Session 13 Sixth Bowl: Deceiving the Nations to Come to Armageddon Rev. 16:12-16)

1. Sixth Bowl: Demons lure the nations to Armageddon
   1. Natural history does not end with superpowers blowing up the world with nuclear weapons. It ends with a battle between Jesus, as a Jewish king, fighting the Antichrist and the kings of the earth.

12The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. 13And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon [Satan], out of the mouth of the beast [Antichrist], and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14…they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth…to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty… 16They gathered them together to the place called…Armageddon. (Rev. 16:12-16)

* 1. The sixth bowl describes the nations being deceived by demons to come to Armageddon and war against Jesus. God’s judgment in the sixth bowl will cause the fullness of man’s rebellion and hostility against God to be openly manifest. Satan’s goal is to rally the resources of the nations to stand against Jesus, thus causing them all to be guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.
  2. Why would Satan prioritize gathering the nations to come to Israel, and why would the kings of the east mobilize their vast armies to wage a war there? They come to fight Jesus (Rev. 17:14; 19:19; Ps. 2:2). They will not be threatened by a small, poorly-armed Israeli army.

14These [the 10 kings] will make war with the Lamb. (Rev. 17:14)

19The kings of the earth and their armies gathered to make war against Him. (Rev. 19:19)

* 1. Jesus will be marching on the ground toward Jerusalem from Edom after the seventh trumpet (Isa. 63:1-6; Hab. 3:12). For them to go to war against Jesus requires that Jesus and His army be on the ground. The nations will aim their weapons against Jesus on the ground, not in the sky. They will come to fight Jesus, who they view as a false Messiah who has the power to destroy their food and water supply, as in the first five bowl judgments.
  2. Satan will come on the world stage to convince the kings that Jesus is a demonically empowered false messiah functioning as an “angel of light.” He will convince them that defeating Jesus is necessary and doable. He will attribute the power Jesus uses to release the bowls to demons, not God. They will view Jesus in a way similar to how we view the Antichrist. We know the Antichrist will have supernatural power, but we are sure that Jesus will defeat him.

14For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. (2 Cor. 11:14)

* 1. The kings will see Jesus’ supernatural sign in the sky just before the seventh trumpet (Mt. 24:30). They will wrongly interpret it as a demonic sign of a false messiah coming to trouble the earth.

30“The sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven…all the tribes of the earth will mourn…they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds…with power and great glory.” (Mt. 24:30)

1. global blasphemy against the Holy Spirit
   1. The Pharisees accused Jesus of doing miracles by demonic power instead of by the power of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 12:24). Jesus responded by teaching that to attribute the power of the Holy Spirit to the work of demons is to blaspheme against the Spirit. This is the only unforgivable sin. It is only done by those who are reprobate, or hardened to such a degree that they will not repent.

24The Pharisees…said, “This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons”…31“The blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men…32Whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him.” (Mt. 12:24, 31-32)

* 1. Blasphemy against the Spirit is a full and final rejection of the ministry of the Spirit (Mt. 12:31-32; Mk. 3:28-29; Lk. 12:10). It is the greatest evil that a person can do. Those who take the mark of the Beast will commit this unpardonable sin (Rev. 14:9-11). They will have no desire to repent. They will have a reprobate or debased mind with a seared conscience that makes a final determination to resist every impression of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 6:4-6; 1 Jn. 5:16).
  2. Paul prophesied that God would send a strong delusion to the nations in the end times so that many would embrace “the lie.” Part of this great lie will include the kings of the earth being deceived by demons working miracles in the sixth bowl, so that they gather at Armageddon to make war against Jesus.

7The mystery of lawlessness is already at work…8…the lawless one [Antichrist] will be revealed…9The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10and with all unrighteous deception among those who…did not receive the love of the truth…11…for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie. (2 Thes. 2:7-11)

* 1. Paul spoke about the mysterious power of sin (2 Thes. 2:7), which has been at work throughout history. Despite Jesus’ great demonstrations of power in coming in the clouds and marching up through the land releasing the first five bowls, many will choose the Antichrist over Jesus.

1Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 3forbidding to marry. (1 Tim. 4:1-3)

11“…many false prophets will rise up and deceive many…24For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.” (Mt. 24:11, 24)

* 1. The sixth bowl involves God giving over the nations to the full power of their wicked choices. God gives people over to increasingly greater evil if they continue in sin (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28).

26God gave them up to vile passions…28God gave them over to a debased mind. (Rom. 1:26-28)

* 1. Natural history will end with a global blasphemy of the Spirit just weeks before the Millennium. The Antichrist wants all the nations brought into this guilt by receiving “the lie” (2 Thes. 2:11). Sin will become ripe worldwide (Rev. 14:18; 17:4; 18:5). The righteous and the wicked mature together at the end of the age (Mt. 13: 29, 30). By understanding the sixth bowl, we see the necessity of the first five bowls. God wanted to wake up the nations before this great deception.

