

Research Article

The Background and Meaning of the Global Battle of Armageddon in Revelation 16:16

Hakizimana Phaniel

Adventist University of Central Africa, P.O. Box 2461, Kigali, Rwanda.
Corresponding Author Email: hakizimanaphaniel@gmail.com

Received: Aug 30, 2020

Accepted: Sep 11, 2020

Published: Sep 19, 2020

Abstract: The study is entitled the “The Background and Meaning of the Global Battle of Armageddon in Revelation 16:16”. This topic was selected after realizing in Christian denominations different understandings on the meaning of the verse, specifically on the word “Armageddon”. On that, many Christians who are familiar with the book of Revelation and believe in it, see the battle of Armageddon as a literal military conflict in the Middle East near the end of the world. One version has a 200 million-man army from Asia sweeping into Northern Israel. Others are fixated on the various military and political conflicts in that part of the world that will, in their understanding, they set the stage for the final military battle of Armageddon in the area of Megiddo. However, the following question arises: Does the Bible’s truth not give a totally different picture? The main objective of this study is to critically analyze this verse in order to have clear understanding on its meaning, specifically on the global battle of Armageddon. Secondary data such hard and soft copy documents were used as research instruments. And information collected was critically analyzed using the original Bible languages context and different Bible translations. Finally, the conclusion was elaborated basing on the supported analysis.

Keywords: Ar-Mageddon, Global Battle.

Introduction

Though most people, including many Christians, don’t know much about the book of Revelation, one image or word from it has reached popular culture: *Armageddon* (see Rev. 16:16). Even in secular culture the word has come to stand for a final struggle in which the fate of the earth hangs in the balance. Hollywood produced a movie called *Armageddon* about a giant asteroid poised to destroy the planet. To some degree, the idea of the world’s end is in the minds of secular people, as well. The text written in revelation 16:16 is among the most misunderstood ones in the book of revelation. As it is known, some of the teachings of the book of Revelation are symbols and literal. While others such as Armageddon have no interpretations. In Revelation 16:16, the word Armageddon appears with no explanation. The war of Armageddon is the first time to be recorded in the bible, but not the first battle to be recorded in the scripture since there have been other battles such as, the one between Michael and His angels and the Devil and his angels where devil lost their place in heaven.

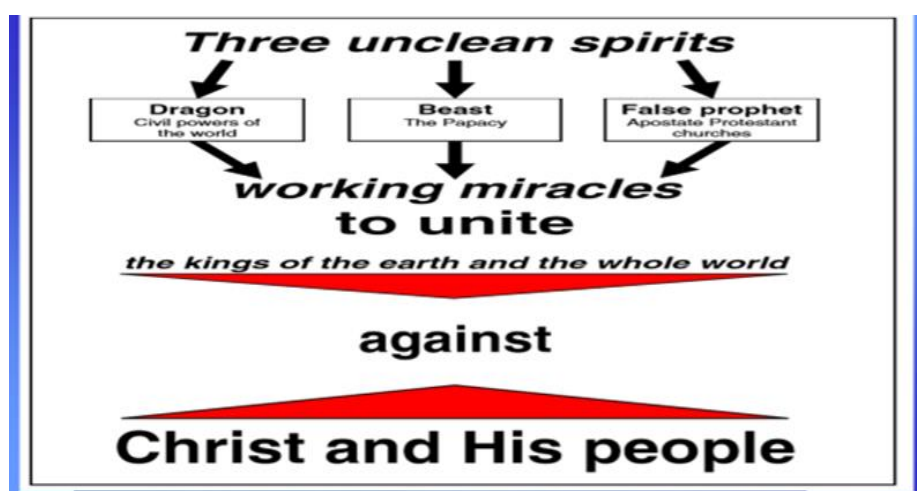
The same war continued to the Earth whereby the Devil, after God created Adam and Eve deceived them to disobey their Creator. This battle as continued for ages, its climax will take place in the end times before Jesus comes again. This is the scenario for Armageddon, the great finale of the conflict between Christ and Satan, between the church of God and her enemies. The Revelator declares of those on the first side: These will make war with the Lamb... (Revelation 17:14). And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to

make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ (Revelation 12:17). In the impending battle of Armageddon the enemies of God make war with the Lamb by attacking His people, for Jesus said: Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me (Matthew 25:40). In the Greek the word for war is the same as the word for battle. It appears that the battle of Armageddon begins with the attempt to destroy the people of God.

As it is indicated, while the world will be united in attacking the saints of God, at the same time there will be continual tension among the various groups. However, even if this tension should lead to military conflict, it is important to note that this conflict will not comprise any part of the battle of Armageddon. In this battle, two great opposing powers are revealed. On one side stands the Creator of heaven and earth. All on His side bear His signet. They are obedient to His commands. On the other side stands for the Prince of darkness, with those who have chosen apostasy and rebellion. That climax is the one written in Revelation 16:16; ... "And they assembled them at the place which in Hebrew Armageddon...." Prior to this, the battle scene of Armageddon in Revelation is quite extraordinary, as highlighted in the following point: (1) "The kings of the whole world" are there, hence this is far larger than any Old Testament encounter that was limited to two sides battling it out; (2) Demonic spirits, "the spirits of demons, performing signs [not any sign but "miraculous signs"] had assembled them. How are we to interpret what this means? It seems already like some very unusual battle. And it may sound even more unusual and strange. First, as demonstrated in the chart below, the Euphrates river is dried up "that the way might be prepared for the kings from the east" (v. 12); and there appear three evil trinity dragon, a beast, and a false prophet whose mouths issue "three foul spirits like frogs" (v. 13).

