



# • Apostolic • Eschatology

EXPOSING GOD'S INTENDED FINISH



Volume 4

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Frans Du Plessis

## Chapter Ten

# ***Antichrist & the Great Tribulation***

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The Bible does not speak of an individual called “the Antichrist”.

This may come as a shock to many. The Lord Jesus never mentioned a person called the antichrist in His ministry on earth. John in the Book of Revelation does not mention an antichrist. Neither Paul nor Peter wrote anything about such a person.

Through the ages religious people have created their own object and image of fear. They combine the *abomination of desolation* that Jesus spoke of, Paul’s *son of perdition*, the *Beast* in Revelation and the number 666 and create an imaginary object of fear called the Antichrist who will rule during the so called great tribulation.

Let us examine these issues.

## The Great Tribulation

Many popular end-time prophets use Daniel Chapter 9 and its 70 weeks to prove their theory about the seven years of great tribulation. As we have seen there is no unfulfilled seven-year period. Daniel chapter nine cannot be used to make such a claim.

The *great tribulation* that most religious people are waiting for has already come when approximately 800 000 to 1000 000 Jews

were massacred in their own city Jerusalem in the most horrific way. This was the fulfilment of *Jacob's distress*.<sup>1</sup>

Paul writes to the Thessalonians and confirms the words of Jesus in Matt 24:8-11 and the angel Gabriel in Daniel Chapter 9 by saying:

*"For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also have suffered these things by your own countrymen, even as they also by the Jews; who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, also driving us out and they do not please God and being contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the nations that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always; but the wrath has come upon them to the uttermost." - 1Th 2:14-16*

Flavius Josephus, a Jew, who witnessed the fall of Jerusalem and the terrible events, and horrors of the day, reported that words could not describe how women and children were brutally murdered. History records that 500 Jews were thrown over the city wall daily by their own brethren to the Romans who crucified them around the city Jerusalem until there were no more trees left in Palestine. It was brother against brother, and houses were divided against themselves just like Jesus said in Matt 24.

More than 80% of the nation was brutally murdered by the fourth Beast, the Roman Empire, whom Daniel saw in his vision. Not only were they murdered in the city, but many villages were totally wiped out by the Roman soldiers.

Historians report that in some places like Galilee, the water turned red with blood and the horses of the Roman soldiers walked up to their bridles in the blood to kill the Jews who entered the water to escape.

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<sup>1</sup> Zeph. 1:15

Let us look at some extracts on the historical account of the fall of Jerusalem and its great tribulation as recorded by Flavius Josephus in the first century:

*"...nor did the Romans, out of the anger they bore at this attempt, leave off, either by night or by day, burning the places in the plain, and stealing away the cattle that were in the country, and killing whatsoever appeared capable of fighting perpetually, and leading the weaker people as slaves into captivity; so that Galilee was all over filled with fire and blood..."*<sup>2</sup>

*"But some of them thought that to die by their own swords was lighter than by the sea, and so they killed themselves before they were drowned; although the greatest part of them were carried by the waves, and dashed to pieces against the abrupt parts of the rocks, insomuch that the sea was bloody a long way, and the maritime parts were full of dead bodies; for the Romans came upon those that were carried to the shore, and destroyed them; and the number of the bodies that were thus thrown out of the sea was four thousand and two hundred. The Romans also took the city without opposition, and utterly demolished it."*<sup>3</sup>

*"... I cannot but think that it was because God had doomed this city to destruction, as a polluted city, and was resolved to purge his sanctuary by fire, ..."*<sup>4</sup>

*"...and when they were going to be taken, they were forced to defend themselves for fear of being punished; as after they had fought, they thought it too late to make any supplications for mercy; so they were first whipped, and then tormented with all sorts of tortures, before they*

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<sup>2</sup> Flavius Josephus – Wars on the Jews – [Iii: IV: 1]

<sup>3</sup> Flavius Josephus – Wars on the Jews – [Iii: ix: 2-4]

<sup>4</sup> Flavius Josephus – Wars on the Jews – [Iv: v: 1-4]

*died, and were then crucified before the wall of the city. This miserable procedure made Titus greatly to pity them, while they caught every day five hundred Jews;*"<sup>5</sup>

*"Thus did the miseries of Jerusalem grow worse and worse every day, and the seditious were still more irritated by the calamities they were under, even while the famine preyed upon themselves, after it had preyed upon the people. And indeed the multitude of carcasses that lay in heaps one upon another was a horrible sight, and produced a pestilential stench, which was a hinderance to those that would make sallies out of the city, and fight the enemy:"*<sup>6</sup>

*"...A false prophet was the occasion of these people's destruction, who had made a public proclamation in the city that very day, that God commanded them to get upon the temple, and that there they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance. Now there was then a great number of false prophets suborned by the tyrants to impose on the people, who denounced this to them, that they should wait for deliverance from God; and this was in order to keep them from deserting, and that they might be buoyed up above fear and care by such hopes..."*<sup>7</sup>

It is not by coincidence that these events took place within one generation of Jesus' prophecy on the fall of Jerusalem and His Kingdom message through the parables.

