
Into Thy Word Bible Study in Revelation

Revelation 19:11-21: “The Return of the KING!”

General idea: The King of kings is here, bringing the climax of this Book and of Christianity! John sees Heaven open up again, but this time the entire world can see it too; and now comes the Rider on the white horse! The horse has a name, “Faithful and True;” he will go to war and judge, doing so fairly. This is no regular horse as its eyes were bright like flames. Crowns were on the rider’s head, and His clothes had been dipped in blood. His title was “The Word of God!” He led the armies of the Lord, striking down all evil and the nations that followed. He stood in the sun; from his mouth came a sword and he bore the wrath of the Almighty God. He was titled the “King of Kings and Lord of Lords!” He shouted to the vultures, saying “come and gather for the banquet God has prepared and feast upon iniquity small and great.” Then, the beast gathered his forces and sought to do battle with the Lord’s armies but it did not go so well for him. He was captured along with the false prophet and all who deceived and accepted his mark, and they were thrown into the Lake of Fire. The army of the beast is killed! Game over—God wins!

Vs. 11-21, Contexts: This passage starts the *sixth cycle of Judgments* that lead up to Christ’s Second Coming and the climax of this Book and Christianity. Most biblical scholars who read the Bible (many do not) see this as happening while Christ is returning or just before. This is also about the principles of real spiritual warfare, how Satan deceives and is doomed and how we are easily tricked and still will be held accountable. This is also about how the Gospel message has been spread without any real effectual hindrances throughout Church history.

The passage is proclaiming the conquering Christ as He wages war against all those who oppose God. His arch enemy, the beast/Satan, seeks to defeat Christ and is so deluded that he thinks he can do so. God’s way defeats all those who are evil and refuse Him. As Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem, now His Name and Word are on the white horse of Judgment, conquering His and our enemies! This also shows the contrast to how the beast rode in, as a choice is given: choose Christ and His liberty or choose evil and its defeat and death. The world will be filled with His (Christ) glory and not his (devil) ways! Along with the previous passage, it is another contrast between two banquets. One is for faithfulness and blessings and the other is for iniquity and its judgment. One is the wedding feast of the Lamb, and now the feast for the beast. His end game and rewards banquet consists of being devoured and thrown into Hell (Psalm 2; Matt. 21:1-11; Eph. 5:25-27; 6:10-20; Heb. 13:8; 1 John 5:4-5; Rev. 1:7; 16: 14-21; 17:14; 19:1-10; 20:7-10; 22:13).

Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Heaven standing open/opened... world can see* means standing open; here, this vision is not limited to John, but the whole world can see it. God's tangible presence is known (Rev. 4:1).
- *White horse* means "the king returns;" it refers to royalty and power. Most conservative theologians see this as the quintessential Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Roman princes rode white horses in pretentious ceremonies showing their self-perceived power and prestige as did the Parthian kings. Here, Christ is shown as the Real King—no pretentiousness. The reality is that He is The Sovereign Lord. Whether it was Jesus Himself on the horse or a representative of Him does not matter; this is about His Title that points to His Supremacy. The image is Christ's second coming as THE KING returns. Whether it is actual or metaphorical, the real point is *are we prepared in our faith and practice* (Psalm 149:6-9; Zech. 9:9-10; 10:3; Col. 3:17; Rev. 6:2)?
- *Rider is called Faithful and True* means *the ultimate and absolute Truth* and/or Christ crucified as a sin offering to be our Deliverer. This is in contrast to Christ as a Lamb; he is now a Warrior.
- *Makes war*. Holy War! Here, Jesus is in all of His Majesty and Glory and He wages war on evil and those who oppress His faithful. God is a God of truth and justice; His enemies will be judged fairly, sentenced to fit their crime, and destroyed too. God is our defender; He wages war on behalf of His people. He is our Warrior who defends our faithfulness and honor. This is what the first century Jews expected the Messiah to do for them in the present, not later as Christ said in Matthew 24 (Ex. 15:2-3; Deut. 20; Psalm 18:8; 46:3; Is. 13:13; 24:18-20; 59:16-18; Jer. 4:23-26; Joel 2:10, 30-31; Hag. 2:6-7, 21; 3:16; Ezek. 32:6-8; 38:18-23, 39; Hab. 3:8-15; Zech. 12:1-9; 14:3-5; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 13:4; 20:15)!
- *Eyes are like blazing fire* means God's penetrating insight and strength. This is also about Christ as the persecutor of sin, His Sovereignty as Warrior, and His role as victor in the final battle to come. It also refers to the great victories in battles in the Old Testament, and points to the Transfiguration (Ex. 15:3; Duet. 32: 41-42; Judges 5:31; Is. 59:17-18; Zech. 14:3; Dan. 10:6; Matt. 13:43; 17:2; Rev. 1:14; 4:6; 19:11-21).
- *Many crowns* normally means a great victory and a victor's reward; here, it is a different word from most other passages (Rev. 2:10; 3:11; 4:4; 12:3; 14:14) in that it refers to "diadems," Christ's royal crowns one of the victor and one of royalty. Thus, Christ is the ultimate, Royal Victor in contrast to Satan's pretentiousness (Rev. 12:3; 13:1).
- *He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself*. The true name of God is veiled from us, perhaps not so much as a secret but as His name is unknowable and not understandable to humanity. No one has authority of power over Him. Knowing a name of a god refers to ownership and control that no one has