The Features of the Battle of Armageddon

All the chart and the verse bellow describes the features of the battle of Armageddon: "I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Rev. 16:13, 14).



Those foul, or unclean spirits, "go out to the kings of the whole world" to assemble them for "the battle. Is this a battle of nations? Further, although all the kings are drawn to the battle, it does not appear to be their war at all: it is called "the battle of the great day of God the Almighty"! It looks like His war against them. As well as *all* the kings of the earth being

assembled. Moreover, they seem to have no weapons, no armaments. How did they all get there?

In Revelation 13, a False Trinity is formed between the dragon, the beast from the sea, and the beast from the earth. They oppose the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—and are ready to vent their wrath against the remnant.

The Dragon

Satan himself is the first power represented by the dragon, as we see in Rev.12: 9. Satan began the war against God right in heaven. Later, on earth he began using different agencies. In this section we will review some of the other powers employed by Satan, the dragon. What actions of the dragon in Revelation 12:3, 4 help to identify an earthly power represented by the dragon? What is this second power? The dragon with seven heads and ten horns also represents the Roman Empire. The seven heads or powers are the great world empires which fought against God, moved by Satan. But the prophet, using a figure of speech in which the whole stands for a part (synecdoche), refers here specifically to the Roman Empire.

The dragon had also ten horns refer to the territory of Rome, which was fragmented into ten nations. In the first century this power, through Herod, stood before the woman (the church) to devour her Child. He ordered the murder of all the children in Bethlehem up to two years of age in an effort to destroy Jesus. What features in Revelation 12:6, 14 identify a third power symbolized by the dragon? What is this third power? This is "Christian" Rome in the middle ages. The woman—the small, loyal church of God—was persecuted during the prophetic period of the 1260 years—three and a half prophetic years or 42 months. (See Rev. 12:6; Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:5.) The fourth stage of persecution by the dragon. (See Rev. 12:17.) There will be a renewal of persecution against God's people by the dragon. The earthly power that he will use for this attack is presented in Revelation 13. On that, the advice is provided: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:10, 11).

The Beast

The first ten verses of Revelation 13 present a history more or less parallel to the one described in Revelation 12. But while in the former chapter the events are seen from a political point of view, here in chapter 13 we witness the same persecution and affliction of the people of God from a religious standpoint.

This beast with its seven heads or powers may well represent the succession of the seven great world powers: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, pagan Rome, and papal Rome. Here also the ten horns identify the European territory into which Rome was divided. Papal Rome would exercise her power especially in Europe. The parallel with the prophetic vision of Daniel 7 is established by verse 2, where we see a beast composed of the parts of three of the four beasts described by Daniel.

These beasts symbolized world empires. What other specifications help identify this first beast? Rev. 13:5-7. Both here and in Daniel 7:21, 25 it is easy to detect the same great features that depict the papal power: (1) blasphemies, assuming titles and powers that belong only to God; (2) war against the saints; (3) a period of religio-political supremacy of 42 prophetic months, equivalent to a literal 1260 years (A.D. 538-1798). "This symbol, as most Protestants have believed, represents the papacy, which succeeded to the power and seat and authority once held by the ancient Roman Empire. This prophecy, which is nearly identical

with the description of the little horn of Daniel 7, unquestionably points to the papacy."—The Great Controversy, p. 439. What happened to one of the heads of the first beast? Rev. 13:3. The death wound was the loss of the political power and supremacy of the papacy, leading up to 1798, when the French General Berthier took the pope prisoner. But the healing process began when Mussolini, in 1929, restored to the pope some of the territories which had been taken from the papacy.

The False Prophet / the beast from the earth,

Basing on what it is written in Revelation 13:11-18, the following features show why it is believable that this beast symbolizes the United States:

1. Time: "When the first beast was going into captivity in 1798 . . . the United States was growing into prominence and power. The nation arose, not in the Old World, with its teeming multitudes, but in the New World, with its relatively few inhabitants¹.

2. Place: It came up out of the earth, and not from the sea as did the other beasts. Since the sea represents peoples, the earth may point out a scarcely populated territory, like the U.S. in its early years.

3. Two lamblike horns: The two horns, uncrowned, could be the two special features of the United States government: (1) a government without a king, a republican government; and (2) a church without a pope—separation of church and state. This ensures the two main human liberties—civil and religious. "It has been shown that the United States is the power represented by the beast with lamblike horns².

If so, in what way was this earth beast changed (Verses 13-17)? The United States has fulfilled, and continues to fulfill the role of a lamblike beast. To its shores have come persecuted men and women from all parts of the world to seek refuge. But according to prophecy a sad change will come. The following are the points:

(1) It will speak as a dragon, and a dragon is a persecuting power (v. 11). (2) It exercises all the power of the sea beast (Rome); it uses the same forceful methods to impose religious practices (v. 12). (3) It causes everybody to worship the sea beast (v. 12). (4) It says to the inhabitants of the earth that they should make an image to the sea beast. If the sea beast (Rome) is a church united to a state that persecutes people, an image should be something similar; "apostate Protestantism using the civil power of the state to enforce religion (v. 14)". (5) It gives life to the image of the beast; the state will support the dictates of apostate Christianity (v. 15). (6) It causes all to receive the mark of the beast; it imposes Sunday observance (v. 16). (7) It causes conditions so that no one can buy or sell except the one who has the mark; it abolishes the most elemental freedoms; it suspends some individual rights (v. 16). (8) It pronounces a death decree against all who do not worship Rome (v. 15). For these reasons, we interpret this prophecy as the United States.