*"...He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons." – Mat 21:41*

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<sup>5</sup> Flavius Josephus – Wars on the Jews – [V: xi: 1-2]

<sup>6</sup> Flavius Josephus – Wars on the Jews – [Vi: i: 1]

<sup>7</sup> Flavius Josephus – Wars on the Jews – [Vi: v: 1-2]

*“but when the King heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.” – Mat 22:7*

*“ ‘Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets... ..See! Your house is left to you desolate;”  
– Mat 23:36-38*

*“Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.” – Mat 24:34*

Hitler’s inhumane murdering of millions of Jewish people in Europe cannot be compared with the intensity of the tribulation of 70AD, when Jerusalem with most of its people, Temple, High Priest and the entire Levitical order were eradicated and burned down to the ground.

*“ ... but for all the rest of the wall, it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited.”-  
Flavious Josephus – Wars on the Jews.*

## Antichrist

John is the only apostle who writes about antichrist. Therefore, we need to read and take note of what he says. The following interesting conclusions are made by studying the writings of John:

1. Firstly, antichrist is ***not an individual*** somewhere in the future.

*“Little children, it is the last time. And just as you have heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have risen up, from which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of*

*us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.” - 1 John 2:18-19*

John calls the immature in the Church little children. He explains to them that it was the last hour and that many antichrists were already present. In this context, antichrists were those who had gone out from amongst them and turned against Christ. They were described as antichrist.

2. He who denies the Father and the Son is antichrist.

*“Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He who denies the Father and the Son is antichrist. Everyone who denies the Son neither has the Father. The one confessing the Son also has the Father.” - 1Jn 2:22-23*

Believing only in the Father, without recognising the Son, is described as antichrist. In essence, this lying spirit does not only deny the Son but also by implication the sonship of all believers. Jesus said that there is no way unto the Father except through Him.

3. Thirdly, antichrist **is a spirit** that does not confess that Christ came in the flesh.

*“And every **spirit** which does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not from God; and this is the antichrist which you heard is coming, and now is already in the world.” - 1Jn 4:3*

Only believing in Jesus as a historical religious leader or his fleshly attributes, without recognising Him as the Christ (Anointed One), also qualifies one as antichrist.

4. Fourthly, antichrist is a deceiver.

*“Because many deceivers went out into the world, those not confessing Jesus Christ to have come in the flesh, **this is the deceiver and the antichrist.**” - 2Jn 1:7*

It is very clear from all these New Testament scriptures that antichrist is a lying and deceiving spirit that finds its expression in a plurality of persons, already manifested in the time of the apostle John.

I have not found any evidence in the Bible of a single human being ruling the world as a future antichrist. Neither do I believe that it was one single man in history. Neither Caesar Nero nor the Pope, as some have suggested. Although it is possible that some individuals in history may have operated by this spirit.

Antichrist is closer and more dangerous than what we were made to believe. This spirit manifests within the religious mind and in the midst of the gathering of Households of faith. It parades itself as a follower of Jesus yet working actively against the truth, and presence of the Christ. This spirit hates and fears the fact that Christ came in the flesh and is still coming in the flesh through His Body, the Church, and will ultimately come in His glorious appearance.

When Jesus came to the earth, He was declared as the Christ, the Son of the living God. When Jesus, the Christ, left the earth at His ascension, He, as the Head left, but the Body of Christ stayed on the earth. The night He was betrayed He took bread and declared: “This is my Body given for you...”

This antichrist spirit operates in many ways. It doesn't dispute the fact that Jesus came, because it is not anti-Jesus but anti-Christ. What scares and threatens this spirit is the fact that Jesus is the Christ who came in the flesh and is bodily present in the earth today through the Church, the Body of Christ.

***The spirit of antichrist is a present reality far more dangerous than the fictitious, singular, futuristic antichrist religion came up with.***

## Paul & the Man of Sin

Many assumed that the apostle Paul was referring to the Antichrist, sitting in the temple in Jerusalem, when he wrote to the Thessalonians. When Paul wrote about the son of perdition in 2 Thessalonians 2:8, he didn't use the Greek word 'hieron' which is used in the New Testament to describe the literal temple holy place in the temple. Rather he used the Greek word 'naos', that described the Church as the holy gathering and temple of the Holy Spirit.<sup>8</sup>

On His way to the Cross, Jesus said to the religious leaders: "destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."<sup>9</sup> The apostle John explained that Jesus was referring to His own body as the temple.<sup>10</sup> After the Cross the Church became His body, the rebuilt temple and the Father's House made up of many dwellings. Paul declares that the believers are the temple [naos] of God.<sup>11</sup>

Let us have a closer look at 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8

*"Let not anyone deceive you by any means. For that Day shall not come unless there first comes a falling away, and the man of sin shall be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, setting himself forth, that he is God."*

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<sup>8</sup> 2Th 2:4

<sup>9</sup> John 2:19

<sup>10</sup> John 2:21

<sup>11</sup> 1Co 3:16; 2 Co 16:16

*Do you not remember that I told you these things when I was still with you? And now you know what holds back, for him to be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already working, only he is now holding back until it comes out of the midst.*

*And then the lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming.” - 2Th 2:3-8*

The ‘falling away’ is not the secret rapture of the Church before the coming of the antichrist. This “falling away” is the Greek word: “apostasia” and it describes defection and apostasy from the truth. It refers to falseness and error that will come first. This man of sin and son of perdition, is a mature corporate expression of a false and destructive dimension amongst the true Church. It is a counterfeit that will be exposed. But there is something that is holding back the exposing of this man of sin. Before we discuss what is withholding the revealing of this lawless one, let us look at what its revealing entails.

