

Armageddon at the Door

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Chapter Eleven

The Conclusion of the Battle

4) A Decisive Moment of Final Decision

As the two gospels advance into the world, one of them true and faithful, the other a carefully crafted counterfeit, the world is brought to a moment of final decision. People must make up their minds whether to follow the comfortable traditions of Babylon or the compelling, but radical truths of the end-time remnant. This moment is highlighted in quite a number of texts in Revelation. One of them makes it clear that life and death issues are at stake.

8 A second angel followed and said, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries." 9 A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, 10 he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name." 12 This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.

Rev 14:8-12, NIV

This is very strong language, disturbing to many readers of this book. How can the Lamb, the symbol of everything that is good and kind and noble, the symbol of Jesus Christ, preside over such a scene of torture and anguish? How can the Lamb be, on the one hand, the victim of violence and on the other hand the one who torments and destroys?

What people often overlook is that any truly good government must at some point exercise violence in order to restrain evil. Governmental violence is not always graphic and bloody, of course. It may simply involve the kind of restraint that occurs when a policeman pulls you over at a speed trap or the IRS sends an agent to audit your taxes. You don't consider that violence? Well, let me ask you some questions. How fast would you drive if there were no police? How much taxes would you pay if they were voluntary? And how eager are most convicts to stay in jail? Good governments provide a necessary restraint so we can all live together in peace. Not every citizen considers what is good for others when they act.

Most people are used to this level of governmental violence. When dealing with an Adolph Hitler or a Saddam Hussein, however, just violence becomes necessarily more brutal. Oppression demands justice (Rev 6:9-11; 16:6; 18:7-8), but evil never gives way voluntarily. The greater the power and brutality of evil, the greater the force needed to undo that evil.

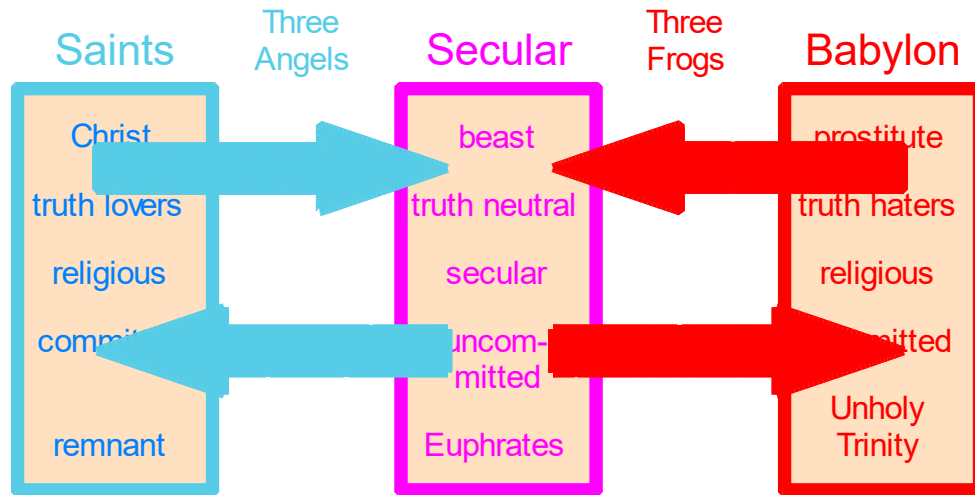
The images of Revelation are not pretty, but they assure us that God will do whatever it takes to end violence and oppression. The fact that divine violence occurs in the presence of the Lamb does not mean He enjoys horrific images. It means that One who has suffered much has been placed in charge of the process. While God's violence is necessary, it is overseen and

limited by the Lamb. Only the Lamb fully understands the cost of suffering. Only the Lamb can be trusted to be merciful in the exercise of divine justice. There will be suffering as a result of divine justice, but not one iota more than necessary.

What this text brings out is that the end-time decision will not be an easy one. Those attracted to the gospel will face the threats and intimidation of Babylon (Rev 13:15-17). On the other hand, those choosing the “easy” path will ultimately find it even harder than the first. There will be cries of anguish and songs of regret.