The third power through which the spirits of devils are to work, is not only symbolized as the second beast but also the false prophet. A false prophet is one who claims to be a spokesman for God, yet is not a faithful witness. A false prophet claims to receive messages from God, but in reality does not act as an intermediary between God and man. False prophets relay untrue messages which are from a source other than God. In Revelation Chapter 16 the false prophet is a symbol of apostate Protestantism. Once the Protestant churches were God's spokespeople, proclaiming His message to the world. Today they are in apostasy, yet they still pose as God's spokesmen. The Revelator appears to equate the false prophet with the

¹ S.D.A. Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 820

² Ellen G White—The Great Controversy, p. 579

image to the beast. In Revelation Chapter 19, where the false prophet is described, it will be seen that his details correspond with the description of the image to the beast of Revelation 13:12-17. The image to the beast will be comprised of the Protestant churches of America united with the American political powers. When this union eventuates, one can readily understand how the false prophet and the image to the beast could be deemed identical.

The mark of the beast_ on the right hand or the forehead_ 666

Adventist interpreters understand this mark to be not a literal brand but some sign of allegiance that identifies the bearer as loyal to the power represented by the beast. The controversy at that time will center on the law of God, and particularly on the fourth command (Rev. 14:12). Hence the observance of Sunday will constitute such a sign, but only at the time when the beast's power will be revived and Sunday observance becomes a matter of compliance with civil law.

Basing on what is written in Revelation 13:16, what does putting the mark on the right hand or the forehead have to do with the commandments of God? To answer this it has to be known that, people of all social classes will be pressured to receive the mark of the beast on their right hands or their foreheads. Just as the seal in the forehead identifies those whom God regards as His (Rev. 7:3, 4; Rev. 14:1), so the mark of the beast identifies the worshipers of the beast. The central issues in the final crisis will be worship and obedience to God in keeping His commandments (Rev. 14:12). The Sabbath commandment, in particular, will be the test of faithfulness and obedience to God. As the Sabbath is the distinctive sign of the obedience of God's faithful people (Ezek. 20:12, 20), so the mark of the beast is the sign of allegiance to the beast.

The mark of the beast involves the substitution of a human commandment for God's commandment. The greatest evidence of this fact is the humanly established institution of Sunday (see Dan. 7:25) as the day of worship instead of the seventh-day Sabbath, the day mandated in Scripture by our Creator. The attempt to change the sign of God's authority to another day is an attempt to usurp the role and power of God Himself. "The mark of the beast is the papal Sabbath.... When the decree shall go forth enforcing the counterfeit Sabbath, and the loud cry of the third angel shall warn men against the worship of the beast and his image ... then those who still continue in transgression will receive the mark of the beast³.

In addition to that, Revelation 13:18 (NKJV) says: "Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666." Who is this man? Paul describes him as "the man of sin" (2 Thess. 2:3). This designation points to the papal power symbolized by the sea beast, whose blasphemous name on its heads points to the divine title it claims for itself, supposedly standing in the place of the Son of God on earth.

The mark of the beast is not a visible sign of any kind. Its placement on the right hand or on the forehead counterfeits the instruction that Moses gave the Israelites to bind God's law as a sign upon their hands or their foreheads (Deut. 6:8). The right hand has to do with behavior, while the forehead has to do with the mind or mental agreement. Some will choose to receive the mark of the beast to escape the threat of death, while others will be fully committed mentally and spiritually to this apostate system of worship.

³Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, pp. 234, 235.

Adventists hold that simultaneously the third angel's message will warn against the reception of the mark (Rev.14:9-11). This message, swelling into a loud cry (Rev. 18:1-4), will enlighten men as to the issues involved. When the issues are thus clearly before them, and men nevertheless choose to support an institution of the beast, knowing it to be in direct opposition to the command of God, they thereby show their allegiance to the power and receive the mark of the beast⁴. "In the issue of the contest all Christendom will be divided into two great classes: those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and those who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark⁵. The warfare against God's law, which was begun in heaven, will be continued until the end of time. In this time, every man will be tested. Here "Obedience or disobedience" is the question to be decided by the whole world. All will be called to choose between the law of God and the laws of men. Here the dividing line will be drawn⁶.

After the Sunday law has been imposed nationwide in the United States, it will very soon become a worldwide obligation. "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 on the globe will be led to follow her example. This will be the sign for the people of God to leave the big cities and go to rural areas or to less-populated places⁷.

The Triple Union and Armageddon

Identification of the three confederated powers: (1) The dragon is in essence Satan himself. In Revelation 12 the dragon also represents the Roman Empire acting under the leadership of the devil. In chapter 16 the dragon is doubtless Satan operating through spiritualism, used by Satan to promote his aims and to unite the other powers, since from the mouth of the three—the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet—there came out spirits of devils (Rev. 16:14). (2) The beast is Rome, the papacy, the first beast of Revelation 13. (3) The false prophet is the same power as "the image of the beast" of Revelation 13—the apostate and confederate Protestantism. "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 [the U.S.] 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 climax of Armageddon end is near⁸.

"Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions. While the former lays the foundation of spiritualism, the latter creates a bond of sympathy with Rome. 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 [the U.S.] will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience⁹.

⁴S.D.A. Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 822.

⁵ Ellen G. White, the Great Controversy, p. 450.

⁶Ellen G White—The Desire of Ages, p. 763

⁷Ellen G White Testimonies, vol. 6, p. 18

⁸. Ellen G White—Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 451

⁹. Ellen G White —The Great Controversy, p. 588.

Armageddon and Mount Carmel

What, though, is this great battle of Armageddon? First, the name seems to mean “Mountain of Megiddo”. However, there is no mountain in the area known as Megiddo, but Mount Carmel was located in the vicinity, and scholars have seen the phrase *Mountain of Megiddo* as a reference to Mount Carmel. More to the point, Bible students have seen the story of Elijah and false prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel as a symbol, a type to what is going to unfold in Revelation 13.

As seen in Revelation 16:13, with its reference to the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, points back to events in Revelation 13, the counterfeit trinity also called “three Unclean Spirits”. Issues in Revelation 13 start to come to a climax in verses 13 and 14, when the second beast performs supernatural acts, even making “fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men” (*Rev. 13:13*). These events then lead to the direct confrontation between God and Satan, between those worshiping the true God and those worshiping the “image to the beast” (*Rev. 13:14*).

In many ways, what we see here is a stark portrayal of the great controversy. Elijah states the issue very plainly in verse 18: *people have forsaken God’s law and are worshiping and following false gods*. Has not this always been the issue, regardless of the endless forms and ways in which this evil has been manifested throughout history? We are either worshiping “Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (*Rev. 14:7, NKJV*), or we are worshiping someone or something else. In the case of Revelation 13 and the events that unfold there, instead of worshiping the Lord, people are worshiping the beast and his image. “There is no middle ground”. We are either on the side of God or on the side of Satan. That’s how important the issues at stake are, now and especially in the battle of Armageddon, where in the story on Mount Carmel, the distinction becomes very clear.

The battle on Mount Carmel was between Elijah, prophet of God, and the hundreds of priests of Baal. It was a test to demonstrate who is the true God, the God who created the heavens and the earth, or Baal, just another manifestation of “the dragon” and another means by which he seeks to deceive the world (*Rev. 12:9*).

The plans now in place for world government will come to fruition, as envisaged in the following statement. There will be a universal bond of union, one great harmony, a confederacy of Satan's forces.... In the warfare to be waged in the last days there will be united, in opposition to God's people, all the corrupt powers that have apostatized from allegiance to the law of Jehovah.²⁰ This means that all those who are not loyal to God’s law and who do not genuinely belong to Christ, will be united together against God and His people. There will be only two sides in the last great conflict. One side - the majority - is classified as worshippers of the beast. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). On the other side - the minority - are those who worship the Lamb. Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Revelation 14:12. “The scene transacted in Jerusalem at the betrayal and rejection of Christ represents the scene which will take place in the future history of the world, when Christ is finally rejected. The religious world will take sides with the first great rebel, and will reject the message of mercy in regard to the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus¹⁰.

¹⁰ —Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 93.

In several places in the battle of Armageddon narrative the hideous creatures and the ugly events take the back stage for a moment and a glimpse of more personal truth appears. As we have seen, one of them is Revelation 16:15: 'Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed' (NIV). This text, coming right in the middle of the one place in the Bible that actually names Armageddon, echoes many New Testament passages about personal preparation for the return of Jesus and the events of the end.

"Another such text is Revelation 17:14: 'These will make war with the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them, because he is Lord of lords and King of kings — and those with him are called and chosen and faithful' (author's translation). Here the Great War at the end engages an army of people whose primary purpose is not to destroy others with weapons, but to be faithful to their divine calling and election. This is a very different kind of battle from the ones that nations and insurgent operations still fight today. As I have said repeatedly, the battle of Armageddon is a struggle for the mind. It is also a battle for the heart — a call to heartfelt allegiance to the Lamb that was slain (Rev. 5:9, 10, 12; 13:8)¹¹.

Armageddon_ Exegetical Analysis

John intended to direct his readers to a study of Armageddon as a Hebrew history, that the cryptic name might be understood. Ἀρμαγεδών [Harmagedōn]: "A Hebrew place-name meaning Mount or Hill of Megiddo and generally identified as the fortress overlooking a pass through the Carmel Range into Galilee." From a combination of Hebrew הָר [hār], mountain, and מִגְדּוֹן [meḡiddōn] (Zec. 12:11), Megiddo. "Megiddo probably means a place of troops (from גָּד [gād]), a troop (Gen. Gen. 49:19); and the verb קָדַד [qāḏaḏ]), to cut to two pieces." Strongly these gives the meaning as "place of crowds"¹². "Harmageddon" as a transliteration from Hebrew's opinion, it differs as to what the Greek transliteration represents. The Reading Harmageddon is from two Hebrew words, the first is probably "har", 'mountain' as noted. However, some ancient manuscripts omit the first syllable ar-or har together.

