make this your priority and desire, to know Jesus. Books like “Steps to Christ,” or the Gospels of Mark, or John, are always a good start. You don’t have to study four hours every day, until maybe you want to. Just start with God, in the morning, or in the evening when you retire, and let your experience grow from this small mustard seed. Let it grow, only if it will, to the greatest of plants, not by guilt, but by desire, a desire that can only really come from His Spirit anyway. Nourish the *connection*, and don’t worry so much about the amount of time, or the rest!

Plead for God's Holy Spirit

We have been counseled to pray for God’s Holy Spirit, for without it we are nothing, “spiritually.” The Spirit is not an “option,” like you would add to your automobile purchase. People talk about the “aid” of the Holy Spirit. But the Spirit is not an “aid,” or a “subsidy.” The power of the Spirit is *everything*, and we must be completely full of it, or if we are not full of it, we are full of the other spirit, the unholy spirit, Satan.

The oil that the five wise bridesmaids had, symbolizes the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was the difference between the wise and the foolish. The Spirit is non-transferrable. You cannot take it from someone else, or give it to someone else. You either have it or you don't, yet you need it to go to heaven. Pray for and plead with your Heavenly Father for this essential gift, which He is more than willing to impart to His beloved sons and daughters.

Keep All of the Commandments as an Act of Delightful Service

Jesus said: "If you love me, keep my commandments."²¹⁴ It is not "legalism," to keep God's Commandments as an act of love and appreciation. In fact, the commandments came forth out of Jesus own mouth at Sinai, and Jesus claims them as His (My Commandments), and a true Christian will want to do anything that Jesus teaches or asks of them. The keeping of God's Commandments, all of them, through the Spirit, is what allows one to gain entrance to the heavenly kingdom.²¹⁵ Keeping God's Precepts, we are told, is a last-day test for all, and is very relevant in this book and in the time in which we are now living.

Stay Close to Your Church Family

Being active in your local church family is not just an optional practice, but probably an essential practice for every last-day Christian. If there is anything that is emphasized more by Jesus, I don't know what it is. He wants his followers to be one, in community, as He and His Father are one. This was His last prayer on earth (John 17). Strength to live aright, help to resist temptation, encouragement, and guidance—all that can come as a result of fellowship with other believers. Jesus sought this desperately in Gethsemane from His disciples, but was slighted and ignored. Please don't act the same way toward your fellow man, and so, thus treat Jesus, himself, the same way.

Many look at church fellowship as unnecessary for salvation, and in the strictest sense this might be true. They see problems in the church, hypocrisy or in-fighting, and so they use that as justification to excuse themselves from the

²¹⁴ John 14:15.

²¹⁵ Rev. 22:14 NKJV

society of others of like faith. But even though these circumstances are a part of the common problem of sin found within the ranks, what is needed are true examples of Christian living, faithful examples that serve amidst the church to counter-act this very work of evil and compromise. Just because Judas was a total hypocrite, and worshipped supposedly “in the church,” did not make Jesus the wrong one to follow.

You, whoever, you are, are desperately needed **in** the church, needed to encourage others to learn to live aright by your own example, or for you to learn how to live, by Jesus’ example. Look at Jesus’ example, not the problems of the hypocrites. There are enough of those to make you dizzy! But Jesus always had people hanging around him socially for the opposite reason. They saw something they liked, and wanted to learn how to be like Him. The church, Jesus taught, is His own body, and very precious, the *only object on which he bestows His supreme regard*. Be a part of the answer, not a part of the problem, and live socially, and sincerely, to serve others within and without the church. Be a true and dedicated Seventh-day Adventist Christian.

Leave Behind the World, the Pursuance of Materialism and things, and the Media Trap

Leave the world behind, in your living and amusements. The apostle John said: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in Him.”²¹⁶ The Apostle is not referring to wholesome recreation, or family fun of the right variety, or some extreme effort to remove from Christians the enjoyment of the simple pleasures of life. God created many things to be enjoyed, He wants us to be joyful, be healthy and be happy; and we need those warm fuzzies, and delights, the wholesome pleasures and joys given to us, in this arduous journey on this earth.

