

Revelation 16:12-17 – Armageddon

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 30 April 2023

Preacher: Simon Lawrenson

[0 : 0 0] So we are going through the book of Revelation, verse by verse, chapter by chapter, right? I know I'm a bit loud, but you know, this is going to be a sleepy one.

So they've cranked it so you can't have a snooze at the back. Actually, this is far from a snoozy one because this morning what we're looking at is the topic of Armageddon.

Ooh, that got your attention, didn't it? Right? So Armageddon, what is it? Because that's where we've come to. And if we're consistent, if we're honest, we get to a certain stage in Revelation where we kind of go, all right, we have to start tackling some difficult stuff.

And we either get a choice to skip it, ignore it, or tackle it. So what we're doing this morning is we've chosen to tackle it.

Okay? So we are Revelation chapter 16. So flick there or swipe there to Revelation 16. We've only got a few chapters left of the book.

[1 : 0 0] We're due to finish, I think, July... I'll just leave it there. Shall I just leave it there? July. July 9th, I think, is when we finish in. So we've got a few...

Yeah, this year. Yeah, this year. So we've got a few chapters left. So Revelation chapter 16, we're looking at the topic of Armageddon.

And the symbol for Armageddon or the phrase of Armageddon is kind of penetrated, isn't it, into our collective minds, mainly thanks to all of the films and books that have been made about it.

You know the one where they send a group of oil miners onto that asteroid to drill down. Did you see that one? To drill down into the asteroid and blow it up with nuclear warheads.

Yeah? Joe's all over that one. Right? Or, you know, climate change has become so bad that it now extinct humanity. Right? And we're walking across the top of a shopping mall and it's ice.

[1 : 5 9] Do you remember that one? The Day After Tomorrow? Terrible film. Well, that's caused more division than when we start with Armageddon. It's like... So when we want to describe something kind of catastrophic or something that kills off humanity, that's the phrase we're likely to hear.

Certainly in pop culture is Armageddon. And so again, the text that we're looking at this morning is really what God has to say about Armageddon.

And what we're going to see is that Armageddon doesn't happen actually in chapter 16, even though it's mentioned in chapter 16. All right? It's not mentioned until...

Or it doesn't happen until chapter 19. So we've got some digging to do this morning. So I hope you put your notebooks, pens, your brains to ready to engage. There was coffee on offer this morning if you came early enough to fill up on the caffeine because you're going to need it.

So let's go to Revelation 16. And let's just read from verse 12. And this morning we're just going to do from 12 to 16. Right?

[3 : 1 0] So what we read is this. The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings of the east.

And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the beast of... Out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. For they are demonic spirits performing signs who go abroad to the kings of the whole world to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.

Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be exposed. And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

Now let's just read on because I want to show you what's coming next. The seventh angel, verse 17, pulled out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne saying,

It is done.

And there were flashes of lightning, rumbles, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake. And the great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell.

[4 : 23] And God remembered Babylon the great to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath. And to every island, and every island fled away and no mountains were to be found.

And great hailstones, about 100 pounds each, fell from heaven on people. And they cursed God for the plagues of the hail because the plague was so severe.

Let's pray. Father, just help us, we pray, to make sense of what is a difficult part of your word. Lord, but we do believe, Lord, that you've given it to us for us to understand.

Lord, we believe that there is something here for us today. And so, Lord, we pray, help us to approach it, Lord, with open minds, open hearts. Lord, that we may receive what you have for us today. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. So, three questions I want to ask to help us kind of break up this text. All right? So, three questions, if you're taking notes, three questions that I think need addressing in this text.

[5 : 23] Number one, what is the River Euphrates, verse 12? Now, for some of you, that's an easy answer. Right? But just hold that thought. Okay? So, what is the Great River Euphrates, verse 12?

What is Armageddon, verse 16? And what is Babylon, verse 19? And so, for those of you who can't write like speedy, let me give you those again.

What is the River Euphrates, in verse 12? What is Armageddon, in verse 16? And then, finally, in verse 19, what is Babylon? If we understand what those three phrases or words mean, we get a much better understanding of why this text is here and what on earth is going on.

So, we've already seen that this is part of a set of seven judgments that God is bringing on the earth to restore, renew the earth in readiness for Jesus to return.

That context is really key. So, that's what God is doing. He's bringing judgments on the earth that is still yet future from where we are today. And he's preparing the earth for himself.

