

# How Near Is Armageddon?

by Denis Lyle

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*The sermon explores the significance of Armageddon and the seven vials of wrath, and warns of the devastating consequences of God's judgment on the wicked world.*

**Scripture:** Lamentations 3:43, Matthew 25:21, Acts 4:27, Revelation 16:1

**Topics:** "End Times", "Gods Judgment"

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## Description

Denis Lyle preaches about the impending judgment of God upon the earth, drawing parallels between historical events and the biblical prophecy of Armageddon. He explains the significance of the Holy Land as the stage for crucial events like Mount Calvary and the Plain of Megiddo, where grace and vengeance are manifested. Lyle delves into Revelation 15 & 16, highlighting the final series of God's judgment through the seven vials of wrath, emphasizing the escalating severity of the judgments and the scene in heaven where God's purpose, praise, and patience are expressed before the storm on earth unfolds.

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## Transcript

On Tuesday, January 29th 1991, radio listeners in St. Louis Missouri, were startled to hear that the end of the world was just moments away. Regular radio programming was interrupted by the jarring attention signal of the Emergency Broadcast System, followed by the voice of an announcer who said, "Your attention please! This is not a test. The United States is under nuclear attack! I repeat this is not a test!" Scores of people who heard the news on their car radios raced home to be with family members when the missiles begin to fall.

Some made frantic phone calls to loved ones: "Get to a basement or shelter now!... Yes, of course its true! The radio said it was not a test". Others flipped the radio dial or turned on their TV to get confirmation of the horrible news. Soon they discovered that only radio station, KSHE, was carrying the alert. Everywhere else across the radio and TV life went on as usual. An hour after the initial panic personnel went on the air with an announcement that the "alert", was a fake broadcast, completely unauthorised by the station management.

The station apologised for the actions of disc jockey John Ulett who was attempting, in his words, "to jolt people and make people think about the horrors of nuclear war". It jolted people all right. But it was a stupid stunt, and the ensuing panic could have resulted in property damage, injury, or death for Ulett's listeners. Fortunately, no one was hurt. But for a few long minutes, a lot of people in St. Louis got just a faint foretaste of what the earth's last days will be like... days of fear: horror: death and destruction unlike

anything the world has ever known before!

We often speak of "The battle of Armageddon", but nowhere does the Bible use that phrase. On September 2nd 1945, when General Douglas MacArthur supervised signing the peace treaty with Japan, he said, "We have had our last chance. If we will not devise something greater and more equitable than war Armageddon will be at our door". The name ARMAGEDDON comes from two Hebrew words, HAR MEGIDDO, the hill of Megiddo. The word MEGIDDO means "place of troops", or "place of slaughter".

It is also called The Plain of Esdraelon and the Valley of Jezreel. The area is about 14 miles wide and 20 miles long, and forms what Napoleon called "the most natural battlefield of the whole earth". Standing on Mount Carmel and overlooking that great plain, you can well understand why it would be used for gathering the armies of the world. It was on this plain that Barak defeated the armies of Canaan (Jud 5:19). Gideon met the Midianites there (Judges 7), and it was there that King Saul lost his life (1 Sam 31).

Titus and the Roman army used this natural corridor, as did the Crusaders in the Middle Ages. British, General Allenby, used it when he defeated the Turkish armies in 1917! So the Holy Land has been chosen by God as the stage upon which two crucial events take place, one on a mountain and the other on a plain. Mount Calvary and the Plain of Megiddo are the two altars of sacrifice that dominate the history of the world. On Mount Calvary grace redeemed the world by the sacrifice of God's Son.

On the Plains of Megiddo vengeance offers up the armies of the world in a sacrifice of doom. Both are blood baths: both are the descent of wrath upon sin: both are brought about by God's bitterest foes, who work out God's perfect and sovereign will! (Acts 4:27-28) From each event proceeds a SUPPER. One a feast of REMEMBRANCE, the other a feast of RETRIBUTION. At Calvary there rang up to heaven a victorious cry, "It is finished". At Armageddon there rings down to earth another cry, "It is done".