1. God will allow Demonic activity to be released
   1. The Lord will send a strong delusion to bring the deep rebellion of the nations against God to the surface. It will be manifest as they assemble to Jerusalem to fight against Jesus.
   2. Paul referred to the greatest deception in history as “the lie.” The sixth bowl is a terrifying judgment in allowing “the lie” to sweep away those who do not love the truth. It involves God giving over the nations to the full power of their wicked choices as they blaspheme the Spirit.
   3. A prototype of this is seen when God sent lying spirits to Ahab, the wicked king of Israel, to convince him to go to war against the king of Syria. False prophets deceived Ahab into believing that the Lord would give him victory. This battle was about 20 miles from Armageddon.

20The Lord said, “Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?”… 21Then a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord, and said, “I will persuade him…22I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.” And the Lord said, “You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.” (1 Kgs. 22:20-22)

* 1. A demonic spirit that lies is called “a spirit of lying.” God will allow lying spirits to operate in the mouths of Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet.
  2. Saul was oppressed by a demonic spirit that was sent to him by God’s decree, because he had continued in rebellion against God (1 Sam. 15:22-23).

14A distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him [Saul]… (1 Sam. 16:14)

* 1. Jesus compared the way a demon dwells in a man to the way demons work in a generation.

43“When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places…44Then he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came’…45Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation.” (Mt. 12:43-45)

1. all nations will come against Jerusalem
   1. The gathering of all nations at the end of the age to the battle of Jerusalem is a major theme in biblical prophecy. It is part of God’s plan to win Israel to Himself, cleanse the earth for Jesus’ 1,000-year reign, and warn against the rebellion at the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:7-9).
   2. In drawing all nations to Jerusalem, Jesus will give all the nations one final test in the last weeks, before He determines which ones will enter the Millennium (Mt. 25:31-32).
   3. Jesus will lure the wicked together into a divine trap so that He might display His power with such an impact that it will stay in the memory of the nations for the next thousand years.

17The Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.” (Rom. 9:17)

* 1. God, Satan, and evil men each participate in the gathering of nations to Armageddon. Satan continually plays the role of “God’s devil,” in that whatever he does, God brings about good. Satan’s schemes continually fall into the greater purpose of God’s ultimate plan.
  2. The Lord will gather the armies of all nations to Jerusalem (Zech. 12:3; 14:2; Joel 3:2; Zeph. 3:8). Jesus will gather the wicked to Armageddon, and the Church at the rapture.

2“For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem…” 3Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. (Zech. 14:2-3)

3“I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone…though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.” (Zech. 12:3)

* 1. Initially, the nations that will gather around Jerusalem will be the 10-nation confederation under the Antichrist. Then the kings of the earth, including the kings of the east, will join them (Zech. 12:2-3; 14:3; Joel 3:2, 12-14; Ps. 2:1-3; Rev. 16:14; 17:14; 19:19).
  2. God wants no nation to be neutral. He will gather all nations to make them declare what is in their hearts toward Jesus. Joel calls this the valley of decision (Joel 3:14). Each king, nation, and person must make a life or death decision. There will be no neutral ground. The Valley of Jehoshaphat is just outside Jerusalem, called the Valley of Berachah (2 Chr. 20:26, 16)

2“I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat [area of Jerusalem]; and I will enter into judgment with them there.” (Joel 3:2)

11Assemble and come, all you nations, and gather together…12Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations…14Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! (Joel 3:11-14)

* 1. Unclean spirits like frogs will come out of the mouths of Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet. They will entice the kings with their words, backed up by confirming miracles. This is the only time in Scripture when Satan acts openly on the world stage before all the nations.

13I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon [Satan], out of the mouth of the beast [Antichrist], and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth. (Rev. 16:13-14)

* 1. Demon spirits will deceive the top leaders of the earth with miracles (Mt. 24:24; Rev. 13:13-14; 2 Thes. 2:9-10). The nations will be accustomed to supernatural activity with many false christs (Mt. 24:5, 11). The Antichrist and the False Prophet will have been operating in great power, being healed from a fatal head wound, making his statue talk, and calling fire down from heaven.

9The coming of the lawless one [Antichrist] is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders. (2 Thes. 2:9)

* 1. Men will embrace the delusion because of their anger, envy (greed), and hatred (bitterness).

