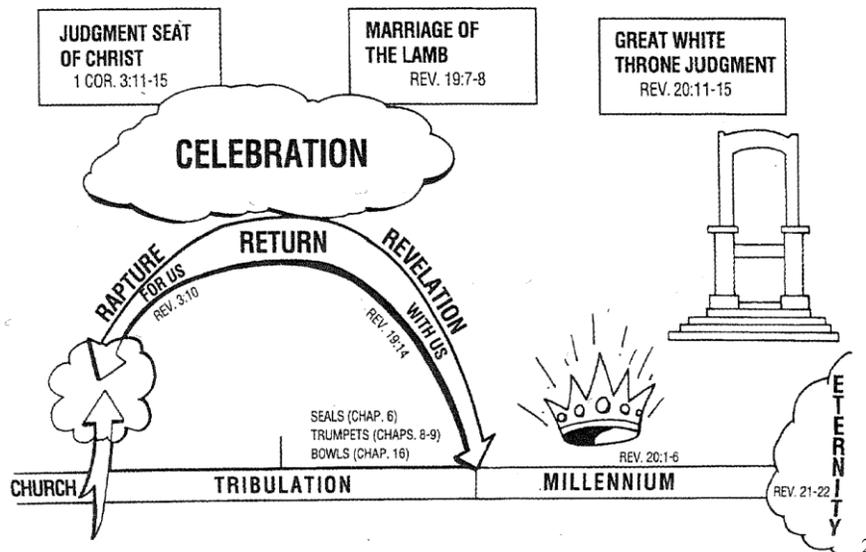


THE RETURN OF CHRIST IN REVELATION 19

INTRODUCTION

- Except for the battle at Armageddon, God's wrath is completed now, having been poured out in the Tribulation
- The focus shifts now from the events of the Great Tribulation to heaven and the second coming of Christ
- Chapter 19 records the celebration of heaven as it prepares for the establishment of the kingdom on earth
- J. Vernon McGee described chapter 19 as that which "marks a dramatic change in the tone of Revelation. The destruction of Babylon, the capital of the Beast's kingdom, marks the end of the Great Tribulation. The somber gives way to song. The transfer is from darkness to light, from black to white, from dreary days of judgment to bright days of blessing. This chapter makes a definite bifurcation in Revelation, and ushers in the greatest event for this earth – the Second Coming of Christ. It is the bridge between the Great Tribulation and the Millennium."¹

EVENTS AFTER THE RAPTURE



THE JOY OF HEAVEN (VV. 1-10)

The Fourfold Hallelujah

Revelation 19:1-6 ~ After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; 2 BECAUSE HIS JUDGMENTS ARE TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and HE HAS AVENGED THE BLOOD OF HIS BOND-SERVANTS ON HER." 3 And a second time they said, "Hallelujah! HER SMOKE RISES UP FOREVER AND EVER." 4 And the twenty-four elders and

¹ J. Vernon McGee, *Reveling Through Revelation*, II, 66.

² Chart taken from Charles Ryrie, *Revelation*, 150.

the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!” 5 And a voice came from the throne, saying, “Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great.” 6 Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

- Four times the word “hallelujah” is uttered in these verses (vv. 1, 3, 4, 6)
- This constitutes a true “Hallelujah Chorus”
- It comes in response to the invitation in Rev 18:20

Revelation 18:20 ~ Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her.

- “after these things” – after the events of chapters 17-18 which detail the downfall of Babylon in all its forms
- “a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven” – these voices do not include the 24 elders and the 4 living creatures as they are not mentioned until v. 4
- It seems best to identify this group as the martyred Tribulation saints who are in heaven because the identical phrase “a great multitude” occurs in Rev 7:9 in reference to that group

Revelation 7:9 ~ After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands;