over our One True God. Just as knowing a person's name means we have knowledge of and influence on them. In ancient cultures, it also meant gaining power over a person. It also refers to His protection over us (Mark 5:9; Rev. 2:17).

- *Robe dipped in blood/blood-stained.* This is an image of a winepress that refers to God's judgment and revenge of His faithful. Also, Jewish tradition from the "Talmud" and "Wisdom of Solomon 18," states a warrior messiah will be stained with blood. It is also an image of the blood of Christ that was shed to atone for our sin, and/or an enemy's blood spilled in war. The word for *dipped in* is the Greek "bapto" as in "baptized" (Gen. 49:10-11; Is. 63:1-3; Rev. 14:14-20).
- *His name is the Word of God* refers to His power, Lordship, and as Judge, thus spiritual warfare is in view here using Spirit, Word, Truth, and prayer instead of conventional weapons (Is. 11:4; John 1:1; 12:48; Heb. 4:12-13).
- *Armies of heaven/his armies* may refer to Angelic beings and/or Believers fighting on God's behalf in contrast to the imitation locust army in Rev. 9. The imagery here is those of the Parthian raiders, the most horrific image for this time. Although not necessarily a literal war plan of God, His plan will be disastrous to the unlawful, unfaithful, and those who are evil (This is where J.R. Tolkien got his ideas for the "Lord of the Rings" books and well as C.S. Lewis' works of fiction.) (Deut 33:2; 2 Kings 2:11; 6:17; Psalm 68:17; Is. 11:4; 66:15; Jer. 4:13; Hab. 3:8; Rev. 17:14).
- *Sharp sword...iron scepter* meant the long Roman sword or spear that was used to create fear and to conquer. The *scepter* was also a symbol of authority with power over life and death. Here, it is in conjunction with the *Word of God* as sharp, powerful, and penetrating, thus is referred to figuratively as a sword. It is also a symbol of judgment (Psalm 2:9; 57:4; Is. 34:5; 49:2; 66:15-16; Jer. 12:12; 47:6; Hos. 6:5; John 1:1; 1 John 1:1; Rev 1:16; 2:27 also: 4 Ezra 13).
- *On his thigh* referred to the horse's thigh where the name of the warrior and/or kingdom was written or was branded similar to modern military designations (Ex. 28:36-38; Rev. 7:3; 13:16).
- *KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS* means the one who rules over all the earth. It refers to the Parthian titles of their kings, an extremely pretentious and prideful statement that now is only reserved for the One True God (Deut. 10:17; Dan. 2:47; Zech. 14:9; 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14).
- *Great supper of God* means a reversed banquet. Instead of sacrificing animals and feasting on them, the opposite comes about. It refers to a contrast to the *wedding feast of the Lamb* in the previous passage; now, there is another feast, a sacrificial feast where God's enemies are sacrificed to prevent the universe from going into chaos. This would have been of great comfort to those undergoing persecutions, knowing their oppressors would get what they deserve (Isa. 34:6-7; 49:26; Jer. 46:10; Zech. 14; Zeph. 1:7-9; Ezek. 29:5; 39:4-22; Rev. 19:7-9; 20:8).