But there are traps, which are very powerful modern distractions and attractive amusements, that can turn out to be in the spiritual sense, deadly traps, in the end. The modern world is abundantly full of such things. The television set, the large and constant array of cinematic material, the all-absorbing pursuit of material things, the selfish seeking of personal appetite or comfort, the acquiring of luxury vehicles or property: all of these things and others can fast

²¹⁶ (I John 2:15)

turn the active Christian into a selfish Laodicean, instead of a sacrificial missionary. John, the apostle says these traps fall into three categories: the pleasures of the flesh, the attraction of material possessions, and the selfish pursuit of popularity (I John 2:16).

Only you can judge which of these things might lead to your downfall, and I don't intend in any of this to tread on, or judge, or invade your personal, sacred space. That is for you and the Lord, and I don't know a thing about you. But, be of this mind, that the traps are there, and that they are subtle and very powerful.

Even good things, practiced out of balance can become a problem. Back in the day when cassette tapes were a thing, one young man, I knew, became so obsessed with listening to religious sermons on tape, that we labeled him and his practice as being that of a "tape worm." He would hole up in his room or car, listen to tapes constantly, while his struggling little wife, desperately needing help with the housework, the children, and the baby, was coldly ignored. Don't be "so heavenly minded that you are of no earthly good."

Seek Rural, or Wholesome Surroundings

Ask the Lord if you need to seek rural surroundings for you or your family. Finding rural retreats, I strongly believe, is part of the "coming out of Babylon" message.²¹⁷ Leaving the false beliefs of Christendom behind is the "spiritual" part of the final message, but working the cities from the suburbs and leaving the places of danger behind, is the "physical" side of the message. God does not only want us to be "saved," He wishes us to be "safe." And the physical, can at times, affect the spiritual.

I have listed below seven reasons why rural living should be sought out and practiced, if at all possible, in these last days. The prophet, Ellen G. White made hundreds of statements to this effect, as the only thing we can do to temporally prepare for the end, even saying that it was her message to the church from God, and crying: "This is my message!"

²¹⁷ I refer, to those interested, to read my late book: *Exit: Understanding the Fourth Angel's Message*.

Since almost no one else among modern pastors and church administrators are saying much about it, I will say something about it, and offer some reasons why any reader should prayerfully consider, how to save, and protect themselves, and their family in this regard, and to do it *now*:

Why Leave Metropolitan Settings?

1. The awaiting, imminent destruction of the cities (thousands *before* the end)
2. The degenerate moral influence and environment found in them.
3. General safety from harm and crime (statistically 2-3 times worse)
4. Freedom to worship without interference
5. Access to pure air, food, and water
6. A more salubrious, healthful, disease-free environment for ourselves and for our children. (The recent COVID-19 crisis is but one example of this, it was much worse in population centers).
7. The impossibility of doing so later (The current check on urban sprawl).

These are but a few of the reasons. But, do nothing extreme—don't move to the desert, or a Himalayan mountain-top! And some may find re-locating almost impossible at this late hour. You must always go where God sends you, even if it is downtown, or somewhere else. But, at the very least, talk to the Lord about it, and ask Him, sincerely, if you need to act, and then listen to His voice through Spirit conviction, His Word, or His providence. Then move. Even if nothing dire ever happens in the place you now live, you will have still made the better choice.

Do not Submit to Unwholesome Fear About the End-times

And lastly, do not submit to fear about the end-times. “Believer’s fear,” is a phenomenon that has come into Adventism, largely because we do have so much direct prophetic counsel about the end-times. But this counsel is often mis-used or mis-apprehended, and because of this, many young, and old, have viewed the end as something to be dreaded, and the subject of nightmares.

I know that just telling you, the reader, not to fear the end times will have no effect on the matter. Fear of these times is natural. And I can't tell you that the end-times will not be of a fearful nature.

But I can tell you, that for a secure Christian, any unbalanced fear of the end is uncharacteristic of what should be found in the mind and spirit of the true follower of God. Perfect love casts out fear (I John 4:18). Though tested, our bread and water will be sure. I can also tell you, that between the two options at the end, those shielded from the plagues, versus those experiencing the plagues, which option you should choose! And I can also tell you, that I am not really afraid, and, I think, neither should you be over-afraid. Like Daniel, or the three Hebrews: trust God! Love and fear Him. Give Him your fears, your heart, and your soul.