Now perhaps by this time you're saying, "Well how does all this relate to (Rev 15 & 16)? Well, in these two chapters we come to the final series of God's judgment, the seven vials of wrath! Now please keep in mind that the seven-year Tribulation Period is characterized by three series of events. (1) THE SEVEN SEALS: (6:1-8:5) (2) THE SEVEN TRUMPETS:(8:6-19:21) (3) THE SEVEN VIALS: (16:1-19:21) We have noted that as the Lord Jesus begins to break the seals of the scroll, that judgments begin here on earth!

The SEALS are BROKEN: the TRUMPETS are SOUNDED: and the VIALS are outpoured, and each series of judgments, in an ascending scale of severity flows from the other! Now before we see the seven final judgments of God upon this earth, we are given a glimpse of glory. So that I want you to notice: (1) THE SCENE IN HEAVEN It is as though God takes us into the glory of heaven first, so that the judgment taking place on earth will seem all the more awesome! John says: "And I saw another sign in heaven" (15:1).

The word "another", refers to the two preceding signs in (ch 12). Look at (12:1-3). Now those three signs taken together represent important elements in the prophetic scene: (1) Israel, that is the woman: (2) The final world empire under the control of Satan and the beast, that is the great red dragon (3) The seven angels having the seven last plagues, that is, the divine judgment upon the satanic system and political power of the beast! Now what does John see in heaven? What is this SCENE in heaven all about?

Well, notice that in heaven is where: (a) GOD'S PURPOSE IS EXPLAINED: Let me pull out a few words from (15:1) The word, "seven", occurs eight times in this brief chapter. As there were SEVEN SEALS and SEVEN TRUMPETS so there are SEVEN VIALS! The word "plagues", implies that the previous judgments

associated with the seals and trumpets were also plagues, that is divine judgments from God on a wicked world. The word "last", indicates that they are the final judgments of God before the Second Coming of Christ!

The concept "filled up" means to bring to conclusion, or to the ultimate goal, that is a fulfilment of divine purpose. You see with these judgments, the purpose of God will be fully accomplished, that is "filled up". This final set of judgments is the turning point, the historical pivot upon which God's plan now turns! At the conclusion of the seven vials of wrath God will begin to set up His kingdom on earth. So here in heaven (a) but look again: (b) GOD'S PRAISE IS EXPRESSED: (15:2-4) There it shimmers, in the light which streams out from the throne of God with currents of fire, glowing in its crystal depths, the sea of glass, designed to reflect the glory of God!

There they stand, the tribulation saints who have triumphed over the beast and all that for which he stands. Now they sing and what a song it is! It's a twofold song, the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. The song of Moses (Exod 15) was sung at the Red Sea, the song of the Lamb is sung at the Crystal Sea. The Song of Moses was a Song of Triumph over Egypt: the Song of the Lamb is a Song of Triumph over Babylon. The Song of Moses told how God brought His people Out, the Song of the Lamb tells how God brings His people in.

The Song of Moses was the First song in Scripture, the Song of the Lamb is the Last song in Scripture ! Did you notice full this song is of the Lord? They are singing "How GREAT Thou art", "How great... Almighty" they are singing, "How GOOD Thou art". "Just... saints", they are singing "How GLORIOUS Thou art", "Who shall... name". My, they are singing about the VIRTUE of the Lord, "for Thou only art holy", they are singing about the VICTORY of the Lord, "for all... Thee" they are singing about the VENGEANCE of the Lord, "for Thy judgments are made manifest" (15:4).

My, this is true praise. There is not a word here about self, its doings, sayings, feelings. Not a syllable about what THEY had done, they're singing about the Lord! How different from so many modern hymns today, which are full of sentimentality instead of adoration. They recount our experiences instead of His mercies, they speak more of our attainments instead of His Atonement! My, in our singing lets EXALT the Lord! (a) (b) But notice: (c) GOD'S PATIENCE IS EXHAUSTED: From (15:5-8) we are taken into the heavenly tabernacle, of which the earthly Tabernacle and Temple were patterned, and we are permitted to look into the Holy of Holies!

