

A Reader's Guide to Revelation 16:12-19:21

Introducing the Big Picture

At the conclusion of the Reader's Guide to Revelation 11:19-16:11, you read of the outpouring of the first five bowls of wrath, in fulfillment of the words of 14:8 *Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality*. We noted that based on what we had seen in Revelation up to that point (especially in chapter 13), it was most likely that "Babylon the Great" was in some way a term for the kingdom that Satan was seeking to establish on the earth. The next sections of Revelation will further clarify the meaning of "Babylon the Great," describe her destruction, and describe the destruction of the entirety of the Satanic kingdom.

Remember that we are at the very end:

- the seals lead to the trumpets which lead to the bowls, and we are at the end of the bowls
- the end has been very clearly announced: *in [the bowls] the wrath of God is finished; they are the last [plagues] (15:1)*
- the final judgment has been vividly pictured (14:14-20)

It would be best, at this point, if you could **read straight through from Revelation 16:12-19:21**, to get the big picture of this section. If that is too much to read at once, you can actually skip or skim all of chapter 18, and you'll still get the big picture fairly well. After you have read through that entire section, spend some time thinking through this basic outline:

1. 16:12-16 → The 6th bowl: false trinity gathers kings for the war of the great day of God
2. 16:17-19:6 → The 7th bowl: destruction of the harlot Babylon
 - a. 16:17-21 → introduction: earthquake, Babylon/world cities fall, upheaval and hail judgment
 - b. 17:1-6 → the focus of the 7th bowl: the harlot Babylon is introduced
 - c. 17:7-14 → the harlot, beast, and kings wage war against the Lamb
 - d. 17:15-18 → civil war in Satan's camp: the beast and kings destroy the harlot
 - e. 18:1-24 → the harlot's destruction explained (God did it) and lamented (by the nations she seduced)
 - f. 19:1-6 → heaven celebrates the harlot's destruction
3. 19:7-21 → The 7th bowl: destruction of the beast and his forces
 - a. 19:7-10 → introducing the bride who will come with the Lamb
 - b. 19:11-16 → displaying the Lamb and His armies
 - c. 19:17-21 → assembling and destroying the beast, kings, and armies

For understanding the overall picture, it is very important to recognize that these chapters view the Satanic empire in *two* parts which will be destroyed in *two* stages (though they may happen almost simultaneously): the fall of the harlot/Babylon (chapters 17-18), and the fall of the beast and his armies (chapter 19). Though this section of the Guide doesn't cover chapter 20, you should also note that the dragon is also bound at the beginning of chapter 20.

So what is the theme of this section? If you put it in your own words, what is the main point?

Introducing the Places

We want to start out by assuming that these are real names of actual places, instead of starting with the assumption that they symbolize something completely different. But we will have to keep in mind that we're in a section that includes a lot of symbolism: spirits of demons are like frogs; the harlot has a "mystery name" which is Babylon; the seven heads are seven mountains which are seven kings. We're also in a section of Revelation that is loaded with Old Testament allusions. When Revelation refers to a place that was mentioned in the Old Testament, we need to discern whether:

- the events of Revelation will involve that *same* place again, or
- the events of Revelation will be like events that happened at that Old Testament place.

There are some hard questions involving the places in this section, but most of them are somewhat insignificant (except the identification of Babylon). If you start to get bogged down, skip ahead to the "People" section.

Temple / Throne Since God's active authority is central to this section of Revelation, it's no surprise that His throne and temple appear again (16:17; 19:4-5).

The Euphrates is dried up as part of the sixth bowl (16:12). You might want to look up a map to remind yourself of its location, which is both north and east of Israel. It is dried up during the sixth bowl so that kings from the east can come across it. Here are several important things to know:

- The Euphrates was mentioned earlier in Revelation in 9:13-19. Four angels bound at the Euphrates were released and a great army killed a third of mankind.
- There is no mention of Israel in this section, so we cannot know for sure if the "kings from the east" are coming toward Israel. But the Euphrates formed the eastern boundary of the land of Israel as originally described by God (Genesis 15:18). To come across the Euphrates from the East would be to come into the God-given boundaries of the people of Israel.
- Water is frequently used figuratively in Revelation (see 17:1, 15; also 13:1). The idea of drying up waters also seems to be used figuratively in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 50:38, 51:36, etc.).
- The literal Euphrates is called "the great river" several times in the Old Testament, suggesting that the same river is in view here (16:12 *the great river, the Euphrates*).
- The literal Euphrates would hardly be a major obstacle for modern armies, though some have suggested that the fierce heat of the fourth bowl (16:8-9) might result in severe flooding from the mountains (it also might dry everything out!).