People read the seven last plagues but don't closely read what comes before in chapter 15. God put chapter 15 before chapter 16 for a good reason! Never read chapter 16 before chapter 15! What comes before the plagues, is the picture of the redeemed *that have come through the plagues* and stand on the sea of glass. It is compared there with Israel passing successfully through the "Red Sea" (and thus are baptized through Jesus' blood!).

The "seven **last** plagues" of the ten that fell on Egypt, did not fall on Israel, at all! Also, the temple, or the most holy place, in chapter 15, is filled with smoke. In the Bible times, when this happened it was a sign that God had accepted with favor the sacrifices of His people, and *that He was very pleased with them*. In chapter 15, those who are on God's side are promised favor, and protection, are sealed with Him, and can sing the *Song of Redemption*: "The Song of Moses and the Lamb."

The words the angels always say, are: "Fear Not." "Don't you either!" "Trust Jesus, now and always."

Maranatha! Even so, Come, Lord Jesus!

APPENDIX

Appendix A



Changes in the Hebrew Alphabet

By Jeff A. Benner

The Ayin and ghayin

The Shin, Sin and Samehh

The Vav and Yud

The Ayin and ghayin

While the Modern Hebrew alphabet consists of twenty-two letters, the evidence suggests that there were additional letters in the original Semitic and Hebrew alphabet.

One of the ancient Semitic languages of Canaan was **Ugarit**. This ancient language is almost identical to the Hebrew language of the Bible but, instead of consisting of twenty-two letters it has twenty-eight letters. One of the major differences between Ugarit and

Hebrew is the additional letter *ghayin* (𐤂), which does not exist in Hebrew. Evidence, such as will be presented here, suggest that the letter "*ghayin*" did originally exist within the Hebrew text of the Bible, but at some point, in the ancient past, the letter *ghayin* began to be written with the letter *ayin* (𐤀, א in the modern Hebrew).

One Word - Two Meanings

The strongest evidence for the missing *ghayin* can be found in the two different meanings of one Hebrew word. As an example, the Hebrew word רע (*ra*) can mean "friend" or "bad". In the ancient past, the Hebrew word 𐤀𐤓, written as רע in the modern Hebrew alphabet and identified in Strong's Dictionary as **#7453**, meant "friend" and the

Hebrew word 𐤒𐤓, also written as רע in the modern Hebrew alphabet and identified in Strong's Dictionary as **#7451**, meant "bad." Below are a few other examples of Hebrew words that are spelled with an ayin that have more than one meaning.

Hebrew	Ayin	<i>ghayin</i>
עול	infant (#5764)	wicked (#5766)
יעל	profit (#3276)	goat (#3277)
ענה	heed (#6030)	afflict (#6031)
עיר	weary (#5888)	darkness (#5890)
עור	skin (#5785)	blind (#5786)
עיר	colt (#5895)	city (#5892)
שער	hair (#8163)	storm (#8175)
ערב	weave (#6148)	dark (#6150)
ערום	naked (#6174)	crafty (#6175)

ערך	neck (#6202)	drop (#6201)
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While one word with two meanings may not seem strange to us as the English language is filled with words with more than one meaning, this is a very rare occurrence in Hebrew and when it does occur, it suggests that they were originally two different words.

If in fact the letter ayin represents two ancient letters, how can we determine which letter was originally used in a given word. As an example, was the *ayin* in the Hebrew word סעה (Strong's #5584) originally spelled with an *ayin* or a *ghayin*? When we compare the meanings of the words in the table above, you will notice that the words in the far-right column are all related to darkness (dark, storm, clouds, rain, blind) and wickedness (wicked, goat, city, bad, crafty). As the Hebrew word סעה means "storm," which is related to the idea of "darkness," we can conclude that it was originally spelled with a *ghayin*. below are a few other words that were most likely originally written with a *ghayin*.

