

Revelation 19:1–21: The Return of Christ.

John W. (Jack) Carter, Ph.D.

As we approach the 19th Chapter of John's Revelation, we may be reminded of the situation that was transpiring in the church to which John was writing. They had been experiencing sporadic persecution and chronic rejection at the hands of both secular and Jewish government and by their surrounding culture for at least two generations. They were immersed in a world that was completely given over to sin, a world where they, or their faith, had little or no influence to change it. The worldly culture promoted rebellion against God through any possible means. Generationally, they knew no other world. These people had witnessed the martyrdom of many of their own fellowship as well as the martyrdom of pastors, deacons, and apostles. These were a people who badly needed encouragement. They needed to know that the suffering that they experienced at the hands of this evil world because of their faith was not in vain. They would also be encouraged to know that those who are living an evil lifestyle will not be ultimately rewarded for their behavior.

"The second coming of Christ is not just the aberrant fascination of "end-time junkies" and apocalyptic doomsayers. It is the historic faith of the Christian church."¹ Prior to Jesus'

¹ David J. MacLeod. "The first 'last thing': the second coming of Christ (Rev 19:11-16)." *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 156(622), (April 1999): 205.

ascension, He promised that He would return² and that no person would know the time of his returning.³ Therefore, it is inappropriate for us to look at John's description of the second coming of Jesus with any mixture of deliberate intent upon determining when it will happen, so there will be no such attempt to do so here. Furthermore, the chronological sequence of events that surround the second coming of Christ is not clear in his writing as he maintains a presentation of apocalyptic imagery that tends to present some events in sequence, but also tends to visit different periods of temporal and heavenly experience in an almost random manner as the message takes priority over the presentation of historic (or prehistoric) narrative. Many in the church have pigeonholed themselves into camps of thought as to their speculations concerning this sequence and defend their views to the point of argument and estrangement. Such behavior is inconsistent with the gospel message of unity inspired by *agape* love. Even students at several of the nations' respected theological seminaries tend to divide themselves and define their fellowship by their millennial views.

John's Revelation was not written to divide the church into doctrinal camps. Rather, his purpose was simple: to present the gospel message to the church in an apocalyptic style to a people who desperately needed encouragement.

Recall the apocalyptic style: People, places and things are not literally described. Instead, they are described by their attributes. Furthermore, those attributes are described using symbolic metaphor and imagery. First-century readers

² John 14:3.

³ Matthew 24:43-44; 1 Thessalonians 5:2.

understood much of the symbolism used in the apocalyptic genre because of its relatively common use. In some circumstances where the symbolism would not be clearly understood, John immediately informs the reader what the symbolism represents. One should not get lost in the text by trying to focus on the symbols as the object of the writer. One must dig deeper to find what it is that John is describing in those symbols.

Donald Guthrie proposes four principles that are worth considering when approaching the symbolism that is utilized in the Revelation:

1. "Where there is any parallel use of the imagery in the Old Testament, we may reasonably expect to find some indication of meaning through a comparison of the use in this book with the use in the Old Testament
2. Detail is likely to be unimportant. If we are intent on assigning meaning to every part of the figure, we may be blurring the essential point that the text is aiming to make.
3. We must take into account the author's purpose.
4. It is not sufficient to interpret each symbol on its own merits, any more than we can get a true appreciation of a jigsaw (puzzle) by minutely examining one piece. Each symbol has meaning only when seen as a part of the whole."⁴

⁴ Donald Guthrie. *Relevance of John's Apocalypse*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987: 30-31.

Revelation 19:1. *And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:*

As John frequently does in the Revelation, following his descriptions of chaos, destruction, and mayhem that take place in satan's realm, he returns us to the throne where the vast multitude of the faithful are engaged in worship. In this way John continues to remind us that the wrath of God's judgment is reserved for those who have chosen to place their trust in the things of this world rather than turn to Him in faith. We are also reminded that the faithful are safely gathered at the throne of heaven, celebrating the glory of God, while the judgments of the LORD are meted out upon satan, sin, and those who are deliberately immersed in it. Though the faithful are affected by the consequences of their own sin and the sin of others in this world, their experience is neither the result of either God's judgment upon them or the result of His condemnation. There is no condemnation for those who have placed their faith in God.⁵

Revelation 19:2-5. *For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. ³And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. ⁴And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.*

⁵ Romans 8:1.

