

## [IN GOD'S IMAGE 81 – REVELATION 19-20 - CHRIST'S RETURN IN MAJESTY ]

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***Last time we finished with the destruction of the great harlot (Babylon) riding on the back of the beast.***

- ◆ So far we have seen how the devil has infiltrated and infected the political, economic, and social systems with his evil ways.
- ◆ God is not going to allow these destructive evil forces to have their way forever and He is going to step in and bring this cycle of destruction to an end.
- ◆ After the obituary of the harlot, we are back to real time and we pick up the story in Revelation 19.
- ◆ The scene switches again to the heavenly throne room and we are introduced to a great multitude crying three hallelujahs over Babylon's fall.
- ◆ The last hallelujah signals God's long awaited intervention in worldly affairs.
- ◆ ***Revelation 19:6-7 Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. <sup>7</sup> Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.***
- ◆ At long last, the cry of the martyrs, "How long O Lord?" is answered?
- ◆ The heavenly army sallies forth with all the power of Almighty God to put an end to evil once and for all.
- ◆ ***Revelation 19:11-15 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. 13 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. 14 The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron sceptre." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: king of kings and lord of lords.***
- ◆ This is none other than Jesus Christ leading the heavenly army against the forces of evil, who under the influence of the great red dragon mount one final desperate battle.
- ◆ ***Revelation 19:19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army.***
- ◆ The kingdoms of this age rise up in defiance to battle the righteous kingdom of God, one representing the brutal and bestial images of this age against the perfect kingdom of love and grace representing the Lamb.
- ◆ We were first introduced to this battle in Revelation 16 when the seventh angel released the seventh plague.
- ◆ ***Revelation 16:16-17 Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. <sup>17</sup> The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!"***
- ◆ Armageddon is another one of those terms that has come in for a lot of speculation over the centuries and is usually associated with the geographical location of the final battle between good and evil.
- ◆ But is John referring to it as a literal geographical location or is it being used in much the same way as Rome is represented by the symbol, Babylon?
- ◆ The literal interpretation of Armageddon is "Hill of Megiddo."
- ◆ Rather than a literal location, the original readers would have regarded this in the same way we regard the terms, Waterloo, Pearl Harbour, or Ground Zero (2 Kings 23:29-30).
- ◆ In other words, this is where evil finally meets its "ground zero" or "Waterloo."

***We need to notice a couple of things about this battle.***

- ◆ Christ's robe is dipped in blood at the start of the battle, not the end (Revelation 19:13).
- ◆ We saw earlier in the book how His robe became covered in blood (Revelation 1:5; 5:9).
- ◆ In contrast to the enemies He is fighting, His blood is shed for the sake of others.
- ◆ Heavenly armour of Christ's army is a white robe not breastplates.
- ◆ The only weapon Christ needs is the sword that comes out of His mouth; such is its power.
- ◆ These evil forces are destroyed when truth and justice overpower it.
- ◆ ***Revelation 19:20-21 But the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped its***

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*image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.<sup>21</sup> The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.*

- ◆ Armageddon culminates with the destruction of the forces of evil represented by the beast and the false prophet, when they are thrown into the Lake of Fire never to raise their evil and malevolent heads again.

***Revelation 20 is a flashback or a summary of the preceding events.***

- ◆ Back in Revelation 12 we were given a summary of the ongoing “enmity,” predicted in Genesis 3:15, between the serpent (Satan) and the woman (God’s people) and the “Seed” (Jesus).
- ◆ Satan was able to “bruise” Christ’s heel at the crucifixion, but that very event fatally doomed the devil by “bruising” his head.
- ◆ The decisive battle to rid the world of evil is not going to happen at the end of the age. It has already happened when Jesus defeated the principalities and powers including the devil and his demons with his atoning sacrifice.
- ◆ ***Colossians 2:15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.***
- ◆ Christ’s victory over sin and death effectively took away Satan’s power to accuse and he was banished to the earth.
- ◆ ***Revelation 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.***
- ◆ This defeat and banishment effectively curtailed Satan’s evil influence over earthly matters to a certain degree and this is the 1000-year or millennial period now referred to in Revelation 20.
- ◆ ***Revelation 20:1-3 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain.<sup>2</sup> He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.<sup>3</sup> He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.***
- ◆ If you like he was put on a chain like a wild dog, which restricts his ability to create havoc.
- ◆ You will remember how the woman (church) was given divine protection from the furious dragon after he was thrown down from heaven (Revelation 12:13-17).

