

# Sure Signs of Christ's Return – Session 1

## *An Introduction to Armageddon*

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### **A KEY PRINCIPLE: GOD RULES IN THE KINGDOM OF MEN**

One of the most important principles in the study of Bible prophecy is expressed in Daniel 4. It's part of a message conveyed by God to the king of Babylon.

#### **Daniel 4:17**

This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that **the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men**, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.

This simple principle is the lens through which all Bible prophecy has to be considered. Regardless of how it may seem to us, God is in complete and absolute control of world events. He has a specific purpose in mind for the earth and He has been working toward that purpose since the first day of creation. Through prophecy God provides us with evidence of His existence and the reliability of His word. Prophecy is a vital resource for developing the faith without which it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).

### **ARMAGEDDON: DEFINITION AND OVERVIEW**

The word "Armageddon" comes from a single passage in the very last book of the Bible, Revelation 16:16.

#### **Revelation 16:12-16**

12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. 13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to **the battle of that great day of God Almighty**. 15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. 16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

Although popular culture portrays Armageddon as the end of the world, we can see that the Bible doesn't portray it that way at all. Revelation 16:16 makes it clear that Armageddon is battle. We're also told that "Armageddon" is a Hebrew word. This is significant because

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Revelation, and the rest of the New Testament, was written in Greek. In Hebrew Armageddon is a compound word – a word made by joining other words.

### **Word Meaning**

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Arma: heap of heaves

Gai: valley

Don: judgment

So, “in the Hebrew tongue”, Armageddon conveys the idea of “a heap of sheaves in a valley for judgment”. Many prophecies in the Bible liken God’s judgment on the nations in the last days to gathering sheaves of wheat to be reaped and threshed. Reaping and threshing wheat is a Biblical metaphor used to describe God’s judgment on nations that oppose or rebel against him (e.g. Revelation 14:16, Micah 4:12-13, Joel 3:12-14, Daniel 2:35, Habakkuk 3:10, 12). Even though Revelation 16 doesn’t tell us much about the battle itself, the name Armageddon is telling us we can find out more by going back to the Old Testament (e.g. Joel 3, Zechariah 12-14 and Ezekiel 38-39).

We’ll start in Joel 3.

### **Joel 3:9-17**

9 Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: 10 Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. 11 Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD. 12 Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to **the valley of Jehoshaphat**: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. 13 Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. 14 **Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.** 15 The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. 16 The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. 17 So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.

Joel 3 is a good example of a passage that describes the context of Armageddon. Verses 1-3 describe the gathering of the nations to the Valley of Jehoshaphat for judgment at a time after Jerusalem is controlled by the Jews. The name “Jehoshaphat” means “Judgment of God”. So, “the valley of Jehoshaphat” can be understood as “the valley of God’s judgment” which is very

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similar to the meaning of Armageddon (i.e. “a heap of sheaves in a valley for judgment”). Notice the language of the harvest as well as the references to Zion and Jerusalem in verses 9-17. Also, in verse 14 the Hebrew word translated “decision” is a word also translated “threshing instrument” in Isaiah 28:27 and Amos 1:3.

Zechariah chapters 12 to 14 make up a single prophecy that deals with the coming “day of the LORD”. It is a time when God will be vindicated by the outpouring of certain necessary judgments. In the following 2 passages, note the repeated references to “Jerusalem” and “Judah” along with the recurring phrase “in that day”.

### **Zechariah 14:1-3**

1 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. 2 For **I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle**; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. 3 Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

### **Zechariah 12:1-10**

1 The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. 2 Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto **all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem**. 3 And **in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people**: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. 4 **In that day**, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness. 5 And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of hosts their God. 6 **In that day** will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. 7 The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah. 8 In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them. 9 And it shall come to pass **in that day**, that **I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem**. 10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

The context of these passages is clearly the land of Israel “in that day” when God’s judgments are poured out upon the nations gathered against Jerusalem for battle. As we stressed earlier,

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God rules in the Kingdom of Men. Notice how the prophecy of Zechariah 12 begins in verse 1. This stresses the authoritative nature of the message, and clearly indicates who is behind the events that are going to take place “in that day”.

## **Jerusalem: A Burdensome Stone**

Since Israel became a Jewish State in 1948 (in fulfillment of Bible prophecy, e.g. Ezekiel 37), the eyes of the nations have never strayed far from the city of Jerusalem. After the Jews seized control of the Old City on June 8, 1967, the attention of the world focused even more intensely on this ancient city.

So, from Revelation 16, Joel 3 and Zechariah 12 & 14 we learn the following about Armageddon.