עב		cloud
עוב		cloud
עוה		perverse, crooked
עות		crooked
עז		goat
עקל		crooked
עק ש		crooked

Modern and Historical evidence of letter changes

This shift from the *ghayin* to the *ayin* is not unique with ancient, and even modern words. Over time words and their roots evolve. To demonstrate this, let us look at an English word and its evolution. The words, "napkin" and "apron" are derived from the word "map". In ancient times maps were written on sheets of fabric called "maps". A very common **shift in letters** as words evolve is from an "m" to an "n" and vice versa. The word "napkin", a sheet of fabric, is the word "map" with the suffix "kin" added to it. An

old English word "napron", also a sheet of fabric tied around the body, is the word "map" (with a shift from an "m" to an "n") with the suffix "ron" added to it. As we would refer to this latter word as "a" napron, the "n" shifted to the "a" and became "an" "apron".

This same shift of letters can be seen many times in the evolution of Hebrew words. Within the Biblical text we have the ancient **parent root** **זָהָב** (*zav*) meaning "yellow". From this parent root are derived two **child roots**, **זָהָב** (*zahav*, **Strong's #2091**) meaning "gold" and **זָוַב** (*zuv*, Strong's #2101) meaning "pus", both being yellow in color. Another Hebrew word, **צָהָב** (*tsahav*, Strong's #6669), also has the meaning "yellow," but has no connection to the ancient parent root **צָבַע** (*tsav*, Strong's #6632) meaning a "wall". From this evidence, we can conclude that **צָהָב** is an evolved form of the root **זָהָב**, as the **צ** (*ts*) and **ז** (*z*) sounds are very similar.

The idea of the letter *ghayin* shifting to the *ayin* is not unique in the Hebrew vocabulary, in fact it is quite common, except that in this case, every use of the *ghayin* shifted over to the *ayin*.

Greek Transliterations of the *ghayin*

Additional evidence to the existence of the letter *ghayin* is the Greek transliteration of Hebrew names. When the Hebrew Bible was **translated into Greek** about 2,000 years ago, the translator transliterated the Hebrew names into Greek. An example of transliterating a name into another language can be seen in the Hebrew name **אָדָם**, which is transliterated into the Roman letters as "Adam."

When we examine Hebrew names that contain the Hebrew letter *ayin*, we find two different methods of transliterating the letter. Table 1 below contains Hebrew names where the *ayin* is not transliterated (the Hebrew letter *ayin* is silent and is represented by an apostrophe in the English transliteration). Table 2 contains Hebrew names where the *ayin* is transliterated with the Greek letter *Gamma* (Γ or γ).

Table 1

Hebrew		Greek		English
בַּעַל (ba'al)		Βααλ (Baal)		Ba'al
בִּלְעָם (bil'am)		Βαλααμ (Balaam)		Bala'am

עשתרות (<i>'ashtarot</i>)		Ασταρωθ (<i>Astaroth</i>)		Ashtaroth
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Table 2

Hebrew		Greek		English
עמרה (<i>'amorah</i>)		Γομορρα (<i>gomorras</i>)		Gomorrah
עזה (<i>'azzah</i>)		Γαζαν (<i>gazan</i>)		Gaza
פעור (<i>pe'or</i>)		Φογορ (<i>pogor</i>)		Peor

Only Hebrew is missing the *ghayin*

Arabic, another modern Semitic language, has managed to retain both the *ayin* and *ghayin* as separate letters. The Arabic letter ع represents the *ayin*, while the غ represents the *ghayin*. The ancient **Ugarit language** also makes a distinction between the *ayin*, written as א, and the *ghayin*, written as ג.

Edward Horowitz

The following is an excerpt from Edward Horowitz's book ***How the Hebrew Language Grew***, by KTAV publishing.

Ancient Hebrew had two different ע; sounds. These sounds were represented in our alphabet by the letter ע;. One was a harsh, heavy ע;. This is now lost, and no longer used in Hebrew. The other was a soft, mild ע. When the Greek Jews translated the Bible into Greek, they had to transliterate Hebrew names having the harsh ע; in it. They used the Greek letter gamma for it - so you can just imagine how hard a sound it must have been. This "ע; gayin" has even come all the way down to English. The Hebrew place names עמרה and עזה both of which have this strong ע; were transliterated into Greek as Gommora and Gaza. Didn't the odd forms of these place names in English ever puzzle you? In medieval times there was exported from Gaza a thin fabric which was naturally name "gauze" after the city of its origin.

What does all this mean to the study of the Hebrew language?

