

Babylon and the Last Battle



SABBATH—JUNE 16

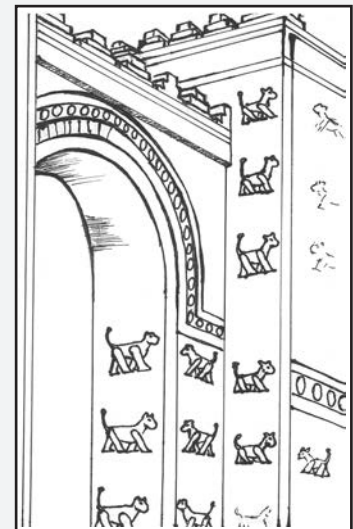
READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Revelation 14:8; Revelation 16:19; Isaiah 52:9; Revelation 18:1–10; 1 Kings 18:1–40.

MEMORY VERSE: “The name written on her forehead was a mystery. Here is what it said. **THE GREAT CITY OF BABYLON, THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES [people who sell sex for money], THE MOTHER OF EVERYTHING ON EARTH THAT GOD HATES**” (Revelation 17:5, NlrV).

THE BOOK OF REVELATION uses many word pictures. It also uses words from the Old Testament. One example is the name Babylon. This name appears six times in Revelation. But Revelation is not talking about Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. That kingdom ended hundreds of years earlier. Instead, John uses this Old Testament city as a word picture to show us a truth. In the Old Testament, Babylon was a powerful kingdom with religious power. This kingdom attacked God's people. John uses Babylon to describe the powerful governments and religious powers that attack God's people in the last days.

John also uses “Armageddon” as a word picture. The word appears only one time in Revelation. It comes from Hebrew wording that may mean “Mountain of Megiddo.” The name “Megiddo” points us to a place in Old Testament Israel. People have many ideas about what the word “Armageddon” means. Many people think it will be a big war fought in the last days in a real place on earth named Megiddo.

This week we will look at Babylon and Armageddon as word pictures. We will try to learn what the Bible is telling us with these word pictures.



John uses the city of Babylon as a word picture to describe the powerful governments and religious powers that attack God's people in the last days.

“THE STRONG WINE OF HER TERRIBLE [AWFUL] SINS’ ” (Revelation 14:8, Nlrv)

The book of Revelation mentions Babylon six times: in Revelation 14:8; Revelation 16:19; Revelation 17:5; and Revelation 18:2, 10, 21. Think of what you learned about the story of Babylon in the Old Testament as you read these six verses in Revelation. What do these verses teach us about Babylon and the things she will do in the last days?

Some people have said that the Bible is a story about two cities: Jerusalem and Babylon. From start to end, the Bible uses Jerusalem as a word picture for the city of God and His chosen people (Psalm 102:21; Isaiah 52:9; Isaiah 65:19; and Revelation 3:12). Babylon is a word picture for a government that follows false religion, fights against God, hurts people, and takes away their religious and personal freedom.

Think about the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:9). The Hebrew word for “Babel” is the same word used for the kingdom of “Babylon.” Here is something else interesting. In 1 Peter 5:13, Peter sends greetings from the church in “Babylon.” Peter did not mean that he was writing his letter from the old kingdom of Babylon, found in today’s Iraq. Instead, Peter was writing from Rome itself. He used “Babylon” as a word picture for Rome, the capital city of the Roman Kingdom. Rome would soon begin to attack God’s church. We read in Revelation that the Roman Church will attack God’s church in the last days. So, it is very interesting that Peter writes “Babylon” as a name for Rome.



The wording “the strong wine of her terrible [awful] sins’ ” points to Babylon’s false teachings, evil actions, and the bad things that come from them.

Read Revelation 14:8 and Revelation 18:3. What do these verses show us about the evil power that Babylon uses to control the people on the earth? How will Babylon use this power against God’s people?

The book of Revelation is clear. It shows us that Babylon is a word picture for a religious government that is full of sin and evil. Babylon’s evil power spreads over the whole earth. The wording “the strong wine of her terrible [awful] sins’ ” (Revelation 14:8, Nlrv) points to Babylon’s false teachings, evil actions, and the bad things that come from them. Babylon is a power for evil. This evil power already has spread to “all the nations” (Nlrv). We need to be careful it does not touch us, too.

BABYLON HAS FALLEN! (Revelation 18:1–10)

It is true that Babylon is very evil and her evil spreads to all people everywhere on earth. But there is good news. The book of Revelation teaches us that Babylon's evil power ends.

Read Revelation 18:1–10. What do these verses tell us about “Babylon the Great [the Powerful]” (NirV)?