And the final proclamation of the gospel will affect more than just the less-religious among the nations. It will reach deep into Babylon itself and call many honest-hearted souls out of her (Rev 18:4). The confederacy of religion will remain intact and grow even more powerful, but it will also lose many to the charms of the gospel. While the end-time Mount Carmel experience will be persuasive to most, many will find the deception too convincing, too smooth, and they will explore the gospel alternative under the conviction of the Spirit. They will yield themselves to the love of the truth and will take hold of it, no matter what the cost in earthly terms (2 Thess 2:10-12).

But in spite of these losses, Babylon succeeds in winning over the bulk of those who live among the nations (Rev 16:13-16). In the previous chapter, we illustrated the activities of Stage Four of the final events in the following way:



As we have seen, this decision process has been going on for a long time, all the way back to New Testament times (2 Cor 10:3-5). Those who seek to follow Jesus have always faced a battle inside their minds, they have always struggled to deal with their own pride, they have always faced the strongholds of Satan within themselves. That battle is a universal one. But the Book of Revelation moves us forward to the final and most decisive spiritual battle of all time in Revelation 16 and 17. The Battle of Armageddon is a battle for the mind!

Until this moment the majority of the people on earth were not committed to either side in the worldwide religious polarization. While those who present the gospel may appear weak and contemptible in human terms, their proclamation will be carried along by the power of God. "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues" (Rev 18:4). Revelation 11:13 makes it clear that many of those in Babylon will respond to the proclamation, this final "remnant" could even become a majority, at least in some segments of Babylon:

11 And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them,

and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. 12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. 13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and ***the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.***

Rev 11:11-13, KJV

I have chosen the King James Version once more because it rightly translates the word “remnant” here. The two witnesses of Revelation 11 are slain and then resurrected. These witnesses seem to represent Scripture on the one hand, and the proclamation of that Scripture by the people of God, on the other. So the resurrection of the Two Witnesses and their ascension to heaven is a symbolic way to describe this final proclamation of the gospel just before the close of probation (signaled by the sounding of the seventh trumpet in verse 15, cf. Rev 10:7). Combined with powerful supporting actions by God (the great earthquake) this final work of the gospel succeeds causing the “remnant” (ninety per cent of the “great city,” cf. verse 8) to become “affrighted” and “give glory to the God of heaven.”

If you can get past the peculiar translation “affrighted” you will notice that this is exactly the response called for by the three angels of Revelation 14. “Fear God and give Him glory” is the final call of God to the human race (Rev 14:7). In fact, those who gain the victory at the very end are described in exactly the same terms as used in Rev 11:13:

3 And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! 4 ***Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name?*** For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

Rev 15:3-4, ESV

So in this final moment of decision Babylon will lose large numbers, even, perhaps, a majority in some locations. This will be of great encouragement to those who proclaim the gospel in those days. No matter how hard the work seems to be, the results at the end will transcend expectation and they will no doubt occur in places thought the most unlikely for success. We should never, therefore, limit ourselves to the parts of the world where success comes easy. God has a plan for the hard places as well and He longs for more people who will have the courage to press on when results are few. Prophecy does more than talk about the future, it gives us courage to do the right thing today, even if it is unpopular or seems unwise.

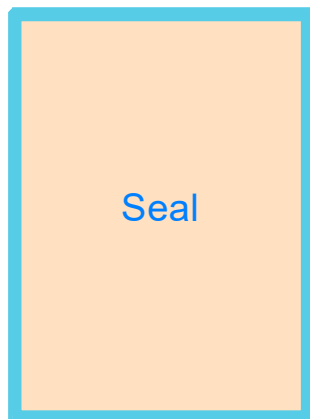
But while Babylon will suffer losses, she still has many tricks up her sleeve. The unholy trinity has great power: the persuasive eloquence of the three frogs, whose job it is to gather the nations; the miraculous, deceptive spectacles of the false Mount Carmel; the great counterfeit of the second coming (2 Thess 2:8-9); the very impersonation of Jesus at one point in the conflict (2 Thess 2:9, Acts 2:22); and, when all else fails, there is threat and coercion (Rev 13:15-17).