In Isaiah 14:13, where "har-mo'ed" is translated as 'mount of the congregation or mount of assembly, it designates the mountain on which Solomon's temple stood. Satan is portrayed as admiring to overthrow the governments of God¹³. Thus the word har-mo'ed is used in Isaiah 14:13 in terms of the great contest between Christ and Satan (Rev 12:7-9; 17:14). On that, a function nicely fitting with the message of Revelation would mean that Armageddon is Satan's last attempt to become the sole object of worship on Planet Earth. In this time there will be only two parties in the world, those who are loyal to God, and those who stand under the banner of the prince of darkness Satan and his angels, the ones who were prophesized to come down with power and signs just with the purpose of deceiving those who dwell on the earth¹⁴. Now this proves that the battle of Armageddon is not a physical battle but spiritual battle.

Armageddon_ Theological analysis

¹¹ — Jon Paulien, *Armageddon at the Door* (Hagerstown, Md.: Autumn House Publishing, a division of Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2008), p. 193.

¹² Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg and Neva F. miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* 2000, page 74

¹³ Seventh Adventist Bible Commentary page 845-1980

¹⁴ Selected message volume 1 page 172,189

All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan, and this is regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. This conflict originated in heaven when a created being, Lucifer who become Satan, endowed with freedom of choice in self-exaltation. He introduced the spirit of rebellion into this world when he led Adam and Eve into sin¹⁵. the war of Armageddon will then be the climax of the time where God will deliver His people from all kinds of oppression for ever and ever.

During times of war and suffering, Christians must look to the Lamb and take comfort in the fact that His purposes – even though mysterious from a human perspective – will not be thwarted. This should lead Christians to worship God in awe and wonder¹⁶. "Ultimately God is in complete control of all things, though He may choose to let certain events happen according to natural laws which He has ordained. God has created a world in which freedom is a real possibility. His permissive will provides for human freedom and the laws of nature. "However, even though God is all powerful, He sovereignly chose to self-limit His power by delegating authority to mankind in the Garden of Eden.

Armageddon and Divine Warning

God reveals to His people the strategy that the enemy will use; He does this so we will not be surprised, discouraged, or deceived by the tumultuous events that unfold around us. God not only knows the future but controls it, a fact that should give us comfort amid situations that, from our limited, sinful perspective, can at times seem hopeless. In connection with that, my brothers and sisters, let us hear to the Divine warning: "GET READY, GET READY, GET READY", because the future is not ahead of us, as most of people say, the future has already started. Do not waste your time with those who do not want to hear and acknowledge the truth. All the Bible texts will not convince those that do not wish to be convinced. Ripe fruit will fall from the tree. The indulgence of a perverted appetite is the main cause that many cannot hear and accept the truth though it is presented in clear lines. Here below is a skeleton of events preceding the battle of Armageddon and Second Coming of Jesus.



¹⁵ Ellen G White- Adventist believe & Great controversy

¹⁶ Sovereignty of God –Holman Bible Dictionary Retrieved 2018-04-19

Note about the order of the mentioned events.

Before giving the explanation on the above chart, let be noticed that, the order given in the lesson for events preceding the end of probation is not necessarily the order in which these events will happen. Nevertheless there is some probabilities in the sequence. The shaking and the reform movement will begin 'before the falling of the latter rain, and the latter rain will start before the finishing of God's work. During a certain period of time the shaking, the reformation, the sealing, the latter rain, and the loud cry will probably be happening together. All of them will end at the (general) close of probation.

A Brief Explanation of this Chart/ skeleton

1844: Christ moves from the "Holy Place to the "Most Holy Place" in the heavenly sanctuary above to begin the judgment of the dead. Very soon now the judgment will move to the cases of the living at the passing of the "National Sunday Law."

NSL = National Sunday Law. - This event is the last act in the drama (PT p. 141). This event will separate the wheat from the tares in the visible SDA church and produce the church triumphant. This is the church that will receive the seal of God, which qualifies it to receive the latter rain which empowers it to give the loud cry message, of Revelation 18: 1 -4. The loud cry takes the gospel to the entire world, and then the end will come, {Matt 24: 14 and Rev. 14 6- 12}.

It is too plain to misunderstand. The Latter Rain is given to those that have received the "Seal of God." The "Seal of God" is given to those who pass the Sunday lest. The Lauer Rain empowers us to give the Loud Cry. The Loud Cry calls the other sheep not of this fold out of "Babylon" and it all happens after the shaking and separating, leading up to and shortly after the NSL. Please read {EW p.269-272.}. But, if we wait until the NSL to secure oil in our lamps, it will be everlasting too late for us, and we will not be saved. The oil represents a holy character that is not developed over night, nor is it transferable from one to another as a gift, but it is gained by a personal relationship with Christ. {See TM-p. 234} Consider the next statement, and remember the refreshing of the "Latter Rain" comes as a result of passing the test and receiving the "Seal of God."

If the light of this truth, revealing the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, and showing that there is no foundation in the Word of God for Sunday observance, and yet you still cling to the false Sabbath, refusing to keep holy the Sabbath which God calls "My holy day," you receive the mark of the beast. When does this take place? When you obey the decree that commands you to cease from labor on Sunday and worship God, while you know that there is not a word in the Bible showing Sunday to be other than a common working day, you consent to receive the mark of the beast, and refuse the seal of God. . . . But the seal of the living God is placed upon those who conscientiously keep the Sabbath of the Lord¹⁷.

COP = Close of Probation - This is the general close of probation for the entire world. {See Dan.12: 1 and Rev. 22: 11 -1 3}. The gospel will have now gone to the entire world, and everyone will have made a choice to accept the truth or reject the truth. Please note that the close of probation for the SDA church will have already taken place back at the NSL, thus separating the wheat from the tares and producing a pure sinless people that God can trust with the power of the latter rain to take the gospel to the other sheep not of this fold.