***⁵And a voice came out of the throne, saying,
Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye
that fear him, both small and great.***

In the previous Chapter, John described the destruction of Babylon. As a literal city, prior to its destruction in 689 B.C. by the Assyrians, it was the largest city in the region, infamous for its egregious wickedness. Babylon was referred to as a home for demons and every evil spirit.⁶ John's readers witnessed the depraved spirit of Babylon all around them, as we still witness that same spirit today. We may observe the spirit of Babylon throughout the world systems of governments and cultures. The decadence of Babylon is seen in all our cities. We may also observe the spirit of Babylon throughout the world in its systems of pagan religions. Much of society has become like Sodom and Gomorrah, separated only by the ever-present remnant of faithful believers that inhabit them. Babylon is described by John as the mother of all of the sin and idolatry that so characterizes this world. Like the sin that so characterizes the sinner, she is the sin that characterizes all of the wickedness and godlessness of this world.

John speaks to God's judgments upon satan, Babylon, and those that follow them: God's judgments are just as he avenges the persecution of the faithful.⁷ He is not bringing His judgment and condemnation upon the faithful, but upon the true source of sin and guilt: satan himself. John reminds the readers that God will judge and will do so in a just and final manner. The suffering of the faithful at the hands of evil and wicked people will be vindicated. Those who seem to have the power in this

⁶ Revelation 18:2.

⁷ Deuteronomy 32:43; Psalm 119:137; Jeremiah 51:48.

world will face God's wrath for their rebellion, and all of their power and wealth will be stripped away. Though the final judgment has not taken place in the lifetimes of John's readers, God's promise of justice can be relied on to the point that we can consider the justice already completed. For this justice, the hosts of heaven praise God.

The host praises God by saying that the smoke goes up from "her" for ever and ever.⁸ One can perceive an image of a smoldering fire that continues to burn without end. Who is the one from whom this smoke eternally rises? The "her" is Babylon the Great, the harlot, the power of sin. The destruction of this evil world will be complete, and permanent. It will never be rebuilt.

The remainder of this passage contains more acclamations of praise, using a Greek transliteration of the Old Testament term, *hallelujah* that is "a joining of two Hebrew words – *hallel*, an imperative meaning 'Praise Ye,' and a shortened form of the Hebrew people's name for God, YAHWEH (*Yah*). The combined words called the people of God to 'Praise ye God' or 'Praise ye the LORD'."⁹

Revelation 19:6. *And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*

⁸ Isaiah 34:9-10.

⁹ Becky Lombard. "Hallelujah in Scripture and Song." *Biblical Illustrator*, 26(3), (Spring 2000): 50.

When the shouts of the hosts of heaven are described in John's Revelation, it is often as the sound of rushing waters, or peals of thunder. This is not the sound of a few souls standing at the altar. It is not the sound of a heavenly chorus with voices raised in musical harmony. It is the sound of a mighty sea of people shouting.¹⁰ This is most likely quite a contrast to the worship that we experience as a church today. Though there are some who shout praise during worship, for most congregations, such an outburst of praise is frowned upon as ignorance or a lack of self-control. There will come a time when satan no longer can hold closed the lips of the elect when they come to the LORD in praise. There will be a time when the persecution will stop, and all will be free to praise God, for all will truly see that He fully reigns, and satan is thoroughly defeated.

There are multiple stages in the defeat of evil. The first was when satan was cast out of heaven; the second is when satan was defeated at the cross of Calvary, and the third is when Babylon is destroyed and God becomes King of the earth, defeating satan on the turf he was given for God's purpose.