- This is substantiated by what this multitude says: vv. 1-2 ~ “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; BECAUSE HIS JUDGMENTS ARE TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and HE HAS AVENGED THE BLOOD OF HIS BOND-SERVANTS ON HER.”
- For the martyrs in particular, the judgment of Babylon is a great triumph
- They finally receive the answer to their question in Rev 6:10 ~ How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?
- They erupt in praise a second time in v. 3, saying “Hallelujah! HER SMOKE RISES UP FOREVER AND EVER.”
- The judgment that is poured out on Babylon is only the beginning of the eternal punishment of the wicked
- In response to the praise the martyrs ascribe to the Lord, the 24 elders and four living creatures (who were previously introduced in Rev 4:6–8) join in the celebration (v. 4)
- For all the saints and angels in heaven, this is a time of rejoicing and celebration
- “This is another reminder that the 24 elders, representing the church of the present Age, are distinguished from the Tribulation saints, described in verse 1 as ‘a great multitude.’”³
- “a voice came from the throne” (v. 5) – perhaps the voice of another angel
- This voice exhorted all the servants of God to join in this praise
- Note the connection in this verse between praising the Lord and fearing the Lord
- The chorus of martyrs erupts with praise again in v. 6 ~ Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns
- The three-fold use of the word “like” in this verse shows that John is attempting to communicate what he heard using simile and metaphor

³ Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 974). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

- The heavenly hallelujah chorus praises God for four things in these opening verses:
 1. His redemption (v. 1)
 2. His judgments (vv. 2-3)
 3. His worth (v. 4)
 4. His reign (v. 6)

The Marriage of the Lamb

- Marriage is used in both the OT and the NT to represent God's relationship with His people
- In the OT, God used Hosea to picture his relationship with Israel, one in which Israel was unfaithful
- In the NT, the relationship between a husband and a wife illustrates the relationship between Christ and the church (Eph 5)
- But there is a contrast between the OT and NT marriage imagery: "While marriage is often used as an illustration of various truths, the norm for the doctrine is that Israel is already married to Jehovah and has proved unfaithful to her responsibility as a wife. By contrast, in the New Testament the church is pictured as a virgin waiting for the coming of her bridegroom (II Cor. 11:2). In this case the wedding union is still future as well as the wedding feast."⁴

Revelation 19:7-9 ~ Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." 8 It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God." 10 Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

- The Marriage of the Lamb follows the judgment seat of Christ but occurs prior to Christ's 2nd coming
- At this joyous occasion, church-age believers are united with Christ forever
 - Christ will be the bridegroom
 - The church will be His bride
- Currently, the bridegroom (Christ) and the bride (the church) are separated, one in heaven, one on earth
- But at this celebration, the formal union of Christ and His church in an eternal relationship will occur
- A Hebrew wedding consisted of 3 parts:
 1. The Betrothal – a legally binding act by the parents which committed the man and woman to each other through the payment of a dowry, often well before the bride and groom were old enough to marry (as illustrated in Matt 1:18-19)
 2. The Presentation – when bride and groom were of suitable age, after days of festivities, the bridegroom would come with his friends for his bride and escort her back to his home in preparation for the ceremony (as illustrated in Matt 25:1-13)
 3. The Ceremony – vows were exchanged; following the ceremony guests would be invited to a final celebratory feast (as illustrated in the wedding feast in Cana in John 2:1-12)
- It is the third phase that is in view in this text
 - The first phase occurred in eternity past when the Father promised the Son a redeemed people and wrote their names in the book of life
 - The second phase will occur when Christ comes for His church at the Rapture (Eph 5:25-27)
 - The third phase will occur at the end of the Tribulation during the ceremony and wedding feast

⁴ John Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 272.

