

**The Facebook Commentary on Revelation**  
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**Revelation Chapter 19**

**Rev 19-20 (Introduction)**— We have seen in Revelation 12-18 a glimpse of God’s vision for the last days of earth’s history. Events will bring two great gospel messages to world attention. One will be the everlasting gospel, grounded in the life and death of Jesus Christ, but uniquely fitted for the situation of the world at the end of time (Rev 10:6-7; 14:6-13). The other will be a counterfeit of the genuine gospel, grounded in Satan’s ambition to exalt himself to the very throne of God (Rev 12:7-8; 16:13-14). There will be an end-time, worldwide, Mount Carmel experience for the world (Rev 16:16; 13:13-14), in which all come to a decision between the true Trinity and the demonic trinity. The result will be three world-wide confederacies--the saints (Rev 14:12; 17:6), the religious alliance (Rev 13:15; 17:4-5), and the secular-political alliance (Rev 17:8-14). As the religious and secular-political alliances unite with each other, the people of the world are brought to a decision on who they will follow so that the whole world is found on one side or the other. As human probation closes, “Babylon” and “the beast” seek to destroy the saints wherever they can be found (Rev 13:15). Christ's intervention prevents that destruction and the confederacy ends up destroying itself (Rev 17:16-17), with lamentable consequences (Rev 18:9-19). Soon after, the Second Coming of Jesus brings evil to an end and rescues the saints, followed by a period of a thousand years. It is at this point in time that the descriptions of Revelation 19 and 20 take place. Revelation 19 focuses on the events surrounding the Second Coming itself.

**Rev 19-20 (Structure)**—Revelation 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). In the big picture of Revelation, one can divide this section of Revelation into two parts, the introductory sanctuary vision (Rev 19:1-10) and the main part of the vision itself (Rev 19:11 – 20:15). Rev 19:1-10 is the sixth of seven sanctuary introduction segments, each of which introduces a major vision of Revelation. See Rev 1:12 (Excursus on the Sanctuary in Revelation) for a complete overview of these sanctuary introductions. While Revelation 19:1-10 does not contain specific sanctuary images (outside of the ubiquitous word “Lamb”), the scene is parallel to that of Revelation 4 and 5, which contains more sanctuary images than any other scene. The sanctuary, which was inaugurated in chapters four and five and emptied in 15:5-8 is now absent from the imagery.

Many of the earlier visions of Revelation are very easy to structure, since they contain numbered elements that occur one after the other; such as seven churches, seven seals and seven trumpets. Structuring is more difficult in Revelation 19-20, because it does not contain such obvious structural cues. The closest thing to a consistent structural cue in these chapters is the repeated “and I saw” (Greek: *kai eidon*) or its equivalent “and I heard” (Greek: *kai êkousa*) that usually come at natural break points in the narrative (Rev 19:1, 6, 11, 17; 20:1, 4, 11, 12).

Revelation 19:1-10 is difficult to structure. The “and I saw” (Greek: *kai eidon*) suggests a break between verses five and six, with 6-8 being a speech inviting praise to God for establish His reign over the earth and for the impending marriage of the Lamb. But most Bible translators don’t make a paragraph break with verse six, instead they put it at the beginning of verse nine, isolating 19:9-10 as an interlude between the sanctuary introduction scene (19:1-8) and the scene of the final battle between the rider on the white horse and the opponents of God on the earth (19:11-21). It is dilemmas like this that lead to the joke that twelve interpreters of Revelation will offer at least thirteen different structural outlines of the book. In my online outline of Revelation ([http://www.thebattleofarmageddon.com/revelation\\_outline.html](http://www.thebattleofarmageddon.com/revelation_outline.html)), I have chosen to leave Revelation 19:1-10 as a single unit, being the sanctuary introduction to the vision that follows.

The second half of chapter nineteen can be divided into two parts, each of which begins with “And I saw” (Greek: *kai eidon*). Revelation 19:11-16 portrays the rider on the white horse leading the armies of heaven. Revelation 19:17-21 portrays the final defeat of the enemy powers and their destruction by birds of prey and a lake of fire.

Chapter 20 can be divided into three or four parts. If one divides the chapter according to the sequence in time, there are events at the beginning of the Millennium (Rev 20:1-3), events during the Millennium (Rev 20:4-6) and events at the end of the Millennium (Rev 20:7-15). But the chapter also falls quite naturally into four parts. The first has to do with the binding of Satan (Rev 20:1-3), the next is the millennial reign of the righteous (20:4-6), then Satan’s final attack on the camp of the saints (20:7-10), and then the final judgment around the great white throne (20:11-15).

