

The Glory of Christ's Return and Reign (Rev 19:11-20:6)

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Please take the Word of Christ and turn to Rev 19. Today we finally come to the final vision before the final judgment and final eternal state. It's the return of the King, the coming of Jesus in glory, the culmination of the book and consummation of all things in the universe and history. It's a completion of earlier pictures in Revelation and Rev 19-20 also are a contrast with how things are in the present age, reminding us of the age to come. It calls for us to live in light of this, and long for this blessed hope, to lift up our voice in the Hallelujah chorus (v. 1-6), to love His appearing. But for those who don't love and long for His kingdom reign, it's a warning.

19:11 *Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.* ¹² *His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself.* ¹³ *He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.* ¹⁴ *And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.* ¹⁵ *From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.* ¹⁶ *On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.* ¹⁷ *Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for the great supper of God,"* ¹⁸ *to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great."* ¹⁹ *And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army.* ²⁰ *And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.* ²¹ *And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.* **20:1** *Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain.* ² *And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,* ³ *and threw him into the pit [abyss], and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.* ⁴ *Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.* ⁵ *The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.* ⁶ *Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.*

The big picture is the glory of Jesus returning, reigning, resurrecting saints. He returns in glory in 19:11-14 and in v. 15 it says He will reign gloriously over the nations as King (middle of v. 15 says 'He will rule them with a rod of iron'). That can't be His present kingdom reign begun in the past, or just ruling invisibly from the throne of heaven, this is His future reign and rule when heaven opens and He comes off His throne visibly, as it said at the start of the book in Rev 1:9.

1st Lesson: Christ Fulfills Prophecy for His Glory

Zech 14 says He will return and all the holy ones with Him and His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, He'll change the earth, and reign as King over all the earth. He'll reign there *gloriously* (Isa 24:23). King Jesus returns with glory and He'll reign in glory with people He resurrects to glory in Rev 20. I think this is what Paul called in Rom 8 '*the redemption of our bodies,*' when those who are justified are also '*glorified*' finally, as all who are with Christ, God the Father '*will graciously give us all things*' (v. 23, 30-32). Amazingly Rev 20:6 shows '*all things*' include sharing the reign of Christ in some way!

When v. 4 mentions thrones, and some given authority to judge, that sounds like what Jesus promised His apostles in Mt 19:28: '***Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging ...***' John heard that and now in Rev 20 I think John sees it in the new world.

I think the new world or renewed earth begins in Rev 20. Jesus addresses the church in 2:29 and says in v. 26: *The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations,*²⁷ ***and he will rule them with a rod of iron ...***

This is Jesus talking, He's the King promised to rule nations with a rod of iron, but here He promises to share authority with others]. Jesus doesn't strike down and rule over nations with a rod of iron till Rev 19. That's a future reign and judging of nations and it says He'll share that in some way at the end with those faithful *till the end*

Look at chapter 5, where it's clear the future reign is for all He's redeemed. Rev 5:9 is the song: "*Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,*¹⁰ ***and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.***"

Not just the nation of Israel, the redeemed of every nation will reign on the earth. That's not talking about people just going to a heavenly kingdom now in the present age, it's future tense, *they will reign on the earth*, all of them. Rev 20:6 says at the first resurrection *they will reign with Him* 1,000 years. I don't have a desire to debate whether that's exactly a literal thousand years exactly but whatever it is I think it's future and all believers, not just Israel. 2 Tim 2:12 says to the church '*If we endure, we shall also reign with Him...*'

2nd Lesson: Christ Will Bring Justice for His Glory

Rev 6:9 *When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.*¹⁰ *They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"*¹¹ *Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.*

How long till true justice takes place, till God avenges the sin of this world, till the martyrs are vindicated, till God deals with terrorists who behead His people, till the curse is reversed and a new world comes, till dead in Christ are resurrected? How long till He returns to reign visibly?

I think Rev 19-20 is the answer. It's not just a replay of Rev 6 or other chapters, it's not just a rehash of earlier problems in history, it's a resolution to them in the future. It answers the question in Rev 13:4 '*who can fight against the beast?*' 19:20 answers Jesus can! Rev 19-20 is also the answer to Rev 6, the contrast of that vision, the completion of the earlier scene in history

- In Rev 6 John saw souls of martyrs, but they're not on thrones, they're under an altar
- They're burdened in Rev 6 but in Rev 20:6 they're blessed.
- They're in Rev 6 for future judgment but in Rev 20:4 the judgment is now happening.
- They appear frustrated in Rev 6, but in Rev 20 they appear vindicated.
- Rev 6 calls them to wait a little while, but Rev 20 calls them to rule a long while.
- In Rev 6 their task is to rest, in Rev 20 their task is to reign. Rev 20 is a contrast.
- The number to be killed is incomplete in Rev 6, it's complete in Rev 20, as is the picture
- I think Rev 20 is future and a fulfillment of earlier
- In Rev 6 justice is still being sought, in Rev 20:4 justice is now being served.

