

The Twitter Commentary on Revelation
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Revelation Chapter 19

Rev 19-20 (Introduction)—

Rev 12-18 offers a glimpse of God's vision for the last days of earth's history. Two great gathering messages divide the world between followers of God and the demonic trinity (Rev 14:6-13; 16:13-14).

The destruction of Babylon by the political forces that once favored her, sets the stage for the final rescue of the "saints" and the final destruction of evil in these chapters.

Rev 19-20 (Structure)—

Rev 19 and 20 focus particularly on the final destruction of evil, which comes in three stages, the Second Coming (Rev 19), the Millennium (Rev 20:1-6), and the events at the end of the Millennium (Rev 20:7-15).

Rev 19:1-10 is the sixth of seven sanctuary introduction segments, each of which introduces a major vision of Revelation.

One way to structure Rev is to look for the opening phrase "and I saw" (*kai eidon*) or "heard" (*ēkousa*), which is often found at the beginning of new sections. Examples of this opening phrase in this section are 19:1, 11, 17 and 20:1.

Rev 19-20 can be divided into as many as eight parts (Rev 19:1-5, 6-10, 11-6, 17-21; 20:1-3, 4-6, 7-10, 11-15).

Rev 19 (Structure)—

The emotions of the great multitude (the righteous) here, as they see the destruction of Babylon (Rev 18:9-19), carry out what the "saints and apostles and prophets" are called to do in Rev 18:20.

Stefanovic and Tonstad structure Rev 19 quite differently than each other, and also quite differently than I do, illustrating the challenge of analyzing Rev by means of Western literary analysis.

Rev 19:1—

The concept of a great multitude appears in only one other place in Rev, chapter 7. There the great multitude (Rev 7:9-14) is the counterpart of the 144,000 (7:4-8). God's end-time alliance of the faithful.

The praise and rejoicing of the great multitude here fulfills Rev 18:20 where the saints, apostles and prophets were called on to rejoice over Babylon's fall.

"Hallelujah" is a Hebrew word made up of *halal* ("praise") and *Yah* (for Yahweh). It is used more than twenty times in the Psalms. In the very first reference (Psalm 104:1), the praise of Yahweh immediately follows the destruction of sinners.

The last part of this verse (“Salvation, glory and power belong to our God”) is somewhat awkward because there is no main verb. I add “belong” to the translation because “our God” can express possession or ownership.

Rev 19:2--

T Rev 19:2-- Verse 2 gives the reasons for the rejoicing in verse 1. The great multitude rejoices because God’s character has been proven trustworthy and fair and because God has vindicated the saints is His judgment of Babylon.

Verse 2 recalls the many celebratory passages of Revelation (Rev 7:10-12, etc.). These passages not only celebrate deliverance from oppression and sin, but vindicate the character of God who brings victory in the whole cosmic conflict.

God’s judgments are “true and righteous”, reminding the reader of Rev 16:7, where God’s judgments are also “true and righteous”. God is true to His own character and integrity when He judges.

Central to Revelation 19:2 is the parallel with the fifth seal (Rev 6:9-10). The souls under the altar complain that God is “not judging” and “not avenging” their blood. This verse tells us God has definitively responded to their pleas (Rev 17-18).

Babylon corrupting the earth recalls the two uses of the same word in 11:18. Babylon’s destruction is the consequence of how she twisted and deceived the minds of her followers.

Babylon’s corrupting work involved idolatry (Rev 13:15) and oppression (Rev 17:6). Both of these give a false picture of God; idolatry making God all too much like humanity, and oppression in God’s name making God appear arbitrary, judgmental and severe.

God acts in the end to make it up to the victims of violence and oppression by not only freeing them but providing them with eternal lives of deep significance, and even, at times, reconciliation with their oppressors in the world made new (Rev 22:2).

Rev 19:3--

According to Tonstad (*Revelation*, 272), the smoke going up forever and ever is poignant language for a memory that will not be erased. Ascending smoke is often all that is left when a fire stops burning.

Rev 19:4--

The combination of “fell down”, “worshipped”, and “the one sitting on the throne” directly recalls the throne room scene of Rev 4 and 5.