So is this the literal Euphrates River of modern day Syria/Iraq, or does it symbolize the removal of obstacles for the kings of the east? It probably doesn't impact your other interpretations very much, except that if it is the literal Euphrates then it is more likely that the kings of the East are headed toward Israel.

The East is the direction from which the first kings come (16:12). Frankly, we don't know what "the East" means here, unless it means "east of the Euphrates." It's possible but unlikely that they are the same as the "kings of the whole world" in verse 14. We aren't told if they are coming to join the other kings or attack the other kings. We just know that "kings from the east" are coming.

Har-Magedon is the place where the kings of the whole world (and their armies) are gathered by the unholy trinity for the war of the great day of God (16:16). The phrase *which in Hebrew is called* indicates that the Old Testament background is very important. The Hebrew phrase literally means "Mount Megiddo" - but there is no Mount Megiddo. There is a city of Megiddo about sixty miles north of Jerusalem, and there is a plain with some hills that surround it. This was the scene of some very important Old Testament battles (see the OT background section). So we can't be certain what "Mount Megiddo" indicates: it might be an unusual way of referring to the plain of Megiddo; it might refer to the hill country around the plain of Megiddo; or it might simply be a reminder to the reader of a place of great conflict like Megiddo in the Old Testament. We'll talk about this more when we discuss some of the Old Testament background to this great war.

The Great City, Babylon is the place that dominates this entire section. But as we saw in the last Reader's Guide (see 14:8), "Babylon" seems to generally be a reference to the Satanic kingdom or world system (which will be like ancient Babylon), not to a specific place. That does not mean that a specific place could not be the capital of that Satanic kingdom (just as the city Babylon represented the kingdom of Babylon). In this section of Revelation, Babylon is referred to both as *the great city* and as a woman, *the great harlot* (17:1, 18). We'll talk much more about this harlot later on, but for now we'll just comment on the possible identification with a literal city:

- Does Babylon = the 1st century city of Jerusalem? If Revelation is a prophecy of the 1st century fall of Jerusalem, then Babylon could be 1st century Jerusalem. Revelation 11:8 calls Jerusalem "the great city," mystically called "Sodom and Egypt," so it would be very reasonable that Jerusalem could be the "great city" mystically called "Babylon." However, it seems highly unlikely that 1st century Jerusalem could be considered: a magnificent center of luxury (18:14-16); a global economic power with whom the merchants of the earth got rich (18:3); a sensuous influence who seduced the nations into immorality (18:3); a city whose demise would lead the kings of the earth to weep (18:9); a city which reigns over the kings of the earth (17:18); and a city whose fall corresponded to the fall of many other cities of the nations (16:19). It also is much more likely that the doom of Babylon announced in 14:8 refers back to the context of chapter 13 (the Satanic kingdom), rather than to the doom of Jerusalem.
- Does Babylon = an end-times Babylon, rebuilt at the ancient location in modern-day Iraq, to function as a capital for the Satanic empire? A city like Babylon (remember the analogy with Babylon in Daniel's time) seems more likely than a city on the site of the ancient city of Babylon itself. God promised that when the city of Babylon was destroyed it would never rise again as a great city (Jer. 50:39-40, 51:24-26, 62-64; Isaiah 13:19-22).

