



REVELATION 19-22: ALL THINGS NEW

HOME GROUP NOTES

This is the final message of our Revelation series, and it ends with bang!

We're about to see the promise of Revelation 4 and 5 depicting God's kingdom in heaven on earth revealed again in glorious technicolour when Jesus suddenly returns.

Jesus' arrival confronts the forces behind the delusion, suffering, and evil in the world in a final battle to liberate the nations held host to their lies.

In these closing chapters of Revelation 19-22, Jesus provides John with a kaleidoscope of seven sights ("And I saw" seven times), to see in varying configurations the significance of Jesus' victorious return.

So, let's see what John sees!

1) THE BATTLE FOR TRUTH

REVELATION 19

11 *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.*

15 *Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter."*

16 *On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:*

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Q: What jumps out at you from this special passage?

This scene, and three others to come, provide different angles of the symbolic battle of Armageddon.

Christ returns, along with the angels and His people, as a glorious liberator for the rest of the world with his sudden appearance on a white horse, recalling the image in Revelation 6 of the four horseman.

Whereas the white horse there described nations, systems, ideologies that seek to dominate and delude the world, here Jesus on his white horse returns instead to reign with faithfulness, truth, justice, and holiness.

We are also told Jesus has a name that no one knows, yet we see five names ascribed to Him: Faithful and True, the Word of God, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords.

The 5 names show the true Lord of creation now revealed to all, but with a name no one knows, he holds a power no one can fathom (“I pray for you, in the *name* of Jesus”).

This power is glimpsed, however, in two ways:

- with the blood on Jesus, not the blood of his enemies, but his own blood which takes away the sin of the world.
- And with a sword that emerges out of his mouth to depict Jesus as the Word of God: the liberating source of all truth.

Whilst Jesus is about to strike down the hostile and unbelieving nations he died for; he is going to do so with the truth of His Lordship to set them free.

Q: Do you agree this is a battle for truth as opposed to an actual war between Jesus and a hostile world?

I have argued that Jesus’ liberation of the nations was the startling secret of the scroll revealed in Revelation 11: the truth bearing witness of the church throughout time supplements Jesus’ work here resulting in the vast majority of civilization repenting!

It raises the question: do we comprehend how powerful a sword we wield, when we speak the truth of Jesus’ Lordship in a world of delusion?

John’s attention is then suddenly directed, only for the briefest moment, to the seemingly horrific image of the great supper of God.

2) THE GREAT SUPPER

17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, “Come, gather together for the great supper of God, **18** so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and the mighty, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, great and small.”

This great supper of God contrasts the wedding supper of the lamb that we read of last week.

This sobering passage echoes Ezekiel 38-39 as the depiction of judgment against all the nations who have variously profited from evil, been deluded by its lies, and who have rejected their Creator.

Q: What are your impressions of this passage?

Q: If we take this as a literal prediction of events to come, how does that shape our view of the future or even of God?

However, because again this is the final battle for truth to prevail, the lies believed by the nations need to be swallowed up in victory.

John then sees another configuration of this same theme.

3) THE FALL OF THE BEAST AND THE FALSE PROPHET

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. ²⁰ 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 image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

²¹ 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.

John sees the demonic spirit of the beast that manifests as the seemingly unconquerable power of the day, along with the false prophet who deludes the world through contemporary forms of media, challenge Christ.

Yet, they are swiftly bound and thrown into the lake of fire, a place we'll consider shortly, to have no more influence in the world.

The rest of the nations, however, have a different fate. They are killed once again with Jesus' sword of truth, and their bodies are left to be picked apart by all manner of birds.

Such a stark picture shows Christ putting to death their idolatry to rot, the very command we receive as God's people in Colossians 3:5.

But *these* people are not literally executed, they'll live and gloriously so, as we'll see later!

Q: If this is a picture of lies believed by the world now defeated, could we now see this vision as a positive one?

Q: How do you think this whole process happens in real-time?

Q: Is there anything in our lives that, as it were, needs to be put to death?

4) THE DEFEAT OF SATAN # PART 1

What with this progressive downfall of evil, John suddenly sees another configuration of Jesus' victorious return that enables us to look back at the church's witness through time in a new light.

REVELATION 20

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. ² He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years...

This scene and its language used is very similar to the description in Revelation 12 of when Satan was thrown down from heaven by Michael and the angels following Jesus' ascension. This scene now shows Satan's continuing downfall depicted as his hurling into the prison of the Abyss.

This kind of idea is presented by Jesus in his parables of Matthew 12 and Mark 3 about Him as the stronger one binding the strong man and plundering his house. Jesus in his earthly ministry and then through His followers saw the release of the captives, formerly under the power of the evil one.

The victorious return of Jesus enables us to see that whilst the present age for Christians can be one of momentary persecution, depicted in Revelation 12 as lasting symbolically for 3 and a half years, it is better viewed as victorious living in the present lasting, as it were, for a thousand years: for the gates of Hades have not been able to withstand the church!

Q: It raises the question; how do we predominately see our lives as Christians: as one of hardship or one of victory?

John then witnesses the final defeat of Satan.

5) THE DEFEAT OF SATAN # PART 2

⁴ I saw...

⁷ When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth... ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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.

This battle scene is witnessed again but now with Satan clinging onto the nations and directing them to maintain their hostility to God and his people. But again, the lies that hold the nations captive is once again devoured.

Satan, however, is thrown in the lake of fire to be tormented day and night.

The lake of fire as a metaphor for final judgment differs clearly from the river of life to come.