The second angel's message tells us about the fall of Babylon (Revelation 14:8). That message is announced again in Revelation 18:2. The second angel's message shows us that the false religious power of Babylon becomes very evil. “The Bible tells us what Satan will do before Jesus' Second Coming. Satan will ‘use this man of sin [the false religious power]. He [the man of sin] will have Satan's power. He will do strange things and many powerful works that will be false. Those [people] who are lost in sin will be fooled by [believe] the things he can do. They are lost in sin because they did not love the truth that would save them. For [because of] this reason, God will allow them to follow false teaching so they will believe a lie.’ 2 Thessalonians 2:9–11 [NLV]. Babylon's fall will happen only when everything in these verses comes true. But Babylon's fall will not happen until the church and the governments on this earth join together. The change will happen little by little. So, the things that Revelation 14:8 says will happen have not all happened. They will happen in the future.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great [big] Controversy [war between God and Satan]*, pages 389, 390; adapted.

When will all those things in Revelation 14:8 come true? Only God knows. But we do know that God will judge Babylon in the future for all the evil she did. “Her sins are as high as heaven. God is ready to punish her for her sins” (Revelation 18:5, NLV). This verse points back to another verse about Babylon in the Old Testament (read Jeremiah 51:9). This verse in Jeremiah helps us understand that God will judge Babylon soon.

Should we be surprised that God will judge Babylon? Of course not. Babylon in the Old Testament was judged (Daniel 5). The Bible makes it very clear in many verses that everyone will have to stand in front of God to be judged. That includes Babylon. How comforting to know we have Jesus to stand for us on the day we are judged (1 John 2:1).



The second angel's message announces the fall of Babylon.

ARMAGEDDON (Revelation 16:12–16)

Most people do not know much about the book of Revelation. That includes many Christians, too. But there is one word or word picture from the book of Revelation that most people do know about. What is it? It is the word “Armageddon” (read Revelation 16:16). Even many people who do not believe in God or do not follow a religion know about Armageddon. For many people, the word “Armageddon” means a final fight or last war. The future of the whole earth depends on what happens during this war. Hollywood even made a movie named *Armageddon*. It was about a giant rock from outer space that almost destroyed Planet Earth. This movie shows us that the idea about the end of this earth also is in the minds of people who do not believe in God or follow a religion.

Many Christians have ideas about Armageddon that are as false as the movie we talked about. Some Christians think Armageddon is going to be a real war with armies in the Middle East in the last days. One false idea about Armageddon says that 200 million soldiers from Asia will enter Northern Israel! Other Christians believe that the final war in the last days will happen in the real place on earth named Megiddo.

But the Bible tells us a totally different story. The Bible shows us that Armageddon is not a final war between countries fighting over money, power, or land. Instead, the war of Armageddon is really a word picture for the spiritual fight in the worldwide war between God and Satan. Armageddon is a religious fight for Planet Earth.



Revelation 16:12–16 uses the word picture of frogs coming from the mouth of the dragon, the false messenger, and the wild animal power that comes from the sea. These frogs are a word picture for evil spirits or demons.

Read Revelation 16:12–16. What can we learn from these verses about Armageddon?

First, do you see all the word pictures in Revelation 16:12–16? As an example, we see spirits the same as frogs coming from the mouth of the dragon, the false messenger, and the wild animal power from the sea. These three powers are shown in Revelation 13. The false messenger is a word picture for the wild animal that comes from the ground. We already learned that this animal power that comes from the ground is a word picture for the United States. We also can see the big war between God and Satan in these verses. We do not know exactly how the war of Armageddon will happen. But we do know it is a worldwide war between the armies of God and the armies of Satan.

ARMAGEDDON AND MOUNT [VERY HIGH HILL] CARMEL: PART 1 (1 Kings 18:1–18)

What exactly is this big fight of Armageddon that we have been studying about? First, the name Armageddon may mean “Mountain of Megiddo.” Did you know that there is no mountain in the land area of Megiddo? But the very high hill of Mount Carmel is nearby. So, some Bible experts believe that Mountain of Megiddo means Mount Carmel.

Also, Bible thinkers believe that the story about Elijah at Mount Carmel is a picture story for what Revelation 13 says will happen in the last days.

Yesterday, we learned more about the dragon, the wild animal power from the sea, and the false messenger (the wild animal power that comes from the ground) in Revelation 16:12–16. We saw that Revelation 16:13 talks about the same things that happen in Revelation 13. In lesson 9, we learned about the false three-in-one god that Revelation 13 talks about.

Revelation 13 says that the wild animal power that comes from the ground will start doing miracles. This power “even makes fire come down from heaven to earth while people are watching” (Revelation 13:13, ICB). These “miracles” will lead to a special test that happens between people who worship God and people who worship the “god that looks like the first wild animal” power that comes from the sea (Revelation 13:14, NLV).

Read the story in 1 Kings 18:1–18. What is happening in this story that shows us some of the things that the book of Revelation says will happen in the last days?

