

NOT YOUR DAD'S END TIMES STUDY

Session 11 - Revelation 19-20

As mentioned in the introductory session, Revelation is in many ways like a movie when it comes to the flow of the narrative and way the action builds and is shown from different perspectives. Now we finally come to the climax of the story of human history - the long-awaited second coming of Christ, His millennial kingdom and the great judgment. This climax is chapters 19 & 20. Next session will be the conclusion, the final wrap up of the final question which is seen in chapters 21 & 22. Remember, Revelation from chapters 4-22 deal with answering questions Christians have concerning the end of history and the beginning of eternity. Tonight the main question will be, "What is going to happen to Satan, the antichrist, the false prophet and those who followed them?"

We ended the last session with Babylon, the great harlot city of Satan, being destroyed by the bowl judgments. Her loss was mourned by the whole world (as the whole world at this point will be under the rule of the antichrist) but the mourning was particularly harsh by those who depended upon Babylon for their livelihood. While the devil worshipping world lamented the loss of Babylon, the angels and servants of God rejoiced at her demise as it showed God's judgment hitting home for her great wickedness. This session begins with a continuation of praise for the Lord which began in 18:20.

I. The four-fold hallelujah. [Read Revelation 19:1-6]

A. Hallelujah means "Praise the Lord!" It is a word that denotes worship of the Lord with great rejoicing. Due to God's decisive destruction of Babylon, He is to be worshiped.

Q: Who is the first group who sings praise to God? (*vv. 1-2 - The first group singing praise to God is a great multitude.*)

Q: Why are they singing praises to God? (*v.2 - They are praising God due to the destruction of the great harlot. Their song is similar to the song of Moses in Exodus 15 after the destruction of Egypt at the Red Sea. God not only granted deliverance but also justice, through the same act. This shows how much God cares for His people. He is not indifferent to injustice, tyranny, idolatry and suffering. Many will ask where God is in times of injustice and oppression and this is the answer. He cares for all people as He is in a special relationship with those who are His children, this is the time and place for their vindication.*)

1. The second and third hallelujah come in vv.3-4 when the same group is shouting praises to God as they see the smoke rising up from Babylon because its destruction is permanent. She will never be rebuilt. The anti-God systems of this world have been torn down by God's judgment forever.

Q: Who joins this great multitude in praise of God in v.4? - (*There is an echo of "Amen! Hallelujah!" from the 24 elders and 4 living creatures. The angels who have been watching curiously how human history will unfold and have been doing God's bidding faithfully, are now watching all God has in His heart unfold before them. The hosts of heaven praise God, just as redeemed mankind does. EXCURSUS: As humans, we have myriad upon myriad reasons to*

praise God. We are those who experienced the oppression, persecution and hardships of this life and faced them by faith and experienced the grace of God in all of them. We know the highs and lows of life. The angels on the other hand, do not know of grace personally. They have not lived by faith but rather by sight and have seen God. They have witnessed so much of His activity and been a part in His will being carried out so both groups will have reason to praise God on that day - as reported here in this passage.)

2. Then there is a call from the throne of God - the symbolic representation of God's rule and authority. The throne is declaring that all the servants of God should praise Him - not just the angels and martyrs but also every single servant of God's great and small.

Q: What are two sounds mentioned in the last hallelujah in v.6? *(The sound of many waters and the sound of mighty thunder.)*

Q: What does the sound of thunder represent in Revelation? *(the presence of God)*

4. The last hallelujah blasts from the great multitude obeying the voice of the throne by praising God loudly as the Almighty and declare His reign. *(V. 6 is where Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" is taken from. When I graduated seminary, the church where the ceremony was held was a several thousand seat sanctuary. There were so many graduates and families that many guests were seated in other parts of the church building and watched via closed circuit TV. When we sang some of the great hymns, you could feel the floor vibrate and the singing was like thunder. Just last week, our family went to see Niagra Falls. It was a humbling experience to hear the power of that water roaring down the falls. You had to yell to be heard over it. This verse describes a joyous praise similar but much stronger than those examples from my personal history. This will be an all-consuming worship experience which will not be given by faith but in sight of God Himself.)*

The Messianic Age, when Christ will reign with His people on the earth. That time is about to begin. **[Read Revelation 19:7-10]**

1. These few verses are only the wedding announcement - not the actual event. Though the event is in future time, it is presented in past tense because it is certain that it will come to pass. (The event actually occurs in the next verse - v.11)

Q: Who is the bride of Christ? **[Read Revelation 21:1-2]** *(It is the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is made up of the community of faith in Christ, all the redeemed throughout all history both Jew and Gentile.)*

a. The key element is that the betrothal is over. God's enemies on earth are wiped out and defeated in a way that they won't be coming back to power. The engagement ends with the bride being given new, special garments for the wedding.