- God is in control of the events that lead to Armageddon
- Nations will be gathered for war against Israel
- Jerusalem & Judah are controlled by Jews when Armageddon takes place
- It will be located close to Jerusalem
- Jerusalem will fall to the nations gathered against it
- God will intervene to deliver the Jews after they have suffered a terrible defeat

## **ARMAGEDDON: THE CAST OF CHARACTERS**

Ezekiel chapters 37 to 39 are another wonderful resource for information about Armageddon and the events leading up to it. A quick survey of Ezekiel 38 illustrates that it has the same basic features as passages we've already cited.

Revelation 16:16, Joel 3, Zechariah 12 &14	Ezekiel 38
God orchestrates the events.	Verse 4
Nations gathered for war against Israel.	Verses 8, 16-17
God intervenes to deliver Israel.	Verses 18-22

Ezekiel 38 verses 11-13 tell us that God uses the prosperity and wealth of Israel to lure the nations to attack and invade. In verse 13 we're also told that the international response will be weak. The nations that take issue with the invasion of Israel will only oppose it with words.

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We're introduced to the nations that make up the invading force in verses 1-3 and 5-6 of Ezekiel 38.

### **Ezekiel 38:1-3, 5-6**

1 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, 3 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal:

...

5 Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: 6 Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee.

We'll just mention a few relevant details about Gog. It is a title signifying something or someone lifted up, a prince or a leader in that sense. The word is used in the most literal sense to refer to a roof or a mountain (i.e. something above everything else around it).

The KJV translation of the Bible describes Gog as "chief prince of Meshech and Tubal" (Ezekiel 38:2 & 3) but the phrase "chief prince" can be better translated "prince of Rosh".

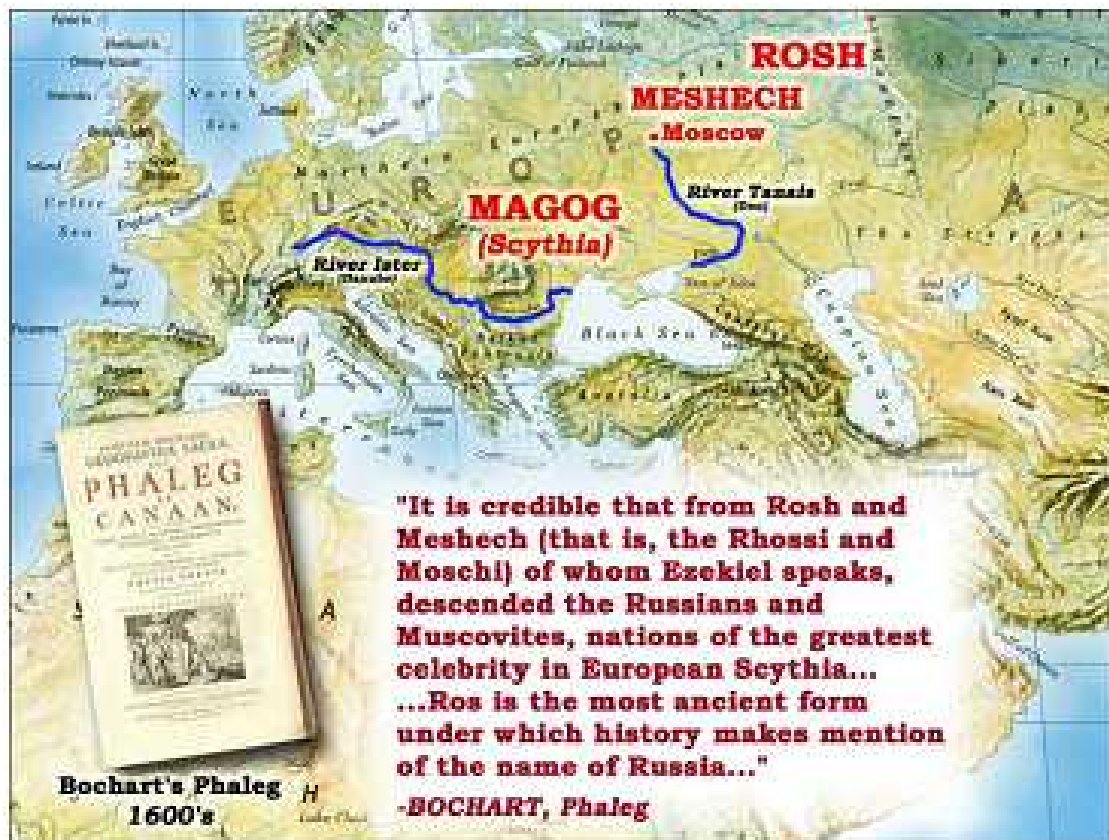
Here are a few examples from other modern translations:

- New American Standard Bible: "the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal..."
- New English Bible: "the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal..."
- Moffat's Translation: "the prince of Rosh and Meshech and Tubal..."
- The Amplified Bible: "the prince of Rosh, of Meshech, and Tubal..."
- Rotherham: "Prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal..."
- Septuagint: "Rhos, prince of Mesoch and Tubal..."