At this stage of the final events, therefore, there are two great religious unities that go out to the entire world and seek to win over the uncommitted to their side. They send out the three angels of Revelation 14, on the one hand, and the three frogs of Revelation 16, on the other. Those who receive the messages of the three angels unite with God and the true gospel. Those who receive the messages of the three frogs unite with Babylon in one of two ways; directly (by accepting its spiritual claims) or indirectly (by accepting its political control over

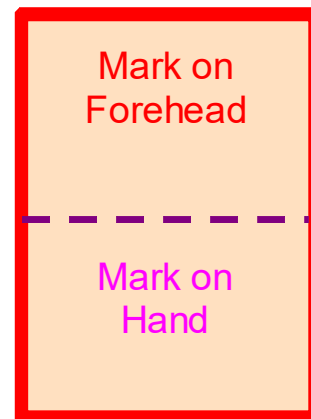
their lives).

This is the reason why the mark of the beast is received on either the forehead or the hand (Rev 13:16-17). Many will commit to Babylon in action even though they are not convinced in mind and heart. They go along because they fear for their lives or because they want to continue living “the good life” in this world. They are marked on the hand. Others come to fully believe the claims of Babylon with their whole mind and heart. They are marked on the forehead. The followers of Babylon include many who follow out of conviction, but the rest follow for economic rather than religious reasons. I call the latter “secular” in the sense that their primary commitments in life relate to the things of this world rather than the things of the spirit. They may in fact believe in God, but that belief is not the primary motivation for their actions. In the previous chapter we illustrated the end result of Stage Four as follows:

Confederacy of
the Saints



Confederacy of
Evil



5) The Religious and Secular Confederacies Unite

As the final time of decision draws to a close, the world's secular and religious confederacies move to unite on the basis of common self-interest (Rev 16:13-14; 17:1-3). The result is a worldwide unity of all public institutions, both the religious and the national. This final worldwide institutional unity is even more dramatic than the worldwide political unity will be.

The mere thought of a unity of religious institutions in today's world is hard enough to manage. The idea that such a religious unity could fully control all the world's nations at the same time seems utterly fantastic to human experience. Many religious and political leaders through history have imagined such a worldwide unity, but its actual fulfillment has never occurred. What kinds of events or philosophical movements could lead to such a unity? Does the Book of Revelation give us any clues?

According to Revelation, there are a number of unifying forces that bring Satan's agencies together at the end of time. The three frogs of Rev 16:13-14 represent the spirits of demons going out to gather the kings of the earth. This suggests a strong role for spiritualism in unifying the world for a common cause. If there is one thing that can get the attention of secular people, it is clear evidence for the existence of supernatural powers. Such themes have been often explored in popular culture, through movies such as *The Exorcist*. Satan will certainly use all the powers at his command to influence events in the direction he desires them to go.

End-time Babylon will certainly need to wield supernatural power in order to blend eastern religions with western mind-sets. The possibilities in this regard are already evident in the development of “New Age” thinking in the West. This New Age thinking, a sub-category of “post-modernism,” seems as attractive to secular people as it is to people of eastern backgrounds. Since the “flower children” of the Sixties, secular people who were formerly uninterested in religion of any kind, find the open-ended spirituality of today’s world quite comfortable.

In fact, the one spiritual place where post-moderns do not seem comfortable is any location associated with the three great monotheistic religions, Judaism, Islam and Christianity. They decry the “bashing” of other religions that is so common in the Christian-Muslim debate, for example, but are much more at home in the defused spirituality of southern and eastern Asia. It may not require a great deal of supernatural power (Mount Carmel-type experiences) to convince the average Westerner of God’s presence today. Today, more than ever, the idea that the vast majority of earth’s peoples and governments could be persuaded toward a religious agenda is plausible.