Q: What are the new garments given to the bride of Christ? *(v.8 - They are fine linen, white and clean. This is given in stark contrast to the harlot's clothing in chapter 17. This completes the contrast between the world under the antichrist's dominion and the saints under Christ's dominion. These garments are said to be the righteous deeds of the saints.)*

b. While many argue over the nature of the Millennial kingdom of Christ, many of the arguments fade when one understands God's purpose for the Millennial kingdom. In brief, the purpose is for Christ to set the enemies of God under His feet. It's also a time to demonstrate the stark contrast between the time of sinful human rule over creation and the rule of God over His creation. It will be time when Christ will set things under His dominion.

c. **[Read I Corinthians 15:24-26]** - This is one of our clear passages that describes the reason behind the millennial kingdom. Christ reigns until He puts every conquers every enemy of God. Thus the consummation of His bride begins just after His return and defeat of the worldly forces opposed to Him. The believers who reign with Him during the Millennium will also be working with Christ to make this happen.

3. However, even at this time, the danger of idolatry is still alive and well.

Q: What does John do after receiving this message from the angel? (*v.10 - He attempted to worship the angel. Angel worship was huge in the days of John (as it is in some places in the world today). No matter how great the temptation to worship someone or something other than God, it must be resisted by guarding one's heart. The testimony of Jesus (what He said and did) is at the heart of His Word (remembering the prophecy is primarily forth-telling not foretelling).*)

II. Christ returns as the warrior-king [Read Revelation 19:11-21]

A. Here we find ourselves at the very end of human history. This is the account of what every beleaguered saint has longed to see since persecution of the saints began.

Q: What did John see once heaven opened up? (*v.11 - John saw heaven opened up and saw white horse with Christ on it.*)

Q: What does white represent in Revelation? (*Associated with Christ, righteous*)

Q: What are the descriptions of Christ given in this passage? (*Faithful and True, righteously judges and wages war, eyes of a flame of fire, head wears many crowns, name written on that no one knows but Himself, clothed in robe dipped in blood, called Word of God*)

a. The description of Christ is a new description. It's a military description in line with the warrior-king prophecies of the Messiah in the Old Testament. However, what follows isn't so much a military warrior battling earthly rulers. Rather, the Messiah engages in warfare that is more an execution of divine justice than a military conflict. He who is faithful and true will judge the rebellious nations.

b. The blazing eyes represent the all-knowing and pure nature of Christ. He wears many crowns - not seven or ten but many. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. There is no sovereignty that can compare to His.

c. In ancient times, if a person knew the name of a god, it gave that person access to that god's power and authority. The names revealed here are: "Word of God" and "King of Kings and Lord of Lords". Yet, there is more to Christ than what has been previously revealed to mankind. At this time, He will share these names with His followers. While on earth the first

time, Jesus was the faithful Word of God but now He is seen as the full expression of God's Word.

d. The blood on His robe is His own. In Revelation, if blood is associated with Christ, it is always His own blood - given for the salvation of mankind. This reference ties it back to Rev. 7:14 and forward to Rev. 22:14 where the believers' garments are washed in this blood.

e. There is a parenthesis in v.14 that describes those who come to earth with Christ.

Q: Who returns to earth with Christ? **[Read Revelation 17:14]** *(There are several places in the New Testament where angels are described as coming to earth with Christ when He comes. Yet there are more than angels returning with Him. In this case it would go with Rev. 17:14. It seems most likely that it is both angels and saints returning with Christ. By remembering one of our clear passages, we understand that it will be saints and angels returning with Christ)* **[Read I Thessalonians 4:14]**.

f. The Messiah then fulfills three Old Testament prophecies concerning Himself: He strikes down the nations (Is. 11:3), He rules them with a rod of iron (Ps. 2:9) and He tramples out the winepress of God's wrath (Is. 63:1-6). This is why these descriptions appear in this passage - for fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the Messiah.

Q: What does a sword represent in Revelation? *(God's justice)*

As the sword is coming from Christ's mouth, it symbolizes that He metes out justice upon the world and conquers with His Word. This is a direct link to II Thessalonians 2:8. Though it appears from looking at the description of Christ that a huge battle is about to take place but it isn't.