In many ways, what we see happening in 1 Kings 18:1–18 shows us the worldwide war between God and Satan. Elijah tells us what the problem is in verse 18: God’s people have rejected God’s law. They worship false gods instead of Him. History shows us that this problem is always the reason for the evil on this earth and the evil in God’s people. We can choose to worship “Him Who made heaven and earth and the sea and the places where water comes out of the earth” (Revelation 14:7, NLV). Or we can worship someone or something else. In Revelation 13, the people do not worship the Lord. The people worship the wild animal power that comes from the sea and his false god. We are either on God’s side, or we are on Satan’s. We can choose only one of two sides. God will make clear the two sides to everyone.



The wild animal power that comes from the ground will make “fire come down from heaven to earth while people are watching” (Revelation 13:13, ICB).

**ARMAGEDDON AND MOUNT [VERY HIGH HILL]
CARMEL: PART 2 (1 Kings 18:18–40)**

Finish reading the story about Elijah in 1 Kings 18:18–40. What happens? How does the story end? How does this story show us what will happen in a bigger way in the worldwide war between God and Satan in the last days?

The fight on Carmel was between Elijah and 450 priests. These priests were religious leaders who served the god Baal. Did you see how the side with the evil religious leaders was much larger than the side with the good leaders? The fight between Elijah and Baal’s religious leaders was a test. This test would show Israel the true God. Was it the God who made the heavens and the earth? Or was it Baal, who was really another name for “the dragon” (Revelation 12:8, NLV), or Satan? Baal was another trick Satan used to lead people to worship him (Revelation 12:9).

The priests prayed to Baal to burn up the bull on their altar to him. The priests shouted from morning to noon. At noon Elijah began to make fun of them. “ ‘Shout louder!’ he said. . . . ‘Maybe he’s [he is] sleeping. You might have to wake him up’ ” (1 Kings 18:27, NIV). The priests acted the same as wild animals. They cut themselves with swords until their blood flowed out. The priests shouted until they became tired. They gave up that evening.

Elijah’s bull was covered in water three times. The water flowed down the bull and flooded the ditch around the altar. Elijah prayed a short prayer. God burned up everything fast, including the altar and the soil under it. It was now clear to everyone who the true God was.



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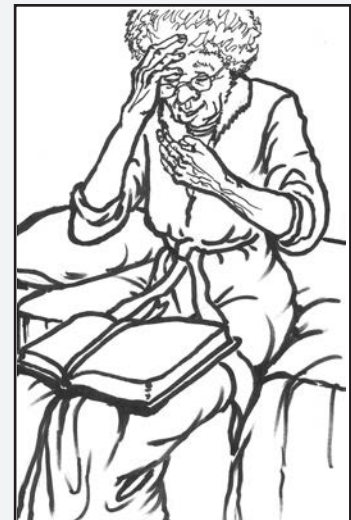
Read Revelation 16:13 and Revelation 19:20, 21. What happens in these verses to the false religious leaders? How is that the same as what happened to the false religious leaders who served Baal?

We do not know everything about Armageddon. But we do know one thing about it. We know how Armageddon ends: God’s enemies will be destroyed. God and His people will be proven innocent of doing any wrong.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1, 2. What does Paul mean in these verses? Why is that truth important for us to remember as we think about what will happen in the future?

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “In the Bible story about the war of Armageddon, something interesting happens. This interesting thing has nothing to do with the awful animals that John writes about in Revelation and the things they do. Instead, John shows us parts of the truth about Jesus. Then the word pictures about the wild animals do not seem so important. A truth about Jesus is shown to us in Revelation 16:15: ‘Listen! I will come at a time you don’t [do not] expect, like [the same as] a thief. Great [wonderful] blessings belong to those [people] who stay awake and keep their clothes [a word picture for living a holy life with help from Jesus] with them. They will not have to go without clothes and be ashamed for people to see them’ (Revelation 16:15, ERV). This verse appears in Revelation right in the middle of the one chapter in the Bible that talks about Armageddon. What does that tell us? It tells us about the importance of getting ready to meet Jesus at the last day after all these things in Revelation happen.

“Another verse that John uses to show us truth about Jesus is Revelation 17:14: ‘These kings will fight and make war with the Lamb [Jesus]. But the Lamb [Jesus] will win the war because He is Lord of lords and King of kings. His people are the called [separated from all other people on this earth] and chosen and faithful [loyal] ones’ (NLV). God’s army is made up of people who do not kill other people with weapons. Instead, they want to stay loyal to God’s work on this earth. The last war of Armageddon is very different from the wars that armies fight today. How? The war of Armageddon is a fight for our minds and our hearts. It is God’s invitation to His people to stay loyal to the Lamb that was killed for them on the cross (Revelation 5:9, 10, 12; Revelation 13:8).”—Jon Paulien, *Armageddon at the Door* (Hagerstown, MD: Autumn House Publishing: 2008), page 193; adapted.



The war of Armageddon is a fight for our minds and our hearts.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What if you know someone who believes that many of the things in Revelation will take place in the real-life places that Revelation uses as word pictures? How could you in a loving way help this person know the right way to understand these verses?
- ② What are some of Babylon’s teachings? How can we stay away from these false teachings?