- Does Babylon = Rome in the first century? This idea is based on evidence such as the possibility that the early church used the word "Babylon" as a sort of code word for "Rome" (which is possible in I Peter 5:13); the observation that the seven mountains of Rev. 17:9 might be the seven hills of Rome; the parallels between the beast's kingdom and the Roman Empire of the first century. Of course if Babylon is 1st century Rome, then this entire section of Revelation is describing the fall of the Roman Empire, not any future events.
- Does Babylon = Rome in the end times? This idea, that Rome will be the center of the Antichrist's empire, probably comes from the proposed connection between the false religion of Revelation and the Roman Catholic Church. But there is little support for this idea in Revelation.
- Does Babylon = end-times Jerusalem? Could the Antichrist set up his kingdom in Jerusalem? It seems possible. This would explain how the demise of Babylon could be the demise of the Satanic kingdom and *also* fulfill the prophecies of Jesus about the demise of Jerusalem for martyring the saints (Matthew. 23:34-35, 27:25, Luke 11:50-51).

So is Babylon one of those literal cities, or does it just symbolize some part of the Satanic empire? As we'll see later on, Revelation 17:16 (which is the most difficult verse in this section of Revelation) makes the question very difficult. We can know this for sure: Babylon is directly connected to Satan and his empire - and Babylon will be completely destroyed by God.

The Cities of the Nations will fall when Babylon falls (16:19). This indicates that this harlot/city of Babylon has universal influence. When she is destroyed the cities of the world will be destroyed, for all of the kings and nations have been seduced by her idolatrous influence (17:18, 18:3).

You made it through that difficult section! The next section will be easier:

Introducing the People

Let's look at the people (or beings!) that we come across in this section:

Angels continue to play a prominent role:

- 16:12 the sixth angel pours out the sixth bowl
- 16:17 the seventh angel pours out the seventh bowl
- 17:1 one of the seven angels acts as John's guide for the visions to follow. This is probably the same angel that John tries to worship in 19:10, who protests that he is only a "servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus."
- 18:1-3 an angel with great authority announces the fall of Babylon
- 18:21-24 a strong angel acts out and announces the fall of Babylon
- 19:17-18 an angel calls the birds to come to the war, the great supper of God

Kings are mentioned repeatedly in this section:

- 16:12 *the kings from the east* are enabled to come across the Euphrates

- 16:14 *the kings of the whole world* are gathered by the three demons for the war of the great day of God
- 17:2 (18:3) *the kings of the earth* commit immorality with Babylon
- 17:10 the seven heads of the beast *are seven kings*
- 17:11 *an eighth* arises who *is one of the seven kings*
- 17:12-14 *ten kings* receive authority with the beast for one hour, give their kingdom to the beast, and then destroy the harlot
- 17:18 the harlot Babylon reigns over the kings of the earth
- 18:9 the kings of the earth weep for the destroyed harlot Babylon
- 19:19 the kings of the earth assemble to make war against the Lamb

The Dragon whom we met in chapters 12 and 13 sends out an unclean spirit to gather the kings of the world to the war of the great day of God (16:13-14). He is bound at the beginning of chapter 20.

The Beast whom we met in 11:7 and 13:1-8 does the same (16:13-14). The "scarlet beast" of 17:3 is probably the same beast. The harlot Babylon rides upon him. He is one of the seven kings and an eighth (17:11). He leads the kings of the earth into battle against the Lamb (17:12, 17; 19:15). He is seized and thrown alive into the lake of fire (19:20).

The False Prophet sounds like a new character (16:13), but almost certainly corresponds to the second beast of Revelation 13:11-17 who leads the world in the worship of the beast. He performs signs and deceives those who receive the mark of the beast (19:20). He is seized and thrown alive into the lake of fire (19:20). The False Prophet, the Beast, and the Dragon form a sort of counterfeit trinity.

Demonic Spirits help the 'trinity' gather the kings for the war of the great day of God (16:13-14). They are also called *unclean spirits like frogs*, and Babylon is full of them (18:2).

The Birds *which fly in midheaven* are called to come have supper, eating the flesh of those who will die in the war (19:17-18).