This verse contains the two main words for “worship” in Revelation, “fell down” (Rev 5:8, 14; 7:11, etc.) and “worshipped” (5:14; 7:11, etc.). The essence of worship, of course, is “Hallelujah” in the Hebrew, praise to the Lord.

Rev 19:5--

The specific Greek language for praise here recalls the musicians in the Israelite temple who praised God both with instruments and with their voices.

Whereas the heavenly council was in distress and consternation in Revelation 5:1-4, this

verse picks up on the unity of praise seen in 5:12-14. “Praise our God” is an English equivalent of the Hebrew “Hallelujah”. To praise God is to speak well of Him.

The language of “those who fear Him both small and great” recalls Rev 11:18, where the precise wording of 19:5 is anticipated (“those who fear . . . both the small and the great”).

The essence of Old Testament worship was to recount or rehearse the mighty things that God had done for Israel. That same pattern is clearly seen in Revelation 19:1-5.

Rev 19:6-8 (Introduction)—

Rev 19:6 seems an important transition point in chapter 19. It repeats the language of 19:1, but leaves out details that don’t need repeating.

In Rev 19:1-5 a great multitude praises God for the destruction of Babylon, in Rev 19:6-8, the same group praises God for His salvific work in their lives, resulting in “righteous acts” (Greek: *dikaiômata*).

The first third of this verse, up to “great multitude”, echoes the opening of 19:1, with two added features. The sound of the multitude is also “like” the sound of many waters and “like” the sound of loud thunderings.

Three expressions of really loud sounds (big crowds, rushing waters, thunder) reverse the opposition to God and His people expressed in texts like Isa 17:12-13, Jer 51:13 and Rev 17:1.

The last clause in this verse begins with “because”, introducing the reason for the overwhelming praise that John was hearing. It is because the Lord God Almighty has “begun to reign”.

The Greek word for “Almighty” occurs nine times in Rev and only once elsewhere in the Bible. The God of the New Testament is not only infinitely gracious, He is all-powerful, well able to achieve victory in the cosmic conflict.

Rev 19:7--

A Hebrew countryside wedding came in three stages: 1) engagement at the bride’s father’s house, 2) preparations at both fathers’ houses, and 3) groom returns to being bride to his father’s house.

John 14:1-3 fits a traditional Hebrew wedding. Jesus leaves His Father’s house to bring His bride to the home that He has prepared for her. While He was preparing the place, she was preparing herself.

Giving God glory recalls Rev 14:7, but there it comes as a command, here it is an exhortation. The former is given to the unwilling (cf. Rev 13:7), the latter is like a sermon encouraging the willing to act.

The second part of this verse introduces the reason the righteous are encouraged to rejoice, the wedding celebration of the Lamb has come. In Scripture marriage is a metaphor for the kind of relationship God seeks with His followers.

Referring to Jesus as “the Lamb” (Greek: *tou arniou*) occurs 28 times in the book of Revelation, but it is a different word for lamb than the one in the Gospel of John (Greek: *ho amnos*).

The Greek word for “bride” can be used in general for any adult female. But here it is used for “wife” or “bride”. The wedding celebration is possible because the bride has completed her preparations for the wedding

Rev 19:8—

“Fine linen” appears earlier in the book. It is simply listing the trade cargoes of Babylon (18:12) and the way Babylon is dressed (18:16, cf. 17:4). But here the use of bussinon is clearly metaphorical, with the meaning provided in the last part of the verse.

The terms “bright and clean” are also used for the dress of the angels in Rev 15:6 and the dress of the armies of heaven in 19:14. That may be significant for the identity of the armies of heaven in Rev 19.

It is tempting to see here a reference to righteousness by faith, as expressed by Paul in Romans and Galatians. But the focus here is not on the saints’ standing with God, but on the outcome of that standing expressed in righteous actions.

The end-time saints’ standing with God is not based on their righteous acts, it is based on the righteous acts of Jesus Christ. But the outflow of that standing with God is righteous actions that demonstrate the new relationship they have with God.

Rev 19:8 does not contradict Romans, but focuses on the end-time results of justification by faith. The saints become so immersed in Christ that their actions imitate those of Jesus (cf. Eph 5:25-31).

