

**REV. 19 FINALLY, THE COMING OF CHRIST!**

It's wonderful to begin Revelation 19 after all the terrible events we have gone over in the previous three chapters (chap. 16-18). We finally arrive at the joyous Second Coming of Christ!

John writes, "*After these things* I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, 'Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! For *true and righteous are His judgments*, because *He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication*; and He has avenged on her *the blood of His servants* shed by her.' Again they said, 'Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!' And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, 'Amen! Alleluia!' Then a voice came from the throne, saying, 'Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!'" (Rev. 19:1-5).

Remember that chapter 17 had described the *destruction* of the religious and commercial system called "Babylon." After John saw its collapse in the vision, he hears the sound of a great multitude of angels in heaven rejoicing because God's righteous judgment has finally come upon Babylon.

As G. E. Ladd notes, "The first paragraph of chapter 19 continues the celebration of the fall of Babylon and consists of a song of thanksgiving in heaven that God has judged the great harlot. After this thanksgiving, John depicts the events of *the consummation*: the marriage of the Lamb, the coming of Christ, His Messianic reign, the [removal] of Satan and of death, and the coming of the new creation [the New Jerusalem]...So long as Babylon stands, the kingdom of God *cannot be established*, for her corrupting influence affects the whole earth, but her *removal* makes way for the coming of God's kingdom" (pp. 244-245). This is *before* Christ comes.

So there is a host of angels praising God for His long-awaited judgment against Babylon. Four times the Hebrew term "Alleluia" is in this section, which means "Praise Yahweh." These are *the only times* the term is found in the New Testament--although it is frequent in the Old Testament. It also mentions God's judgments are just and righteous. Mounce points out, "The outburst of praise rests upon the fact that the judgments of God—specifically, his judgment of the great harlot—are both true and just.

That God's actions are 'true' indicates that they are valid. The punishment that the prostitute Rome has received is precisely what she deserved. It is also 'just,' that is, absolutely fair. The same two attributes are ascribed to God by the victors in chap. 15:3 and by the voice of the altar in chap. 16:7" (p. 342).

John continues, "And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, 'Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the *marriage of the Lamb* has come, and *His wife* has made herself ready.' And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is *the righteous acts of the saints*. Then he said to me, 'Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to *the marriage supper of the Lamb*!' And he said to me, 'These are the true sayings of God.' And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, 'See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy'" (Rev. 19:6-10).

Notice the translators use the term "reigns" as if it *already had occurred* but that is inaccurate. As Ladd brings out, "The Gk. verb is...an inceptive aorist, emphasizing the *initiation* of an action. The NEB version correctly renders it, 'The Lord our God...has *entered* on his reign!' At this point in Revelation, the reign of God has in fact *not yet been fully established*; it awaits *the return of Christ*, the chaining of Satan, and the inauguration of Christ's Messianic reign—all events yet to be described" (p. 246).

So now comes the time for Christ to return to the earth and celebrate the marriage supper with the Bride--a much anticipated event (see Hosea 2:19-20). It is also vital to remember that in John's day, marriages were carried out *in two necessary stages*.

As Mounce explains, "In biblical times a marriage involved *two major events*, the *betrothal* and the *wedding*. These were normally separated by a period of time during which the two individuals were considered *husband and wife* and as such were under obligations of faithfulness. The wedding began with a procession to the bride's house, which was followed by a return to the house of the groom for the marriage feast" (p. 347).

So it's vital to grasp *we are already "betrothed"* to Christ, *the first stage* of the New Covenant with Him, but this marriage has not been consummated. Mary, for instance, had been *betrothed* to Joseph and they were technically "husband and wife"--but not yet living together (Mt. 1:18-19). That is why we can be "betrothed" and still "ruin it" and not marry Christ.

Paul mentions, "For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For *I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ [at that time]*" (2 Cor. 11:2). He also pictures this betrothal relationship of Christ and the bride in Eph. 5:25-32 where Christ presents *the Church to Himself* (not with God the Father yet in the picture with glorified people). Ladd adds, "The Messianic consummation is pictured not only as a marriage supper but as *a joyous banquet*. Jesus said that many would come from east and west and sit at the table with the patriarchs in the kingdom of God (Mt. 8:11). He told his disciples at the Last Supper he would not drink [of the wine] until he should drink it with them in the kingdom of God (Mt. 26:29)" (p. 250).

The Old Testament also depicts the coming of the Messiah and a great feast to take place on Mt. Zion. Isaiah writes, "It shall come to pass *in that day that the Lord will punish on high the host of exalted ones, and on the earth the kings of the earth...Then the moon will be disgraced and the sun ashamed; for the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem...And in this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all people a feast of choice pieces, a feast of wines on the lees...And He will destroy on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the veil [of deceit] that is spread over all nations*" (Is. 24:21-23; 25:6-7).