[6 : 35] Chapter 16 kind of lays out those bold judgments in really, really quick succession. And we get to the sixth. And all of a sudden, we stop because there's way more detail in the sixth bowl than the other bowls.

Now, look, again, Armageddon, whatever you think that is, doesn't take place until chapter 19. So, just flick over, swipe down to that.

Chapter 19, verse 11. It's coming on the screen anyway. This is where Armageddon actually takes place. So, verse 11. John says, And then, look, after that, we get this.

This describes the same person who we saw in chapter 1. They're identified as Jesus. Okay? So, the one riding that white horse who is called Faithful and True and in Righteousness, he judges and makes war.

That's Jesus. So, we see Jesus coming back. Verse 14. The armies of heaven arrayed in fine linen, white and pure were following him on white horses.

[7 : 52] So, we get armies. We also get white horses, which I think is pretty cool. But, don't worry if you don't know how to ride. I think we'll be okay. So, we get armies coming with Jesus when Jesus returns.

Skip down to verse 19, where John says, I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army.

So, look, let's just say this one thing really quickly. Most Christians think that the events of chapter 19 are actual events that are going to happen because it describes when Jesus comes back.

Like, if you don't believe that Jesus comes back, you've got a bigger problem than what on earth is Armageddon. Okay. So, notice that in chapter 19, verse 14, we see Jesus returning with armies.

And most of us read that and say that Jesus is actually coming back. But the description of the armies might be figurative. Like, Jesus isn't rocking up with Challenger tanks and F-35 fighter jets.

[9 : 10] Can we agree that? Great. So, then in chapter 17, it's saying the same thing. Just flick over to 17. So, in 19, we see the actual event.

And we see armies of the kings and the beast against Jesus and the armies. 17, this is what we read. And way more figurative language than appears in chapter 19.

Then the ten horns that you saw are ten kings. And we'll fill that in in a couple of weeks, right? The ten horns that you saw are ten kings that have not yet received royal power. But they are to receive

authority as kings for one hour together with the beast.

These are of one mind. And they have handed their power over to the authority of the beast. And you're like, well, great. Why are you reading that? I'm reading that because of this. They will make war on the lamb. Figurative or not?

Well, lamb is figurative, correct? Because no one's going after a baby sheep. Right? We did that a few weeks ago. It was called Easter and it was great. Right? So, this is mixing literal language and figurative language.

[10:18] It's important that we see that. They will make war on the lamb. The lamb will conquer them. For he is the Lord of lords and king of kings. And those with him are called and chosen and faithful.

So, chapter 17 is describing the same event of chapter 19. So, what we're looking at in chapter 16 is a setup. And it's important that we see it's a setup.

Right? For chapter 19. So, let's deal with the first question. So, that's where we're going. All right? Does everybody understand? We're on the same page. We're going to chapter 19 by way of chapter 17.

Chapter 16 is a setup for chapter 19. All right? So, let's deal with the first question. What is the river Euphrates? And then we'll deal with what is Armageddon and what is Babylon.

So, verse 12. The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates and its water was dried up. So, the river Euphrates, 1,800 miles in length, goes from Mount Ararat all the way down to the Persian Gulf.

[11:18] I don't have a problem with it being literal. I'll tell you why I don't have a problem with being literal. In Exodus, the drying up of the Red Sea allowed Israel to leave Egypt. We read that literally.

We're like, that happened. Right? Same thing happened in Joshua chapter 3, Joshua chapter 4, when the river Jordan parted so the Israelites could leave Canaan. We're okay with that.

2 Kings chapter 2, verse 8. Elijah parted the waters of the Jordan to allow himself and Elisha to pass through. We're okay with that. So, look. The point is that it has precedence.

This isn't a surprise. If it was the first time that happened, we're like, hang on. What's going on? Right? It has precedence. However, there is only one other time the river Euphrates is mentioned in the New Testament, and that is in Revelation chapter 9.

And Revelation chapter 9 is not a really good place to go to help us understand what's going on in Revelation 16. That's like going from one toddler to another toddler to ask them what they meant.

[12:18] Right? So, we're going to get mixed messages. So, there in Revelation 9, what we said when we looked at that was that God instructs an angel.

Do you remember this? God instructs an angel to go and release the four angels that are held captive in the Euphrates River. And we concluded that that was probably not literal.