People and Multitudes and Nations and Tongues are under the influence of the harlot Babylon (17:1, 15). Some of them are merchants, seamen, musicians, or craftsmen who prosper because of the harlot Babylon and greatly lament her destruction (18:3, 11-22). Their names are not written in the book of life (17:8), and they are amazed at the beast (17:8), receive the mark of the beast and worship him (19:20), and participate in the harlotry of Babylon (18:3). But some of them are severely mistreated through human trafficking (18:13). Their cities fall (16:19), great hailstones fall upon them (16:21), and many (or all) of them are destroyed when they join the armies to fight against the Lamb (19:18-21).

God is the driving force behind the events of this section. This is stated most clearly when the ten horns and beast turn against the harlot Babylon, and we are told that *God*

has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose (17:17). All of these things are fulfilling the words of God (17:17). We see God's involvement in many indirect statements such as the huge hailstones which came down from heaven (16:21), the loud voice out of the temple from the throne that says It is done (16:17), passive verbs such as receive authority in 17:12, the beast that goes to destruction (17:8, 11), and the great authority of the angel in 18:1. The coming war is the war of the great day of God, the Almighty (16:14). God remembered Babylon to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath (16:19), for her sins have piled up as high as heaven (18:5). He will give her the exact justice she deserves (18:6-8), for the Lord God who judges her is strong (18:8). God pronounces judgment for His people against Babylon (18:21). The saints and other heavenly beings all sing great praise to God, for He reigns (19:1-6).

Jesus speaks directly in 16:15, warning His people to stay prepared for *Behold, I am coming like a thief*. The harlot Babylon has martyred His witnesses (17:6). The beast and kings wage war against Him, but *He will overcome them because He is Lord of lords and King of kings (17:14)*. The marriage supper of the Lamb arrives in 19:7-9, and then Jesus is described extensively as He comes in glory in 19:11-16 to fight the great war. The beast and false prophet are seized and the rest are killed *with the sword which came from His mouth* as Jesus wins a decisive victory (19:19-21).

The Saints also appear many times in this section. This is especially significant since this is a section in which we might not expect the saints to appear, since the focus is on the defeat of the ungodly by the Lamb. Yet the saints are with Jesus in His triumphs as *the called and chosen and faithful (17:14)*. Before the final triumphs, they are *witnesses of Jesus* and the harlot Babylon martyrs so many of them that she is drunk with their blood (17:6). *In her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth (18:24)*. They must *come out and not participate* in the sins of the harlot Babylon (18:4-5), but must stay awake so that they will not be caught unprepared and be ashamed when Jesus comes (16:15). God will pronounce judgment for them against harlot Babylon, and they are even commanded to *rejoice over her* when she is destroyed (18:20). They are bond-servants who fear God, and when called to praise Him they respond with thunderous praise (19:5-6). They come prepared to the marriage of the Lamb, and may be part of the armies which come with Jesus when He returns (19:7-10, 14).

Jesus' Armies come with Him on white horses when He comes to the war of the great day of God (19:14). Though the beast and kings and their armies are ready to *make war* against the armies of Jesus, they are immediately defeated (19:19-21).

Introducing the Major Events

The order of the events in this list is not necessarily the order in which they will occur:

The Gathering of the Kings of the Whole World. This is specifically mentioned in 16:14, 16:16, and 19:19. It is not just the kings who come, but their armies (19:19). This is organized by Satan and his beast and his prophet, motivated through deceptive signs, and focused against

Jesus (16:13-14; 19:19; cf. 13:14). Yet it is aided by God and leads directly to His great day (16:12, 14).

The War of the Great Day of God (16:14). This war at Har-Magedon pits the armies of the beast against the armies of the Lamb. All except the dragon, beast, and false prophet will be *killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse* (19:21). We'll talk more about this war when we discuss the Old Testament background.

The Fall of Babylon the Great and the Cities of the Nations. This fall involves a storm and great earthquake; Babylon being split into three parts; great geophysical changes to the earth; great hailstones; plagues; torment; pestilence; famine; burning with fire (16:19-21; 17:16; 18:2, 5, 8, 15). *She will be thrown down with violence and will not be found any longer* (18:21). This occurs when God pours out His fierce wrath and remembers her iniquities on behalf of His people for *in her was found the blood of the martyrs* (16:19; 18:5, 20, 24; 19:2). *The Lord God who judges her is strong*, and God's people are to *rejoice over her* destruction because she deceived and corrupted the nations (18:8, 20, 24, 19:2). **The Destruction of Babylon by the Beast and Ten Kings** seems to also be a part of this, as 17:16 records that *these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire*.