There may also be ecological reasons that the political powers choose to join the religious confederacy. If many of the seven last plagues of Revelation 16 are taken literally (particularly the first four and the last), the world may have a total ecological breakdown at some point in the future, requiring drastic measures in maintain law and order. In the context of a revival of religious institutions, these disasters could easily be seen as a judgment of God

(which they will in fact be). In such a setting, anyone who bucks the religious confederacy might be seen as the cause of the calamities in the environment. In order to save the planet, the call might go out to join Babylon and conform to her wishes.

In Revelation 17:2, fornication is used as a metaphor to describe the relationship between prostitute Babylon and the kings of the world. There will be mutual self-interest in the relationship. Whenever two people get together sexually outside of marriage (except in cases such as rape) there is the mutual sense that these activities will improve their lives. While this sense usually proves to be illusive in retrospect, it is mutual self-interest that draws them together.

People are most willing to accept coercive government into their lives when there is a perceived breakdown of law and order. Submitting to restrictive authority seems a small price to pay in order to deal with crime or terrorism. As events in Iraq proved, it is easier to sow disorder than to create order. In times of serious disorder, severe measures will seem required in order to restore order. The end-time unity of religious institutions with the nations can be illustrated as follows:

At the End, therefore, the religious and political confederacies of the world will succeed in uniting for a period of time. Babylon is supported by the Euphrates River. The prostitute sits on the waters. The woman rides the beast. The three frogs gather the kings of the whole inhabited world. Those who are paying attention to these prophecies will watch for these end-time developments.

6) The Remnant Are Singled Out for Destruction

At this point in the final events the worldwide unity is complete and those who resist are noticed. They do not conform to the requirements of the worldwide unity of secular and religious authority. They are perceived as a threat. So they soon become singled out for destruction. In the language of Revelation, the dragon leads the entire coalition into war with the remnant (Rev 12:17). Those who refuse to worship the beast or his image will not be allowed to buy or sell, in other words, they will face economic and employment sanctions (Rev 13:16-17). Even beyond that they will eventually face a death decree (Rev 13:15). The ten horns give their authority to the beast and together they make war with the Lamb and those who are with Him (Rev 17:12-14).

At this point the restraining influence of the four angels of Revelation 7:1-4 is removed and all hell breaks loose, so to speak, around the world. The strongest analogies for the death decree in the Old Testament are found in the books of Esther and Daniel. Closest to home is the story of Daniel's three friends and the fiery furnace. The call for worship of an image goes out and those who do not respond to that call are delivered for execution.

In Daniel three the death decree and the execution of death are all on the same day. In Daniel 6, on the other hand, a period of 30 days is allowed for compliance, then the death decree is executed. In the book of Esther, the death decree was set several months ahead and was to be executed by the sword and by hanging. All three events are analogies to the death decree in Revelation, yet all are somewhat different. Revelation does not by itself clarify the

nature of the death decree. The description in *The Great Controversy* (613-636, cf. *Prophets and Kings*, 605-606) seems most similar to that of Esther.

Will the saints be martyred or delivered at the end? The three Old Testament accounts just mentioned are encouraging. In all three cases the people of God are delivered in the midst of the death decree. Daniel's three friends are thrown into the furnace, but they are not burned, they are promoted! Daniel is thrown into the lion's den, but the lions do not hurt him and he is also promoted. Esther and her people are allowed to defend themselves and they succeed, with the result that Mordechai is further promoted. So the three Old Testament parallels suggest that the people of God will escape the final death decree and will be promoted into the kingdom of God!

On the other hand, there are texts in Revelation that suggest some, at least, of the saints will suffer the ultimate earthly penalty:

If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

Rev 13:10, ESV

According to this verse, some of the saints will be taken captive and some of them will be slain, requiring the rest to exercise endurance and faith. Revelation 20:4 speaks of those who were "beheaded" on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. These are not just any Christian martyrs, but specifically those who faced the economic boycott and death decree of Revelation 13:15-17. So the picture seems to be one of a general deliverance that will not be universal among the followers of God. Some will lose their lives in the final events, but

the rest will be delivered, as we will see shortly.