The Greek word for ‘reveal’ is: “*apocalypses*” and means to uncover, expose or reveal. When truth is revealed, uncovered or exposed, it comes into power and sets us free. But when the lie or deception is revealed it loses its power.

The thing that protects the lie and gives it ruler ship is a lack of knowledge or ignorance thereof. As soon as truth comes into the midst of the lie, it uncovers, reveals and dethrones the lie and the deception.

There is a counterfeit Church that looks like the real Church and speaks great things. It is a corporate man of sin and a son of deception. The true Church is a corporate son of God and Body of Christ. Paul calls the son of sin a mystery that was at that time already at work until the time of it being revealed.

In the parable of the sower this principle of exposure and removal is clearly explained. When the workers asked the sower if they should take out the counterfeit wheat (tares) from among the true harvest, the sower replied:

*“No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers,..” – Mat 13:29-30a*

The time of the maturity of the wheat is called harvest time. This is also the time at which the tares reach maturity. At this time God sends His messengers to remove from His Kingdom all who offend and practise lawlessness.

God has throughout the ages separated the flesh from the Spirit in the time of the harvest or maturity. In the house of Abraham there were two women, Hagar the slave who produced to the flesh and Sarah who produced the promise according to the Spirit. Ishmael and Isaac grew up in the same house. When the time of maturity came, God commanded Abraham to send away the slave woman and her son.

Paul declares that this mystery of iniquity is already working just until that which now is withholding it is removed out of the midst. I believe that ignorance must be removed. Ignorance is protecting the lie from exposure. But when it is removed the false will be uncovered and defeated. Paul echoes the Words of Jesus in Mat 13 when He said:

*“Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father”<sup>12</sup>*

In this Apostolic season also, God sends out His angels (messengers), His Apostolic voice and as the truth comes into the midst of His Kingdom, it will expose the son of deception and break its power.

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<sup>12</sup> Mat 13:43

## Chapter Eleven

# *The Day of the Lord*

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The tribulation and hardships of Israel were always as a result of their disobedience that invited the righteous judgment of God. Throughout the Old Testament the prophets announced the coming of the Day of the Lord. The Prophets believed that He would come in judgment and in power.

This judgment is metaphorically described in the Old Testament as His coming in, or with clouds. Most prophets warned Israel of the approaching Day of the Lord. The prophet Joel who probably lived around 800BC in Judah describes it as follows:

*“Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; For the day of the LORD is coming, For it is at hand: A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness, Like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; Nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations.” – Joel 2:1*

God used nations, and mostly heathen nations, to execute His judgement on evil and Godless people. He called them His army or His servants. King Cyrus, a heathen king, is called His servant and His anointed one:

*“Thus says the LORD to His anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held— To subdue nations before him And loose the armour of kings, To open before him the*

*double doors, So that the gates will not be shut.” – Is 45:1<sup>13</sup>*

The Day of the Lord has two sets of consequences: Reward and salvation to those who obey but vengeance and desolation on the disobedient. This is more commonly known as the righteous judgment of God.

When the glorious presence of the Lord moved with Israel from Egypt it was in the form of a cloud. This glorious presence brought light to Israel and judgement and destruction to the Egyptians. The Lord went before them in a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night<sup>14</sup>

*“So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other, so that the one did not come near the other all that night.” – Ex 14:20*

David describes his deliverance from all his enemies as the Lord coming in clouds, and wrote the following songs about it:

*“He bowed the heavens also, and came down with darkness under His feet. He rode upon a cherub, and flew; and He was seen upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness canopies around Him, Dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. From the brightness before Him coals of fire were kindled.” - 2Sa 22:10-13<sup>15</sup>*

*“Clouds and darkness surround Him; Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. A fire goes before Him, and burns up His enemies round about. His lightnings light the world; the earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the LORD,*

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<sup>13</sup> Is 44:28

<sup>14</sup> Ex. 13:21

<sup>15</sup> Ps 18:9-12

*at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.” - Ps 97:2-5*

*“He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters; he makes the clouds His chariot, He walks on the wings of the wind,” - Ps 104:3*

This is a metaphorical way of speaking. The Lord was not literally seen upon the wings of the wind or in the clouds. The whole Hebrew language is full of these expressions, rich in meaning. The prophets also regularly used this metaphoric language to convey the message from God.