We might recall that the first-century church was bound by Roman law to worship the Emperor as their lord and their god. The title used for God here, literally "Our Lord and our God," is the same title that the Roman Emperor Domitian demanded for himself. First-century readers would have recognized this, and in doing so understand the folly of Domitian's demand. It would also encourage them to know that all true authority is held by God and God alone. The Emperor is no god and is not even a good imposter.

¹⁰ Ezekiel 1:24.

Revelation 19:7-8. *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. ⁸And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.*

The metaphor of the bride goes back to the Old Testament representation of Jehovah married to Israel.¹¹ "In marriage a man and a woman are united in a relationship for companionship, fellowship, intimacy - the sharing of thoughts, purposes, and life. When the Bible pictures the relationship of Christ and His people as that of a husband and wife, it is expressing the truth that there is a covenant or bond between them, an everlasting union."¹² Here the metaphor denotes the permanent communion of Christ with the community of men and women whom he has purchased with his blood. "Like an engaged woman, she is ready for the anxiously awaited union with her husband. The time of the marriage has finally come. The bride, having prepared herself while on earth by doing the will of God, now weds Christ, the One who willingly gave His life out of His unblemished love for her."¹³ The text announces "only the advent of the wedding feast of the Lamb. It never described the event. Interpreters often understand the feast as

¹¹ Hosea 2:19; Isaiah 54:1-8.

¹² David J. MacLeod. "Heaven's hallelujah chorus: An introduction to the seven 'last things' (Rev 19:1-10)." *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 156(621), (January 1999): 78.

¹³ Martha S. Bergen. "Brides as imagery in the New Testament." *Biblical Illustrator*, 34(4), (Summer 2008): 63.

a symbol of the fellowship the church will enjoy with the Christ when He returns in His glory."¹⁴

Though some dispensationalists would argue that this group is limited only to the saved from the post-resurrection period, this is only a speculation based upon the dispensational model. No such limit is stated in scripture. Consequently, if this limitation is not applied, the wedding of the Lamb refers to the consummation, or final union, of the redeemed of all ages with Christ. It is this consummation that is the focal event in John's Revelation. It is surrounded by the defeat of evil and its eternal separation from all that is righteous. This is a simple and encouraging message.

John's meaning of the metaphor of the fine linen is not as evident to first-century readers as are others in John's text, so he inserts an explanation that defines it as the righteous acts of the saints. This should not be confused with the "filthy rags" righteousness of Isaiah 64:6. The righteous acts we perform for our own purposes and from our own power are as those filthy rags. Many unsaved people (and saved for that matter) do great philanthropic acts for a variety of reasons that may be characterized as both selfish and unselfish. The only truly righteous acts that we perform are those that are motivated by, and immersed in, God's *agape* love.¹⁵ The former works of the

¹⁴ Thomas D. Lea. "Marriage symbolism in Revelation." *Biblical Illustrator*, 26(4), (Summer 2000): 76.

¹⁵ "The righteous deeds of 19:8, then, can be none other than the *ërga* that are sought by Christ, the 'first works,' ensuring that one is in a living relationship with him. Fundamental among them are the four works of love, faith, service, and endurance (2:19). Their core is the 'first love,' the response of love to the loving of Christ, which is constitutive of the bridal church. These are the works that follow those 'who die in the Lord' (14:13)." Donal McIlraith. " 'For the fine linen is the righteous

flesh are denounced by Paul whereas the latter works of the Spirit are promoted by the book of James as irrepressible indications of a life of faith. Paul and James do not disagree on the mode of salvation. They simply apply their use of the word "works" in a different manner. It is those works of the Spirit, made righteous by God's agape love that are described here as bright and clean linen. This statement of clothing does not stand alone. We may also note that the bright pure raiment of the bride is in striking contrast with the harlot's clothing.¹⁶

Revelation 19:9. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

All men are called by God, but when the time has come for the bride to come to the wedding supper of the Lamb, only the faithful are invited,¹⁷ and upon them this blessing is pronounced. There is an irony in that the church is the bride of Christ and at the same time is the guest at the wedding supper.