At the risk of too much repetition, I would like to introduce chapter nineteen with a second look at its structure. If we follow the natural division signaled by “And I heard” (Greek: *kai êkousa*) at the beginning of verse six, the first portion of chapter nineteen is verses 1-5. These verses depict the emotions of the great multitude (the righteous) as they see the destruction of Babylon depicted in Revelation 18:9-19. Revelation 19:1-5 picks up on the emotions of the “saints and apostles and prophets” in Revelation 18:20.

The second part of chapter nineteen describes the righteous ones as the bride of Christ prepared for a wedding (Revelation 19:6-8), followed by a short interchange between John and the interpreting angel (19:9-10).

In the third part (Rev 19:11-16) the armies of heaven come to rescue the righteous and finish the destruction of the unrighteous. The fourth part (Rev 19:17-21) depicts the armies of earth gathering to fight the one on the white horse and the armies of heaven, but they are quickly destroyed. This entire chapter echoes many themes found elsewhere in Revelation. We will take these up one by one as we go verse by verse through the chapter.

Stefanovic (*Revelation of Jesus Christ, 551, 561*) is content to divide this chapter into only two parts. He titles the first (Rev 19:1-10), “The Wedding Supper of the Lamb”, and the second (Rev 19:11-21), “The Great Supper of God”. In his view, the main movement in the chapter is from the depiction of a wedding banquet to a mixture of military and banquet imagery. But he does give a nod to the four-part structure of Revelation 19 when he notes that the wedding supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:6-8) is preceded by the tumultuous reaction to

Babylon's doom (19:1-5), and the gruesome feast of the birds (19:17-21) is preceded by a description of the coming of Christ (19:11-16). Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 551.

Tonstad, on the other hand, seems to prefer a three-part division quite different from what I am proposing. He sees Revelation 19 in terms of three tableaux. Revelation 19:1-9 is a wedding scene, Revelation 19:11-16 describes how God "makes decisions and wages war", and Revelation 19:17-21 is a "sickening supper". Not part of the three tableaux is the brief scene of John and the angel (Rev 19:10). Tonstad, *Revelation*, 270, 275.

**Rev 19:1— After these things I heard, as it were, the sound of a great multitude of many people in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation, glory and power belong to our God, . . .** The concept of a great multitude appears in only one other place in Revelation, chapter seven. There the great multitude (Rev 7:9-14) is the counterpart of the 144,000 (7:4-8). The great multitude are those who are found standing (7:9) in the day of the Lord (6:17). They proclaim that "salvation is to our God". "Great multitude" is one of many images Revelation uses to describe the end-time alliance of the saints. The great multitude here is described as being in heaven, in Revelation 7:9 they are "before the throne". They are the same group as the 144,000 with the Lamb on Mount Zion (Rev 14:1-3) and the saints (14:12).

"After these things" (Greek: *meta tauta*) is a major Greek structuring expression in Revelation, often combined with "I saw" (Greek: *eidon*—Rev 4:1; 7:1; 7:9). Here it is combined with "I heard" (Greek: *êkousa*). The praise and rejoicing here picks up on Revelation 18:20 where the saints, apostles and prophets were called on to rejoice over Babylon's fall. The first part of Revelation 19 describes the fulfillment of that call as the great multitude lift up their voices in praise. The song that begins in verse one continues to the end of verse two.

"Hallelujah" (Greek: *halleluia*) is a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew word for "praise Yahweh". The Hebrew word is a compound made up of *halal* ("praise") and *Yah* (for Yahweh). It is used more than twenty times in the Psalms as an expression of praise and worship (LXX: Psa 104:1, 105:1, 106:1, 110:1, etc.—Hebrew: Psa 104:35; 105:45; 106:48; 111:1). Many of these psalms either begin or end with the word "Hallelujah". In the very first OT reference (Psalm 104:1, Hebrew 104:35), the praise of Yahweh immediately follows the destruction of sinners. The Hallelujah song in Revelation 19 is one of many scenes of celebration in the book of Revelation (Rev 4:9-11; 5:9-13; 7:10-12; 11:15; 12:10; 15:2-4). Within the New Testament, in fact, the word Hallelujah occurs only in Revelation 19:1-6 (four times). The judgment of end-time Babylon, which provoked laments in the previous chapter (Rev 18:9-19) provokes an explosion of joy here. In two other places in Revelation, triumphant songs occur in the context of the judgment of the unrighteous (Rev 7:9-17; 11:17).