Like, there's probably not four angels held captive in the Euphrates River today. Okay? Now, look, the most important aspect of the Euphrates River, actually, in the Old Testament, was that it marked the eastern boundary of the land that God promised to the descendants of Abraham.

Okay? So, here it is. Genesis chapter 15, verse 18. God says, on that day, or Moses says, on that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, saying, to your offspring, I will give this land from the river of Egypt, which is the Nile, right?

To the great river, the river Euphrates. So, the promised land, interestingly, if you want to know where the promised land is, the promised land lies all the way from the river Nile in the west, all the way through to the Euphrates in the east, which is Iraq, bordering Kuwait.

[13:38] Okay? So, that takes in all of Jordan, most of Saudi Arabia, and most of Iraq. Okay? So, the reason the river has been dried, John says, he gives a logical reason for it, verse 12, to prepare the way for the kings from the east.

Now, look, despite what popular Bible teachers are saying, that you might have found on YouTube or whatever, the kings of the east have no reference to China, North Korea, India, Pakistan.

Okay? So, we'll deal with, like that in chapter 17 and 18, but look, this is all referring to Babylon. Right?

So, let's deal with that question next, because I think if we deal with that question, that helps us deal with this question. You still with me? Great. Just about.

So, let's deal with the question, what is Babylon? Verse 19 says this, The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great.

[14:46] Now, would you notice that? Babylon the great. To make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath. Now, most of us are like, I don't know what that means, but I don't care.

It doesn't sound good. Right? Like, someone's in trouble. Someone's getting it in that verse. Right? So, this is what Babylon looks like today. Babylon the great?

Not really. Okay? So, there's a problem straight away. Okay? So, by the looks of it, verse 19 has already been fulfilled.

Right? Because Babylon has already got it. Okay? And that's it. And in fact, today, Babylon, you can go there, it's an uninhabited small village in eastern Iraq.

You've got four or five villages around the area, but they are pretty much by themselves. They don't have many people, let alone an army.

[15:48] It's actually a UNESCO World Heritage site, and it is a distant description of how John, in 17 and 18, describes Babylon.

So, what is John talking about? Well, John is using the term Babylon to describe Israel's arch enemy. So, think of it this way.

Go back to Genesis 11, in your minds, and you'll know that there was a rebellion called the Babel Rebellion. And in Genesis 11, that takes place, and then God judges all the nations.

Right? And after that, Egypt, as a nation, emerges as the nation that was central, the central enemy, if you like, to God's people. But it doesn't stay with them.

Right? Because Egypt eventually gets displaced by Babylon in that role. So, after Babylon succeeded, or after Babylon kind of invaded Egypt and pushed them out, what Babylon did, and why it makes them the arch enemy, is that Babylon not only took God's people captive, but they actually went to Jerusalem and conquered Jerusalem.

[17:07] So, Egypt had done a lot of things, right? And had done a lot of things in Israel. Like, Josiah was killed by one of the pharaohs right there in Israel. But what Egypt had not done, they hadn't been successful in conquering Jerusalem and destroying it.

Up until that point, Egypt could only take Jewish captives to their own land. They really didn't go into Israel in a big, big way. Certainly not like Babylon. It's really Babylon who was the arch enemy, because it was Babylon, if you remember, who destroyed the temple.

It was Babylon that sent the people of God into exile. So, if you want to describe something like on that scale, who was like the arch enemy of Israel, the term Babylon comes to mind.

The language you're going to have to use is Babylon language. And so, all of this imagery that John is using, both in this section, chapter 17, 18, and then later on in chapter 19, is all connected to the Jeremiah 50, 51 Babylon.

So, where John sees the Euphrates dry up, and the kings of the east pass through it, where is east from Jerusalem? Babylon. Jerusalem. Right?

[18:25] In that story, and this is where it gets super interesting, is in that story, the Babylonians lay siege to Jerusalem. Right? So, there, you know, we read about it in the Old Testament.

And they lay siege. There's actually four deportations from Jerusalem over the course of that whole period. And in the third deportation, they lay Jerusalem siege for two years.

And during that time, life was incredibly difficult. So, just to give you an idea of how difficult it was, 2 Kings 18, 27 says that the people were so desperate that they had to drink their own urine just to survive.

Like, that's going to have an effect on your national consciousness about how you think about Babylon and what they've done to the nation. Right? Jeremiah 19, verse 9 says this, I will make them eat the flesh of their own sons and daughters.