As is still true today, the ancient Greeks promoted a philosophy of relativism that rejects the concept of any singular and inviolable truth, replacing it with the belief that each person can formulate their own version of truth. By rejecting truth, this philosophy strips an individual of the solid foundation that truth provides, leaving them both to (1) wander throughout

deeds of the Saints': works and wife in Revelation 19:8." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 61(3), (July 1999): 527.

¹⁶ Revelation 17:4, 18:16.

¹⁷ Matthew 22:3, Luke 14:8.

their lives searching for that truth, and (2) leading them to reject the truth they search for. This relativism is simply one more ornament in Babylon's bejeweled gown, one more lie that looks attractive to the world but serves to draw people away from God. God's Word is a foundational and inviolable truth upon which all mankind can rely. God's Word is a gift that God has given to us that in it we can be saved from the judgment to come. Rather than face that judgment, those who have come to accept that truth find themselves blessed as they take part in the wedding supper of the Lamb.

Revelation 19:10. *And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

John is so overwhelmed by the presence of the angel and the magnitude of this message that he was inspired to fall to his knees and worship the angel, the one who brought the message to him. The angel reminded John that he is one with all of those brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus, and that he should worship God only. The error made by John is seemingly replicated today by far too many Christians. Rather than save our veneration for God, we often venerate those who bring the message, creating differing levels of righteousness or spiritual value that we assign to them. Just as the world does, we evaluate and judge others, putting some of the faithful on pedestals while denigrating or subjugating others. Some have raised the state of some of the faithful, including Mary the mother of Jesus, the Apostles, and many others, to the point of veneration whereby people are called to pray to them with an

attitude of worship. These have been raised to the point that they are considered intermediaries between God and man, a position reserved for Jesus alone.

I was recently interviewed by the chancellor of one of our well-respected Baptist seminaries for an open faculty position for which I was being recruited. Before entering his office I was coached on where to sit, how to sit, where to place my hands, and how to speak. I was only to answer his questions, and never to speak without his particular request. Even the name I would use to refer to him was dictated. It was evident that those who were close to this chancellor venerated him to a point that approached worship. In our first exchange of words I responded to his initial greeting with something similar to, "Well, sir, we have met before, but at the time you were preoccupied and looked right through me." I could easily show this man the respect he deserved, but it was evident that I could not hold him in a position of veneration. While my "coach" sat there mortified, the chancellor was amused by my candor and we were able start our meeting on level ground, sharing a mutual respect.

We are to reserve our worship for God, and God alone.

Revelation 19:11. And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

We find ourselves herein thrust back into apocalyptic imagery reminiscent of Revelation 6:2 where we were introduced to the metaphor of four horses that represented the nature of four catastrophes that would soon befall the earth. In our culture,

horses are used for a variety of purposes, mostly recreational. As recent as four generations ago, the predominant use of a horse was as a power source in agriculture. At the time of this writing, the rarity and value of horses limited their use primarily to the military.¹⁸ Other animals were more efficiently applied to agriculture, but those lacked the speed, intelligence, and controllability of a horse. So, John looks into heaven and sees a white horse and a rider. This horse is given a clear military connotation.

Who is riding the horse? In true apocalyptic form, his given name is never revealed. Rather, he is referred to by metaphors pertaining to his attributes. First, we see that he is Faithful and True. There is only one who is completely faithful, and that one is Jesus. There is only one who is completely true and that one is Jesus.¹⁹

The white horse should not be equated or confused with the white horse of Revelation 6:2, one of the four horses that serve as metaphors for four attributes of God's judgment upon satan and the world of sin. The earlier rider who carried a bow and was bent on "conquest" was one of the four plagues to be loosed upon the followers of the beast. However, in the same manner, the metaphor of the horse is used to identify the character of the one it is associated with, one with the power to execute the task He is to perform. Though Jesus has always been known

¹⁸ David J. MacLeod. "The first 'last thing': the second coming of Christ (Rev 19:11-16)." *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 156(622), (April 1999): 209.