The last part of this verse (**Salvation, glory and power belong to our God**) is somewhat awkward because there is no main verb. It is literally "the salvation and the glory and the power of our God" (Greek: *hê sôtêria kai hê doxa kai hê dunamis tou theou*). So like a predicate nominative or a predicate adjective, the verb must be supplied. I chose "belong" because of the genitive form of *tou theou* ("of God"), which can express possession or ownership.

A parallel to the praises of this verse and the next can be found in Psalm 149:4-9. As here, in the Psalm Yahweh provides salvation for his people (149:4), the godly sing praises to

God (149:5-6). So it is possible that John had Psalm 149 on his mind as he wrote Revelation 19:1ff. But in Psalm 149:7-10 it is the responsibility of God's people to "execute vengeance" on the nations. This was written in the context of Israel's nationhood with its political and military aspects. In Revelation 19, the destruction of Babylon is ascribed to God alone. See Rev 15 (Wrath of God) for the various ways that can happen. But we do know that in Revelation Babylon is actually destroyed by a civil war (Rev 17:16) rather than by the direct hand of God.

**Rev 19:2-- . . . because His judgments are true and righteous, because He has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her fornications, and avenged the blood of his slaves out of her hand."** While the translation above is awkward in English because of the repetition of "because" (Greek: *hoti*), this double rendering in Greek makes it abundantly clear that verse two is closely connected to verse 1 and will give the reasons for the rejoicing that occurs there. The great multitude rejoices first because God's character has been proven trustworthy and fair and second that God has publically acknowledged the suffering of the righteous at Babylon's hand. While Babylon had judged the saints worthy of execution, God's vindicates them with mighty actions at the end. These actions are met with celebration.

This verse recalls a number of earlier passages in Revelation. Among them are the many celebratory passages of Revelation (Rev 4:9-11; 5:9-13; 7:10-12; 11:15; 12:10; 15:2-4—see comments on these passages elsewhere). These celebratory passages as a whole have a dual focus. They are, of course, usually a celebration of deliverance from oppression and sin, but even more they are a celebration of the fact that the final events of history vindicate the character of God and bring victory to the whole cosmic conflict. The saints have grown so close to God that God's concerns in the wider conflict have become theirs as well. God's vindication and their own have become two sides of the same coin. While at first there are many questions about what God is doing (Rev 5:1-2), those questions are settled for the righteous as they see God acting in the final events of earth's history. In the end God's decisions (Tonstad's translation of "judgments"—Greek: *hai kriseis autou*—Tonstad, *Revelation*, 271) are proven trustworthy (Greek: *alêthinai*) and fair (Greek: *dikaiai*).

God's judgments (Greek: *hai kriseis*) are "true (Greek: *alêthinai*) and righteous (Greek: *dikaiai*)", reminding the reader of Revelation 15:3-4, where these two key words are reversed. There God's ways are "righteous (Greek: *dikaiai*) and true (Greek: *alêthinai*)" or trustworthy. God's judgments and His ways are the same. God is true to His own character and integrity when He judges. But the closest parallel is with Revelation 16:7, where God's judgments (Greek: *hai kriseis*) are true (Greek: *alêthinai*)" and righteous (Greek: *dikaiai*). 19:2 not only repeats the same three words but in exactly the same grammatical form. There is a strong sense of justice in God's settling accounts with Babylon, for she is drunk with the blood of the saints (Rev 17:6).

Even more central to Revelation 19:2 is the parallel with the fifth seal (Rev 6:9-10). There the souls under the altar complain, "**How long, O Lord, the Holy and True One, do you not judge** (Greek: *krineis*) **and avenge** (Greek: *ekdikeis*) **our blood on those who live on the earth?"** Rev 6:10. They do not see God acting to right the wrongs that they have suffered. God is found to be "not judging" and "not avenging". The present indicative of these verbs,

combined with the negative, implies a future tense. God is not acting in the present to deliver the souls under the altar. This cry is answered with finality in Revelation 19:2. God **has judged** (Greek: *ekrinen*) **the great prostitute . . . and has avenged** (Greek: *exedikêsen*) **the blood of his slaves**. . . . Revelation 19:2 is the fulfillment of the cry for justice in the fifth seal.