The bride of the Lamb is not only portrayed as a woman at her wedding, but also as a city. Just as Babylon is both a woman and a city (Rev 17:3, 18), so is the New Jerusalem.

Rev 19:9-10 (Introduction)—

The scene here turns from the great multitude in heaven (19:1, 6) to an interchange between John and an unnamed visionary figure (19:9-10). These scene is different from what comes before and after, a separate structural element.

The antecedent of “he” in “and he said to me” (Rev 19:9) is unclear within the context. Options include Rev 1:1, 17:1, and 19:5.

There are multiple angels in Rev 17:1 – 19:9 (17:1, 15; 18:1-3, 21). The clearest antecedent of “‘he’ said to me” is 17:15, an exact parallel, referring back to the bowl angel of 17:1.

The second structural question raised about verse nine is: What are the genuine words of God referred to here? Possibilities include 19:9a, 19:1-9a and 17:1 – 19:9a.

I am inclined to think that the antecedent of “these are the genuine words of God” is the declaration of 19:9a rather than a larger block of text, based on the parallels to Rev 21:5.

Rev 19:9--

In one sense, the saints play the role of the bride (Rev 19:7-8, cf. 2 Cor 11:2) and in another sense they are the guests at the wedding (Rev 19:9), as is often portrayed in the parables of Jesus (Matt 22:1-14; Matt 25:1-13; Luke 12:35-37; 14:8-11).

“And he (the angel) said to me. . . .” I believe that the antecedent of “he” in the text is

the bowl angel of Revelation 17:1, who has from time to time communicated with John since that point.

The term “wedding banquet” here (Greek: *to deipnon*) is more concrete or specific than “wedding celebration” (Greek: *ho gamos*) in verse seven. It refers specifically to the participants in a wedding sitting down to eat a major meal.

The words in the first half of the verse are powerful enough on their own. But the declaration in the second part of the verse certifies the statement and makes the blessing sure.

Rev 19:10--

In the Jewish mind there is a line drawn between God and the creation. Everything below that line, including angels and human beings, is not God and is not to be worshiped. So the angel thinks of himself more like John than like God.

As a subjective genitive, the testimony of Jesus would be the testimony that Jesus Himself gives, Jesus’ testimony. As an objective genitive, it would be expressing our testimony about Jesus. John often works from a “both/and” perspective.

In Rev 1:2 the testimony of Jesus is “what John saw.” It refers to the visionary, prophetic gift that Jesus gave to John (Rev 1:2). In Rev 12:17, the testimony of Jesus appears again as one of the two characteristics of the remnant of the woman’s seed.

The concept of a spirit of prophecy was in current usage by Jews in the First Century, so it was not coined by John. It is the spirit that moves the prophets to speak for God.

The testimony of Jesus and the spirit of prophecy both express a visionary, prophetic gift like the one that led John to write the book of Revelation, but is not confined to the book of Revelation.

Rev 19:11-21 (Structure)--

Rev 19 can be divided into two parts, each of which begins with “and I saw”. 19:11-16 portrays the armies of heaven, and 19:17-21 portrays the defeat of the armies of earth.

Revelation 19:11-21 portrays that final piece of the conflict before the second advent of Christ, the fate of the secular powers who collaborated with the end-time religious alliance (Rev 17:1-3).

Rev 19:11--

“Heaven standing open” recalls the door standing open in heaven in Rev 4:1. This parallels is one of many in the larger chiasmic parallel between the seven seals and the decisive events of Rev 19 and 20.

Roman generals often rode white horses at their victory parades. So this sitting is fitting to the time when John wrote, and suggests that victory is assured even though the battle will only be described at the end of the chapter.

Multiple connections with Jesus texts earlier in Rev demonstrate that the rider on the white horse in this text is also Jesus (Rev 1:14; 3:14; 17:14). Being called the Word of God also recalls John 1:1-18.

That Christ judges and makes war in “righteousness” is a deliberate contrast with the

way Satan and earthly powers judge and make war. He judges and makes war in a way that is appropriate to His character.