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This is what Lowth has to say about the word "Rosh" in his commentary on Ezekiel: "Rosh, taken as a proper name, signifies those inhabitants of Scythia, from whence the Russians derive their name and origin."



Ezekiel 38:15 tells us that Gog will be from the far north. The KJV simply says "out of the north parts" but compare that with some of the other modern and ancient translations shown below.

- RSV: "...come from your place out of the uttermost parts of the north, you and many peoples with you..."
- NIV: "...from your place in the far north..."
- NEB: "...from your home in the far recesses of the north..."
- Rotherham's: "...out of the remote parts of the North..."
- Septuagint: "...come out of thy place from the farthest north..."

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We're introduced to the nations that oppose this invasion politically in verse 13 Ezekiel 38.

### **Ezekiel 38:13**

13 Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?

We'll just mention a few relevant details about Tarshish. It can be identified in scripture and by history with Britain. Tarshish with her young lions corresponds to Britain and her former colonies and allies. Throughout the Bible, Tarshish is known as a "merchant" power. Tarshish is a Gentile nation, and there is strong evidence that the Tarshish of Scripture is Great Britain.

In Ezekiel 27:12, Tarshish was noted for tin. It says that Tarshish provided the Phoenicians (Tyre) with "silver, iron, tin and lead." The historian Cootes relays that "Bochart is of the opinion that the Phoenicians called the island (of England) by the name of Baratanac, i.e. 'The Land of Tin,' an appellation which the Greeks softened into Bratania, and whence arose the Roman Britannia." According to Psalm 72:10, Tarshish is a monarchy and Britain remains a monarchy today.



These details point specifically in the direction that the "merchants of Tarshish" occupied the area that Great Britain occupies today. At the right is a World War I enlistment poster, depicting Great Britain as an old lion appealing to its young lions for support.

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The map below illustrates a likely arrangement of the cast mentioned in Ezekiel 38 based on scripture and history.





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### **ARMAGEDDON: HOW CURRENT EVENTS MAY BE RELEVANT**

Ezekiel 38 gives a number of things to look for in current events and the future.

- Dictator dominating the Eurasian continent – vv. 2-3.
- A dependent Europe falling under Russia's political control – V.6.
- Territory west, north and east of Israel falling under Russian control – V.5-6.
- The West Bank (i.e. "the mountains of Israel") remaining part of Israel proper – V.8.
- Israel at peace internally and with near neighbors – V.8-11.
- Israel very prosperous and envied – V.12.
- Britain allied with former colonies (young lions) in opposition to Russian invasion – V.13.
- Arabian peninsula states (Sheba & Dedan) backing Britain – v. 13

Israel has a long history of rebelling against God's commands. God has brought punishment and judgment against them as a result of their disobedience. However, Ezekiel 39:23-29 (below) is speaking about a time after Armageddon when all the Jews are going to finally be re-gathered back to the Land of Israel. In verse 28 it says at the end, "but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there." God was not going to let any Jew stay in the lands where they were in captivity, but all of them will be brought back to the Promised Land. The striking thing we learn in verse 26 is that the shame and humility that is going to come upon the nation of Israel through the battle of Armageddon is due to their arrogance and trespasses. It will be at the worst level ever in their history. It is reached "when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid." This point is still future, since they have not yet reach a point in the land of Israel where the nation is dwelling in safety and none make them afraid. Much of the Arab world desires Israel to be destroyed and not exist as a nation. They do not recognize their right to exist and actively seek their destruction!

#### **Ezekiel 39:23-29**

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23 And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, **therefore hid I my face from them**, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword. 24 According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions have I done unto them, and **hid my face from them**. 25 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; 26 After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, **when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid**. 27 When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; 28 Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. 29 **Neither will I hide my face any more from them**: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.

The verses below from Ezekiel 38 show that the West Bank will be inhabited and controlled by the Jews. 90% of the mountains of Israel are in the West Bank. We're also told that they will be dwelling in the "midst of the land".

## **Ezekiel 38:8, 12**

8 After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against **the mountains of Israel**, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them.

...

12 To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, **that dwell in the midst of the land**.

