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(Revelation 16:12-16)

Intro. In this series I’ve been dealing with matters pertaining to the end times. Tonight, we are going to have a blood moon, when it will appear reddish due to an eclipse & because of its close proximity this time of year, it will appear 14% larger than normal. That got me to thinking about other signs of the end times. When you see a blood moon, you just might be in the end times. When IU football starts the season 4-0, you just might be in the end times. When Nick Saban loses consecutive games to Ole Miss, you just might be in the end times. When Christopher Evans gets on Facebook like he did this past weekend, you just might be in the end times. When Ryan Begue starts toning it down, you just might be in the end times. When the judgment of God falls on unbelieving nations & the crisis in the Middle East escalates, you just might be in the end times. As we continue in the series on “God’s Great Wrath” in Revelation 15-16, today we look at “Preparing for Armageddon” in 16:12-16.

Theme: God’s wrath/judgment

Background: The Apostle John provides the 3rd & final set of judgments

- There are some parallels between the 6th seal, 6th trumpet & 6th bowl—both the latter two mention the Euphrates & the 6th seal speaks of the “kings of the earth” while the 6th bowl speaks of the “kings of the whole world”
- The things we’ll be looking at in this passage are preparatory for the Battle of Armageddon, which we’ll look at even more closely next time.

Explanation of the Text:

1. **The 6th bowl is drought-like (16:12)**, for the Euphrates River (Sweetwater) dries up & the source of the Euphrates will also be stopped up
 - The Euphrates is mentioned in the first pages of Genesis & the last pages of Revelation—human history will come to an end where it began
 - God’s great redemptive acts in the OT often included drying up of water—the Red Sea in redeeming Israel (Exodus 14:21) & the Jordan River for entrance into Canaan (Joshua 3:14-17)
 - The purpose for drying up the Euphrates is to allow vast armies from the east (other passages also talk about the north) to enter by land & make their way to Israel (show pic of map)
 - With the Ataturk Dam, Turkey is now capable of cutting off the flow of the Euphrates to the rest of the Middle East
 - The “kings from the east” probably refer to Middle Eastern countries (currently Muslim nations), but could also include major nations like India, China, Indonesia & the like
2. **Satan masquerades as God, but he’s part of the unholy trinity (16:13-14)**—the dragon (Satan), beast (political leader, antichrist) & false prophet (religious leader)
 - The imagery of demons coming out of their mouths refers to verbal enticements & propaganda which will draw many people to their evil cause

Illus: Some people love Halloween because they get to masquerade as someone they want to be (even the cast members of the Phantom of the Opera sing a song with “Masquerade! Paper faces on parade, Masquerade! Hide your face, so the world will never find you!” The irony is they think they are rid of the masked phantom so they celebrate with a masked ball, only to discover he is alive & well)

- This unholy trinity is nothing but unclean spirits, demons—they are “like frogs,” which were unclean animals in the OT (Leviticus 11:10; see also the 2nd plague in Egypt, Exodus 8:1-15); may simply mean they hop around the world as they influence kings to gather for this great battle
- These demons perform signs—miracles signaling they are special, but they are deceptive & misleading, especially for the kings of the earth

3. **Jesus’ coming will catch unbelievers off-guard (16:15)**

- Jesus’s coming will be like a thief in the night—unbelievers will be caught unprepared

Illus: More than one scholar notes how the reference to staying alert & clothed referred to the overseer of the watchmen. If a watchman was ever caught sleeping during his watch, the overseer would beat him & burn his clothes & he would return home naked & ashamed for failing to do his job—believers are called to be alert so we won’t be ashamed, because we are clothed in Christ’s righteousness & purity; if not, you will be ashamed before Him

4. **Megiddo is the gathering place for the world's forces against the Lord's people (16:16)**

- The reference to Armageddon is a bit confusing. It literally seems to mean “mountain of Megiddo” (har megeddon) but scholars aren't certain.
- The valley or plains between the surrounding mountains is an area some 15 miles by 25 miles of flat farmland (also called the Plain of Esdraelon or the Valley of Jezreel)—show pics—Napoleon called it “the most natural battlefield of the whole earth”
- If so, it is one of history's most famous battlefields with some 200 battles fought in that vicinity, beginning with Tuthmosis III in 1468 BC, Lord Allenby in 1917 & the 6 Days War in 1967.
- In the Bible, Barak & Deborah defeated Sisera there (Judges 5:19), Gideon defeated the Midianites there (Judges 7), King Ahaziah was wounded in battle & died there (2 Kings 9:27), King Saul & his son Jonathan died at the end of those same plains at Gilboa (1 Samuel 31); King Josiah died there against Pharaoh Neco of Egypt (2 Kings 23:29-30)
- It may refer to the initial stage of the final war, where they gather before moving south against Jerusalem (14:20 speaks of bloodshed for 180 miles; 9:14-16 speak of a great army of 200 million)
- Related passages to these end times events include the following:
 - Psalm 2:1-3—kings of the earth against Yahweh & His anointed
 - Isaiah 13:9-13—God's wrath on the day of Yahweh
 - Isaiah 24:1-23—judgment of the whole earth
 - Daniel 11:40-45—attacks from both a king of the south & a king of the north, referring to the Antichrist
 - Joel 3:2-13—God will judge the nations outside Jerusalem
 - Zechariah 14:2-4—all the nations battle it out in Jerusalem but Yahweh will come & conquer
 - Matthew 24:27-31—signs preceding the Lord's return
- This will be a true “world war” but instead of fighting against each other, they will gather against the Lord & His people (cf. 17:14)—see also Revelation 14:14-20 (terrible bloodshed); 19:11-21 (battle won by Christ & His people are with Him)

Areas of Application:

1. Don't misread miracles (16:14)

- God sometimes performs miracles but so does Satan & he does it to deceive. Many charismatics get caught up in the miraculous but they never stop to ask the origin of the so-called miracle

2. Stay alert by being clothed in Christ's righteousness (16:15)

- One of the reasons I believe Christians will go through the Tribulation is because of verses like this—you don't need to write it to Christians if they will be raptured out 7 years ahead of this. And for those who say these are Christians who get saved during the Tribulation, then you have to teach multiple raptures so this final group of Christians doesn't get judged at the return of Christ (and the Bible doesn't teach multiple raptures)

Illus: Chuck Swindoll says, “Now you need a little reassurance here... please understand that these horrendous scenes should not give you a bit of fear or cause any dread; you will not go through this time on the earth. You and I will be lifted up and taken off the earth before the tribulation period sits in.... I am convinced that we will be taken off the earth and we will be with the Lord”—I don't believe you can give that kind of assurance

3. Don't masquerade in life (16:15)

- An occasional dress-up can be fun, but if dressing up & attending worship services each Sunday is part of your masquerade to the world while you fake your Christianity, then repent. You may hide behind your mask & think Satan is not ruling your life, but even if you fool us, God sees behind your mask & you will be exposed in the end

Conc. The greatest warning of this text is the coming of Christ like a thief. Don't put off surrendering to the Lord or He will come when you don't expect it. If you have trusted Him, share your hope with others, even if it is as simple as inviting them to church. According to a recent study done by LifeWay Research, only 2% of church members are actively involved in inviting others to church. 56% of the unchurched are willing to receive information about a local church from a friend or neighbor. 62% of the unchurched are not actively looking for a church but are open to the idea of attending church regularly. 82% of the unchurched are at least somewhat likely to attend church if invited. 70% of the unchurched in this study had never received an invitation to church in their whole lives. You have a small stack of invite cards in your bulletin today. Let's use them to invite others to hear the gospel & be among you, one of their friends. Let's do it before it's too late.