Everyone shall eat the flesh of their neighbor in the siege and in the distress, with which their enemies, with which their enemies and those who seek their life afflict them. Cannibalism.

[19:31] So, you're living through that as a nation. That's going to have an effect on how you view Babylon. And every time you use that term Babylon, it's going to conjure up some kind of imagery for you, some kind of picture for you about what is going on.

Now, part of that story of that, not only the siege, but also the deportation and the exiles, is of course someone came to save them, didn't they? Do you remember?

So, the person who came to save them was a guy called Cyrus. And he was the king or the leader of the Medo-Persian Empire. And the story is, is that they sent the army upstream in the Euphrates of Babylon and they diverted the river Euphrates.

So, that downstream, the river Euphrates, guess what? Dried up. And because it dried up, the army were able to go from the east to the west.

And so, overnight conquering the Babylonians. But that's not the point. The point is that they freed the Jewish exiles. Right? So, Cyrus became a savior figure.

[20 : 54] He's even called, in the Bible, he's called a shepherd. He's called, he's called in Hebrew, Messiah. Right? Not the Messiah, but he is one who has come to save.

And so, John, is trying to communicate the totality of the problem. Right? And the best way to do that, is to refer to the, to this last world empire, as Babylon.

Babylon. It's like Babylon, all over again, John is saying. And there's going to be an event, that seems like someone is coming to save Israel, just like the Medo-Persians did.

But a twist is, and we'll see this, the twist is, they join forces. And it seems like no one is there to rescue Israel. That's the idea. And then out of heaven, we see John, in chapter 19, out of heaven, Jesus himself, arrives to rescue, and to save.

And the issue is, that you can try and spiritualize all of this, but the real difficulty is, that chapter 19, and the coming of Jesus, isn't spiritual, it's actual. Jesus is actually coming back.

[22 : 03] And what, and that's what I mean by saying, that chapter 16, is a set up for chapter 19, because it leaves us with the question, if you don't know what's coming, well who on earth then, is going to save Israel?

If this is like, the Babylonian, you know, captivity, and like the Medo-Persian invasion, who is there, that's going to save Israel?

And you read the first verse, or verse 12, and you go, oh the kings of the east, the kings of the east, Medo-Persians, the kings of the east, two nations together. The kings of the east, are going to save Israel.

And then you find out later on, they don't, they don't save Israel, they joined forces, they brought out. So who is left to save Israel? That's the set up. And so in chapter 19, we're still asking that question, who's going to save Israel?

And all of a sudden, Jesus and his armies come. You see? He's asking this question, do you remember how terrible the Babylonians were, and how God sent Cyrus, Medo-Persians, but it's not going to happen like that again.

[23 : 12] In fact, they're going to go against Israel too, so who's going to save Israel? All of that is in John's mind when he's writing. So let's talk about the rest of the text, because we're getting lost.

So let's talk about the rest of the text. Verse 13, and I saw, John says, coming out of the mouth of the dragon. Now look, if you've been with us through chapter 12 and 13, you know that this dragon is Satan, really, really easy.

It's just Satan, right? He's not a scaled animal, you know, from mythology. It's just Satan, okay? Out of the mouth of the beast, out of the mouth of the prophet, these two chaos beasts that we saw in Job.

So those two chaos beasts, Leviathan and Behemoth, representative of chaos beasts. So here they show up again, Antichrist and false prophet. And it says that out of those three came three unclean spirits like frogs.

Now I don't think John's got anything against frogs, quite like frogs. I used to have frogs when I was a kid, at home. The mention of the frogs is just like, they're unclean.

[24 : 16] So in the Levitical law, frogs were seen as unclean, and so John is just going, they're unclean. Oh, like frogs are unclean. All right? They're not spirits who are jumping around, hopping around, you know, doing whatever.

What noise do frogs make? Rabbit. Yeah, they're not. It's not. You know, that's reading way too much into the text, okay? So they're unclean spirits like frogs are unclean animals, right?

For they are demonic spirits, verse 14, performing signs who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to a larger fighting force than simply the kings of the east, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.

So, the idea of unclean spirits is a common phrase in the New Testament. If you've read the Gospels, you know that. Like, you can't go too many pages before you come up this problem of

unclean spirits.

And what we learn is that as we read that, the unclean spirits are not souls of those who have died and somehow been left behind. So, it's referring to beings of the fallen realm.