¹⁷ —Ellen G. White Comments, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 979, 980.

SC= Second Coming of Jesus - God's people will endure a time of great mental anguish from the COP, until the SC. The seven last plagues one after another will be falling all over the world. After the first plague, the death degree will have been passed upon all, who will not yield to the beast and his image. Nevertheless In tills "Great Time of Trouble" our bread and water will be sure. {See GC 613-623)

In Revelation 16:16 then, the final battle between the dragon and God is named: the battle of Armageddon. What happens in Revelation 13 could be seen partly as the dragon's pre-Armageddon battle preparation. This preparation includes the recruitment of bestial allies and propaganda agents, so that "the kings of the whole world" (Rev 16:14) can be gathered to fight for the dragon. It is within this wider context that the image of the beast appears on the scene of history.

The Time of Trouble

"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Rev. 22:11). As spoken in this verse, "An angel returning from the earth announces that his work is done; the final test has been brought upon the world, and all who have proved themselves loyal to the divine precepts have received 'the seal of the living God.' Then Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above. He lifts His hands and with a loud voice says, 'It is done;' and all the angelic host lay off their crowns as He makes the solemn announcement: 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still.' . . Every case has been decided for life or death"¹⁸.

When does the time of trouble end? Although no one knows exactly what the duration of the time of trouble will be, we infer that it will be short. And at the appointed time the deliverance will come just shortly before the actual appearance of Jesus. Said the servant of the Lord: "Satan's host and wicked men will surround them [the saints], and exult over them, because there will seem to be no way of escape for them. But in the midst of their revelry and triumph, there is heard peal upon peal of the loudest thunder. The heavens have gathered blackness, and are only illuminated by the blazing light and terrible glory from heaven, as God utters His voice from His holy habitation. "The foundations of the earth shake; buildings totter and fall with a terrible crash. The sea boils like a pot, and the whole earth is in terrible commotion. The captivity of the righteous is turned, and with sweet and solemn whisperings they say to one another: 'We are delivered. It is the voice of God'¹⁹.

Commenting on Rev. 12:12 "*The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time*", Ellen White wrote: "Fearful are the scenes which call forth this exclamation from the heavenly voice. The wrath of Satan increases as his time grows short, and his work of deceit and destruction will reach its culmination in the time of trouble"²⁰.

The Battle of Armageddon: the Time and Setting

The general question being asked here is "at what particular time does Armageddon occur?" As written in the Bible; "The sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared"

¹⁸ Ellen G White—The Great Controversy, p. 613

¹⁹ Ellen G White—Testimonies, vol. 1, p. 354

²⁰ Ellen G White—The Great Controversy, p. 623.

(Rev. 16:12); the preparation for Armageddon comes under the sixth plague and the battle itself under the seventh (See also Rev. 19:11-21.)

It comes after the close of probation and is the final major event before the coming of Jesus. If it is so, what is a possible interpretation of the drying up of the Euphrates? Euphrates is the literal river of the literal Babylon. But Babylon in Revelation is symbolic of a religious power. It is logical then to regard the Euphrates River as also symbolic. Waters are peoples (Rev. 17:15). So the drying up of the Euphrates may represent the withdrawal of support for symbolic Babylon by the people who formerly upheld it. The kings of the East may point to Christ and the armies of heaven that come to fight against the wicked nations in order to liberate the children of God. At the climax of the struggle between the people of God and the persecuting powers, when the saints will be under the soon-to-be-executed death decree, the events of Armageddon will be a sign of encouragement to the faithful that the great liberation is coming in a short time. On that, a good news is that always God never leaves us without hope. As known, "Man's extremity is God's opportunity" to show His power.

This is the promise: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13). This promise applies to any individual or group, either now or during the time of trouble²¹.

The powers engaged in Armageddon

As written in Rev. 19:18-19, the contending forces in the conflict will be formed, therefore, of the following: (1) Those arrayed against God; namely, Satan, the demons, the three politicoreligious persecuting powers, the kings of the earth, and the nations (wicked men). (2) Those allied with God; namely, Christ and His angels and the righteous of earth who uphold truth and profess loyalty to the Creator and His law. "The last great conflict between truth and error is the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God."—The Great Controversy, p. 582.

The powers of evil will not yield up the conflict without a struggle. But Providence has a part to act 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 field²². As said, we have to GET READY for sure. "A terrible conflict is before us. We are nearing the battle of the great day of God Almighty. That which has been held in control is to be let loose."... The earth is to be the battlefield—the scene of the final contest and the final victory. Here, where for so long Satan has led men against God, rebellion is to be forever suppressed²³. Where shall Armageddon find me and my family? Whatever how the answer may be, everybody has to know that in the battle, there shall be no neutral place in that day. To be wise, answer personally this question: "Am I wholeheartedly enrolled under the banner of Emmanuel, or by my lukewarm attitude have I divided interests?" (See Matt. 12:30).

The relationship between Armageddon and Is. 26:21 & Zech. 14:12

"The Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain" (Isa. 26:21). "This shall

²¹Ellen G. White Comments, S.D.A. Bible Commentary, vol. 7, pp. 982, 983.

²²—Ellen G. White Comments, S.D.A. Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 983.