So we have the following picture of the Wedding Feast of the Lamb and the Bride. Jesus comes back as the Lamb to *establish* His kingdom and to *live and reign* with His Bride--the Church. He *resurrects* the dead who are asleep in Christ and those alive in Christ (1 Thes. 4:13-18) who comprise those of *the First Resurrection*. They will *rise*, adorned in white clothes, to *meet Him* in the air as He descends with His angels. Then, as the Groom, He brings her (the Bride) *back to the earth* to their new home, which is *the kingdom of God*. They will rejoice on Mt. Zion and there will be a *great wedding feast* with all the saints who have ever lived until that time. Notice *nowhere*

is it mentioned *Christ takes them to heaven first* and has the wedding feast there—a vital event left out *if it were true*! It would contradict the *chronology* and sequence of Christ's return as found in Zec. 14:1-16; Mt. 24:30-31; Lk. 13:28-29; Acts 1:11; 1 Thes. 4:13-18. Besides, if Jesus returns, gathers the elect and *goes to heaven* to have a wedding feast, when He comes back to the earth, it would be a *third return* and not *the Second Coming*, invalidating Heb. 9:28, "He will appear a *second time*" and Rev. 1:7, "Every eye will see Him..." So there is *no place* in the Bible where Christ is described as *first taking the saints to heaven*, and thus, by this logic, *it is a false teaching*.

As Ladd explains, "Jesus used *the metaphor of a wedding feast* to describe *the eschatological coming of the Kingdom* (Mt. 22:1-14)...Again, Jesus likened the uncertain hour of *the coming of the bridegroom* to the unknown hour of *the coming of the kingdom of God* (Mt. 25:1-13). In this parable...the five wise maidens who found *entrance into the wedding feast* represent *followers of Jesus who are ready and awake for His coming*, while the five foolish ones represent *those who claim admission but are unprepared*...It is this [end time] event—the *perfect union of Christ and His Church*—which John announced under the metaphor of the marriage of the Lamb...it is a metaphorical way of alluding to *the final redemptive fact* when 'the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them (Rev. 21:3). This is why John can apply *the same metaphor of the bride prepared for her husband to the New Jerusalem* which comes down from heaven to dwell among men, and *why the angel can refer to the New Jerusalem as 'the bride, the wife of the Lamb'* (Rev. 21:9). As Jerusalem is frequently used in Scripture to represent the people of God (Mt. 23:37), *so in the vision of the new world*, the people of God and their capital city—the Church and the New Jerusalem—are *so closely connected that the same figure—the bride—is used for both [accounts]...*" (pp. 247-249). So we have *an even greater spiritual consummation of the Pact and a bigger wedding celebration* when *God the Father comes down to dwell with us*! God the Father will then be "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28). Wow!

Note also the Bride consists of Church members dressed in "fine linen" which "*is the righteous acts of the saints.*" It equates with those overcomers who by

the faith of Christ “kept *the commandments of God*” (Rev. 14:12) thus producing good spiritual fruits.

After this, John falls down to worship the angel but is rebuked, for worship is only reserved for God. He tells him that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, not the angel’s. This means only through what Christ reveals can the angel teach these things to John and only by the spirit of God living in us can we be sure of what Bible prophecy is all about.

John goes on, “Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed *with a robe dipped in blood*, and His name is called *The Word of God*. And the armies in heaven, *clothed in fine linen*, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (Rev. 19:11-16).

Jesus now descends from heaven to defeat the armies of the Beast and False Prophet. He has the symbols of His blood sacrifice on His robe (Rev. 5:6). It is Jesus because only He has the name “The Word of God” (John 1:1-3, 14; 1 Jn. 1:1). Who accompany Christ? We know angels will do so (Mt. 16:27; 24:30-31; 2 Thes. 1:7) but in Rev. 17:14 it says, “For He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and *those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful*.” Angels are not called, nor chosen, so it must refer to *the saints*. So, *both* resurrected saints and angels are involved. “This army may include angels (Zec. 14:5), but must include believers (Rev. 17:14)” (NIV Cultural Bible).

Regarding the “sword” coming out of His mouth, it is symbolic of *the power of His word*. In Is. 11:4 it says the Messiah will “strike the earth with the rod of his mouth.” With respect to the rod of iron, it portrays Him as a shepherd king, smiting His enemies. Mounce mentions, “To rule with an iron scepter means *to destroy rather than to govern in a stern fashion*. The shepherd not only leads his flock to pasture but defends the sheep from marauding predators” (p. 355).

John continues, “Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, ‘Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.’ And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh” (R. 19:17-21).

Now is the battle at Jerusalem between Christ and His armies and the Beast and the False Prophet’s forces. The Beast and the False Prophet are first captured and cast into the lake of fire. Then, Christ speaks and they perish instantly. The details on this death are found in Zec. 14:12, “And this shall be the plague with which *the Lord will strike* all the people *who fought against Jerusalem*: Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths.” So, not much of their dissolved bodies will be left for birds to scavenge.

In Isaiah 66 it also describes the battle scene and the annihilation of all the armies, “For behold, the Lord will come with fire and with His chariots, like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by His sword the Lord will judge all flesh; and the slain of the Lord shall be many...And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be an *abhorrence to all flesh*” (Is. 66:15-16, 24). This means a *shameful* death where they do not receive a decent burial, but what is left of them will just rot and there will be a lot of blood (Rev. 14:20).

Next time, we will see what occurs in the kingdom of God on earth with Christ and His saints ruling!