¹⁹ Proponents of postmillennialism "argue that Revelation 19 (with the rider on the white horse) describes not the second advent of Christ but the victorious preaching of the gospel in the present age." David J. MacLeod. "The fourth 'last thing': the millennial kingdom of Christ." (Rev 20:4-6). *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 157(625), (January 2000): 50.

as a man of peace, now at His second coming He is portrayed as a man of war.²⁰

There is little that would encourage John's readers more than to know that the authority of Rome and of the Jewish religious leaders is not the final authority, and that an event will take place to vindicate their suffering. Furthermore, it is the One, the person of Jesus who will vindicate their suffering. As Jehoshaphat stood and watched his enemies annihilate themselves when God fought the battle,²¹ the message here is clear that God is going to fight the winning battle over sin and death. Jesus' nature is of true justice and with that nature He will judge the wicked.²² It is that judgment that will defeat the enemy, satan.

Revelation 19:12-13. *His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. ¹³And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.*

As we look at verse 12, let us not lose the context of the passage. The eyes of the rider are described as like a blazing fire. In this context we can note the ancient use of fire to purify, to separate. Their culture had a need for iron and bronze that was purified by melting it with fire. This process (smelting) would separate the pure metal from the impurities that would then be thrown

²⁰ R.H. Charles. "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John." In: *International Critical Commentary*. Cambridge, England: James Clark and Company, 1971: 2:131.

²¹ 2 Chronicles, Chapter 20.

²² Isaiah 11:4-5.

away, never to be used. Likewise, the eyes of the rider have power to separate the righteous from the wicked. These are eyes that look right straight to the heart of the person, revealing their true nature, their deceit, and judging their final, and eternal, state. We may recall from apocalyptic metaphor that crowns are often used to refer to authority. A king would wear a crown that symbolizes his authority, his right to make judgments, and to rule. On the head of the rider are many crowns. Another way to refer to this is that he is "fully" or "completely" crowned, giving the connotation of complete authority. The rider has complete authority over all. Recall that His position on the white horse identifies his power to use that authority.

The second half of verse 12 states that he has a name that no one knows but He himself. Remember that this use of the word "name" is a reference to the nature of the one named. It is in this context that scripture admonishes us to believe on the "name" of Jesus to be saved. Even satan believes in Jesus, but he rejects his "name." Jesus' "name" is the fullness of his nature and purpose. Who completely understands Jesus' nature and purpose? We strive to understand, to be more like Jesus as Paul admonishes, and even through intense and concentrated prayer and Bible study we will never completely understand what Paul refers to as the "unsearchable riches" of Christ.²³

He is dressed in a white robe dipped in blood. The use of symbolism here is obvious. His robe is white, identifying that He is clothed with purity. His spotless robe has been dipped in blood, a reference to the work on the Cross of Calvary when the

²³ Ephesians 3:8.

LORD humbled Himself before evil men.²⁴ Yet, no blemish remains on the robe: Jesus' robe is pure and spotless. Jesus is enclosed in purity. Furthermore, that purity is bestowed upon him by way of the blood, His atoning act on the cross. Some argue that this is the blood of the conquered in battle. This interpretation represents a vast misunderstanding of the judgment that will take place and denies its use by John as an attribute of Jesus. Jesus will not strike down the evil by the shedding of their blood, staining Himself in the process. He will utterly destroy them with the word of truth that will separate them from God for eternity.

Jesus' name is applied the most literally in the last half of verse 13 as the "Word of God." John often referred to Jesus as the Word, the Logos, most notably in John 1:1-2 and John 1:14. If there is any doubt as to the identity of the rider as Jesus Christ, such doubt should vanish here.