Lamentation and Celebration Over the Fall of Babylon. A surprisingly long section of chapter 18 records the great sorrow of the earth-dwellers over Babylon's fall. Though they have been deceived by her, they weep for they can no longer get rich by her. While they weep, both the redeemed people and the other heavenly beings obey the command of 18:20 and loudly celebrate her demise (19:1-6). The four uses of the word "Hallelujah" in this section are the only uses of the word in the New Testament. *Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns*.

The Marriage of the Lamb (19:7-10). We will discuss this in the next guide.

The Coming of Christ (19:11-16).

The Seizure of the Beast, False Prophet, and Dragon. The beast and false prophet are *thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone* (19:21), and the dragon is bound with a great chain and thrown into the abyss for a thousand years (20:1-3).

Way to go! You've thought carefully about the places, people, and events of these chapters - now you're ready to put these things together. It would be best if you could now **read straight through from Revelation 16:12-19:21** again, as you did at the beginning of this guide.

Once you've done that, you've probably grasped the big picture of this section fairly well. Now the next section of the guide is quite difficult, but it deals with a question that is quite significant: who is the harlot Babylon? If you're not eager to dig through the details right now, skip to the conclusion.

The Big Interpretive Challenge

It would seem that this section is fairly easy to understand. The Satanic (dragon's) kingdom, described in chapter 13, is a sensuous and immoral kingdom that influences all the people, nations, and kings of the world, turning them against God. "Babylon" pictures that kingdom (or maybe specifically its capital) as a harlot who seduces others. Under the leadership of the beast, the nations gather together to war against God at Har-Magedon. Jesus comes, their cities are destroyed, their armies are destroyed, their leaders are seized, and Jesus wins. Harlot Babylon is gone. Simple enough.

But the section is not nearly that simple for one major reason (and a bunch of minor ones): the sixteenth verse of chapter seventeen. The harlot Babylon cannot be the same thing as the kingdom (or capital) of the dragon & beast, because she sits on the beast (17:3) and to our great surprise she is eventually hated and destroyed by the beast and kings (17:16). It makes very little sense for the beast to hate his own kingdom and destroy it, or to hate his own capital city and destroy it. The defeat of harlot Babylon in chapters 16-18 is not the same thing as the defeat of the dragon, beast, and their armies by Jesus in chapter 19. Jesus does not return and defeat harlot Babylon - she has already been defeated. And to complicate matters even more, keep in mind that when harlot Babylon falls, the cities of the nations fall too (16:19)! So who is the harlot Babylon, if she is not the kingdom of the dragon and beast; if she is destroyed by the beast and his kings; if the cities of the nations fall when she falls?

Here are some possibilities:

- The harlot is 1st century Jerusalem, and the kingdom of the beast is the Roman Empire who got along with the Jews for a while but then destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70. The strength of this view is that it explains 17:16 quite nicely, but it faces the nearly insurmountable problems noted above under the discussion of the place "Babylon." Could 1st century Jerusalem really be considered: a magnificent center of luxury (18:14-16); a global economic power with whom the merchants of the earth got rich (18:3); a sensuous influence who seduced the nations into immorality (18:3); a city whose demise would lead the kings of the earth to weep (18:9); and a city which reigns over the kings of the earth (17:18)? The cities of many other nations did not fall when Jerusalem fell in AD 70 (16:19).
- The harlot is not really any specific city or kingdom, but just symbolizes any worldly city or any center of wickedness in any age that allures people away from God. From this general perspective, many of the hard interpretive questions fade away. But if you take this perspective, you have to be quite creative as you interpret verses like 16:19 *The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell.* You also have to creatively explain the kings of 17:9-13 and the symbolism of 17:16 if the harlot is just any worldly system that draws people away from God. Why would the beast want to destroy that?
- The harlot is the seductive culture of the Satanic kingdom. 17:16 means that those who have been seduced by this culture will realize they have been fooled and will hate her, but it will be too late. Again this requires extremely creative symbolic interpretation of all of the details of this section.