God's justice system also deals with Satan in Rev 20 and the verdict as I read it is a long prison sentenced with no possibility of parole, during his lock-down in the hole. The pit (Greek *abyss*) in 20:3 seems to be a temporary prison for demons to keep them from activity on earth. Rev 9:1 first mentions this abyss opened and locust-like demons fly out and in Rev 9:3 they come on the earth only after they're let out of the abyss. It's the same thing in 20:7 as soon as Satan is let out his prison he comes back to earth. In Luke 9 demons beg Jesus not to send them to the abyss but to let them stay on earth and go into some pigs instead. They asked Jesus if He's come to torment them '*before the appointed time?*' (Mt 8:29 NIV). It seems demons know there is an appointed time when they will be cast in the abyss, and it will be a place of torment, and only outside it can they roam the earth. Peter says Satan roams the earth like a roaring lion running at prey, but Rev 20 says one day Satan will be incarcerated. So I think it's an imprisonment and banishment to come after Jesus comes in Rev 19

If you look back at chapter 2 I think it's clear Satan's not in the abyss now, banished from earth to that prison. In Rev 2:12 Christ speaks to the church in Pergamum, v. 13: '*I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells*

Satan doesn't dwell in the abyss yet, he's still on the earth and has a throne, a kingdom here, but one day the world's kingdom will become the kingdom of Christ, and Satan will lose his throne and must dwell in the abyss instead. ¹⁰ *Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison ...* Satan in this age is not only on a throne on earth, he has power to throw into prison, but in Rev 20 Satan will be thrown down from earth to a prison instead (same word *prison* in 20:7 and *throw* in 20:3). One day tables will be turned and what he does to Christians now, God will do to him in Rev 20. In 1 Thess 2:18 Satan hinders Paul, in Rev 20 he's hindered. Retributive justice will be served.

Rev 12:9 says '*Satan...deceives the whole world,*' but Rev 20:3 says he will no longer be able to deceive nations of the world on the day he's cast in the abyss. Rev 20:7 calls it a prison and it says when he's bound and banished there, it will be shut and sealed. The first word *shut* in Rev 20:3 is always in the NT the idea of closing or locking to keep away from others (Lk 3:20, Acts 5:23, 26:10). In Rev 3:7 the same word is used of the Lord who *shuts and no one opens*.

Satan's prison will be shut by the Lord and not even Satan can open it or get out. Rev 20:3 makes it even stronger by saying it will be shut, then *sealed*. Rev 5 uses that word for the scroll *sealed* and no one in the universe could open the seal except Christ. It's the same word used for when Christ's tomb was *sealed*, the idea is to make sure he's not coming out (Mt 27:66). It says at the end of Rev 20:3 this is all done so Satan cannot *deceive nations*

- The very thing he's doing in Rev 12 (deceiving the world) ceases later in Rev 20.
- 1 Cor 4:4 calls Satan "the god of this age" who blinds unbelievers of all nations on the earth.
- 1 John 5:19 says in this age "the whole world lies under the sway of the evil one."¹

But the good news is that will change in the age to come and the renewed world of Rev 20-22! Now I need to acknowledge godly men don't agree on some of those details and smarter people than me believe Rev 20 is describing the present age before Jesus returns so they have different views on the nature of the 1000 years (millennium in Latin) in relation to the 2nd coming. I think the events of Rev 20 will happen after Jesus comes in Rev 19 but the subject is a difficult one that doesn't need to be a divisive one. I lean toward the historic premillennial view, other leaders and teachers here have different leanings, and that's ok. The historic view doesn't hold to some of the more recent emphases of the last 100-some years such as 2 peoples of God in 2 places and 2 plans with 2 comings – I tend to see one. Men holding historic premillennial views include Spurgeon, J.C. Ryle,² George Muller,³ John Bunyan,⁴ many Puritans including authors of the Reformed confessions,⁵ and many of the early church in history (hence the name historic premil). There are challenges to this view in chronology of resurrection(s) and the rebellion in v. 7-10 and how this relates to the end of Ezekiel, honestly I think it has less challenges and is easier to harmonize with other Scriptures than the other views. But godly men hold other views, like most speakers at Shepherd's Conference this year, still all shared a high view of Scripture and the gospel. That's the hill to die on, Calvary's hill, Christ and His Word.