Revelation 19:14-16. *And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING of KINGS, AND LORD of LORDS.*

Following Jesus are the white-clad armies of heaven, also on white horses - a symbol of victory. Again, they are clothed in

²⁴ Isaiah 53:3.

white, clean linen, referring to the testimony of their righteous acts. The faithful reader will see himself as part of this army, part of this group who have been given raiment of "white linen." The words used here and in 19:8 to describe the garment are a slight variation to those used to refer to the "white robes" of Revelation 6:11. Linen refers to the substance of the material rather than the garment, whether it is a cloak or a robe. Also, the word rendered "white" refers to brilliant radiance rather than the simple color of white. One may perceive a subtle progression²⁵ as the raiment passes from white to radiant, and as the cloak becomes a robe, and finally refers to the nature of the fabric itself. Together we may see John presenting an increasing focus on the purity of the saints, their security at the throne, and the miracle of God's grace.

The stage is set for a bloody battle. One would think that if this were a literal army, those dressed in white who follow Jesus will be an army of soldiers, brandishing powerful weapons, posed to do battle. If this were the case, we would be facing the responsibility to fight alongside Jesus in this final battle. Such an interpretation ignores the context and metaphors used here. The sword comes from his mouth, the same sword that we observe in John's original description of Jesus at the opening of the Revelation.²⁶ It is with the spoken word of truth that Jesus will judge the wicked.²⁷ It is a truth that we already know, though we may not completely understand it. It is the truth that is now foolishness to those who do not believe.²⁸ The iron

²⁵ Jerry M. Windsor. "White Raiment in Revelation." *Biblical Illustrator*, 41(1), (Fall 2014): 29-32.

²⁶ Revelation 2:16.

²⁷ Isaiah 11:4.

²⁸ 1 Corinthians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 2:14.

scepter is an allusion to Psalm 2:9 and is repeated in Revelation 2:27 and 12:5. The Psalmist makes use of the metaphor of the iron scepter shattering clay pottery. Pottery stands no chance against an iron hammer, and the powers of evil can gain no more ground against the truth of the Word of God.

Just as the fire is used to separate, the winepress is also used to separate, to remove from the grape that which is impure and undesirable, leaving behind the pure wine. It is in God's nature to allow only that which is pure and holy into His presence, and all that is impure must be separated and rejected. It is this demand that is illustrated as the fury and wrath of God Almighty.

Again, the title on his robe and thigh is meant for Himself only, and challenges directly the title of the Roman Emperor, Domitian. It may be interesting to note that in Greek sculpture, the identity of the image was often carved on the robe and/or thigh. The first-century Christian would recognize this metaphor.

Revelation 19:17-18. *And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; ¹⁸That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.*

John draws from Ezekiel's prophecy as he describes the feast of the birds.²⁹ The pronouncement of the feast is proffered by an angel, "standing in the sun," an epithet that describes the nature of the angel, and consequently, the nature of the message that is proclaimed. The sun is located in the highest point in the sky, and is visible to all, including the birds who make the sky their home. The sun also represents the brightest source of natural light, denoting that the message is proclaimed out of light, and is not a message that comes out of the darkness. This light may also represent the glory of the LORD, adding His personal nature to the message. Finally, the sun represents a new day, a new start, as the proclamation of this message coincides with events that will bring about the new day, the new "future" in the New Jerusalem.³⁰

The image of the birds further epitomizes the gravity of the defeat of evil. Here is written a stark contrast between the feast of the birds and the marriage supper of the Lamb that was presented in verse nine. That the dead should be left unburied for the birds of prey to feast on added to the shame of the defeat of evil. In no way could the dishonor of the lost be more forcefully described than this. Again, the first-century reader is receiving a promise of vindication for the ironic experience of victory that evil seems to have in this current world. Little has changed in the last 20 centuries. Satan is still the powerless prince of this world, and his fall will be great. Of that we can be sure.

²⁹ Isaiah 34:6-7.