Jeremiah wrote concerning the judgment on Israel:

*“Behold, He shall come up like clouds, And His chariots like a whirlwind. His horses are swifter than eagles. Woe to us, for we are plundered! O Jerusalem wash your heart from wickedness that you may be saved.” - Je 4:13-14*

Ezekiel prophesied that the Day of the Lord is a day of clouds and the time of the gentiles:

*“For the day is near, even the day of the LORD is near; it will be a day of clouds, the time of the Gentiles.” - Ezek 30:3*

The Prophet Nahum declares:

*“The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The LORD has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and **the clouds** are the dust of His feet.” - Nah 1:3*

The Prophet Zephaniah writes:

*“That day is a day of wrath, A day of trouble and distress, A day of devastation and desolation, A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness.” - Zeph. 1:15*

We see that God employs the gentiles to fulfil His judgments in the Day of the Lord. This day is described as a day of clouds. In the Old Testament God used the Assyrians, Egyptians and the Babylonians to judge His people. The prophets described the Day of the Lord as a cloud coming. All these Old Testament prophetic utterances had their literal fulfilment within the history of Israel.

## The Great Day of the Lord

All of these historic happenings also pointed to the Great Day of the Lord that was still in the future. At that time the Lord Himself would come in His power and bring final judgement and salvation to Israel. These Scriptures are referred to as Messianic prophecies.

But Elijah had to come first before the Messiah would appear and the great Day of the Lord would arrive. It was the prophets Isaiah and Malachi who gave more detail as to the time of the Lord's coming and His day.

*"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD." - Mal 4:5*

John the Baptist baptised and warned people not to flee from the coming day of the Lord's wrath but to repent and to be baptized.<sup>16</sup> Jesus told them that Elijah had already come and that they rejected him. He referred to John the Baptist<sup>17</sup>

The Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes and High Priest knew of the Great Day of the Lord. In fact, Herod and all the religious leaders of Israel were well aware of the coming of the Great Day of the Lord. They believed that the Messiah would come and rule Israel from the

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<sup>16</sup> Mat 3:7

<sup>17</sup> Mat 11:14

throne of David in Jerusalem. This coming of the Lord with clouds would bring the final Day of the Lord's judgement on His enemies, and those who resist and reject His rule. They all expected Elijah to come before the Day of the Lord and the appearance of the Messiah.

However, they had their own expectation and interpretation concerning the prophetic declarations. We know today that they missed the Messiah and were judged in His Wrath. Jesus said that they were deceived because of their hardened hearts, man-made traditions and their lust for the honour that comes from men.

We might ask the question: Why did they not recognise Him? They were blinded by their own agendas and hardened hearts.

In the process, they rejected the Chief Cornerstone.<sup>18</sup> As hirelings of the Vineyard (the Kingdom) they killed the Heir and Son, Jesus the Christ.<sup>19</sup>

The religious leaders of Israel became His enemies, and not the sinners or the Romans. He came in humility riding on a donkey. They wanted and expected His appearance to be on a white horse and with political power. Their interpretation of Him was man-centred and not Christ-centred. Therefore He did not measure up to their expectations and power-hungry minds. They failed to understand the prophecy concerning the Suffering Servant of the Lord.<sup>20</sup>

Although John the Baptist warned them about the wrath that was coming, they did not repent. The axe was at the root of the trees to remove them if there were no fruit of repentance.

John told them that the One greater than himself carries the winnowing fan and fire in His hand and will clean His threshing floor through and through and that He will burn up all the chaff with fire<sup>21</sup>. John the Baptist confirmed the prophecy of Malachi concerning this day of fire.

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<sup>18</sup> 1Pe 2:7

<sup>19</sup> Mat 21:39

<sup>20</sup> Is 53:11

<sup>21</sup> Mat 3:12

*"For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," Says the LORD of hosts, "That will leave them neither root nor branch." Mal 4:1*

*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD." Mal 4:5*

## The Cloud Coming of the Lord

Scripture always connects the cloud coming of the Lord to the Day of the Lord as we have seen from the prophets. The religious leaders, who had great knowledge of the Old Testament scriptures took great offence at Jesus' answer during His trial:

*"... And the high priest answered and said to Him, I adjure you by the living God that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said to him, you said it. I tell you more. From this time you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, **and coming on the clouds** of the heavens. Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard his blasphemy. " – Mat 26:63-65*

Jesus makes three important statements in His reply to the High Priest:

- ❖ I am the Christ, the Son of God;
- ❖ You will see Me seated at the Father's right hand of power; and
- ❖ You will see me coming on the clouds of heaven.

Jesus made similar statements to His disciples in the Book of Mathew:

*“For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.” – Mat 16:27-28*

*“Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” – Mat 24:30*

Jesus did not speak about some distant future happening in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He was using scriptural, prophetic language to describe the Day of the Lord that would come in their generation.

Some people believe that the Day of the Lord came at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts, chapter two. But the apostle Paul warns:

*“not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first,...” – 2 Thess. 2:2-3a*

Thus this Day of the Lord (Christ) had not yet come at the writing of Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians. It would only be fully manifested in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD.

## Mathew Chapter 24

When the disciples heard the statements of Jesus concerning the temple, and that evil generation,<sup>22</sup> they came to Him and asked when these things that He spoke of would happen.