- The harlot is the apostate one-world church, which the Antichrist turns upon and destroys when he sets up the worship of himself as the only religion (Daniel 11:36-37). This explains 17:16 fairly nicely, but nothing in this section directly connects harlot Babylon with religion, and it is very difficult to explain how harlot Babylon (as described in 18:9-24) can possibly be the one-world church.
- The harlot is the wicked culture of the Satanic kingdom, a combination of religious and economic forces. The beast and kings of the earth persuade the people of the earth to turn against her. They mourn when they realize they have destroyed the foundation of their economic security. This perspective creates as many problems as it solves: how do the people turn against their own culture - that's basically turning against themselves? Why do the leaders of the culture (the kings) persuade people to turn against their culture? And nothing in Revelation 17 speaks of the kings persuading their people to turn against something.

Maybe the connection of the harlot with the false religion of the apostate church is the best option, but no solution is problem-free. It seems that we can conclude that harlot Babylon:

1. is an integral part of the Satanic kingdom whose description we read about in chapter 13 (remember 14:8), yet
2. is distinct enough that she can be hated and destroyed by the beast and kings..

Therefore it seems that there will some sort of great internal conflict and self-destruction within the Satanic empire. It is very helpful to realize that this section of Revelation describes several different aspects of the fall of the Satanic empire. It happens through:

1. Physical judgments such as the earthquake, hailstones, pestilence, and famine.
2. Internal strife and self-destruction.
3. The defeat by Jesus at the war of the great day of God.

Old Testament Background

The Old Testament background in this section is almost overwhelmingly rich. Of course, that's true of Revelation in general! These Guides would be impossibly long if we included even a portion of the possible O.T. background for the entire book. But to give you a taste for the richness of Revelation's connection with the Old Testament, we'll list a number of the key passages that may relate to this section. As you'll see, the connections are fascinating, yet it's not always easy to see how those connections should affect our interpretation of Revelation.

As mentioned earlier, there are **references to the Euphrates as the eastern boundary of the land of Israel**: Genesis 15:18, Deuteronomy 1:7, 11:24, Joshua 1:4.

There are also several direct or indirect references to the area of **Megiddo**:

- This was the location of Deborah and Barak's victory in Judges 4-5.
- It was the site of Gideon's victory in Judges 7 (though the word Megiddo is not used, the places named are in that same area).
- It was the area in which Saul died (I Sam. 31:1 refers to Mt Gilboa, right by the plain of Megiddo).

- King Josiah died in battle there. II Chronicles 35:20-22 is especially interesting since Pharaoh apparently was near the Euphrates when Josiah first engaged him in a battle that ended up in the plain of Megiddo.
- During the time of Elijah, false prophets were slain at the river Kishon, which flowed through the middle of the valley of Megiddo (I Ki. 8:40).
- The mention of the plain of Megiddo in Zechariah 12:11 is especially interesting. See below.

There are comparisons and contrasts between **Israel and harlot Babylon**. Sinful Israel is frequently illustrated as an unfaithful woman (Ezekiel 16 and Hosea being chief examples). Jerusalem is called a great city, just as the harlot Babylon (Lam. 1:1, Jer. 22:8). She is told "you had a harlot's forehead," as Revelation 17:5 describes the forehead of the harlot Babylon (Jer. 3:3). The high priest also had a plate which hung at his forehead, engraved with "holy to the Lord," in contrast with the harlot Babylon's forehead (Ex 28:36-38).

Revelation 16:14, 16 and Revelation 19 certainly bring to mind **Psalm 2**.