This is not the most pleasant message imaginable. Many Adventists have lived in fear of the end-time and the persecutions anticipated there. How should you and I relate to the possibility that we might experience such a fate personally? I have come to believe that one of the spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit delivers to God's people (see 1 Cor 13, Rom 12 and Eph 4) is the gift of martyrdom. In the ultimate sense, it is a gift that can only be exercised once. If you have ever read accounts of the martyrs during the Middle Ages and the Reformation period, you will notice that they often did not seem to feel the flames that were taking their lives. At is as if God intervened to give them what they needed in the time of ultimate decision and crisis.

God will not allow us to experience more than we can possibly bear (1 Cor 10:13). To invest a lot of time worrying about the persecutions of the future is not spiritually productive. If God allows us to go through hard times, He will give us everything we need to honor Him through those times. If we are faithful in the little things today, He will see us through the big things tomorrow. (Luke 19:17)

7) The Close of Probation

At some point in the course of these events probation closes for everyone on earth. This occurs in the lead up to the sounding of the seventh trumpet (Rev 10:7). It occurs just before the seven bowls are poured out (15:5-8). It is sometime just before the second coming of Jesus (22:11-12). This is not an arbitrary decree on the part of God. It is rather a point in time when

everyone on earth has come to a settled relationship with one or the other of the two worldwide gospels (Rev 14:6-12). Beyond this point people can no longer change sides, nor would they truly wish to. This reminds me of an Ellen White statement about people “settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved” (4BC 1161) Minds will no longer change. Firm decisions are being made on earth and fully ratified in heaven.

What is not clear from Revelation is whether the close of human probation should be listed as point six, seven or eight. I have placed it as point seven in this list, but without a great deal of conviction. It seems to me that the declaration of a death decree against the people of God represents a significant hardening against the gospel (stage six). All institutions have become set in their opposition to God and the gospel. But in the context of the death decree some individuals will still be making their last moves (Stage Seven). The execution of the decree represents the actions of people and institutions that are fully hardened in their opposition (stage eight). The exact timing of the close of probation in relation to points six and eight is not explicit in Revelation.

The gospel continues to go forth as Babylon gathers the nations, unites with the beast; and begins to focus on destroying the saints. There comes a time when everybody on earth has made their decision and the heavenly temple is empty (Revelation 15:5-8). The righteous will still be righteous and the filthy will still be filthy (Revelation 22:11). From that point on people will remain the same spiritually. If there is any change, it is further growth in the same direction. The good are getting better and the bad are getting worse.

8) The Remnant Under Attack

At some point along the way, the religious and political powers of the world carry out a final attack on the remnant/saints. The powers of the world use their economic, military and law enforcement resources in an attempt to destroy God's faithful people. At first this will probably be more of an economic matter, seeking to persuade the saints by threatening their ability to earn a living (Rev 13:16-17). But eventually the political, military, intelligence and police forces all combine together to seek out and destroy the people of God (Rev 13:15). This attack will be of such a severe nature that for a time, at least, all may appear lost for the faithful people of God. As mentioned earlier in this book, the war on terror has provided an idea of the kinds of resources that the nations can bring against small groups and individuals who have a different agenda than that of the approved majority.