The phrase, "the temple", (naos) refers to the inner Holy Place of the Tabernacle, and as John looks he see's SEVEN ANGELS coming out of the Temple indicating that God's judgments are now about to take place. Now notice here two things about THE ANGELS: Notice the NUMBER of them: "seven angels", You see GOD'S JUDGMENT WILL BE PERFECT: Noone will be judged too severely or too lightly. Notice the DRESS of them: they are dressed in white wearing golden girdles. You see GOD'S JUDGMENT WILL BE RIGHTEOUS: It will be the Lord Himself who will judge, and it will be an awful judgment symbolised by the vials of wrath!

My, the dam of God's mercy is about to give way to the waters of His wrath. Look at (15:8) Once a year the High Priest was permitted to enter there, carrying a bowl of blood in his hand. Since Calvary, the way into the holiest in heaven has been opened to all, because the blood of Christ has blazed a highway to the heart of God, but now the royal road is barred. Why can noone enter the temple? Because it is to late to pray! For thousands of years God has been patient with mankind but no longer!

Gods PATIENCE is EXHAUSTED. Nothing can stay the hand of God. Nothing can hold back His judgment. Jeremiah prophesied of this day when he said, "Thou hast covered with anger, and persecuted us: Thou hast slain, Thou hast not pitied. Thou hast covered Thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through" (Lam 3:43-44). No one was able to get through to God. God's wrath is burning against mankind. (1) (2) THE STORM ON EARTH In (Rev 15:1) we have the phrase "in heaven" in (Rev 16:1) we have the phrase "upon the earth". (2) Now much of what follows in (ch 16) reminds us of the plagues that came upon Egypt, boils, water turned to blood, darkness, frogs, thunder and hail.

It is probably best then to take these judgments as literal. Look at these SEVEN VIAL'S (BOWLS) of wrath as the angels pour them out. Notice: (a) THE CONTAGIOUS SORES: (16:2) This judgment is in the form of physical affliction of unusual severity bringing widespread suffering! Do you recall what the sixth plague in Egypt was? (Exod 9) Runny, bloody ulcers on the skin of men and this judgment will be comparable. I wonder will it be like our present day plague of AIDS? A disease that was unknown just a few years ago, a disease which unleashes a host of other diseases in the body including cancers: inflammations of the skin: and viral infections.

You and I know that AIDS can only be transmitted by an exchange of body fluids, through sexual activity, or through a drug - users needle. Can you imagine what would happen if AIDS could be transmitted as easily as the common cold? My, there is a day coming when the followers of the Anti- Christ will be plagued with CONTAGIOUS SORES: (b) THE CONTAMINATED SEAS: (16:3) At the sounding of the SECOND TRUMPET a third part of the sea became blood, (8:8) but here it seems that all of the water is affected.

In Moses day it was the Nile that was turned to blood: now it is the sea itself. Ills: From time to time off the coast of California and Florida a phenomenon known as "the red tide" occurs. This "red tide" is caused by minute organisms that multiply incredibly and cause everything in one area to die. Dead fish are seen floating in what look's like a bowl of blood. Scientists do not know what causes this, but they presume it is due to cobalt from nuclear waste. This may not explain what happens when the SECOND VIAL is outpoured but it certainly illustrates it! (a) (b) (c) THE CORRUPTED STREAMS: (16:4-7) My, what will it be like when rivers and lakes, fountains and streams are likewise corrupted?

When all sources of fresh water will turn to blood as they did in Egypt? The Lord's first miracle was to turn water to wine, now He turns water into blood! Do you ever hear the saying, "What goes around, comes around". What you dish out, you will some day have to take. Well, those who shed the blood of the prophets and the saints of God will have to drink what they spilled: a torrent of blood. Look at the 4th Vial and notice: (d) THE CONSUMING SUN: (16:8-9) AT puts (16:8) like this: "The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire".

I tell you in this day you'll not have to go the Mediterranean to get a heat wave. When the Lord Jesus died on the Cross the sun hid its face and refused to shine, but now the sun's heat will not be able to be withheld. The face of this earth will be scorched by the power of God, but still men will refuse to turn to God! They will know that God has done this because only God can control the sun, but their hearts are so hardened that they continue to blaspheme God! (e) THE CONFOUNDED SINNERS: (16:10-11) Similar unexplained occurrences of darkness have occurred in the USA and in other places around the world.