*“Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him. privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”” – Mat 24:2*

Here Jesus was addressing their question about the following issues:

- ❖ The judgement on Jerusalem;
- ❖ The coming of the Son of Man;
- ❖ The fall of the Temple and;
- ❖ The end of that age.

In Mathew Chapter 23, Jesus announced judgement on the religious leaders of His Day:

*“Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.” - Mat 23:36*

This statement was confirmed towards the end of the Olivet discourse:

*“Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away **till all these things** take place.” - Mat 24:34*

The prophecy contained in Mathew 24 would be fulfilled within that generation. Not one of the things Jesus spoke about was left unfulfilled within the forty years following the Cross of Jesus, until the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD. This was the final generation of that age.

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<sup>22</sup> Mat 23:32-39

# The Revelation

The Book of Revelation was written in approximately 68AD during the reign of the tyrant, Nero Caesar. It has as its theme the soon coming of the Lord with a cloud and the Day of the Lord.

Most prominent theologians agree that the Revelation of Christ to John was about the imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact the book of Revelation is a lawsuit against the Jewish covenant breaking people, announcing the four-sevenfold curses described in Lev 26.<sup>23</sup>

At the writing of the vision there were only two years left before the end of that age, the fall of Jerusalem and its holocaust. Therefore the message of the Revelation was urgent and repeats more than ten times that the time is short and at hand and that things will happen quickly.<sup>24</sup>

*“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.” – Rev 1:7*

This Scripture declares that all the tribes of the land (*gē* - term often used for Palestine, occupied by Israel) will see Him coming with clouds, **even those who pierced Him**. And they will mourn over Him.

The apostles accused the religious and unbelieving Jews for killing and crucifying the Lord through the hands of the Romans. The Apostle Peter said:

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<sup>23</sup> 1) Lev 26:18; 2) Lev 26:21; 3) Lev 26:24; 4) Lev 26:28;

<sup>24</sup> Rev 1:1; Rev 1:3; Rev 2:5; Rev 2:16; Rev 3:11; Rev 22:6; Rev 22:7; Rev 22:10; Rev 22:12; Rev 22:20.

*"Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, **you have taken by lawless hands**, have crucified, and put to death" - Act 2:23*

*"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." - Act 2:36*

*"So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: 'Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? ...you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. ...But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.'" - Act 3:12*

*Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel ...let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead" - Act 4:8*

*"But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree" - Act 5:29*

Stephen declares:

*"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold Even the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers" - Acts 7:51*

Jesus himself accused the Jewish leaders that they will kill the Son of God and fill up the measure of their judgment.

*"Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?"*

*Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.*

*Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left desolate." – Mat 23:31-38*

And so the list goes on and on...

Without a doubt that evil, religious, non-believing generation killed and pierced the Messiah. It was during that generation, that the tree would be chopped, the chaff burned, the temple destroyed, and the city burned with fire.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD was without doubt the cloud coming of the Lord, and the great day of the Lord's vengeance. It started with His death, burial and resurrection. He judged the evil one, and brought everlasting salvation. He was crowned King of kings by His Father and sat down at the right hand

of Power on the throne of David.<sup>25</sup> Then He came with great power and strength to judge apostate Israel in 70 AD just as He foretold His disciples, the Jews and the High Priest.

The Jewish historian, Flavious Josephus gave a graphic description of that terrible time. He wrote several volumes as an eyewitness of the judgment of God on Jerusalem and Israel. The Vineyard (The Kingdom) was entrusted to another Nation, the Church, who will bear the fruit of it. It will never be taken away again.<sup>26</sup>

## The Physical Return of the Lord

Yes, the Lord will return to the earth again as He said He would, but not as the thief in the night or as in the days of Noah, for that has already happened in 70 AD when He came as a flood, in clouds and thickness of darkness and destroyed the wicked religious covenant breaking people and brought an end to the age of the Law and the Prophets. He burned their city, Jerusalem, through the Roman army but protected and left the Church just as He prayed:

*"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one."  
- John 17:15*

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<sup>25</sup> Ps 110; Act 2:30

<sup>26</sup> Mat 21:43

## Chapter Twelve

# ***The Battle of Armageddon***

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Situated approximately in the middle of the Book of Revelation is the mysterious battle of Armageddon. In order to understand the reality of this great battle, we need to be able to interpret the system of symbols in the Revelation to John.

### Tools of interpretation

The key to understanding the Revelation, is to take note of the form in which it was delivered and introduced to John.

*“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John,”- Rev1:1*

The word “signified” in the Greek literally means to bring to sight or manifest through symbols. These symbols need to be decoded accurately to understand the mystery of the Vision. Therefore there are some important concepts we need to be aware of in order to understand and interpret the events recorded.

## A System of Symbolism

The symbols used in Revelation are well established in the Old Testament. It is part of a system of symbolism the Prophets used to convey their messages. This is a vital key when we consider the mysterious event called 'The battle of Armageddon'. Ignoring or overlooking this very important fact opens the door to wild, unbiblical speculation. Many End-time movies, originated from speculation and unbiblical interpretation by so-called prophets.