Rev 19:12--

Jesus eyes are like a blazing fire, which repeats the language of Rev 1:14. The rider on the white horse in Rev 19 is the same individual who is called the “son of man” in Rev 1. Both figures represent Jesus.

There are two Greek words for crown in Rev. The Greek word *stephanos* is a victory crown, like the laurel wreath worn by winners at the Olympic games. The other type of crown is the *diadêma*, the royal crown of authority and rulership.

The rider on the white horse in 19:12 wears many diadems. By way of contrast, the rider on the white horse in 6:2 wears the victory crown. If the rider in 6:2 is Jesus, there is an advancement in His career symbolized by a change of crowns.

The “many crowns” here recalls Rev 12:3 and 13:1. The dragon and his agents wear many crowns. They claim the crowns that belong to Christ alone. But in the battle of Rev 19 Jesus demonstrates the falsity of the dragon’s claim.

In the Hebrew context, a name represents one’s character. But the rider’s name, which is God’s name, is here unknown. The rider on the white horse comes onto the stage in a world that does not know what God is like.

Rev 19:13-14--

There are at least two possibilities for understanding the garment dipped in blood; the blood of Christ’s enemies slain in battle, or His own blood shed at the cross.

Isa 63:1-6 includes the treading of a wine press (2-3), the spattering of the blood on the garments of the Lord (3) and on the ground (6). If John had Isa 63 in mind, it might support a military reading of the garment dipped in blood.

If the rider on the white horse is the slain Lamb, Jesus Christ, the mention of blood could well recall the cross, where Jesus’ authority over the earth was vindicated and the imposter was thrown down (Rev 12:10-11).

A possible OT allusion is the story of Joseph (Gen 37:31-33). His brothers took Joseph’s robe of many colors, killed a goat, dipped his robe in the goat’s blood, and presented it as evidence that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal.

Possible allusion: An Aramaic translation of Gen 49:11 says, “(The Messiah) will . . . make the rivers red with the blood of their slain . . . his garments will be dipped in blood, and he himself like the juice of the wine-press.”

This is the only place outside of the first chapter of the Gospel of John that Jesus is called the Word, so it is, perhaps, an allusion to John 1:1-5. The Word of God is truly a unique name for Jesus, as no one else in Scripture is called by that name.

Only two of the many names of the rider on the white horse are written down, the one no one knows but Him (19:12) and King of kings and Lord of lords (19:16). I suspect the two names are the same.

In Rev white or “bright” garments are worn by the overcomers in Sardis (Rev 3:4-5), the

twenty-four elders (4:4), the Great Multitude (7:9, 13), and the angels in the heavenly temple (15:6) and the end-time people of God (19:8).

The armies of heaven wear garments of “fine linen, bright and clean”, an exact parallel with 19:8. This suggests that the bride of the Lamb and the armies of heaven are the symbols of the same group of people.

Rev 19:15-16—

The language of this passage is reminiscent of earlier images in Rev (1:16; 2:12, 27; 12:5; 14:19-20; 17:14). The rider on the white horse is the same Jesus Christ that has been symbolized in so many other ways in Rev.

I have placed these two verses together, because they are a single sentence in the Greek, but a sentence that has four main parts, each beginning with a Greek “and”.

Since the Word of God (Scripture) is sharper than any sword (Heb 4:12), the sword coming out of the rider’s mouth likely represents the words He speaks. The rider prevails over the nations by His witness rather than by conquest.

The word for “rule” is actually the verb for “shepherd” (Rev 2:27; 12:5, Psa 2:9). When one thinks in terms of shepherding here rather than rulership, the image is not as harsh sounding.

The name here is written on His garment, like the name badge on a modern-day soldier. It is probably on that part of the garment that is over the thigh.

Rev 19:17-21—

These verses begin with “and I saw” (Greek: *kai eidon*), a phrase frequently used by John to signal a new section in the structure of the book. This section is the fourth major part of Rev 19.

Rev 19:17-18—

Verse 17 has especially strong parallels to Rev 8:13, the first angel’s message (Rev 14:6-7), and the wedding supper of the Lamb (19:7-8). How one responds to the final gospel message determines the ultimate outcome.