²³—Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, May 13, 1902.

be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem" (Zech. 14:12-13). As biblically cleared, in this battle: "Many of the wicked were greatly enraged as they suffered the effects of the plagues. It was a scene of fearful agony. Parents were bitterly reproaching their children, and children their parents, brothers their sisters, and sisters their brothers. Loud, wailing cries were heard in every direction, "it was you who kept me from receiving the truth which would have saved me from this awful hour".

The people turned upon their ministers with bitter hate and reproached them, saying, "You have not warned us. You told us that all the world was to be converted, and cried, Peace, peace, to quiet every fear that was aroused. You have not told us of this hour; and those who warned us of it you declared to be fanatics and evil men, who would ruin us.' But I saw that the ministers did not escape the wrath of God. Their suffering was tenfold greater than that of their people²⁴.

"The people see that they have been deluded. They accuse one another of having led them to destruction; but all unite in heaping their bitterest condemnation upon the ministers. Unfaithful pastors have prophesied smooth things; they have led their hearers to make void the law of God and to persecute those who would keep it holy. Now, in their despair, these teachers confess before the world their work of deception. The multitudes are filled with fury. 'We are lost!' they cry, 'and you are the cause of our ruin;' and they turn upon the false shepherds. The very ones that once admired them most will pronounce the most dreadful curses upon them. The very hands that once crowned them with laurels will be raised for their destruction. The swords which were to slay God's people are now employed to destroy their enemies. Everywhere there is strife and bloodshed²⁵.

"When the voice of God turns the captivity of His people, there is a terrible awakening of those who have lost all in the great conflict of life.... The result is, their lives are a failure; their pleasures are now turned to gall, their treasures to corruption. The gain of a lifetime is swept away in a moment²⁶.

The outcome of Armageddon

Rev. 19:17-21. An angel calls the fowls of heaven together in order to eat the flesh of kings, captains, and mighty men. And John sees the beast and the false prophet thrown into a lake of fire. This is not the lake of fire that appears at the end of the millennium. He sees the rest slain by the sword of the One that sat on the white horse. As for the dragon, Satan himself and his devils will remain for 1000 more years on this devastated and solitary planet. They will see the final results of their rebellion. The victory of Jesus in the battle of Armageddon is absolute, complete, and eternal. The liberation of the saints is final.

Why has God waited so long to bring an end to sin? Why will He delay 1000 years more in destroying Satan and the evil spirits? With this awful experience of sin, sorrow, and death, with the complete development of the principles and plans of Satan, the whole universe will have been effectively vaccinated against sin. The wonderful love and justice of God will have been vindicated forever, and the curse of sin will not arise the second time²⁷.

²⁴Ellen G White— Early Writings, p. 282.

²⁵Ellen G White— the Great Controversy, pp. 655, 656).

²⁶ Ibid p. 654

²⁷ The Great Controversy, pp. 653-661; Early Writings, p. 290.

Jesus' warning on the events of Armageddon

As described in Rev. 16:15; the only way to withstand the hour of God's judgment in the Battle of Armageddon, is to acquire the garments of heaven. The time to buy the white raiment to cover our spiritual nakedness is now. When Armageddon comes, probation will have closed. To watch and keep on the garments of the righteousness of Christ—both forgiveness and victory, both justification and sanctification—requires a constant faith in Jesus. He is the only One who can give us this beautiful robe. He is the only One who can cleanse us from all unrighteousness through faith in Him that includes confession of sin. Only He can transfer to us His perfect character.

From the above, the question arises: what did Jesus teach about the relationship between Himself and the believer? Referring to what is written in John 15:4, 5, the branch has life in it and retains the possibility of having flowers and bearing fruit as long as it continues to be a part of the vine. As soon as it is cut off the vine, it dies. The same happens with the child of God. The only possibility of having a fruitful life is to abide in Christ, to be vitally united with Him, and to depend upon Him every moment. "Many have an idea that they must do some part of the work alone. They have trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sin, but now they seek by their own efforts to live aright. But every such effort must fail.

Jesus says, 'Without Me ye can do nothing.' Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness, all depend upon our union with Christ. It is by communion with Him, daily, hourly, by abiding in Him, that we are to grow in grace. He is not only the Author, but the Finisher of our faith. It is Christ first and last and always. He is to be with us, not only at the beginning and the end of our course, but at every step of the way. David says, 'I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.' Psalm 16:8²⁸.

Summary

The purpose of this research paper was to reveal the biblical meaning of "Armageddon" as found in Revelation 16:16. As discussed, the word refers to the battle involving these three great powers identified as follows: the dragon, meaning the spiritualism and paganism; the beast, Romanism; and the false prophet, apostate Protestantism. These are the three forces that will ally themselves under the leadership of Satan to fight against God, the saints, and the truth. The word "Armageddon" is used just once in the Scriptures, in Revelation 16:16. Some have claimed that Armageddon is Megiddo, but others see no relationship between the two names except that they sound alike. This word (Armageddon) could be taken as a symbolic expression used by the Scriptures to refer to a worldwide battle in the great day of God.