In the study of the ancient Hebrew language and alphabet we begin studying the language at its simplest roots, the letters. Each letter is a picture that represents a meaning. When the letters are combined to form roots, each letter supplies meaning to the root. By then studying the various words, which are derived out of any given root, we can begin to reconstruct the original root language of Hebrew. In order to be as accurate as possible, we need to be sure that we are using the correct words, roots and letters.

Now that the twenty-third letter of the Hebrew alphabet has been found, are there others? The answer is most likely "yes." Edward Horowitz claims that there are two נs, two פs, two טs and three צs bringing the total count of Hebrew letters to twenty-eight. Interestingly the Arabic alphabet contains twenty-eight letters and the ancient Ugarit alphabet contains thirty, but this includes two variations of the letter aleph, bringing us back to twenty-eight letters.

The Shin, Sin and Samehh

In the Modern Hebrew alphabet the letter *shin* (ש) represents two different sounds, a "sh" and an "s". To differentiate between these two sounds, a dot is placed above the *shin* in different locations. For the "sh" sound, the dot is placed on the right (שׁ) and is called a *shin* and for the "s" sound it is placed on the left (שׂ) and called a *sin*.

In most cases words spelled with the *sin* are more closely related in meaning with words spelled with the *samech* (ס). In addition, Hebrew words spelled with the *sin* are written with the *samech* in other Semitic languages. As an example, in the Masoretic text you will find the name ישראל (yisra'el/Israel), but this name was most likely originally spelled as יסראל, which interestingly is the spelling of this name in the **Aramaic** translations of the Old Testament. In the Hebrew Bible, several Hebrew words written with the ש are also written with a ס as is demonstrated in the table below.

נשא	נסא	nasa	Lift up
שור	סור	sur	Remove
שכך	סכך	sakak	Cover
שוט	סוט	sut	Turn aside
שט	סט	set	Rebel
שש ה	שס ה	shasa h	Plunder

The Vav and Yud

Until 1947, the oldest manuscript of the Hebrew Bible was the **Codex Leningrad** which is dated to around 1,000 A.D. With the discovery of the **Dead Sea Scrolls** in 1947 we now have manuscripts that are 1000 years older than the Codex Leningrad. While the Hebrew texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls (2000 years old) and the Hebrew text from the Codex Leningrad (1000 years old) are very similar, there are differences. One of the largest differences is the vowels used for the text. Throughout the Codex Leningrad,

vowel sounds are represented by dots and dashes placed above and below the letters. For instance, the Hebrew word for 'no', as it appears in the codex, is נֹ (lo, [Strong's #3808](#)). The dot above the letter *aleph* is called a *hholam* and represents the vowel sound 'o'. These dots and dashes (called *nikkudot*, *nikkud* in the singular) were created by the Masorites during the time the codex Leningrad was written. The Dead Sea Scrolls, written long before the Masorites, used the letter ל (waw, vav in Modern Hebrew) for the consonant 'w,' but also for the vowel sound 'o'. Throughout the Dead Sea Scrolls, this word appears as נלֹ. In the Masoretic text the name David is written as דָּוִד (dawid). The dot, called the *hhireq*, below the ל represents the 'i' sound. However, in the Dead Sea Scrolls the name David is written as ד'י'ד where the letter ' (yud) is used for the 'i' sound.

From the vast number of manuscripts unearthed in the Dead Sea Caves it has been discovered that the letters waw and yud (and to a lesser extent the letters hey and aleph) were widely used as vowels. When and why, they were removed from the text and replaced with the *nikkudot* appears to be a mystery.

About the Author

Steven E. Behrmann is a recently retired pastor, educator, theologian, and author who enjoys writing on biblical and spiritual themes, especially Bible prophecy. He is a life-time committed Seventh-day Adventist educator and cleric. He believes that God's last-day people need to prepare for the coming times, and that they need to be greatly awakened as to their purpose and calling.

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Author's Materials

Books:

Prophecy

The Days of the Seventh Angel, Seven Volumes (Extensive notes and commentary on the Book of Revelation).

The Mysterious Marks of the Apocalypse (A treatise on the *Seal of God*, the *Mark of the Beast*, and the number, 666)

Back to the Future—Forward to the Past, (Last-day events in the light of past Bible history)

Exit: Examining The Fourth Angel's Message (The last message to the world and the call away from Babylon)

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