- “Betrothed in eternity past, presented in the Father’s house since the Rapture, the church is now ready for the wedding ceremony to begin. That ceremony will coincide with the establishment of the millennial kingdom, and stretch throughout that thousand-year period to be finally consummated in the new heavens and the new earth...The idea of a thousand-year-long ceremony may seem far-fetched; yet it is no more difficult than several thousand years of betrothal...In the new heavens and the new earth, the bride concept will be expanded to include not only the church, but also all the redeemed of all ages as the New Jerusalem becomes the bridal city (21:1-2).”⁵
- Verse 7 indicates that Christ’s “bride has made herself ready” for the marriage of the lamb
- She has not done this by her own works, but by God’s gracious working
- And verse 8 indicates that, “It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”
- The church will be inherently righteous at this point – at salvation, believers were granted Christ’s imputed righteousness; but at the marriage supper the church is clothed with a righteousness of its own
- The fact that the bride is wearing her beautiful garments indicates that she has already received her rewards for her deeds of righteousness
- The judgment seat of Christ has already occurred at which point believers were rewarded for their faithfulness in this life
- The wedding is followed by the supper and blessed are those who are invited to the supper (v. 9)
- One issue to consider is the fact that there is a distinction in v. 9 between the bride and “those who are invited to the marriage supper of the lamb”
- These guests are not the bride...and they are not unsaved people...so they must be redeemed people who are not members of the church (i.e. OT and Tribulation saints)
- “One of the false interpretations that has plagued the church is the concept that God treats all saints exactly alike. Instead, a literal interpretation of the Bible distinguishes different groups of saints, and here the bride is distinguished from those who are invited to the wedding supper. Instead of treating all alike, God indeed has a program for Israel as a nation and also for those in Israel who are saved. He also has a program for Gentiles in the Old Testament who come to faith in God. And in the New Testament He has a program for the church as still a different group of saints. Again in the Book of Revelation the Tribulation saints are distinguished from other previous groups. It is not so much a question of difference in blessings as it is that God has a program designed for each group of saints which corresponds to their particular relationship to His overall program. Here the church, described as a bride, will be attended by angels and by saints who are distinct from the bride.”⁶
- “The dispensational distinction between the saints of the present age belonging to the church, the Body of Christ, and the saints of other ages, such as those in the Old Testament or those in the future tribulation, therefore seems to be observed in this passage where the wife is distinguished from the great multitude identified in chapter 7 as martyrs out of the great tribulation. The ‘marriage of the Lamb’ is properly the marriage supper of the Lamb, the final aspect of the marriage relationship between Christ and His church.”⁷
- “Some may question why the church age believers should be granted the honor of being the bride, while believers from other ages are merely guests. But one may equally ask why God singled out Israel to be the

⁵ John MacArthur, *Revelation 12-22*, 203.

⁶ Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 975). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁷ Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 272.

covenant people. The only answer to both questions is that God sovereignly purposed that it be so (cf. Deut 7:7-8)...There will be no ‘second class citizens’ in God’s kingdom, just as all the participants in a wedding enjoy the celebration.”⁸

- OT saints will be resurrected at the end of the Tribulation to be guests at the wedding and enjoy all the festivities of the glory of the kingdom (Dan 12:1-2)
- Israel’s inclusion in the festivities is a demonstration of God’s grace and mercy to restore her
- In response to such a glorious truth, John bowed down to worship the angel but was told not to and to worship God alone (v. 10)
- When the marriage supper occurs, the promises of John 14:3 and 1 Thessalonians 4:17 are fulfilled

John 14:3 ~ If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 ~ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

- Incidentally, the marriage supper provides another argument in favor of a pre-tribulational rapture
- If the church is to be judged and rewarded (at the judgment seat of Christ) and joined to Christ (at the marriage supper) before the Second Coming of Christ, then an interval of time is required
- Only a pre-tribulational rapture provides that interval of time

THE JUDGMENT ON EARTH (VV. 11-21)

The Second Coming

Revelation 19:11-16 ~ And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. 13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. 15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

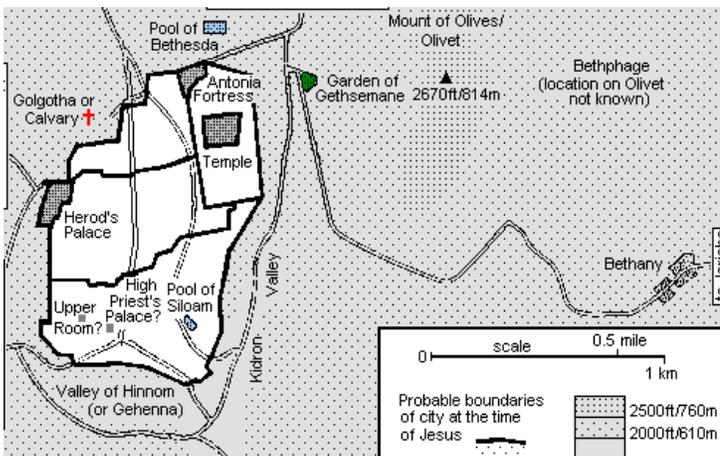
- This passage describes the return of Christ in glory ready for battle
- The description of Christ here is one of absolute power and authority
- The symbolic language in these verses is meant to communicate realities concerning Christ’s return
 - He will return on “a white horse” – a symbol of triumph, like victorious Romans generals who paraded war booty through Rome
 - He is “called Faithful and True” – in contrast to Satan and Antichrist
 - And “in righteousness He judges and wages war” – his holy nature demands this reaction to sin
 - His “eyes are a flame of fire” – denotes the penetrating quality of His judgment
 - “On His head are many diadems” – indicates His majesty and sovereignty
 - “He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself” – suggesting that Christ is the indescribable One
 - “He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood” – a symbol of the righteous vengeance that will be displayed in battle

⁸ MacArthur, *Revelation 12-22*, 204.