On the hill at the bottom of GCBC's driveway Millennium sports club had a big sign 'the Millennium,' but that's not something we make a big deal of. I joked to the SS class awhile back it's all a matter of perspective, if you drive *past it* on N. Shingle to our main driveway, you're *post*-millennium. If you go up the driveway *before* the sign, it's pre-millennium. Now there's *no* sign so our *amillennial* members here feel even more welcome. All are welcome (pan-, pro-, etc)

It's ok to have different views on secondary details but it's not ok to view others as second-class. We can disagree w/out dividing or disdaining others. Let's leave the fighting to the Lord in Rev 19. Let's keep the battleground there. If things look differently than you or I think they will right before or after the coming of the Lord, it won't really matter then. So let's long to see that day. On that day the glory of Christ's coming will outshine all else, all ideas and imperfect theology (which we all have somewhere) will be cleared up. Now we see through a glass dimly, then we will see face to face. How the kingdom at the end will be exactly may not be completely clear, we'll see more next time in the rest of Rev 20 and 21, but for the rest of our time today I want to focus on the King of the kingdom, and the glory of King Jesus.

1st application: We need to view Christ rightly to view life rightly

The view of Christ in 19:11 should outshine our views about other things:
Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

We need to behold this vision. John had seen Jesus in weakness on earth in His first coming, but now he beholds Him in warrior-mode coming again. John had seen Him riding on a wimpy donkey, now he sees Him riding on a white horse. Next Sunday is Palm Sunday, the so-called 'triumphal entry' of Jesus to Jerusalem. Here's the real Triumphal Entry. This is the ultimate just war and true holy war. We need to see Jesus, warrior-king, faithful and true. When we're not faithful, when other people are not faithful to us, we need to fix our eyes on the One who's called Faithful and True, *the* Promise-Keeper. If people say things about you that are untrue, if things are done that aren't right, and there's nothing you can do, He is true and will make right wrongs.

¹² *His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems ...*

He's crowned with many crowns, which indicates sovereignty and majesty and royalty and authority. His eyes are burning, searching, purging, probing X-ray vision of all things. His holy gaze blazes through facades or charades. One writer says it means He can see 'through and through, search all depths, look beneath all masks, penetrate all darkness and try everything ... It is an eye-flame of Omniscient perception and out-breaking indignation and wrath, which seizes and unmans the foe before he feels the sword.'¹⁶ He is all seeing and all knowing but it adds He has a name no one knows but Himself

¹³ *He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.* ¹⁴ *And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses [1 Th 3:13 says He comes with all His saints].* ¹⁵ *From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.*

Jesus is called the Word of God, v. 13 says, and the word of His mouth will be all that's needed for nations to be struck down and every knee to bow. As Luther wrote, when the devil's to be banished, one little word shall fell him, that word above all earthly powers. Jesus is the Word, the Word made flesh, and here He's the Word made furious. This isn't gentle Jesus, meek and mild. This is a challenge to the view of Christ many have.

Mike Abendroth's book The Sovereignty and Supremacy of King Jesus says 'It is hard for the typical evangelical today to stomach Rev 19 because our days are ruled by the imaginary "God of only love." However, Rev 19 could be summarized by Ex 15:3: "*The Lord is a warrior...*" ... [Rev 19] has been described by scholars as "one of the grandest" and "one of the most graphic pictures of the second coming..." ... "This paragraph has always seemed to me almost too overwhelmingly glorious..." stunning, stirring, and chilling... [Abendroth sums it up] The King Rides on a Horse of Triumph...The King Fulfills His Promise to Triumph...The King's Eyes Demand Triumph...The King's Crowns Demonstrate Triumph...The King's Name Reveals Authority to Triumph...The King's Robe Displays Triumph...The King's Sword Wields Triumph...The King's Iron Scepter Destroys Triumphantly...Jesus wins, and He wins decisively...Knowing that Jesus will return...how should you live?'⁷

Rev 19:5 tells us we should be thankful, we should live in praise to God and fear of God. We shouldn't live defeated lives, we serve a victorious Christ, a risen reigning King who will call us to rise and reign (even if you're not sure that's in Rev 20). He's our triumphant militant General.

He leads to victory, not just at the end, 2 Cor 2:14 says '*Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ...*' There is a future triumph and reign to be climaxed in the end, but it begins now. Rom 8:37 '*in all these things we are more than conquerors [NAS 'overwhelmingly conquer'] through Him who loved us...*'

Some people live weak lives because of their weak view of Christ. We need to remember what they say in Rev 19 at the end of v. 6: '*the Lord God, the Almighty reigns!*' NKJV '*Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!*'

2nd Application: **We should be encouraged and we should encourage others**

1 Thess 4 says of the coming return and resurrection: '*encourage each other with these words*' or '*comfort one another with these words.*' (NKJV). The next chapter says of the day of the Lord coming, destruction will fall on the unsaved like a thief in the night, but the church will be ready and won't face the wrath of God (5:1-9), so "*Therefore, encourage one another...*" (v. 11). Paul gives examples then of respecting and appreciating leaders laboring for you, esteeming them highly for their work and also encouraging faint hearts and helping the weak and being patient with all (v. 12-13). People need that.