The **judgment and destruction of Tyre**, prophesied in Isaiah 23 and Ezekiel 26-28, parallels in some ways the judgment and destruction of the Satanic kingdom in Revelation. Especially intriguing is the possible connection between Satan and the leader of Tyre - read Ezekiel 28. But there are many other parallels before that one: Isaiah 23 says that Tyre (described as a woman) was *the market of the nations* who will *be in anguish* at the news of her destruction. *Her merchants were princes, her traders were the honored of the earth. She will play the harlot with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth, but the Lord of hosts has planned to defile her.* Ezekiel says *I will bring up many nations against you.* Her music would be silenced (see Eze 26:13 and Rev. 18:22). *The princes of the sea will take up a lamentation over her.* She was beautifully adorned (for example, Eze. 27:6 with Rev. 18:16), and made the sea merchants wealthy. The description of her merchants (27:12-25) is much like the description in Revelation 18, and the end of Ezekiel 27 describes again their great lamentation over her.

Isaiah 63:1-6 promises that at the time when salvation comes to Zion (62:11), a majestic One who is *mighty to save* will have had His *day of vengeance* and *year of redemption*. He *trod down the peoples* and *made them drunk* with His wrath. His garments were stained with their blood, as He trampled them like grapes in a wine press (Rev. 14:17-20; 16:14; 18:6; 19:13).

Just as Isaiah prophesied of the day when salvation would come to Zion, so Ezekiel prophesied of the day when Israel would be restored physically to their own land and restored spiritually to their God (Ezekiel 36; 37:25-29) through the work of God's Spirit and the Messiah king (39:25, 37:24). In the midst of these prophecies, **Ezekiel 38-39** describes a great battle in the "latter years" pitting a ruler called "Gog" and his nation of "Magog" against renewed Israel. While Gog and Magog are mentioned specifically in the battle of Revelation 20:7-9 (which is discussed in a later section of the Guide), there are also several parallels between the battle of Ezekiel 38-39 and the "war of the great day of God" that we have been studying in Revelation 16-19. For example:

- God brings out the armies of Gog to the battle (38:4; Rev. 16:12, 17:17)

- The armies come from the north - remember that the Euphrates is both to the north and east of Israel (38:6; Rev. 16:12).
- God displays His holiness and vindicates Himself before the nations through their defeat (38:16, 23; Rev. 19:1-6).
- There will be a great earthquake (38:19; Rev. 16:18).
- The mountains will be thrown down (38:20; Rev. 16:20).
- There will be internal strife among Gog's armies (38:21), as we have suggested from Revelation 17:16.
- God will send hailstones of judgment (38:22; Rev. 16:21).
- The birds of prey will feast on the defeated army (39:4; Rev. 19:17-18) - they are summoned for this, just as in Revelation 19 (Eze. 39:17-20).

These parallels don't prove that the battle of Ezekiel 38-39 is the same battle as the one in Revelation 16-19 (especially since the specific mention of Gog & Magog is in Revelation 20). But the parallels are significant enough that the connection is at least possible if not likely.

Daniel's vision of the fourth great kingdom in **Daniel 7** has many parallels to this Satanic kingdom in this section of Revelation: ten horns, boasting, persecuting the saints, the triumph of God over that kingdom, and the enthronement of the Ancient of Days. I won't try to make all of the connections here, but you'll definitely want to read through Daniel 7 with this section of Revelation in mind. **Daniel 11:36-45** also tells of a great, blasphemous, wealthy ruler; division within his kingdom; and his ultimate destruction: this might be the beast of Rev. 16-19.

Joel also prophesied of the restoration of Israel and the destruction of their enemies in the *great and very awesome day of the Lord* (2:11) - which sounds like it may well be the same thing as the great day of God in Revelation 16:14. **Joel 2-3** parallels some of the other prophetic passages that we've looked at as it emphasizes the land, the physical restoration of the people of Israel, their spiritual restoration, and a great day of battle. God will *gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat* (we don't know of this location - Jehoshaphat means "Yahweh judges"). The nations and their armies will be roused up and prepared for war. *Let the nations be aroused and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations.* The twin images of wheat harvest and treading the winepress are used here again (as in Rev. 14:14-20). The avenging of the blood of the God's people is also clearly mentioned.

