

# Christ—the Key to the Future

## “ARMAGEDDON!—A BIBLICAL VIEW”

by Desmond Ford

*The popular view of Armageddon is mistaken because it is literalistic. It uses as its source newspapers and history books. Revelation 16, the Armageddon chapter, must be understood in its true context—the whole Bible!*



This magazine concludes our four-part series “Christ—the Key to the Future.” Dr. Ford presented these studies at the 1993 **GNU** Summer Congresses.

The vital theme of this series is that great events in the Bible (the Creation, the Flood, the Exodus, the Babylonian Captivity) are described using a similar literary pattern and language.

This pattern is ultimately fulfilled in Christ, and is the pattern Bible writers

use to outline the future. Because some students of the Bible don’t understand this, prophetic interpretation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been marred by historicism and dispensationalism. Because our great need is Jesus, the Christ-pattern is the fundamental principle of prophetic interpretation.

All the Bible promises about the future are ours now the moment we believe in Jesus.

**A**rmageddon! The word is like a shrill blast of trumpets.

When I was a lad, I thought the word meant to “arm again.” I reckoned that it meant World War III. I was no more wrong than most of the books in the 6,000 Christian bookstores across this nation.

I’ve brought these books to show you the kind of thing found in these 6,000 Christian bookstores. *Armaged-*





don, Oil, and the Middle East Crisis. This book is sold by the hundreds of thousands. *The Rise of Babylon: Sign of the End Times*. This has pictures of the new buildings that Saddam Hussein has put up on the assumption that he's going to be the new great Babylonian king. The buildings are nothing at all like the old Babylon. It's just a facade. Nevertheless, this book makes a great deal of the facade

*Escape the Coming Night*. This is a book Jack Van Impe recommends. It's a great title, and the author is probably a great Christian. But the material in it is just not biblical.

### Popular View of Armageddon

I want to challenge you to consider another approach to the popular view of Armageddon, so that you can decide as you study which is the truth.

The popular view is that Armageddon is a battle to be fought in the Middle East. After the saints are raptured, the Jews in Palestine will rebuild the temple and recommence the sacrificial system. An Antichrist, coming out of Europe, will make a covenant with the Jews. Antichrist will break this covenant after three and a half years, and then begin to persecute the Jews. After another three and a half years, there will be a great battle in the Middle East near the Valley of Megiddo—then Christ is to come.

There are other details in the popular view: Egypt comes up from the South, Antichrist comes out of Europe, Gog and Magog come down from Russia, and they all meet at Megiddo. There they are confronted by opposition from the kings of the East, China and Japan.

This is the Armageddon scenario popular in this country. (Mainly in this country, not in Europe.) It is the fruitage of dispensationalism, and the Scofield Bible. (Don't feel bad if you own a Scofield Bible. Many of the scholars who helped write the Scofield notes were not dispensationalists, and there are many good things in the notes.) But the popular dispensationalist view is not the view of Scripture.

Down through the centuries, novelists, essayists, and politicians have written about Armageddon. Even *Time* and *Newsweek* in recent years have had ar-



ticles on how White House policy is shaped by what politicians think about Armageddon.

*Newsweek* [November 5, 1984] had an article on how President Reagan was guided by the fact that he believed in the scenario I've just given you. The President of the United States believed what I've just expressed! And because such beliefs were held by several of his staff, billions of U.S. tax dollars were given to Israel.

*Time* said the same thing:

The most literal of the literalists, now known as dispensationalists, have devised elaborate systems of dividing history into divinely ordained eras. Reagan is among the millions influenced by this subculture. (*Time*, 5 November, 1984)

So the doctrine of Armageddon has tremendous impact.

C.S. Lewis wrote a book called, *The Last Battle*, part of his Narnia Chronicles. It's a great book; I recommend it. It's really about Armageddon (though, of course, it's not dispensationalist).

### Revelation 16 Is a Key Passage

Let's look at the Scripture that talks about Armageddon.

Revelation 16 is the key passage. For now, let me just quote verse 16:

Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. (Revelation 16:16 NIV)

Before we can study the whole of the chapter, we must take care of some background study.

### The Whole Bible Is the Context

You've often heard it said that, "A text without a context is a pretext." The context of this passage is the whole book of Revelation. And the context of Revelation is the whole Bible!

No one has a right to speak on anything in the book of Revelation, unless they can stand up and lecture *ad infinitum* on all the preceding 65 books. Why? Because in this book all the books of the Bible meet and end.

All the things we find in seed form in Genesis grow up into a beautiful garden in the Book of Revelation.

In the first three chapters of Gen-

esis—the beginning of the Bible—you have a new heavens and a new earth, a day followed by a night, and a marriage of the first Adam. Also, you have the entrance of the serpent, sin, sorrow, death, and the curse.

Come to the end of the Bible and the last three chapters give you a replay. It's as though you have been traveling on a golden circle and you've come back where you started. The third chapter of the Bible begins with the introduction of sin, the curse, Satan, and death. When you get to the third last chapter of the Bible there's no more sin, no more death, no more sorrow, no more curse, and Satan is destroyed. The serpent is introduced in chapter three of the Bible, and he goes out in the third last chapter.

All the themes of the previous books of the Bible mature, grow up, or are consummated, in the book of Revelation. It is a mosaic of Old Testament passages. Altogether, the Book of Revelation makes more than 500 allusions to the Old Testament. There is not one paragraph in the book of Revelation that doesn't have its roots in the Old Testament.

When I read a book such as *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey (God bless him), I get the impression that he seems to know nothing about the Old Testament. When Hal tries to exegete Revelation, all he uses is history books and newspapers. He does not use the Old Testament to explain the symbols. All the symbols of the last book of the Bible had their roots in the Old Testament. We cannot understand the symbols of Revelation unless we understand the previous books.

### Example of Megiddo

A simple example of this is found in the name Armageddon, that comes from the name Megiddo.

Megiddo was the name of the capital city of a fertile plain in Palestine. It is mentioned 12 times in the Old Testament, and the 13th time it occurs is right here in Revelation 16.

Numbers in the Bible are often significant when they are in a symbolic context—and the Book of Revelation is symbolic. Thirteen in the Bible is the number of rebellion.

Twelve is the kingdom number.

There are 12 tribes of Israel, 12 apostles, 12 foundations to the kingdom city, and 12 gates. But the number 13, one beyond 12, is the number of rebellion. Judas, the rebel, was the 13th man in the upper room. The first time the number 13 is mentioned in the Bible is in Genesis 14:

Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled. (Genesis 14:4 KJV)

The first reference to anything in the Bible is prophetic of its later use. A key always lies at the door. The 13th time the word Megiddo is mentioned is here, in Revelation 16, and it pictures a time when the world will be in rebellion against God.

Now, the rebels can't fire pea shooters up into heaven, so they manifest their rebellion by making war against God's people, by attacking his people. By "God's people" I mean all Bible-believers, not any one denomination. God has his children in every flock. God has a big family. ❖