

Is Armageddon World War III?

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1. Most evangelicals equate the word “Armageddon” to World War III.
2. “Armageddon” comes from Revelation 16:16, *“And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.”*
3. Revelation 16:12-16 is the vision of the sixth bowl of judgment.
 - a. God dries up the river Euphrates. Armies from the east would then pour into Israel for a great end-time battle.
 - b. Euphrates protected Babylon from invasion by eastern kings, such as the Medo-Persian King Cyrus in 539 B.C. He diverted the river to a canal, allowing his army to enter the city and defeat the Babylonians (Isa 44:27-28). Cyrus allowed the Jewish exiles to return to the Promised Land.
 - c. Euphrates symbolized the barrier between God’s people and Gentile nations. Abraham came from the city of Ur beyond the river. During David’s reign, the river was its eastern boundary (2 Sam 8:3). The Roman Empire’s eastern boundary was also the Euphrates.
 - d. The drying up of the Euphrates recalls the drying up of the Red Sea to allow Israel to escape Egypt, and also to destroy the Egyptian army. In the sixth bowl, God allows his enemies to attack his people, but at the same time, to destroy his enemies and save his people.
4. After the seventh bowl of judgment, Chapters 17-18 describes the destruction of Babylon, the city representing the unbelieving nations of the world. Chapter 19 then describes Armageddon.
5. Most evangelical teachers and pastors are convinced that Armageddon refers to the plain of Megiddo, northeast of Jerusalem, the site of several major battles in Israel’s history (Jgs 5:19; 2 Kgs 9:27, 23:29-30; 2 Chr 35:22). When Christ returns, the armies of the world will assemble on the plain of Megiddo to destroy Israel, or to fight against his heavenly army. But Christ destroys them.
6. But some Bible scholars argue that the plain of Megiddo is not Armageddon. The original Greek word is *Harmagedon*, which in Hebrew means “Mount of Gathering” or “Mount of Assembly.”
 - a. The Hebrew word for mountain is *har*. *magedon* is from the Hebrew *moed*, which means “assembly” or “gathering.” In Isaiah 14:13, “mount of assembly” is *Har-moed*. As well, Megiddo is a plain, and there is no mountain there.
 - b. It is common in Greek and Hebrew literature to name a person, place or event according to its significance. For example, Babylon is from *babel*, which means “confusion,” where God “confused” the languages of the people. Revelation 16:16’s word-play: *“And they **assembled** them at the place that in Hebrew is called **Armageddon**”*—the armies *assembled* at the Mount of Assembly.
 - c. God’s dwelling place is usually called a mountain: holy mountain, holy hill, Mount Zion.
 - d. The Old Testament connects the final battle between God and his enemies with the **holy city of God**, Jerusalem, not Megiddo. Zechariah 14:1-3 says, *“I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken... Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations.”* Zechariah 12:3 also says, *“all the nations of the earth will gather against it.”*
John uses this imagery of the nations **gathering in an assembly** against God’s people in two other passages in his book (Rev 19:19; 20:9). Satanic forces make war against the saints and the beloved city. Also, in Hebrews 12:22-23, the holy city is not geographical Israel or Jerusalem.
7. When Jesus returns from heaven with his heavenly army, will the people of the world assemble to fight against him? Impossible! Rather, *“the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, **and who can stand?**”* (Rev 6:15-17; cf Isa 2:19, 21).

Conclusion: Armageddon is not a military mother of all wars in the plain of Megiddo. Armageddon is Har-Magedon, the “Mount of Assembly” representing all Satanic forces assembled together to make a final assault to destroy God’s church represented by Mount Zion.

In this battle, the Church will look defeated, helpless and irrelevant for a time, even left for dead. But just when the persecution and suffering is so severe that the plight of believers seems hopeless, God intervenes, “resurrects” his church, and destroys Satan and his demonic forces (Rev 11:7-13).