2 Thess 1 applies it this way: *...in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure...[v. 7 says God will] give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,⁸ in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁹ These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,¹⁰ when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe ...¹² that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God (NKJV)*

2 Thess 1 says the tribulation of the church will end, rest from tribulation is to come when Jesus comes in fire judging enemies. It glorifies Jesus' power over sinners and at the same time He's glorified in His saints with Him and admired by believers here who marvel and magnify His glory as He comes. It's all about the fame of the name glorified in you and you in Him by grace. Rev 19:16 says the name written on Him is *King of kings and Lord of lords*. And v. 14 makes clear this King will fight for His people along for the ride.

Jim Hamilton writes how this should encourage in everyday mundane life:

'if we trust in Jesus, the role we play in God's purposes is more exalted than we would ever expect. Believer in Jesus, one day you will ride a white horse to victory in the cavalry charge led by the risen Christ...! ... Let us take up the tasks God has given us now as those who know that one day we'll ride with Jesus...Live nobly now. Change diapers with the same sense of significance you would feel if you were preparing your child to be presented before the world's true King. In a sense, that is exactly what you are doing...Your deeds are significant when done unto God. Treasure God. Nothing can do for us what only God can do for us:

- Don't look to *pornography* to satisfy you in ways that only God can. God made beauty not for idolatry but so we would catch a glimpse of his beauty. Worship God, not things in his image.

- Refuse the tendency to rely on all that *money* can do for you ... God gives us money so we can have some conception of his inexhaustible riches and entire self-sufficiency.
- Don't remain in *slothful indulgence* looking for lengthened periods of rest to renew you. God built us so that, as Augustine put it, we have no rest until we rest in him.
- Don't expect other human beings to absolutely satisfy the need you feel for *companionship and love*. God gives us earthly relationships so that we can understand more about love ...

Christ will come on that white horse in glory. On that day even our most mundane actions done by faith in him will take on enormous significance because we will mount white steeds and ride behind the conquering King.⁸

Turn to Heb 10, a last application for the church as we see the day approach

When He shall come with trumpet sound, O may I then in Him be found
Dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne⁹

Will you be found on that day dressed in the righteousness of Christ alone? If you're not sure, seek the sure Solid Rock today, seek help from us, others.

Hebrews 10:27 says unbelievers rejecting Christ have '*a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries ...*³¹ *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God ...*³² *For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay;*³⁸ *but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him."*³⁹ *But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls...[look back v. 22] let us draw near with a true heart in **full assurance of faith ...***²³ *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.*²⁴ *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,*²⁵ *not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but **encouraging one another**, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

¹ For interaction with latest amillennial writers/responses on Rev 20:1-3, see <http://www.tms.edu/m/msj26c.pdf>

² See http://futureisraelministries.org/c_h_spurgeon.html and http://futureisraelministries.org/j_c_ryle.html

³ <http://www.desiringgod.org/biographies/george-muellers-strategy-for-showing-god>

⁴ <https://scripturethoughts.wordpress.com/2014/07/17/the-chiliasts-early-premillennialists-and-john-bunyan/>

⁵ <https://ilyston.wordpress.com/2014/05/01/may-a-premillennialist-subscribe-to-the-1689-london-baptist-confession/>

Renihan writes on the authors of the 1689 London Baptist Confession: 'Some of those men, probably only a few, would have held an amillennial position similar to that which is common among us today. Others, such as Hanserd Knollys...as late as 1689 advocate[d] a position that is more akin to postmillennialism ... Benjamin Keach held a view that seems remotely akin to premillennialism saying, "The Lord Jesus will come, because all the kingdoms of the world are given unto him, and he shall reign a thousand years upon the earth with his saints . . . I see no room for any to doubt of this, though some take it for a mystical reign." These latter two positions were probably the majority views held by these men [the 1689 confession authors]. We may adapt Iain Murray's words from *The Puritan Hope*: "The Particular Baptists had no party divisions determined by prophetic beliefs." There was room, even within a close confessional theology, for differences of opinion.' http://www.reformedbaptistinstitute.org/?p=83#_ftn3

⁶ J.A. Seiss, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation*, (Zondervan, 1954), p. 434.

⁷ Mike Abendroth, *The Sovereignty and Supremacy of King Jesus*, p. 199-206.

⁸ James Hamilton, *Revelation*, p. 360, 364.

⁹ "On Christ the Solid Rock I Stand."