- *Eat the flesh of kings...* refers to judgment and a proverbial curse as God reverses the created food chain and dietary laws (Gen. 1:30; 9:2-3; Deut. 28:26; Psalm 79:2; Jer. 7:33; 15:3; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20; Ezek. 29:5; 32:4).
- *The beast.* See Rev. 13:1-10 Study.
- *Armies gathered.* The world's armies, who seek to mock and fight God, get their deserved judgment (Rev. 16:14).
- *Lake of burning sulfur/lake of fire.* Means the judgment and defeat of Satan and his entourage of followers such as evil leaders too! For the ancients, "fire" was greatly feared; it meant pain, punishment, judgment, and torment. Here, it is referred to as an all consuming eternity of judgment. This is Hell, the place of everlasting torment. It is the very worse thing that can ever happen to anyone, and our ultimate fear and dread. It is also a place the wicked send them selves because they do not want to be with God. It is a place of extreme suffering and anguish yet a place of grace, because a loving God does not force anyone to be with Him that would not want to be (2 King 16:3; 23:10; Is. 30:33; 66:15; Jer 7:31; Joel 2:3; Dan. 7:11; Matt. 5:22; Rev. 14:9-10; 20:10-15; 21:8, also1 Enoch 54:1).
- *Birds gorged themselves.* An image of Deut 28:26-49 and Matthew 24:28; 25:31-45, this refers to the sure judgment and defeat of the world's wicked that awaits them. It is also an assault on the perceived dignity of evil and pride, and that if you fight against God, you will be devoured (1 Sam. 17:44-46; 1 Kings 4:11; 16:4; 21:19; 21:23-24; 2 Kings 9:10)!

Thoughts and Applications:

This passage also seems to make reference to Roman oppression that it is finely over, and it sets up the world for the return of Christ! This is true for those who first read this letter, but this passage is not just about the then current situation of the seven churches or Rome's eventual demise. Revelation and its themes and applications resound to us and beyond because it was not only written to the seven churches, but it is also for us throughout Church history. Thus, we can take great comfort and assurance that our King will return in His timing. This is our triumph and anticipation, but as it is a climax of Christianity, effectual faith, love, and fruit are our first and foremost calls for the meantime!

No matter what we face and what we go through, we have a reason and a purpose. Tragedies and jubilations can mold and shape us, but that shape is only good when it is in His image and plan. No matter how powerful or ominous our foes seem or are, they will be judged and they will fall!

The Four Prevailing Views (This passage concludes the four prevailing views that resound from chapters four through nineteen. Chapter twenty is about the three main

views of the Millennium: Post-millennium/Postmillennial, Pre-millennium/Premillennial, and Am-millennium/Amillennial (see background article) that intersect into the four views. Then, Chapters twenty-one and twenty-two deal with the literal versus non-literal interpretation of Scripture.

The Preterist view: This camp is split as full Preterists see that Christ already returned in form and/or spirit in 70 A. D. (this view is rare); the Partial-Preterist sees that all up to this point of Revelation has been fulfilled; then, as of this writing, the future events that have not been fulfilled are seen. The Preterist sees the allusion to Christ's second coming in this passage as the start of the Church Age and the spiritual warfare with Satan and his minions. The *White horse* is seen as the living and conquering Jesus setting up the Church and empowering the Believers, depicted as being *clothed in linen*. The fall of the beast and false prophet is seen as the destruction of Rome, as the *Beast*, and its states as the *false prophet*, thus not the physical coming of our Lord. This is mainly due to the phrase, *Word of God*, meaning spiritual conflict, not physical. Thus, the conquering power and spread of the Gospel and the defeat of evil and the resulting growth of faith are principal aspects of the passage in this view. The Partial-Preterist sees the conquering power of the Gospel, but also sees a literal return of the King.