“Standing in the sun” would locate the angel “high in the sky”, a parallel to Revelation 14:6-7 where the first angel flies in “mid-heaven” (Greek: *en mesouranēmati*).

This is a probably allusion to Ezekiel 39:17-20. But in Ezekiel, it is not God who destroys the armies of Gog, they take up the swords against each other (Ezek 38:21). Could that also be the case here?

The language here is what one might call godly hyperbole. In actual life, vultures tend to circle over a battlefield. They don’t need to be summoned. So this description is more metaphorical than literal.

“Free or slave, small or great” is universal language. Every cultural and socio-economic group is included here. In the end-time war all nations and classes are united against God and His people.

Rev 19:19--

Up until this point in the second half of Rev 19, the focus has been on the one riding a white horse and the army that was with Him. In this verse we see the forces arrayed against the armies of heaven.

The language of this part of the verse draws on Rev 17. The beast here is the same as the beast upon which harlot Babylon rides in 17:3. It is a coalition of the “kings of the earth” (17:2, 12-13), the political alliance which for a time supports Babylon.

This is the final showdown between Christ and the remaining powers of earth, the beast (worldwide political alliance) and the shattered remnants of Babylon (worldwide religious alliance).

Rev 19:20--

While Babylon has been removed from the scene, the secular political alliance remains to challenge the army of heaven.

Fire has been a preferred weapon for the opposing side throughout the book of Revelation (Rev 9:17-18; 13:13-14; 16:8; 17:16; 18:8). The fire that someone kindles can quickly get out of control and burn the one who started it.

Reference to the lake of fire here anticipates the lake of fire at the end of the millennium in Rev 20:10-15. Are these lakes references to literal destruction by fire or is their purpose more symbolic or metaphorical?

Since there are different victims in Rev 19 and 20, the two lakes of fire are symbolic and reflect different times in history, at opposite ends of the Millennium.

Rev 19:21—

This is one of three times in Rev where “remnant” is used for groupings that oppose God. The “remnant” are unrepentant (Rev 9:20), are the unrighteous dead (20:5), and here are the entities that are destroyed at the Second Coming.

If anyone could possibly employ violence justly, it would be the One who experienced its horror to the fullest. But the use of passives throughout the context raise the question if this is active violence or something else.

This verse needs to be read in the context of the universal conflict over God’s character and government (Rev 12:7-11). The role of Satan and his emissaries is grounded in deception (Rev 13:13-14; 16:13-14).

Combining Eph 6:17 and Rev 19; if the sword coming out of Jesus’ mouth is the Word of God, the self-destruction of the wicked is caused by a revelation of what God is truly like.

Allowing the bodies of a defeated enemy to be food for birds and animals is a sign of total defeat and shameful humiliation (1 Sam 17:44; 1 Kings 14:11; 16:4; 21:23-24; Ezek 39:4, 17-20). It was also one of the curses of the covenant (Deut 28:26).

Rev 19 (Spiritual lessons)—

The first reason for followers of Jesus to rejoice is the mighty acts of God in our past. The rejoicing of Rev 19:1-8 adds a second reason, anticipating God’s mighty acts in our future.

One's everyday walk with Jesus is symbolized in Rev 19 in terms of getting ready for a wedding. Getting ready for a wedding takes much preparation and requires practical action.

The book of Rev seeks to clarify the ultimate "pros and cons" of all of our decisions and actions. Walking with Jesus is never easy in this life. But knowing the outcomes can motivate us to make the right choices every day.

Rev 19 (Summary)--

Rev 19 and 20 focus particularly on the final destruction of evil, which comes in three stages, the Second Coming (Rev 19), the Millennium (Rev 20:1-6), and the events at the end of the Millennium (Rev 20:7-15).

Rev 19 is one of several references to the Second Coming of Jesus in the book. Two other major ones are 6:15-17 and 14:14-20. Some minor ones are 1:7, 16:15, 22:11-12, and 22:20.

Rev 19 (Conclusion)--

At this point in the book, Babylon is destroyed, Satan's allies are in the lake of fire, but the fate of Satan has not yet been described. In that sense, things are finally and ultimately settled in the next chapter, Rev 20.