A lake does not branch out like a river; it remains contained, and unlike a chaotic sea, that is mentioned several times in Revelation, a lake is serene and powerless in comparison.

Satan and his forces, it appears, are forever restricted from their influence spreading out, in part because they've been deprived of all their power.

And whereas day and night they once accused God's people in heaven, now evil rebounds back on them day and night as they are tormented by their own defeat and powerlessness.

Akin to C.S. Lewis' depiction in his book *The Great Divorce*, or the Phantom Zone in *Superman*, the lake of fire appears to be a small, powerless form of existence under quarantine to the humiliation of a bad loser!

Q: What do we make of this image of the lake of fire?

Q: Do we take this image literally or as a metaphor?

Q: Do we believe justice occurs if instead the forces of evil are annihilated instantly? Would death be a form of escape?

John then witnesses the sixth sight of the final judgement.

6) THE FINAL JUDGEMENT

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it.

¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened.

Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.

¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

John sees God's judgment of all people according to what they have done in life, to show that every act we do is seen, remembered, and holds profound significance. Every wrong will be addressed and held to account.

The book of life also lists God's people and most of civilization harvested by Christ, who in the end welcome Jesus' offer to inherit his New Eden.

Yet, thrown into this quarantine of the lake of fire is death itself, so that death will have no power in God's new creation, and Hades as the realm of the dead.

We also see people who become beasts, through forever refusing God's offer of life and wanting to inflict and profit from evil, join this place to restrict their ways.

Understandably, if these images trouble us, take comfort from Abraham's words in Genesis 18:22, 'wont the judge of the earth do what's right?!'

Q: What are our impressions of this judgement given also to people, and not just demonic forces?

Subsequently, at the defeat of evil, John now sees the moment when God makes all things new.

7) THE NEW EDEN

REVELATION 21

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,”^[a] for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

In Revelation 21 and 22, God’s kingdom is depicted as both the experience of a renewed creation, free from death, evil and suffering, and a renewed people of God who see the Lord face to face.

This experience is like a garden of Eden where the Tree of life resides and the river of life of God’s presence continually flows to bring wholeness to all.

But God’s kingdom is also a holy city, a garden city, a New Eden.

This city is depicted with its walls encrusted in the 12 gems of the High Priest’s breastplate over the heart, and that erupt from the One on the Throne, to show that this world will be encompassed by the tangible experience of God’s love.

This city also measures 12,000 stadia in length, width, and height to constitute a massive cube.

The Holy of Holies in the temple was a cube shape, but this vast cuboid city shows the whole ecosystem of the New Eden is the personal presence, the very Spirit of the Father and Son illuminating the world.

Q: What startles us about this vision of God’s kingdom come?

And importantly,

²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.

²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.

The world finally enters God’s New Eden and they bring their honour and splendour into this city.

Instances of the good, true and the beautiful of human culture - art, architecture, customs, games – that have been made throughout history find their place in the New Eden. It means, that without their knowing, the formerly unbelieving populace has also been building the Kingdom of God!

Q: What do we think might be carried into the New Eden?

And so, together, as Revelation 22:5 states God's people and the nations reign forever to truly rule and subdue God's new creation and thus a whole new history is to be written, in which every chapter is better than the one before.

Jesus draws this whole vision to a close with a promise in response to the call of the Church and the Spirit: "Yes, I am coming soon."

As John replies in praying the cry of the ages: Amen, Come, Lord Jesus, I can imagine John awakening from his visionary state to see himself back in his room.

I can see John opening his door to see he is back on Patmos on the Lord's Day.

And with a smile of his face, goes back to his room, fetches parchment and quill and begins compiling all he's seen into this final word of Scripture.

With this whole Revelation of Jesus, like John we can go from being crushed exiles in this world to courageous prophets declaring in word and deed the truth of Jesus for the healing of the nations.

Prayer Time

Let's pray for our family, colleagues, neighbours, who do not know the Lord yet, that they would know and love Him as we do.

Extra Resources

If you would like to continue your own exploration of Revelation through these weeks or in the future, here are some helpful resources worth looking into.

For an overview of the whole of Revelation check out these fantastic videos from the Bible Project.

Part 1: <https://youtu.be/5nvVVcYD-0w?feature=shared>

Part 2: <https://youtu.be/Qpnlrq2bKo?feature=shared>

The Bible Project have also released a creative video on how to read Apocalyptic Literature:

<https://youtu.be/UNDX4tUdjIY?feature=shared>

If you want to go in a bit deeper, a good place to start is NT Wright's commentary, *Revelation for Everyone*, which explains the meaning of each chapter of Revelation in bitesize portions. A more devotional book, beautifully written, is from a hero of mine, Eugene Peterson, called *Reversed Thunder*.

A little more complex but great nonetheless are the books, *Reading Revelation Responsibly* by Michael J. Gorman which debunks a lot of unhelpful stuff we bring to this book and draws into sharper focus what the book is about. Then *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* by Richard Bauckham is possibly the best book on Revelation I have read. It's a small book covering the major themes of Revelation, it

may keep you own your toes as it is quite academic, but it led me to worship more than any other book on the topic I have read! There is also a commentary called *Revelation and the End of All Things* by Craig Koester which is very helpful in exploring the meaning of each chapter in greater depth than say NT Wright's book.

Lastly, if you want to explore the book word-by-word check out *Revelation (Anchor Yale Bible)* by Craig Koester or Ian Paul's *Revelation (TNTC)*.

Revelation 1:3

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it...