[25 : 29] So we might call them, and we call them various different names today. So we might call them demons. We might even call them fallen angels. As verse 14 says, they are demonic spirits. And what we can see particularly in the Gospels is a little bit disturbing if I'm honest.

Alright? Because these guys can see. They can talk. They have emotions. And guess what? They know their Bible better than you do. And better than I do.

Right? They are good in theology. So, for example, Mark chapter 1, verse 23. Mark writes that immediately there was in the synagogue a man with an unclean spirit.

If we hadn't read it so many times, that should alarm us. Because that's like not normal. And he cried out, what have you to do with us?

Jesus of knowledge. That's the unclean spirit speaking right there. And we'll be like, what? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. The Holy One of God.

[26 : 32] Like, no one else. I mean, this is Mark chapter 1, right? Jesus has barely arrived on the scene. And these spirits, everybody else is going, I don't know who he is. And the spirits are like, I know who you are.

It's good theology, right? Mark chapter 3, verse 11. Whenever the unclean spirits saw Jesus, they fell down before him and cried out, you're the son of God. Right?

We also know, though, that they have limited authority. Right? So, Matthew chapter 10, Jesus called his 12 disciples together, gave them authority over unclean spirits to cast them out.

Right? So, they don't have a huge amount of authority. So, in the Gospels, Jesus engaged, and this is key to the whole kind of idea of what's going on in these passages.

Jesus engaged in freeing people from the power of such beings. That's what he did. So, Jesus is a savior in the real sense of the word.

[27 : 32] He just doesn't save in terms of taking chains off like we might use in kind of Christian language, but he saves from the root issues too. But, and so, what we're talking about in terms of this setup, this is part of that setup.

What is Jesus going to do when he comes back? Well, these unclean spirits, Jesus is going to save people from them too. That's the idea. But this unholy trinity is actually using them.

John says, for the purpose to assemble, that is the kings, for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. So again, there's this setup. Jesus is the one who frees and saves.

Jesus is the one who frees and saves. And just as it seems that we'll see this battle commence, we get this interruption in verse 15. Right?

And we get this interruption and it is, it seems to be Jesus speaking, behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be exposed.

[28 : 43] So we understand that the last part of that verse is explaining the first part. Right? So he says, blessed is the one who stays awake. Let me tell you what staying awake looks like. Don't get your jammies on or even worse, your birthday suit.

Because otherwise you'd be running out of the house naked. That's the point. Right? So the idea is stay awake, be alert. Jesus said the same thing to the church in Sardis and Laodicea in chapter 3. And so this is the response of those who are, who should be, who are following the Lord.

This should be the response of those who are following the Lord. Whether it's in John's time of writing now or at the end times when this event is actually taking place. Now both Paul and Peter, apostles, tell us that the day is coming as a thief in the night.

Let me give you two verses for that. 1 Thessalonians 5, 2. For you yourselves, Paul says, are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

2 Peter 3, verse 10, the day of the Lord will come like a thief and then the heavens will pass away with a roar and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

[30 : 05] And so it seems that the analogy of his coming like a thief is really designed to call us to then be alert, to watch, to think about how we're living today.

Right? And the way that we're supposed to live today is again that blessed phrase, blessed is the one who stays awake.

Paul said to the church in Thessalonians, he said this, he said, for you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of darkness, so let us not sleep as others do, but let us stay awake and be sober. Now look, he's not saying don't take a nap or don't go to bed at night.

He's not saying that. He's saying be alert spiritually of what's going on. And over and over again, Jesus himself exhorted us to be watching and ready for his return.

[31 : 11] Matthew 24, verse 42, therefore stay awake, Jesus says, for you don't know what day your Lord is coming, but know this, that if a master of the house had known what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and he would not have let his house be broken into.

Therefore, you must also be ready for the Son of Man is coming and now you don't expect. And then, you know, the parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids that follows is all about being alert and being watchful.

And so the whole point really is about how you live in your life. How are you living? If you believe Jesus is coming back, regardless of what you think is the river Euphrates, Armageddon, or Babylon, how are you living today?

And that's the challenge for all of us, isn't it? Jesus said in Mark chapter 13, stay awake, you do not know when your master of the house will come, in the evening or at midnight or when the rooster crows or in the morning.