- “His name is called The Word of God” – a name used only by John (John 1:1, 14; 1 John 1:1)
 - “From His mouth comes a sharp sword so that He may strike down the nations” – a *rhomphaia* was a very long sword; speaks of judgment; coming from His mouth, it symbolizes the deadly power of His words
 - “He will rule them with a rod of iron” – he will instantly put down rebellion; see Psalm 2:9
 - “He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty” – the splattering of grace juice in the winepress pictures the pouring out of the blood of Christ’s enemies
 - “on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords” – refers to Christ’s sovereign triumph over all His enemies and His absolute rule in the earthly kingdom
- v. 14 reveals that all the redeemed of all ages (OT saints, church saints, Tribulations saints) return with Christ
 - Additionally, the angels will return with Christ (Matt 25:31)
 - Notably, the heavenly army of the redeemed are not armed; Christ alone will destroy His enemies
 - The saints will come not to fight with Christ, but to reign with Him (Rev 20:4-6; 1 Cor 6:2)
- This will be the culmination of numerous passages in both OT and NT that speak of Christ’s Second Coming

Zechariah 9:14-15 ~ Then the LORD will appear over them, And His arrow will go forth like lightning; And the Lord GOD will blow the trumpet, And will march in the storm winds of the south. 15 The LORD of hosts will defend them. And they will devour and trample on the sling stones; And they will drink and be boisterous as with wine; And they will be filled like a sacrificial basin, Drenched like the corners of the altar.

Zechariah 14:3-4 ~ Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.



Matthew 24:27-30 ~ For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.

1 Thessalonians 1:10 ~ and to wait for His Son from heaven

1 Thessalonians 2:19 ~ For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?

1 Thessalonians 3:13 ~ so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 ~ Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

James 5:7-9 ~ Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.

1 Peter 1:13 ~ Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 4:13 ~ but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation

Colossians 3:4 ~ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

Revelation 22:20 ~ He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus

- We know that the Rapture and the Second Coming will not be a simultaneous event (i.e. posttribulational) because there are a number of clear distinctions between the Rapture and the Second Coming

Rapture	Second Coming
Christ comes for His saints (John 14:3; 1 Thess 4:16-17)	Christ comes with His saints (Rev 19:14)
Christ meets the saints in the air (1 Thess 4:17) to take them to heaven (John 14:2-3)	Christ descends with the saints from heaven to earth (Zech 14:4)
No hint of judgment (John 14:1-3; 1 Thess 4:13-18)	Judgment plays a prominent role (Rev 19:11, 15, 17-21)

The Battle of Armageddon

Revelation 19:17-21 ~ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, “Come, assemble for the great supper of God, 18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.” 19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. 20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. 21 And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

- So great will the slaughter be in this war that an angel calls together the birds to eat the flesh of all those who fall in battle (vv. 17-18)
- Millions of men and their horses will be destroyed instantly
- The birds will feast on the carcasses of man and beast at the “great supper of God” – the same word “supper” is used to refer to both the marriage supper of the Lamb and the great supper of God which stand in stark contrast to each other

Matthew 24:27-28 ~ For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28 “Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

- The beast and his armies will be no match for Christ
 - There is really no mention of an actual battle between Christ and the forces of Antichrist; rather it will amount to a complete slaughter
 - The beast and false prophet will be cast into the lake of fire alive (vv. 19-20) where they will still be 1000 years later (Rev 20:10) – this is a strong refutation of the false doctrine of annihilationism
 - The Antichrist and false prophet will be the first inhabitants of the lake of fire, the first of millions of ungodly men and fallen angels who are cast there
 - Their bodies are immediately transformed and they pass directly into the lake of fire
 - The “lake of fire” is the final hell, the place of eternal punishment for all unrepentant rebels, angelic or human (cf. 20:10, 15)
 - That it is a place of fire and brimstone indicates that it is a place of divine judgment
-
- Antichrist’s followers will all be killed by Christ (v. 21)
 - Christ will kill the rest with the “sword which came from [his] mouth” – probably referring to Christ’s voice of authority...Christ’s words will go forth like a sword of destruction to cause their deaths
 - Antichrist’s hosts will rise to fight, but with swords only drawn and not used, they will fall in death