When this verse reports that Babylon has “corrupted” (Greek: *diephtheiren*) the nations, the attentive Greek reader would notice that it is repeating an unusual compound word that occurs twice in Revelation 11:18. There it is said that one of the events of the seventh trumpet is to “to destroy (Greek: *diaphtheirai*) those who are destroying (Greek: *diaphtheirontas*) the earth”. The word is rare in the Bible and has two major meanings in ancient Greek. The more literal meaning is to spoil or destroy. It can describe rust, food spoilage and the deterioration of the body through age (2 Cor 4:16), hunger or disease. It can describe the physical destruction of persons or things. This seems to be the primary meaning of the first usage in Revelation 11:18, looking forward to the final destruction of the unrighteous. The second major meaning is metaphorical. People and their minds can become morally corrupted or depraved. That seems to be the meaning in 19:2 and possibly also the second reference in 11:18 (“destroying those who have corrupted the earth”—a word play). On the role of Revelation 19:2 and 11:18 on the structure of the book as a whole see Rev 11:18-19 (Introduction). The vision of Revelation 19 is contemporary with the seventh trumpet.

The reason given for Babylon’s destruction in 19:2 is that she has morally corrupted the minds of so many on earth. Spiritual decay results in physical destruction. Related forms of this word are found in the LXX of Genesis 6:11-13, where the corruption of the earth before the Flood includes acts of violence. See also the judgment on the original Babylon in Jeremiah 51:25. There Babylon’s corrupting of the earth (LXX: *diephtharmenon to diaphtheiron*) is the grounds for her destruction. The vision of Revelation 19 builds on Old Testament themes.

The imperfect form of “corrupt” here (Greek: *diephtheiren*) implies ongoing action in the past. Babylon’s work of corruption is not a one-time act, but has gone on continually in the period prior to the celebration of Revelation 19. Babylon’s corrupting work involved idolatry (Rev 13:15) and oppression (Rev 17:6). Both of these give a false picture of God. Idolatry makes God all too much like humanity. Oppression in the name of God makes God appear arbitrary, judgmental and severe. These qualities are appropriate to Satan, but not to God.

Tonstad (*Revelation*, 272) concludes his discussion of the judgments of this verse by making a distinction between retribution and vindication. Retribution is concerned with the offender, the actions of the offender need to be punished in order to somehow rebalance the universe. Vindication is more concerned with the victim, who has been maligned and ultimately killed for exercising faith in God. Victims of violence on this earth often feel abandoned by God in the course of their suffering. This raises questions about what God is doing in the world (Rev 5:1-2). 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). God does not lose sight of the oppressor in Revelation, but Tonstad goes to great lengths to show that the vindication and elevation of the victims is the primary concern in these scenes of judgment (see also Daniel 7:26-27).

**Rev 19:3-- And a second time they shouted, "Hallelujah! Her smoke goes up forever and ever."** The "second time" (Greek: *deuteron*) is with reference to the "Hallelujah", which is here shouted for the second of four times in Revelation 19:1-6. The smoke (Greek: *ho kapnos*) rising up "forever and ever" (Greek: *tous aiônas tôn aiônôn*) reminds the reader of Revelation 14:11, where the smoke (Greek: *ho kapnos*) of those who worship the beast and his image also goes up forever and ever (Greek: *aiônas aiônôn*). 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. Stefanovic (*Revelation*, 555) sees this metaphor as echoing the doom of Edom which would never rise from her ruins again (Isa 34:8-10). It may also recall the smoke of Sodom which was described in Genesis 19:28 and echoed in Revelation 9:2. The great multitude celebrates because the destruction of Babylon is now irreversible.

**Rev 19:4-- The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, the one sitting on the throne, saying, "Amen, Hallelujah!"** The combination of "fell down", "worshiped", and "the one sitting on the throne" goes back directly to the throne room scene of Revelation 4 and 5. See notes on the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures in the comments on Revelation 4. The elders seem to be representatives of redeemed humanity from both Old and New Testament Israel, and the four living creatures seem to represent the four archangels of Jewish tradition. Heaven and earth are joined together in praising God. In Revelation 4 and 5 the twenty-four elders are mentioned first, then the four living creatures, then the "great multitude" before the throne. In Revelation 19, the order is reversed; first the great multitude is described (19:1) and then the elders and the four living creatures are brought into the scene.

The first half of Revelation 19 directly recalls the earlier throne room scene (Rev 4:1 – 5:14), but without reference to the unique features of the heavenly sanctuary, such as furnishings. The heavenly sanctuary that was inaugurated in chapters four and five is now absent. Worship can occur outside the sanctuary context, which anticipates the "no temple there" of Revelation 21:22. See Rev 1:12 (Excursus on the Sanctuary in the Book of Revelation) to see how this passage fits in to the larger sanctuary/temple theme in Revelation). In Revelation 4 and 5, the one sitting on the throne is left undefined. But here the occupant of the throne is finally named as God (although in Rev 7:11 the ones before the throne are described as worshipping "God", so the identification of the one sitting on the throne is assumed, if not stated in Revelation 4 and 5). The reticence to do so earlier in the book probably reflects Jewish shyness about pronouncing the name of God.