Like I thought when the rooster crows or in the morning were the same thing, if I'm honest. Lest he be suddenly come and find you asleep and you say, and what I say to you, I say to you, oh stay awake.

[32 : 18] This is the same thing in Luke chapter 21. And what we see in those passages really break down into three areas that we should probably challenge ourselves in. Right?

And they're all coming on the screen all at the same time so you can write them down. Right? The three dangers that we have are complacency and comfort, there are no spiritual flame and then being snared.

Like, and I think we all can probably testify to one or all of those being a reality. Right? Like, complacency and comfort, like the attitude that the Lord has delayed his coming so we've just got plenty of time.

Like, I don't know whether that's just ingrained in all of us or whether that's just me. Like, you know when, you know, if you're fortunate, blessed enough to have a dad at home when you were grown up.

Right? And things started going wrong like you're misbehaving. I just talked to myself. Right? I talked about myself. When I was misbehaving, right, you'd leave it until he's coming up the drive, keying the door to tidy your room.

[33 : 20] Why? Because you didn't really believe he was coming. Right? There was a complacency. I don't know how many times we were told not to play football in the lounge. If my mom and dad are listening on the podcast, we never played football in the lounge.

This is all hypothetical. But we never started clearing up until the door was being opened. Why? Complacency. We've become too comfortable, haven't we?

The attitude has always been there, but certainly, like, you know, we see this, commentators see this, lockdown has really increased that attitude, hasn't it?

You know, I've got to take care of me, myself, and I. I'm not going to step into areas that make myself uncomfortable, physically or otherwise. Look, I can get church online, and that's not a comment about us being half empty this morning.

Like, I don't know where people are, but, like, so it's not a comment, but please don't take it as a, that's not negative, but, like, it's easy, isn't it? I don't need accountability for my Christian family, right?

[34 : 33] The moment we do that, we're not comfortable, are we? But look, also, how many of us testify about the struggle of keeping a spiritual flame alive?

And the, the problem of the lamp going out. Has your lamp gone out? Is it kind of just flickering, ready to go out? Is it dangerous, isn't it?

What are we doing then to fan the flame, to bring that, that flame back into something that's healthy? What spiritual rhythms and disciplines are we pursuing to help that? And look, you know

what, being snared, I just, just chuck this one out there, it's just a grenade, and I'll just throw it and then walk away.

Materialism is a great danger, isn't it? There, I've said it, I'll leave it there. You all know what I mean. There's all, there's dangers for all of us. And Jesus, Jesus highlights that actually those dangers make us cold to the reality that he's coming back and he could come back any moment.

And so, we get this interruption in verse 15 to remind us that we, we, we need to not just agree with this text and go, oh, Babylon, didn't know that, huh?

[35 : 54] Add that to my knowledge bank, right? But it should alter the course of our lives. However, slowly, but surely, that might happen. So, verse 16, get back on track.

We'll close with this verse. And they, and so just look, that is, seems to be the spirits, assembled them, which is the kings and presumably their armies, at the place that in Hebrew is called, should have a drum roll, Armageddon, right?

So, there's, there's our, there's our word Armageddon as it appears. So, we need to answer this question, what is Armageddon? Now, I don't want to get too technical.

So, let's just say this. This is a super clumsy way of writing this verse. Right? If you know anything about this word, it is super clumsy.

And John, I won't say has done us a disservice, but probably all of the kind of the books and the movies have probably done us a disservice as to what this word means. So, John clearly expresses that it's a Hebrew word.

[37 : 08] Now, that should make you stop and take count to start with. Why? Because the New Testament is written in Greek and none of us are reading, well, I'm assuming none of us are reading Greek this morning. We're reading English or we might even be reading Nakamajon, right?

What are we reading this morning? Okay, great. And Mike's reading something completely different. So, I couldn't resist, sorry.

So, John clearly expresses that this word is a Hebrew word. and we should be like, huh?

It's a Hebrew word. In a Greek New Testament, us reading it in English, right? So, the reason for that is because there's no Greek word for that Hebrew word.

Okay? So, it's been transliterated. So, it's letter by letter alternative for that Hebrew word in Greek.

[38 : 09] So, bear that in mind because scholars disagree about where this place is or even if this place exists at all.

Now, look, certainly the first three letters in English should not be A-R, they should be H-A-R, right? And you can clearly see that in the Hebrew. I won't get into it. Don't want to be technical, but it means mountain. Great.