The well known and respected theologian Albert Barnes, in his exposition of Revelation accurately states:

*"...the method of disclosing them was **mainly** by symbols." - Albert Barnes - Exposition of Revelation.*

The use of symbols are very well known to us today. A gold medal given to an athlete means he won his event. The gold medal conveys a story of victory. Nobody will dare to change the meaning or give his own interpretation of this symbol.

Another good example is found in the book of Daniel where in a vision he saw four great beasts coming out of the sea. The four Beasts represented four worldly kingdoms that came out of the gentile nations of the earth.

*"Daniel spoke, saying, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other." - Dan 7:2-3*

Daniel did not speculate or guess the meaning of the vision, the messenger told him the interpretation.

*"I came near to one of those who stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: 'Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth.'" - Dan 7:16-17*

Peter the apostle warns us not to speculate or give our own interpretation of prophecy:

*“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” - 2 Pet1: 20-21*

Because the Holy Spirit was the source of all prophesy, we cannot rely on our own imagination to interpret those prophesies.

Jesus cautioned us in Revelation:

*“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in the book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city and from the things which are written in this book.” – Rev 22:18*

### **Scripture interprets Scripture**

In principle, Scripture must interpret Scripture as we investigate the mysteries of the Word of God. Jesus Himself and the apostles continuously used this method. They confirmed what they said by referring to the Prophetic utterances of the Old Testament.

*“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” – Rom 15:4*

*“And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,” - Matt 2:5*

By ignoring this principles our interpretation will be contaminated by our own fears or believes.

The Revelation was written (68AD) to the first century Church in Asia Minor, who understood the Old Testament and its symbols. They understood the symbolic language of Revelation and that a lamb was not a literal lamb with four legs, but referred to Jesus the Lamb of God that was slain for the sin of the world.

If the Roman persecutors would read the Revelation, they would not understand the symbols contained therein, for they did not have access to the Old Testament. Likewise, if we want to understand Armageddon in the Revelation, we need to go to the Scriptures to find its true meaning.

### Timeframe

Besides understanding the scriptural symbolism of the Revelation, there remains another important key, which is the timeframe of the Revelation. Not everything shown to John was in the future. The instruction of Jesus was clear:

*“Write the things which you **have seen**, and the things which **are**, and the things which **will take place** after this” - Rev 1:19*

The vision includes things past, present and future. When John saw and wrote the Vision, the things that were future to him, were not all in the distant future. What was future to him is not necessary future to us today. The angel kept on mentioning that the events are imminent. *Quickly, shortly, and at hand*, were some of the terms, used by the angel, bringing to his attention the urgency and immediacy of the Vision.

*“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for **the time is near.**” - Rev 1:3*

*“And he said to me “Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book for the time is at hand.” - Rev 22:10*

## Armageddon's Origin

The word *Armageddon* is not found in the Old Testament and is only mentioned once in the New Testament.

*"...Behold I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments lest he walks naked and they see his shame. And they gathered them together to the place called in the Hebrew Armageddon." - Rev 16:16*

The battle of Armageddon is an integral part of the end time teachings of those who hold to the dispensational viewpoint. It is taught that after the rapture of the Church to heaven, evil nations will gather around Jerusalem. Nations like China, Russia and other supposed *antichrist* nations. In these teachings, Jerusalem and the Middle East will be the geographical location where this final battle takes place.

Because of this literal interpretation, it is believed that this battle will be fought on horseback and with ancient weapons that will cause the blood of the slain to rise up to the horses' bridles, for many miles in the valleys outside Jerusalem.

To literally accomplish this, the blood would have to fill the whole valley from Mount Carmel to the Mediterranean Sea. Along the Kishon River through the Valley of Megiddo and Jezreel to the river Jordan. Then flow south, through the plain of the Jordan River, and then through the Dead Sea. Lastly, it would have to flow onward through the valley of the Wilderness of Zin, past Kadesh-Barnea into the Sinai Peninsula! Moreover, much less blood is spilled in the ways of modern warfare than in the days of swords and spears.

*"This is absurd, and totally impossible! Even if all of the earth's inhabitants and horses' throats were slit, THERE'S SIMPLY NOT ENOUGH BLOOD! - Kelly Varner*

When the news media reports on events like, stars and planets lining up, meteorites traveling in the direction of the earth, computers systems crashing, (Y2K) the earth warming up, tsunamis, flooding and other disasters, it is interpreted that Armageddon is imminent. According to dispensational teaching this also means that the *antichrist* and *great tribulation* must be at hand.

I believe the best season for the Church is yet to come. With God the best wine is always kept for last. This is not the season to evacuate the earth but to invade it with the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

*"For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the LORD, They shall inherit the earth." - Ps 37:9*

With this in mind let's take a close look at the word *Armageddon*. The word is a composition of two words. *Armageddon* is translated from a Hebrew word that means: "the hill or mountain of Megiddo;" (*Strong's Concordance*)

HAR is: "mountain or range of hills" and MEGIDDO means: "rendezvous, place of crowds or troops."