Revelation describes this police action in global terms. The nations of the world make war against the Lamb and His called, chosen and faithful followers (Rev 17:14). This attack is also described in terms of the rising waters of the Euphrates River (Rev 16:12; 17:1). Babylon sets in motion all the economic, military and law enforcement resources available to it. We have seen how the drying up of the Euphrates is a major theme in at least two Old Testament books (Jeremiah 50-51 and Isaiah 44-47). They describe how Babylon loses the support of its political, economic and military resources. Note the following interesting text:

The LORD spoke to me again:
"Because this people has rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah and

rejoices over Rezin and the son of Remaliah, therefore the Lord is about to bring against them the mighty flood waters of the River--the king of Assyria with all his pomp. It (the Euphrates River) will overflow all its channels, run over all its banks, and sweep on into Judah, swirling over it, passing through it and reaching up to the neck. Its outspread wings will cover the breadth of your land, O Immanuel!"

Isaiah 8:5-8, NIV

In this Old Testament narrative, the armies of Assyria are described as the overflowing waters of the Euphrates River. The Assyrians conquered every city of Judah except Jerusalem, the capital. So their attack is described as a flood that overflows the entire land up to the neck. The walls of Jerusalem provide the neck and the surviving city is the head. So the flooding Euphrates becomes a metaphor of this overwhelming military attack that carried all the way to the capital city of Jerusalem. The end-time Euphrates will pose a similar threat to the people of God at the end of time.

This imagery supports the idea that some, perhaps many of God's people will lose their lives before the close of probation. The combined religious/political confederacy will shed the blood of the saints (Rev 13:10; 17:14; 18:5-8; 20:4). The good news is that after the close of probation, no such event will happen. There is no longer any usefulness in the martyrdom of the saints, which through history often became like seed, drawing many new converts to the faith. In the ninth stage of the final events God puts an end to persecution and slaughter.

9) God Intervenes on Behalf of the Saints

As the attack of Stage Eight reaches its climax, Revelation makes it clear that God intervenes in behalf of the saints. He withdraws His permission for a worldwide unity of satanic

power (Rev 17:17). He dries up the Euphrates River by sowing distrust and enmity between the political and the religious confederacies (Rev 16:12). As a result, the powers that oppose the people of God divide once more. The political unity comes to hate Babylon more than they hate the remnant, with the miraculous result that the saints are delivered.

Again, this development is described on a worldwide basis in Revelation. But the same change of direction occurs at the local level throughout the world. Christ intervenes in behalf of the saints at the very moment the two world-wide confederacies are doing their best to crush out the lives of the saints. As a result, the political and military powers (and the police forces at the local level) of the world withdraw their support from Babylon and turn on her, leading to her utter collapse (Rev 17:16; 18:9-19; 19:1-2). The people of the world see that they have been deceived, stop focusing on the saints, and start directing their negative attention against those who had deceived them.

10) Babylon Destroyed by the Nations That Supported Her

This stage is fairly brief and there is not much more to say about it. The secular powers of the world turn on those responsible for the great deception. When Babylon is exposed as a spiritual fraud, she is destroyed by the very powers she depended on to extend her spiritual reach. “The beast and the ten horns hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire” (Rev 17:16, NIV). But while the nations are the ones that actually carry out the destruction of Babylon, there are two further dynamics

that need to be noted briefly.

First, the nations themselves will come to regret the action, almost as soon as they carry it out (Rev 18:9-19). The mourning of Revelation 18 includes those who were deeply involved with Babylon and those who were not so deeply involved. They all mourn because all the wicked lose when Babylon falls. Great wealth and prosperity come to an end with Babylon's destruction. The world order will never recover from this act.

Second, in the end it turns out that the nations were not acting entirely on their own accord. God remains in control of the process all the way (Rev 17:17; 16:19). No political or religious union can long endure unless God is supportive of the process. So in Revelation 17:16 the nations do God's will against their own will. They carry out a momentary rage to their own ultimate hurt.

The fall of Babylon not only splits her off from the nations, but she falls apart from within as well. Revelation 16:19 tells us that Babylon splits into three parts, the dragon, the beast and the false prophet (Rev 16:13, 19). So even the unity of Babylon itself does not last for long, the various religious entities that make up Babylon at the end also go their separate ways after the deception is exposed. The total worldwide unity of evil does not last long.