All of these events have two things in common. (1) Noone was ever able to explain these events in terms of an eclipse. (2) Most who experienced these events were filled with terror believing the end of the world

had come. DARKNESS not only an absence of LIGHT but an absence of RIGHTEOUSNESS, as the people on earth are confused and cannot understand what is happening to their world. Their Saviour, the Anti - Christ is on his throne but he can do nothing about it. And instead of asking mercy from the Lord, their hatred of Him intensifies.

My, what a time its going to be when these SEVEN ANGELS take these SEVEN VIALS of WRATH and pour them out on planet earth. Look at the sixth vial and notice: (f) THE CONTROLLING SPIRITS: (16:12-16) Now because this vial has caused more comment and controversy than any of the rest I want to try and break this section down for our understanding. There are several things I want you to note here: (1) THE SPECIAL PLACE: (16:12) "The great river Euphrates". What do we know about this river?

Well, God gave to Abraham the Promised Land extending as far as the Euphrates. (Gen 15:18) Moreover this river is the dividing line between East and West. Babylon was built right over the Euphrates River in modern day Iraq. Do you recall that ancient Babylon was overthrown when the armies of Cyrus the Persian diverted the River Euphrates into another channel and walked on the dry bed of the river under the city wall. (Dan ch 5) Now this great river which is 1800 miles long: in some places 3600 feet wide and 30 feet deep will dry up.

Why? Look at: (2) THE SOLEMN PURPOSE: "That the way of... prepared" (16:12). You see the drying up of this river, paves the way for the armies of the Far East to enter the battle at Armageddon! Who are the "kings of the East?". Possibly China, India, Japan and other Asian countries. My, at long last the awakened millions of the EAST see their way clear to avenge themselves on the hated powers of the WEST! There is a time coming when EAST and WEST SHALL come together. It will happen in a place called Armageddon. (1) (2) (3) THE SPIRIT POWERS: "And I saw... prophet" (16:13-14).

Do you know something? Leaders of nations think they control events, when it is actually THEY who are controlled by events... and by unseen spiritual forces! Look at these demons as they go forth, working miracles: (13:12-15) deluding men: inflaming passions: stirring up the world: summoning together the countless armies of the world east against west, west against east, all against God. (2) (3) But look again and note: (4) THE SPECIAL PROMISE: (16:15) The suffering saints are now told that the Lord's Coming is no longer imminent but immediate, and they are to be ready, avoiding contamination from the world around.

He says to them, "Don't worry. I'am almost there". Look at (16:16) and notice: (5) THE SOVEREIGN PLAN: "And He (God)... Armageddon" (16:16). No doubt they are drawn there for various reasons... to stamp out by united action the last living Jew on earth: and the last known believer in God: to settle their own bitter animosities: to decide once for all who will control the world: to fight against God and thus meet their doom. But please keep in mind it is not merely that God PERMITS this array of nations, God PLANS it!

"The Gentiles and the peoples of Israel were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy Hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done" Acts 4:27-28 My, God WAS in control: IS in control: WILL be in control. "God is still on the Throne". Look at the seventh vial and notice: (g) THE CONVULSIVE STORMS: (16:17-21) Similar phenomena accompanied the breaking of the SEVENTH SEAL ( 7:5) and the blowing of the SEVENTH TRUMPET (11:19) A terrible storm will arise. This earthquake will bring incredible devastation.

Cities will crumble. Islands will sink into the seas. Mountains will fall away. We have never had an earthquake that rocked the entire world but this will be the final shaking of the earth. Hailstones will weigh more than 100 pounds and will fall on men who will continue to curse God, rather than turn in repentance! What an incredible time. Sores covering men, ecological disasters covering the earth, the unholy trinity calling men to destruction at Armageddon. This is what the world will be like when God pours out His wrath and this is what the world will deserve.

HOW NEAR IS ARMAGEDDON? Well, Israel this... is back in the Land and is the focus of world attention. Religion seems headed for a world church, (13:12) and a revived Roman Empire seems to be in embryo form in the EEC Although Armageddon itself is at least 7 years away, the events that will climax there may begin soon. The Rapture could occur at any moment! Bless God for us as believers, there will be no Armageddon, but rather the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Are you living in the light of that great event? What about your worship? What about your walk? What about your witness? If He burst the clouds and came this... would you hear those words of commendation? "Well done" (Matt 25:21)

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