***We briefly looked at this millennial period in an earlier session on the kingdom of God, but we need to revisit it at this point as this 1000 year period is another one those issues that has come in for a great deal of speculation.***

- ◆ As we saw earlier, the course of humanity and history has been set on a whole new trajectory as a result of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection.
- ◆ This is the pivotal moment in salvation history and the beginning of the new creation.
- ◆ As a result, we have two times running in parallel, the new creation, i.e. the kingdom of God is steadily advancing, while chronos time is falling away into decay.
- ◆ However this all changes at Christ’s return.
- ◆ We just read back in Revelation 19:11-15 the description of the returning King of kings and Lord of lords in all his unveiled majesty and glory.
- ◆ This is the planned consummation of the new creation initiated with Jesus’ victory over sin and death at the cross.
- ◆ Christ is returning to make all things new; there is no going back to the old, decaying structures of this present evil world.
- ◆ The book of Revelation, as we have discovered, has revealed the source of evil that infests all of human activity and the downfall of each of these evils.
- ◆ So to view the 1000-year earthly reign of Christ within the old decaying structure of chronos time fails to recognize what transpired when Jesus rose from the dead.
- ◆ Rather it is referring to this “between the times” period between Jesus’ victory over sin and death and His triumphant return to judge and renew all things.

***But shortly before the end of chronos time, the dragon is released from his restricting chain to again wreck havoc.***

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- ◆ **Revelation 20:7-8** *When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison<sup>8</sup> and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore.*
  - ◆ This again is the final end-time battle between good and evil already mentioned in Revelation 16 and 19.
  - ◆ The devil mobilises Gog and Magog for one final battle, but they are destroyed when fire comes down from heaven before they can inflict more wickedness.
  - ◆ **Revelation 20: 9-10** *They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them.<sup>10</sup> And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*
  - ◆ The one *"whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek is Apollyon (that is, Destroyer)"* (Revelation 9:11) is finally destroyed when he too is thrown into the lake of fire.
  - ◆ This final decisive battle and the destruction of the dragon, the beast and false prophet mark the end of their destructive influence in world affairs.
  - ◆ To hark back to Daniel's prophecy in Daniel 2, this is when the *"a rock was cut out, but not by human hands"* destroys the great image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.
  - ◆ **Daniel 2:34-35** *While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them.<sup>35</sup> Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken to pieces and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.*
  - ◆ No longer will these sources of evil who have infiltrated and infested every aspect of human activity, Satan, his evil cohorts, demons, tyrannical rulers, their conquering armies, predatory government politicians and bureaucrats, grasping businessman, and peddlers of false religion be allowed to function in this new kingdom.
  - ◆ Instead this whole system in opposition to God represented by the description of "Babylon the great" is destroyed and in its place a new system represented by the heavenly New Jerusalem is introduced.
  - ◆ **Revelation 18:21-24** *Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.*
  - ◆ The destruction of these evil powers also reminds us that the hoped for ideals of the kingdom of God will not come within history but at the end of history.
  - ◆ Despite what some in our societies may naively think about achieving a golden age through human efforts, more education, better forms of government, more laws, etc., it just isn't going to happen.
  - ◆ It's a noble ideal of course. Unfortunately, each generation goes to its grave with dashed expectations and the world about the same as it has always been.
  - ◆ The forces of evil are so powerful and their influence so pervasive, it is only Christ at the end of history who will finally destroy them.
  - ◆ This doesn't mean it gives us the right to disengage from the world. We need to remember we serve a risen Lord who along with the life-renewing Holy Spirit is already at work alleviating human suffering and opposing the destructive powers of darkness.
  - ◆ But as John reminds us in this book, we need to be part of the life-bringing kingdom of God rather than the destructive kingdoms of this world.
  - ◆ These vivid images in Revelation are designed first, to highlight the destructive evil power of these beasts, but also to remind Christians that in the final analysis, these brutal forces that would destroy life will be overcome by the conquering power of Christ's Word.
- At the beginning of this series on the book of Revelation, we identified three themes running throughout the book.**
- ◆ The first and major theme is one of allegiance.
  - ◆ We shared the legend a Native American grandfather speaking with his grandson about the two competing wolves that reside in each of us, one representing evil, the other good.
  - ◆ The story ends with the grandfather answering his grandson's question as to "Which wolf will win?" with the response, "The one you feed."

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- ◆ John wants his readers to align themselves with the kingdom devoted to the preservation of life rather than the destruction of life despite the perils they may face.
  - ◆ In other words, align yourselves with the kingdom representing “good.”
- But there are also a couple of sub themes running throughout the dialogue.***
- ◆ There are evil powers at work that infiltrate and infest all levels of human society, and the book of Revelation systematically exposes these malevolent powers, along with their final destruction.
  - ◆ However the book does not end with destruction, but with a final vision of hope.
  - ◆ From a human perspective it appears like the forces of evil are winning the battle but in the end as we just saw, the forces of good prevail.
  - ◆ We now turn our attention to this final vision of hope.