It's all you need to know, right? It just means mountain. So, John's readers will be thinking, all right, Mount Megidon. Great. Now, you're expecting me to go, I'll show you a map, right?

Where Mount Megidon is. But instead, I'm going to tell you Mount Megidon means rendezvous and Mount Megidon doesn't exist. Boom.

Okay? So, there is no Mount Megidon anywhere, not only in Scripture, but in life. Like, in reality, in the real world, that place doesn't even exist.

[39 : 12] So, now we've got a problem. Because Euphrates exists. You can go there today.

Babylon exists. It's a pile of dirt, but you can go there today. Armageddon, the Mount of Rendezvous, you can't go there.

Why? It doesn't exist. So, so, so what does that leave us? Well, people go, well, I've got a problem. So, it must be Megiddo. That's what people say.

It must be Megiddo. Oh, so you, okay, I'm going to come back to that, right? So, the closest term is Megiddo. Twelve times in the Old Testament is Megiddo, as mentioned, in the Valley of Jezreel.

But it's never called a mountain. Now, you might go, yeah, but this is the only time it has been called. One out of 13 times, that's okay, right? Well, look, look at this.

There you go. Now, you're looking at this and you're thinking, I don't even know what I'm looking at. Okay, so, this is an elevation map, all right? And, Megiddo is here.

[40 : 17] So, that's 165 meters above sea level. Just for reference, we're sat 65 meters above sea level. 165 meters above sea level, mountain or not a mountain?

Not a mountain, right? So, what you see in here, all of this blue is the Valley of Jezreel, right? Up there, the white area right at the top, that's Mount Carmel.

So, you've got Nazareth just right like here-ish, right? So, mountain? No. Can't even be described as a mountain, right?

I mean, you've even got right here, McDonald's. Absolutely true story, right? So, there's a McDonald's right on the edge of Megiddo, right? The city of Megiddo.

So, this has caused a lot of problems. Okay, so what is the solution? Well, I think the solution is to see it from two angles. The first is to see that the Euphrates and all of these together, right?

[41 : 19] So, the Euphrates, Babylon, and Armageddon are not actual places being plotted on a map for an end times war. That's the first angle I think we need to see it at. But, they are instead types of places and people that are associated with Israel's national enemy, the worst of the worst, the most despicable people you could ever think of being a Jew and that would be Babylon.

Now, what I'm not saying is that the war doesn't take place. I just wonder whether Armageddon and the Valley of Jezreel are the actual locations.

you see what I'm saying? Like, although there is a real battle against God's people in the end times involving real armies and real nations, I think that what we're reading is John using terms that are historically significant in John's, in John's day, in the life of Israel.

So, that it's not important. I haven't spent 45 minutes talking about this. so that it's not important that Babylon isn't Babylon because in the mind of a Jew, they are the arch enemy because they destroyed the temple.

And it's not important that all of the world's armies can't fit into the Valley of Jezreel. It's 150 square miles. It's not important that actually Mount Megiddon doesn't exist.

[42 : 48] And to say, even the Medo-Persians, even they are going to come against you, who can save you? Now, the other angle is to look at it and to see not only, and I think, so the first, I think the first is true, but I also think the second is true, equally true, is that the other angle is to see that this is not only a physical offensive against Israel, I think will happen in the end times, but I'm just like sketchy on the places, right?

But also, behind the scenes of the physical offensive, there is a spiritual one taking place. Why does John litter our text with references to demons and spirits and things like that?

This is not just greedy people going after the oil reserves of the Middle East, right? Behind the physical offensive is a spiritual one.

A spiritual offensive against Mount Zion and God himself because clearly, when we read the Old Testament, Joel chapter 3, Zechariah chapter 14, I think, they assemble in a place called the Jezreel Valley, but they go to Jerusalem, right?

The actual battle takes place later on. And so, Armageddon becomes the same place that God speaks to Isaiah about in Isaiah chapter 14.

[44 : 21] Let's read it. Isaiah 14, verse 12, just says this, how you are fallen from heaven, O day star, son of the dawn, how you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low.

You said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven above the stars of God. I will set my throne on high. I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north.

Okay, so look, the context, really quickly, is that God is basically mocking Satan in this text, all right? And God says that you said Satan, right?

You said, and then he quotes Satan, I will ascend to heaven above the stars of God. I will set my throne on high. Notice this, ring this, underline this. I will sit on the mount of assembly.