2. After the description of the victorious Christ, an angel cries out to the birds to come and dine on the carcasses of those about to be killed by Christ's second coming. This is a reference to Ezekiel 39:17 where it describes the overthrow of the great anti-God kingdom of Gog. The key in interpretation here is not in the literalness of the language, though this could certainly happen, but rather in what it signifies. Those who die in battle may die with some degree of nobility or honor but to die in battle and have one's body desecrated by being eaten is a sign of total defeat and dishonor. In I Samuel 17 we are told of the account of David fighting Goliath. Just before the actual confrontation, when Goliath saw David, he began to taunt him and threaten David that he would "feed his body to the birds and wild animals". David turned this taunt around and told Goliath, it would be his body that would be eaten by birds and wild animals. This is an ancient taunt of a dishonorable, ignoble death as there won't be enough of the losing force to bury their own dead. As we know from Revelation chapters 13-18, the number of those who oppose Christ will be staggeringly huge. So Revelation 19:20-21 is another perspective of Armageddon from Revelation 16:16. Here we see the physical, earthly perspective whereas in Revelation 16 it was the spiritual view of the "battle".

Q: Who gets thrown into hell directly? *(v.20 - the beast (antichrist) and his false prophet)*

Q: How do the rest of those who are opposing Christ get killed? *(v.21 - by the sword of Christ's mouth - this is the Word of God. God said this would happen and by the very power of God's*

Word, which declares His will, this event is happening.)

3. At last we come to the official end of the antichrist's reign as he and his false prophet are thrown directly into hell. So between these two leaders of fallen mankind being tossed into hell and the rest of the beast's unrepentant leadership structure and hierarchy killed by the Word of God, there isn't much of a battle. Christ executes immediate judgment upon Satan's representatives in the world. As swiftly as the antichrist's rule is ended, the era of righteousness is established by Christ.

Note that a huge chunk of humanity is not killed at Christ's return. Only those who were actively waging war ("the rest" of v.21) who are killed upon His return. The rest are spared to live into the Millennial kingdom, though not ruling as the believers will be. We know that not everyone killed by Christ in that there are nations that are mentioned in the following chapters that don't know Christ and are still on earth.

IV. The binding of Satan and the Millennial Kingdom [Read Revelation 20: 1-3]

A. In chapter 12 we saw Satan cast out of heaven and then thrown down and ravaged the earth.

Q: Where do we see Satan cast in this passage? (*vv. 2-3 - Now we see the devil being cast from earth into the abyss. While we would love to see the devil thrown directly into hell along with the other two-thirds of his unholy trinity, that doesn't happen yet. God has one more purpose for him. At the end of the millennial reign of Christ, the devil is freed to deceive the nations into rebelling against Christ's rule.*)

1. The 1,000 years should not be taken as literal. Though it could turn out to be 1,000 years, it is better taken as 10 (the complete number) cubed (multiplied by itself three times) to show utter completeness of God's plan.

2. The world will enjoy the freedom from Satan and evil for this time under the reign of Christ. Yet, the fact that the devil will be released and deceive many (as we'll see) shows that even in the heart of man are the seeds of sin and rebellion and self-rule. The devil's goal is to foster those seeds to grow.

3. The abyss, as we've seen is the holding place for demons.

B. The millennial kingdom is the time Christ will physically rule over the earth. **[Read Revelation 20:4-6]**

1. The key to understanding this section is to understand the "first resurrection" and the "second death".

a. John mentions the first resurrection directly but not the second. It is only implied that if one is called the first, then a second will follow. The main question is "who gets resurrected in the first resurrection?"

Q: Who gets resurrected in this "first resurrection"? (*Explicitly we are told in v.4 that the martyrs that died during the Great Tribulation will certainly be there. However, is that everyone? If you look at a few of the clear passages we studied earlier, it may indicate that there will be more present than just the martyrs. (I Thessalonians 4:16 for instance) indicates that all the dead in Christ will return to participate in Christ's millennial kingdom. When Christ returns we are told that all those who are dead in Christ will be caught up with Him in the sky (I*

Corinthians 15:50-54). As our (those who are redeemed) spirits are already seated in heaven (Ephesians 2:6) it is our spirits who descend from heaven with the Lord and are re-united with our new glorified bodies which we receive upon Jesus' return.

2) So, it makes more sense to see this as the rapture where all believers who are dead in the Lord and the precious few still alive on the earth at this point in history will be caught up in the sky with Jesus only to return and then reign with Him during His millennial reign. Revelation is written this way in order to assure those who are facing death during the Great Tribulation that they will not remain dead long and that they will rise when Christ returns. This is why the martyrs are the only ones discussed in the passage about the Millennial kingdom, they took the brunt of the persecution from the antichrist and so they need the most reassurance here. It just doesn't preclude that the rest of the redeemed will be with them as seen in the clear passages.

b. Next we need to understand what is the second death?