11“I will do according to your anger and according to the envy which you showed in your hatred against them; and I will make Myself known…when I judge you.” (Ezek. 35:11)

1. The Armageddon campaign
   1. The word *Armageddon* appears only once in the Bible (Rev. 16:16). It is the place God will gather the nations to go to war against Him. ***It will be the military staging area***. The word *Armageddon* comes from the Hebrew *Harmagedon,* or *Har Magedon,* which means the hill of Megiddo. The Hebrew *“har”* means “hill-country.” Thus, Har Magedon is the hill-country of Megiddo. Megiddo is a town in the valley of Jezreel (or Esdraelon) in northern Israel, about sixty miles north of Jerusalem. The valley is about fifteen miles wide and twenty miles long.
   2. The Armageddon campaign will continue for 3 ½ years before Jesus returns. It will end with the battle of Jerusalem (Zech. 12:3; 14:1-2). The armies of the earth will be stationed and deployed from the area of Armageddon. This great military conflict will extend from the north, down through Jerusalem, out into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and southward to Edom.
2. JESUS’ ESCHATOLOGICAL WINEPRESS

8“My determination is to gather the nations to My assembly of kingdoms, to pour on them…all My fierce anger; all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy.” (Zeph. 3:8)

* 1. For the first time in history, all the kings of the earth will be gathered in one area. The Gentile leaders of the nations will reject Jesus at His second coming to Jerusalem in the same spirit that the Jewish leaders did at His first coming to Jerusalem.
  2. Jesus will gather all the top leaders of the nations into a “geographical winepress.” Millions of soldiers will march to Jerusalem from the north, only to be hemmed into God’s “wine vat” by the Mediterranean Sea on the west, the desert on the east, and Jesus marching up from the south.
  3. Jesus treads the winepress of the fierceness of God’s wrath (Rev. 19:15, 21). The “wine” that runs through the streets will be their blood. It will actually stain Jesus’ robe (Isa. 63:1-6; 19:13).

1“Who is this who comes from Edom…traveling in the greatness of His strength…2Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress?” 3“I have trodden the winepress…I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes.” (Isa. 63:1-3)

* 1. When Jesus tramples these armies in His “winepress,” it will cause their blood to flow for almost two hundred miles. A winepress was traditionally associated with the celebration of the harvest.

19The angel…gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. 20…the winepress was trampled outside the city [Jerusalem], and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses’ bridles, for 1,600 furlongs [nearly 200 miles]. (Rev. 14:19-20)

* 1. Blood will flow for 1,600 furlongs, or nearly 200 miles (a furlong equals about one-eighth of a mile). This is the distance from Megiddo in the north to Jordan (Edom) in the south (Isa. 63:1-6). A horse’s bridle is about five feet from the ground. This will be possible because torrential rains (Ezek. 38:22) will mix with blood and run through the valleys in Israel’s hilly terrain.

1. the kings of the East in End-Time prophecy

12The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared…14…demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth…to gather them to the battle of that great day of God… (Rev. 16:12-14)

* 1. This passage is both negative and positive. It is negative in that the kings of the east will ultimately be deceived (just days before the Antichrist is defeated). It is positive because they will resist cooperating with the Antichrist for the years leading up to the rapture. For years, they will resist his financial seductions, refuse his miracles, and stand against his threats.
  2. The responses of the Asian coalition of kings to the Antichrist during the Tribulation will trouble him instead of bless him by cooperating (Dan. 11:44). Daniel 11:36-12:3 outlines the Antichrist’s activities in three sections: first, his religious attitudes (v. 36-39); second, his military activities (v. 40-45); and third, his defeat (12:1-3).

44“But news from the east and the north shall trouble him [Antichrist]; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many.” (Dan. 11:44)

* 1. God will dry the Euphrates River as a judgment on wicked kings in the Asian coalition. It will embolden them to gather to Armageddon. This “confirming miracle” will be what convinces them. What message will they receive in seeing this miracle? God dried the Jordan River when Israel entered the promised land (Josh. 3:13-17). The Antichrist may prophesy its drying and then claim it as his miracle as the proof of his ability to defeat Jesus.
  2. Isaiah prophesied that God would dry up the Euphrates so men could cross over it on dry ground.

15“…with His mighty wind He will shake His fist over the River [Euphrates], and strike it in the seven streams, and make men [Asian armies] cross over dry-shod.” (Isa. 11:15)

1. Jesus will come as a thief: beware that you do not suffer loss

15“Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.” (Rev. 16:15)

* 1. Jesus suddenly interrupts the description of the sixth bowl to interject a blessing with a warning. Many translations (NASB, RSV) put this verse in a parenthesis. It is not meant to be understood as a part of the events that unfold during the sixth bowl. It is an urgent warning to believers before the Tribulation to be prepared so that they are not progressively swept away by deception.
  2. Jesus is not a thief, but His coming is ***“like a thief”*** in its effect on people who are not prepared (Mt. 24:43; Lk. 12:39; 1 Thes. 5:2, 4; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3; 16:14-15). There are two important truths related to the metaphor of Jesus coming like a thief. First, His coming will result in people ***suffering unnecessary loss***. This is the primary warning. Second, His coming is ***unexpected*** and sudden. Thieves effectively work when their victims are not expecting them. The “***thief effect***” occurs because of increasing compromise. Coming as a thief is a proverbial expression.