The Futurist view: This camp sees this passage as a quintessential opening describing the victorious Second Coming of Christ. This view is partially supported by the writings of the Early Church Fathers as well as Augustine and the Reformers. This is the first that this "end times" theory has had significant agreement with Scripture and backed up by nearly two thousand years of Church theological history. *White horse* is the return of Christ setting up His millennial Kingdom, depicted by His names *Word, Faithful and True*, and *King of kings*. The *saints* are seen as the Believers and/or angels in battle against evil nations either spiritually or actually. There are varying views in this camp, over spiritual warfare, the battle of Armageddon, the movement of the Gospel, or the conflicts in the Church over the years. And, the *lake of fire* is the endgame for Satan and his followers.

The Idealist view: They see this passage as the Names of Christ converging, *Word, Faithful and True*, and *King of kings* as fulfilled Old Testament prophecies, and *no one knows* as only God can understand Himself. *Armies of heaven* is seen as angels while others see them as Believers, both interlocked in spiritual warfare and the angels engaging Satan in our behalf. *Winepress* is seen as God's wrath and His ferocity in dealing with sin and evil. This war is seen as literal with humanity and/or angels engaging the evil worldly persecuting powers and armies in an epic holy war. The battle ends as the Church and Christ are victors and the evil and those seduced into the world's sin being judged and then thrown into hell.

The Historicist view: They see this passage as mostly symbolic referring to the victories of Christ accomplished through His Church to spread His Word. This is also about God's judgment against evil and worldly ways. Others in this camp see an actual battle of Armageddon as literal or symbolic against apostasy and/or the Catholic Church versus the Protestant Church. Others see this as symbolic for spiritual warfare and how

we are victorious when we are faithful in Christ. *Sharp sword* and *Word* are seen as true doctrine winning out against false teachings. *Armies of heaven* and *saints* are seen as Believers remaining faithful by following Christ and/or witnesses of His glory. *Birds gorged* is seen as God's enemies destroyed by their own ways collapsing upon themselves and/or God's direct intervention. Reformer Luther and others see this as the destruction or downfall of the apostate Catholic Church and/or the weakening of papal power. Some have seen this already accomplished by Vatican I and II.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. What does celebration mean to you and your family? What does it mean to your Church? What should it mean?
2. How do you give Christ honor for His glory? How has Christ been your Deliverer from your salvation into your daily life?
3. How do you think the entire world would react to this ponderous and illustrious event? How will you and your church react? How do you feel that Jesus will judge and do so fairly?
4. What do you see as the meaning of the phrase "The Word of God?" How do you feel about the fact that those who do evil against you and others who are faithful, and those who refuse to repent will be thrown into the Lake of Fire?
5. The climax of this Book and Christianity is His Return. But, is this the most important aspect of our faith? Why, or why not? How do you have confidence in God that Satan and evil are killed; game over—God wins?
6. What are some principles of real spiritual warfare can you glean from this passage? How can you have more assurance of faith because you know God is victorious?

7. How have you seen the Gospel message spread? What are the hindrances to His Word seen throughout Church history? How can knowing that now there are no real, effectual impediments raise your confidence for evangelism and missions?
8. How would you feel if God's tangible presence was made known to you? How does our pretentiousness get in the way of His reality? What about how you make decisions or lead a church?
9. How can you be better prepared in your faith and practice for the return of the King? Jesus is depicted in this passage as the Sovereign Mighty Warrior; what does this do to your view and worship of Him?
10. No matter how powerful or ominous our foes seem or are, they will be judged and they will fall. How can this give you more confidence to manage your daily life as a Christian?
11. Keeping in mind righteousness and purity, how then will you live your Christian life? What will be your response to Who He is and what He has done? How can you prevent yourself and church to do as you (your pride) see fit?
12. What does it mean to your church that Christ is the Sovereign Lord? What can be done to better reverence Him in worship and your daily life? What would that mean to your maturity and relationships?