1) Those who are not part of the first resurrection are the lost, wicked dead. They will not take part in the millennial kingdom at all. This is called the second death because these have already died once physically at the return of Christ but in the future they will be subjected to eternal death in hell. However, they will be raised after the millennial reign of Christ to face final judgement by God.

2) The good news is that those who take part in the first resurrection will not take part in the second death. Those who miss out on the first resurrection will suffer the second death and spend eternity in the lake of fire at the final judgment.

c. The saints who are reigning with Christ during His millennial reign will be priests during this time. We will be ministering to God and mankind during this time. This is the only passage in Scripture that speaks of the millennial kingdom in such a clear fashion.

C. The release and final demise of Satan. **[Read Revelation 20: 7-10]**

1. Despite Christ ruling on the world physically for a fairly long time, the devil will be released one last time to deceive the nations in an attempt to overthrow Christ.

2. The word "nations" in Revelation is used to symbolize the lost of the world, those who don't know Christ personally.

3. The city of God or the beloved city are the community of faith, the Christians who have been reigning with Him during the millennium.

4. The references to Gog and Magog are from Ezekiel 38-39. They represent nations of this world banding together for some final assault upon God and His people. This follows the pattern set foretold by Ezekiel that there would be a time of restoration for God's people followed by an assault upon God's people after the restoration.

Q: What is the source of rebellion against God? *(This shows that the source of rebellion against God isn't Satan, as he's been in the abyss during the earthly reign of Christ. Rather, the source of evil is in the hearts of unregenerate mankind. People still need God and His salvation to overcome sin and their own flesh. One of the lessons of the Millennial kingdom is that man will see just how deep the roots of sin go and just how marvelous and powerful God's grace and forgiveness extend.)*

5. Like the last so-called battle, this isn't one either. The forces of evil descend upon the children of God and God sends down fire from heaven, like with Elijah, and kills all those opposed to Himself. This is swift final judgment. This is the final act of Satan as God is done with him now and casts him into the lake of fire where he will be tormented all day every day for all eternity.

[I Corinthians 15:20-28] - This was one of our clear passages. It explains some of the reason for the Millennial kingdom as to subject everything to Christ.

Q: What is the last enemy Christ will abolish (*v.26 - death*)

Notice back in Revelation 20:7-10, Satan is thrown into hell once and for all. Immediately after that, the Great White Throne Judgment begins, where death and Hades are thrown into hell (v. 14) Thus this is linked with the passage in I Corinthians 15 we just read. The Millennial Kingdom ends with the final judgment.

D. The final judgment of mankind **[Read Revelation 20:11-15]**

1. The imagery of v.11 is that the world is fading away. (This is spoken of in several of our clear passages and alluded to in other Revelation passages: II Peter 3:10, Revelation 6:14, 16:19).

Q: What will be the only sight to be seen on Judgment Day? (*Only God and the things that relate to God's nature will remain. The only reality we see is God sitting on His Great White Throne in judgment of mankind. At this point His sovereignty is seen by all and will be completely unchallenged.*)

2. The dead are pictured as standing before the throne of God and the books are opened. Yet, there is another book that is also opened - the book of life.

a. The dead were judged according to their works which are written in the books (the first ones opened). Works are unmistakable evidence of where the loyalty of one's heart lies. They express either belief or unbelief. Was one's heart with Christ or the devil in this life? Since His eyes are a flame of fire, God knows the motives of every action ever taken by everyone.

Q: How many scales or sets of scales are depicted in this passage? (*Zero - Final judgment is not a balancing act here. While works can show loyalty of heart, if a person's name is not found in the book of life, he is cast into hell for eternity. Only those who know the Lamb and are known by the Lamb will spend eternity with Him. This passage deals away the notion that God will put our good works on a scale and balance them with our bad works and if we have more good than bad, then we go to heaven with Him. This also does away with universalism. God's mercy is beyond comparison but it isn't limitless in this sense. There will be a day of reckoning in which every soul must be laid bare before the truth of God's throne and if one is not found in the book of life, he is cast into hell - which is the second death.*)

b. So notice what we are told and aren't told here. In this chapter we are told what happens to the lost and wicked and rebellious. Their fate is described in v.15 - it is hell for all time.

Q: There is one big question left to answer. What is that question to wrap up all of human existence and eternity? *(What happens to the saved? What is the fate of those who's names are written in the book of life? That's the subject for the last two chapters.)*

Q: Do you have any questions, comments, rebukes or rebuttals?