So, according to that verse, what's going on is that the gods or the fallen angels come together around the throne of Satan in the mount of assembly.

[45 : 31] And that term, mount of assembly in Hebrew is the same root as Armageddon. Now, normally, I'll just be honest with you, that would be terrible exegesis.

Normally would. Like, if I was sat there, I'd be getting up and walking out. But, the fact that John says that Armageddon is a Hebrew word, and we're reading from Greek into English, actually lay some weight behind it.

Now, look, all that to say, let me close, all that to say, my view, the place of Armageddon is a specific place somewhere, and whatever goes down there, in terms of the rumble, the fight, the war, whatever happens there, in the background, is ruled by and served by satanic power.

And so, this is all a setup for chapter 19, and it's really, really important that we see that this is going somewhere, it doesn't stand alone. The question is, who can save?

Adam, Medo Persians are going to come and save. Answer, no. And the answer we see in this text, and actually the text in chapter 19, is that the only one who can save is Jesus.

[46 : 55] That's the answer we're driving at, that's the answer we're going to. When everything else seems hopeless and helpless, and we've come to the end of all our other options, what is the answer we're left with is Jesus.

Our hope doesn't come in nations and kings. Look, I'm looking forward, don't stone me, but I'm looking forward to watching the coronation next week. Like, I don't know.

I'm okay with you disagreeing with me, totally fine with that, because you don't have to watch it. I'm looking forward to watching King Charles becoming King Charles and watching that.

I think that's cool. I'll be voting this week, but neither my local councillors, nor our local MPs or our government or King Charles is able to save.

Right? And, you know, what we are left with this morning is this question, who can save me?

Because what we do is that we often pin the salvation onto something, don't we?

[48 : 04] maybe that's why the hype is around the coronation next weekend, because we kind of pin our hope on something.

We do this all the time, don't we? Like, we pin our hope on something that's going to save us or get us out of our predicament or our problem, and it works for a while, doesn't it? And that's actually sometimes the problem.

You know, we get a new government in and everything seems rosy for about three minutes, right?

And so they stop the tax cuts or whatever it might be, but we do the same, look, we do the same.

We find a new partner, and everything's what is rose tinted glasses, that's what we call it, isn't it?

And then we get to the realities of life and we go, oh, they weren't able to save me. Or we get a new job.

We're like, oh, this is the job I've been looking for all my life. I don't know who says that, but I hear people say that. This is it, I've arrived.

[49 : 05] I've got the promotion, right? We move house. It's my dream house. It's got a three by three meter backyard.

I've arrived, right? And we pin our hope on something that's going to save us, and for a little while it seems like it is. Isn't that what the writer to Ecclesiastes was talking about?

It's like, it's just vanity, vanities, everything is vanities. It just comes and goes, comes and goes. All the time, our hearts are pinning our hope on that and attaching salvation to that, and John is going, do you remember when the nation of Israel were really in dire strait?

There was a real problem. And King Cyrus, the Messiah, shepherd, comes and saves you. Do you remember that? It's not going to happen again. Why? Because there's only one who can save you, and that's Jesus.

And so salvation only comes when Jesus comes. And can I encourage you this week just to think about maybe just that, and to invite Jesus to come, come into your day, that he might save you from yourself, from your, we talked about this last week, from your grumbling, from our grumbling, from our problems, our distresses, of thinking that something else might be able to save us when only Jesus can.

[50 : 34] Let's pray together. Father, thank you for giving us the Bible. Thank you that we, Lord, we understand it to be your word to us today.

Lord, we want to confess, Lord, that there's lots of stuff that we just don't understand, we don't get. Lord, but we do understand, Lord, that you are a God who saves. And so, Lord, we want to thank you for that.

We thank you for saving us. And we do pray, Lord, that if there are things that we've read this morning, Lord, that might concern us about our own response to you.

Lord, maybe we have become complacent and uncomfortable in our lives. Lord, maybe we want to recognize, Lord, that the flame, let's just recognize that the flame at one point was burning brighter than it is today.

Maybe we've got caught in a snare and a trap and we're just basically just too worldly. Lord, help us this week to bring Jesus into our conversations, into our thoughts, into the way that we work and talk so that he might save us.

[51 : 52] So we look to you, Lord, not to anything else, not to our better plans or our better initiatives, Lord, but we look to you. So help us to do that, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.