Through Zephaniah, God called His people to *Wait for Me, for the day when I rise up as a witness. Indeed, My decision is to gather nations, To assemble kingdoms, To pour out on them My indignation, All My burning anger; For all the earth will be devoured By the fire of My zeal (Zephaniah 3:8).*

Through Haggai God said *Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land.... I will overthrow the thrones of kingdoms and destroy the power of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariots and their riders, and the horses and their riders will go down, everyone by the sword of another (Haggai 2:6, 22).* The references to shaking, the sea, kingdoms and nations, and internal strife all bear resemblances to the other prophetic passages we've been considering.

Finally, **Zechariah 12-14** is a very important section of prophetic scripture that clearly underlies some of the message of Revelation. There are too many direct parallels for us to discuss here, but keep in mind that Zechariah 12:10 was essentially quoted in Revelation 1:7. We've spent a lot of time discussing Har-Magedon: Zechariah 12:11 is the only place in the Old Testament that specifically mentions the plain of Megiddo in respect to the end times events. Zechariah records that all the nations of the earth will gather against Jerusalem, but will be destroyed. The false prophets and unclean spirits will be destroyed (a fascinating connection with the false prophet and unclean spirits in Revelation 16 and 18; cf. I Kings 8:40). The Lord will return and stand on the Mount of Olives; He will be king over all the earth. Zechariah 14 even describes dramatic geophysical changes which might correspond to Revelation 16:20.

While that might be a little overwhelming, I hope it gives you some sense of the incredible depth and unity of Scripture. It also helps to illustrate very clearly that the message of Revelation is not new at all - it is anchored deeply in the promises God has been making for thousands of years.

These prophetic passages also show the role that Jerusalem and Israel will apparently play in the end time events. The section of Revelation that we are currently studying doesn't directly mention Israel at all, except for the allusion of the kings coming across the Euphrates from the East. There was a direct connection earlier in chapter 11 (the two witnesses and the beast in Jerusalem) and in chapter 7 (the 144,000 sealed from every tribe of Israel). So there is clearly a Jewish aspect to the end-time events. With that in mind, I think it might be helpful to avoid these two reactions:

1. Some feel uncomfortable with any literal future for Israel, and believe that the church has replaced Israel in the plan of God. From this perspective, the references to Israel in Revelation should be understood as referring to what they call the "true Israel," the church. The prophecies to Israel in the Old Testament will be spiritually fulfilled in the church. While this is possible, it is not the position that I'm taking in this guide. I believe that God is not yet done fulfilling His promises to the nation of Israel.
2. Some want to place Israel at the very center of end time events as if those events are all about them. But this goes beyond what the book of Revelation tells us about the global scope of the judgments and salvation in Revelation. We don't need to force Israel into every section of Revelation.

Revelation is about the end of the world, but as we've seen from these other prophetic passages in the Old Testament, Israel will play an important role. When Daniel, Zechariah, Ezekiel, and Revelation are considered together, it seems likely that the war of the great day of God takes place in and around Israel, including Jerusalem and the valley of Megiddo.

Conclusion and Applications

We've spent enough time looking at the trees! Time to back up and take another look at the forest. Go back to the beginning of this section of the guide, and skim quickly back over the people, places, and events. Then work on these suggested application questions:

1. Meditate on Revelation 16:15. Who is this verse spoken to? Why do you think it might be placed in the middle of Revelation 16? What is the blessing, and what is the warning?

2. Meditate on the connection between John 19:30 and Revelation 16:17. In what ways are the two "conclusions" parallel to one another?
3. In 16:21, men blaspheme God as they receive from Him exactly what they deserve. What does this teach us about our human nature?
4. What is the meaning of the three-fold description of those who are with the Lamb in 17:14?
5. What does Revelation 17:17 teach us about God?
6. What can you learn about yourself and your temptations from the harlot Babylon and her effect on the nations? What were the things the followers of the harlot live for?
7. How can you obey the commands of God in 18:4 and 18:20?
8. Make a list of the reasons why God is worthy of praise in 19:1-6.

In the next section of the guide will explore more fully the marriage of the Lamb and the description of the Word of God in chapter 19.