Adding mountain to the name of the city called Megiddo takes a literal and geographical place and elevates it to another dimension. Remember there is no geographical, mountain of Megiddo on this planet. This must be seen as a symbolic name indicating a symbolic and spiritual battle. Armageddon in Revelation reveals a great spiritual battle. It borrows its symbolism from the battles that took place at Megiddo in the Old Testament.

## Mountains as Kingdoms

Throughout the Old Testament mountains were locations where spiritual encounters took place. Moses met God on Mount Sinai and

received the Law and the pattern of the Tabernacle. Elijah challenged the Baal's prophets on Mount Carmel. Abraham took his son Isaac to mount Moriah to offer him there as the Lord directed him. King David also took the Ark of Covenant to Mount Zion.

In the New Testament Jesus took three of his disciples to what is today called the Mount of Transfiguration. There He changed before their eyes and His clothing began to shine like the sun and spoke to Moses and Elijah.<sup>27</sup> It was also on a hill called Golgotha, (the place of the skull) outside the city of Jerusalem, where He was crucified.

The apostle John on the island of Patmos was taken in the Spirit to a very high mountain to see the Bride City, the Wife of the Lamb.<sup>28</sup>

In the Scriptures, mountains are positions that are elevated or heavenly, where God encounters the affairs of man, and man encounters the affairs of God.

Mountains in the Bible are also metaphors for kingdoms. This can be seen in the dream of the Babylonian king that Daniel interpreted. In the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar he saw a stone coming from a high mountain without the doing of a man's hand, destroying the image.<sup>29</sup> The stone itself became a mountain and filled the earth. God gave Daniel the interpretation of the dream. The stone that became a mountain is God's Kingdom that will be set up on the earth and it will fill all of the earth. This kingdom will be given to the saints of the Most High and never taken away again.<sup>30</sup>

This principle is also applied in Isaiah chapter two when it speaks of the Lord's house as a mountain:

*"Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it." - Isaiah 2:2*

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<sup>27</sup> Matthew 17:2; Mark 9:2-3; Luke 9:28-36

<sup>28</sup> Rev 21: 8

<sup>29</sup> Dan 2

<sup>30</sup> Dan 2:44

Changing the Old Testament name, *Megiddo*, into *Armageddon* in the Revelation, elevates the battle from an earthly natural collision of forces, to a battle in the heavenlies between opposing kingdoms.

## The History of Megiddo

In the history of Israel at least two notable battles took place at Megiddo. The first battle was when Deborah and Barak defeated the army of Sisera at Megiddo. After the victory, Deborah and Barak sang a song about this famous battle:

*"LORD, when You went out from Seir, When You marched from the field of Edom, the earth trembled and the heavens poured, the clouds also poured water;" - Judges 5:4*

*"The kings came and fought, then the kings of Canaan fought In Taanach, by the waters of **Megiddo**; they took no spoils of silver. They fought from the heavens; The stars from their courses fought against Sisera. The torrent of Kishon swept them away, that ancient torrent, the torrent of Kishon. O my soul, march on in strength! Then the horses' hooves pounded, The galloping, galloping of his steeds.*

*'Curse Meroz,' said the angel of the LORD, 'Curse its inhabitants bitterly, because they did not come to the help of the LORD, To the help of the LORD against the mighty.'" - Judges 5: 19 -23*

This battle at Megiddo was one of the great battles. Here Israel defeated king Jabin of Canaan and Sisera his general who had a mighty army of 900 iron chariots. Sisera was killed when his skull was pierced in the tent of Jael.

In Deborah's song she mentions the earth quaking, stars leaving their courses and the torrent of Kishon helping the Lord in His battle. Deborah also sings about the horses' hooves pounding the earth. At this ancient battle horses were the power of the enemy.

A second battle was fought at Megiddo between Egypt and Assyria against Israel. During this battle, King Josiah of Judah, was killed by Pharaoh Necho of Egypt. Josiah was one of the greatest Reformers in Israel's history bring the people back to God.

*"In his days Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went to the aid of the king of Assyria, to the River Euphrates; and King Josiah went against him. And Pharaoh Necho killed him at Megiddo when he confronted him." - 2Ki 23:29*

In this battle the kings of Egypt and Assyria gathered at the Euphrates river and they killed one of the greatest kings in Judah, king Josiah.

The river Euphrates played a great role in this battle. Kings gathered there and used it as a highway for battle. Cyrus the Persian king, conquered Babylon's King Belshazzar, by temporarily turning the Euphrates out of its course, enabling his army to march up the riverbed into the city, taking it by surprise.<sup>31</sup>

*Megiddo* in the Old Testament, was a place of war between rival kings and kingdoms that effected world history.

## Golgotha

To me it is perfectly clear that the battle of Armageddon, as symbolically described in Revelation took place at Golgotha, the hill of the skull. There, Jesus fought the hordes of hell all by Himself. It was there at the place of the skull, outside the city that He crushed

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<sup>31</sup> Dan 5

the head of the snake, mortally wounding him and rendered him helpless as the writer of Hebrews put it.<sup>32</sup>

Jesus defeated the kingdom of darkness and made a show of them openly.<sup>33</sup> The veil of the Temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom, the earth quaked, and the rocks were rent.