11) Christ Finishes the Destruction at His Second Coming

Revelation makes it clear that the nations of the world do not just crumble or kill each other off. At the end there is need for a proactive execution on the part of God. And God the

Father does not take over at that point, but continues to allow Jesus Christ to be the active and visible agent of divine activity on the planet. It is the Lamb Himself who finishes the job of destroying evil at His second coming (Rev 14:9-11). It is the Lamb and those who are with Him who overcome the ten horns and the beast (17:14). It is the rider on the white horse and those with him who destroy the beast and the false prophet at the very end (19:11-21).

While the rider on the white horse is not called the Lamb, the description of him recalls the son of man in chapter one (1:13-16) and the Lamb of chapter 17:14. At this stage of the final conflict anything left of the unholy trinity and the secular-political confederacy is destroyed. Among the means used in this execution are great hailstones (Rev 16:17-21), fire (14:9-11; 19:20; 20:7-10), the sword of rider's mouth (19:21) and military action (17:14).

It is none other than Jesus Christ, the lowly one, the meek and mild, who executes destruction on the nations at the End. Execution is safely left in the hands of one who has suffered much Himself, for whom execution is a "strange work."

21 The LORD will rise up as he did at Mount Perazim, he will rouse himself as in the Valley of Gibeon-- to do his work, ***his strange work***, and perform his task, ***his alien task***. 22 Now stop your mocking, or your chains will become heavier; the Lord, the LORD Almighty, has told me of the destruction decreed against the whole land.

Isa 28:21-22, NIV

12) The Lamb Gathers the Saints to be With Him

Several texts in Revelation indicate that the final act of the drama is the Lamb gathering the saints to be with Him forever. The Book of Revelation does not tell us explicitly that this gathering includes the righteous dead, although there are texts that support that idea in at

least a limited sense (Rev 1:7; 14:13; 20:4-6). The resurrection of the righteous dead at the Second Coming, however, is a clear teaching in other texts of the New Testament.

15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are **left**, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

1 Thess 4:15-17, ESV

Notice that Paul has a “remnant” in this text (“we. . . who are **left**”). Just like Revelation, the remnant is made up of those who pass through the final crisis and are alive to meet Jesus when He returns. They are caught up to meet Jesus in the air, along with the righteous dead who are raised in the context of Jesus’ return to earth.

Revelation also does not explicitly tell us where Jesus takes the righteous at His Second Coming. It only tells us that they are gathered to Him as a farmer gathers in his wheat crop at harvest time (Rev 14:14-16). The saints are swept up to meet Jesus in the air, just as Paul said to the Thessalonians. But neither text tells us whether Jesus takes the righteous back to heaven with Him or brings them back to earth. John 14:1-3 (ESV), however, clears up this matter:

1 Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And ***if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.***

The key element in this text is the third verse. Jesus goes away to prepare a place for His disciples. When He returns, He does not come to be with them where they are, instead He will take them to be with Him where He is. At the Second Coming Jesus gathers the righteous, both

living and dead, to Himself. He then takes them all back to heaven with Him to live there for a thousand years. Then at the end of that thousand years they return with Him in the New Jerusalem back to earth, to live there with Him forever (Rev 21:2-3). So while Revelation does not tell us explicitly that the righteous are in heaven during the thousand years, the movement of the New Jerusalem at the end of that period is consistent with what Jesus said to His disciples in John 14.

Summary

I have organized the final events of the Battle of Armageddon into twelve major movements. I don't doubt that you or others could organize these events in a slightly different way. You could perhaps make a list of ten or fourteen (in my first attempt I had ten). You might choose to put different titles on them. You might even disagree on the order in a place or two. But I believe the basic outline is clear.

God's people need to have a basic sense of what is coming, they don't need to know all the details today. Prophecy is not given to satisfy our curiosity about the future, it is designed to motivate and instruct us to do the right thing today. For the sake of those readers who learn best by visual demonstration, I offer the following attempt to chart the above sequence:

THE ORDER OF FINAL EVENTS IN REVELATION