A comparison of Revelation 16:13, 14 with other Scripture passages and with pertinent paragraphs from the spirit of prophecy leads to the following conclusions about Armageddon: 1. It is a battle between truth and error. 2. It is a conflict between Christ and Satan. 3. The fallen angels will be aligned with their leader, Satan. 4. The struggle will be directed against the children of God and will bring about a great persecution. 5. The three apostate powers will participate actively in it. 6. These three powers, allied under the prince of darkness, will level their attack at God and Christ in the person of His faithful children. They will require all to receive the mark of the beast (Rev. 13:16) and will rely on the aid of kings (governments) to enforce their decrees (Rev. 16:14). 7. The forces of evil will be destroyed in the lake of fire and the children of God will be liberated. Armageddon is one of the final episodes in the

²⁸Ellen G White—Steps to Christ, p. 69

conflict between good and evil, between truth and error, between Christ and Satan with their respective followings of angels and men.

Conclusion

A study of last-day events is incomplete without examining the subject of Armageddon. The main objective of this study was then, to unlock through an exegetical analysis the true interpretation of the battle of Armageddon as found in Revelation 16:16. After following Historical Grammatical method and laying down the exegetical principles; it came up by defining “Armageddon” as Satan’s last attempt to be object of worship. This interpretation doesn’t contradict the Analogy of the scripture. One thing that Scripture is certain about is the fact that sin and rebellion will come to an end. After six thousand years of human history the greatest conflict ever known will reach its climax. The protagonist is Christ and His people set against the antagonist Satan and his supporters - the enemies of God. This conflict will reach its climax just prior the Second Advent of Christ. Today we see evil increasing indicating that the conflict between good and evil is intensifying. John the Revelator declared: Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time (Revelation 12:12).

The closer we come to the climax of earth’s history, the more frenzied Satan’s efforts will become to bring the world to ruin. The climax we are referring to, is known as “Armageddon” in Scripture. Up until the Second Advent, all proper nouns in the book of Revelation have a symbolic application. Consequently “Armageddon” as featured in the sixth plague (Revelation 16:12), is symbolic of the last battle between good and evil. Scripture, thus, presents Armageddon as the ultimate climax, not between squabbling nations, but between the two sides of the cosmic controversy. It’s a religious struggle, not economic or political, however much economic and political factors might come into play. If this is the case, nowadays’ time is a very critical one for this to happen. Thus, wise and watchful we’ve to be, we who are living nearby the end of time (1Corinthians 10:11).

Already we are beginning to hear the voice of the dragon. There is a satanic force propelling the Sunday movement, but it is concealed. Even the men who are engaged in the work, are themselves blinded to the results which will follow their movement. Let not the commandment-keeping people of God be silent at this time, as though we gracefully accepted the situation. There is the prospect before us of waging a continuous war, at the risk of imprisonment, of losing property and even life itself, to defend the law of God, which is being made void by the laws of men²⁹.

The Lord’s faithful servants will receive the bitterest persecution from false teachers, who will not hear the word of God, and who prepare stumbling blocks to put in the way of those who would hear. But God’s people are not to fear. Satan cannot go beyond his limit. The Lord will be the defense of His people. He regards the injury done to His servants for the truth’s sake as done to Himself. When the last decision has been made, when all have taken sides, either for Christ and the commandments or for the great apostate, God will arise in His power, and the mouths of those who have blasphemed against Him will be forever stopped. Every opposing power will receive its punishment³⁰.

²⁹ —Ellen G. White Comments, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 975.

³⁰ —*Maranatha*, p. 191.

Conflicts of interest: None declared

References

1. Jordan, J. B. (1985). *Biblical Horizons*.
2. Advenist, S. D. (N.D.). *Great Controversy*. Review And Herald.
3. Arthur, M. (2000). *Marc Arthur New Testament Commentary*. Chicago.
4. Association, S. (1980). *Bible Commentary*. Washigton Dc: Review And Herand .
5. Champman, R. (2015). *Premillenial Dispensationism*. London .
6. *Commentary On Apocalypse*. (N.D.). 353 : On Chapter 10:11,Anf Volume 7 .
7. Commentary, S. D. (1980). Washington : Review And Relard Publishing Association .
8. Commentary, S. D. (1980). *War Of Armageddon*. Usa: Review And Herald.
9. Dio. (N.D.). *Roman History Volume 6 Loeb Edition Vol 8 Page 349*.
10. John, C. O. (1972). Michigan : Grand Rapids.
11. Maude, R. (N.D.). *The Servant,The General And Armageddon*. George Ronald .
12. Moody. (2015). *Litfin Bgyan Acts ,Exploring The Lives And And Legend Of The Apostles*. Chicago.
13. P.V Zaubern, S. (1991). *The Pergamon Altar* .
14. Rodger. (2012). *The Rich And La*. Kansa: Artp.
15. Rushdoony, R. J. (N.D.). *Thy Kingdom Come :Studies In Daniel And Revelation*. Usa .
16. *Sovereignty Of God -Holman Bible Dictionary Retrieved 2018-04-19*. (N.D.).
17. Terry ,Milton *Biblical Hermeneutics Of The Treaties On The Interpretation Of Old Testament And New Testament*. (1974). House.
18. Timothy Friberg, B. F. (2000). *Analytical Lexicon Of The Greek New Testament* .
19. White, E. G. (1899). *Bible Commentary*. Usa.
20. White, E. G. (1899). *Selected Message*. Review And Herald.

Citation: Hakizimana Phaniel. 2020. The Background and Meaning of the Global Battle of Armageddon in Revelation 16:16. International Journal of Recent Innovations in Academic Research, 4(9): 29-44.

Copyright: ©2020 Hakizimana Phaniel. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.