It was John the Baptist who said that Jesus was standing on the threshing floor ready to cleanse it thoroughly. The coming of Jesus to Israel was described as harvest time. It was the end of the Age - the Jewish age.

*"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" - Matt 3:7*

*"His winnowing fan [is] in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." - Matt 3:10*

Jesus clearly told the religious leaders that it was harvest time.

*"Do you not say, 'It wants four months yet to the harvest'? But look round, I tell you, and observe these plains-- they are already ripe for the sickle." - John 4:35*

As the Heir of the Kingdom He demanded the fruit thereof.<sup>34</sup> The builders rejected the Cornerstone. They rejected Him by killing Him outside the city.

*"and another angel came out from the altar, who had authority over fire. And he spoke with a great cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle*

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<sup>32</sup> Heb 2:14

<sup>33</sup> Col 2:14-15

<sup>34</sup> Mat 21: 34

*into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into **the great winepress of the anger of God.** And the winepress was trodden outside the city and blood came out of the winepress, even to the bridles of the horses, for the space of a thousand, six hundred stadia.”- Rev 14:18*

Gethsemane (the oil press) was the place where the Christ the Anointed, prayed through the night and accepted the cup of God's anger towards our sin on our behalf.

The pressure was so intense that night, that His sweat became like blood. He finally cried out in full surrender: "... not My will but Thy will be done". At Golgotha He became sin for whosoever would receive Him as Lord and Saviour.<sup>35</sup>

Golgotha was the place where Jesus by Himself treaded the winepress of God's wrath outside the city. The prophet Isaiah described this battle seven hundred years before its fulfilment.

*“Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One adorned in His clothing, bending down in His great power? I who speak in righteousness, great to save. Why is Your clothing red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the peoples there was no man with Me; for I will tread them in My anger and trample them in My fury; and their blood will be sprinkled on My garments, and I will stain all My clothing. **For the day of vengeance is in My heart and the year of My redeemed has come.** And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was no one to uphold; therefore My own arm has saved for Me; and My fury upheld Me. And I will tread down the people in My anger, and make them drunk in My fury, and I will pour their juice to the earth” - Isaiah 63:1-6*

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<sup>35</sup> 2 Co 5:21

Jesus fought the battle at Calvary and secured the victory on behalf of everyone who believed on Him. But not everyone accepted His salvation. To them Jesus said He would return, but this time as a thief in the night. He promised that it would happen within one generation and that it would result in the destruction of the Temple and the great tribulation of that generation.

## Consequences for that Generation

The Angel also told John that the killing of all the prophets through the ages was the reason for the battle of Armageddon.

*"... Since they have poured out the blood of the saints and prophets; and you gave them blood to drink, for they were deserving." - Rev 16:6*

Who is this that killed the prophets and the saints? Jesus clearly told us who killed all the prophets send to the earth.

*"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets, and decorate the tombs of the righteous, and say, if we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. **Therefore you are witnesses to yourselves, that you are the sons of those who killed the prophets;**"*

*Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?*

*Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the*

*righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.*

*Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come **upon this generation.***" - Mat 23: 32-36

From these and others scriptures it is clear who Jesus blamed for the deaths of all the prophets throughout the history. He told them that they would fill up the measure of their judgement by killing the Son and heir of God. It was that generation whose house would be left desolate, and would have to face the day of vengeance prophesied by the Old Testament Prophets. It was the generation He was addressing during His earthly ministry.

*"... So that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, **may be required of this generation;***" - Luke 11:50

This was the great mother of Harlots that is described in Rev 17:5-7. She had a cup in her hand filled with the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus. John was amazed by her splendour because she was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious pearls. But the angel rebuked him and told him the mystery concerning this woman and the beast that carried her. The beast with seven heads is a metaphor for the Roman Empire that was built on seven mountains on which the Women sat. This woman was the unbelieving Jewish religious system that would finally be desolated by the beast itself.<sup>36</sup>

The Battle of Armageddon is also closely linked to the coming of the Lord as a thief in the night to those who do not believe and the Great day of the Lord. As we have seen this was His coming in judgment against Jerusalem.

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<sup>36</sup> Rev 17:16

*"For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."*

*Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed [is] he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."*

*And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon." - Rev 16: 14-16*

Armageddon has two dimensions.

- ❖ The one side was Golgotha where Jesus paid the price for sin. There He tread the winepress of Gods anger towards sin and conquered the devil, sin sickness and death. In the process His blood stained his garments. Golgotha was the victory of the Messiah and those who believes on Him. It was called the year of His goodness and grace.
- ❖ The other side was the destruction of Jerusalem 70AD where judgement fell on Jerusalem, its temple and an evil generation that rejected their Messiah. That generation that refused His salvation and the Good news of His Kingdom. They chose the curse of the Law. This brought the Day of the Lord also called the day of vengeance.

*"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." Rev 15, 16*