³⁰ David J. MacLeod. "The second 'last thing': the defeat of antichrist (Rev 19:17-21)." *Bibliotheca Sacra*. 156(623), (July 1999): 328.

Revelation 19:19. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

It is this passage that is most often referred to as the final battle of Armageddon. If we interpret this as a literal armed conflict as some have done we will tend to ascribe it to specific places³¹ or a stand made by a certain group of people. We will be drawn to speculate as to the mechanical weaponry used, etc. Wandering into such speculation can only move us away from the truth of John's message. Do not lose sight that the battle is between God and the power of evil in this wicked world, and the participants represent a personification of evil for all ages.³² Again, the battle will be waged using one weapon: the truth of the Word of God that is pronounced by Jesus, who is the very personification of the Word of God. It is that word and that word alone that word will do the separating.

Revelation 19:20-21. The beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. ²¹And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

³¹ Such as the plain of Megiddo as some have done.

³² Psalm 2:2.

John describes the struggle of the Warrior on the white horse with the Beast, the False Prophet and the kings of the earth. The battle has been "fought" between the heavenly Warrior and his foes but note that there is no real battle. There is no expenditure of weapons and ammunition. There are no advances or retreats of lines of soldiers. The pronouncement of the Word simply destroys the enemy. They are destroyed in their death. Death in and of itself means separation, not necessarily annihilation. If it were annihilation, there would be no need for the eternal lake of burning sulfur, referring to extreme torment. If one is familiar at all with sulfur burns, they understand the concept of the burning lake. If burning sulfur is to get on one's skin, it continues to burn through, producing extreme pain and debilitating injury.

The beast, false prophet, and their armies are all destroyed by the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider. They are destroyed simply by the Word of God. Christ spoke the judgment and it was so.

A literal aside might be amusing at this point: The beast and the false prophet were cast into the lake of fire,³³ and all of the people were killed with their bodies left for the birds to eat.³⁴ If the previous woes upon the physical earth had literally taken place in the sequence of the text, these birds were quite hungry.

Christ's return will take place with a purpose. It will bring an end to the age³⁵ where satan and evil have had their reign. All the evil that we see empowered in religion, society, and

³³ Isaiah 30:33; Daniel 7:11.

³⁴ Ezekiel 39:19-20.

³⁵ Matthew 28:20.

government will be separated from God for eternity along with those souls who ascribe to their authority. The Word of God will bring the righteous to Himself for eternity.

Sources

All Scripture Quotes are from the King James Version of the Bible.

Bergen, Martha S. "Brides as imagery in the New Testament." *Biblical Illustrator*, 34(4), (Summer 2008): 63.

Charles, R.H. "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John." In: *International Critical Commentary*. Cambridge, England: James Clark and Company, 1971: 2:131.

Guthrie, Donald. *Relevance of John's Apocalypse*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987: 30-31.

Lea, Thomas D. "Marriage symbolism in Revelation." *Biblical Illustrator*, 26(4), (Summer 2000): 76.

Lombard, Becky. "Hallelujah in Scripture and Song." *Biblical Illustrator*, 26(3), (Spring 2000): 50.

MacLeod, David J. "Heaven's hallelujah chorus: An introduction to the seven 'last things' (Rev 19:1-10)." *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 156(621), (January 1999): 78.

MacLeod, David J. "The first 'last thing': the second coming of Christ (Rev 19:11-16)." *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 156(622), (April 1999): 209.

MacLeod, David J. "The fourth 'last thing': the millennial kingdom of Christ." (Rev 20:4-6). *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 157(625), (January 2000): 50.

MacLeod, David J. "The second 'last thing': the defeat of antichrist (Rev 19:17-21)." *Bibliotheca Sacra*. 156(623), (July 1999): 328

McIlraith, Donal. " 'For the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the Saints': works and wife in Revelation 19:8." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 61(3), (July 1999): 527.

Windsor, Jerry M. "White Raiment in Revelation." *Biblical Illustrator*, 41(1), (Fall 2014): 29-32.