This verse contains the two main words for "worship" in Revelation. The first is "fell down" (Greek: *epesan*—cf. Rev 5:8, 14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:10; 22:8) and the second is "worshiped" (Greek: *prosekunêsan*—5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 14:7; 15:4; 19:10; 22:8-9). The latter can also be used for worshipping the beast or his image (Rev 13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4). The essence of worship, of course, is "Hallelujah" in the Hebrew, praise to the Lord.

**Rev 19:5-- And a voice went out from the throne, "Praise our God, all his servants, and those who fear Him both small and great."** A voice going out from the throne would normally be the voice of God or the voice of the Lamb, although created beings are described as being "in the midst of the throne" in 4:6. Since the call is "praise *our* God", whoever is giving the call includes themselves as objects of the call. So perhaps the elders around the throne would be the best candidates as the ones voicing this call. The specific Greek language for praise here (*aineite tō theō*) recalls the musicians in the Israelite temple who praised God both with instruments and with their voices (1 Chr 23:5; 26-30; 25:3; 2 Chr 7:6; 20:19; 23:13; 29:30; Ezra 3:10; Neh 12:46). But in Revelation 19:5, all of God's "servants", not just the specially designated priests and Levites, are invited to join in the praise.

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 the English equivalent of the Hebrew "Hallelujah". To praise God is to speak well of Him. The Greek word for "servants" here (*douloi*) is more than just paid domestic help, it has the strong connotations of slavery. For the New Testament, in a sense, those who follow God have no other choice, because they have come to realize that worshiping God and acting in obedience to His ways is the path to their own best life. The concept of "servants of God" is frequently cited in Revelation. God's servants are the ones for whom the Revelation was given (Rev 1:1; 22:6). They are the objects of Jezebel's seduction (2:20) and the recipients of the seal (7:3). They have a role in the final proclamation of the "mystery of God", the gospel (10:7). Their acts of service to God will continue in the context of the New Jerusalem (22:3). Since they are the beneficiaries of God's judgments on Babylon (19:2), they are here called to respond in worship.

The language of "those who fear Him both small and great" recalls earlier themes in the book. The most direct reference is to Revelation 11:18, where the precise wording of 19:5 is anticipated ("those who fear . . . both the small and the great"—Greek: *tois phoboumenois . . . tous mikrous kai tous megalous*). Revelation 19 is the fulfillment of the promise to "destroy those who are destroying the earth" (11:18). "Fear God" is the appropriate response to the final proclamation of the gospel (Rev 14:7, cf. 11:13). The word "fear" (Greek: *phobos*) can have two meanings. One is best expressed by the English words fright or terror (Rev 1:17; 11:11; 18:10, 15). The other meaning is appropriate here, expressed in English by honor, reverence and respect. To praise God is to honor Him for all that He has done. The combination of "small and great" (Greek: *mikros kai megas*) is an expressive Greek way of saying "everybody without exception". This expression is, perhaps, based on Psalm 115:13, where it refers all socio-economic classes. Everyone who honors God, without exception, is called to worship and praise Him in this verse.

In the Old Testament there is a strong pattern of God performing mighty acts of deliverance and salvation for His "servants" with a corresponding response of worship from those who benefited from those mighty acts. The essence of Old Testament worship was to recount or rehearse the mighty things that God had done for them. See Jon Paulien, *Meet God Again for the First Time* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2003) pages 137-149. That same pattern is clearly seen in Revelation 19:1-5. God's servants have been delivered from the oppression of Babylon (Revelation 18) and are now called to worship God by celebrating that

mighty act. That worship is driven by two things; 1) a sense of relief among the righteous in the wake of their deliverance, and 2) the supernatural work of God in bringing about that deliverance.

**Rev 19:6-8 (Introduction)**— Revelation 19:6 strikes me as an important transition point with the chapter. The first clue is the repetition of the phrase “great multitude” (Greek: *ochlou pollou*) in verses one and six. This concept appears three times in Revelation, the first being Revelation 7:9 (Greek: *ochlos polus*). In Revelation 7 the great multitude is the counterpart of the 144,000, two different ways of describing the one end-time people of God. In none of these occurrences is the definite article used, so I have chosen to translate “great multitude” without capital letters. It is “a great multitude”.

The second clue that verse six is an important transition point within the chapter is the repetition of the word “I heard” (Greek: *êkousa*). In 19:1 *êkousa* is part of a major transition phrase, “after these things I saw” (Greek: *meta tauta êkousa*). The opening of verse six echos verse one with a simple “and I saw” (Greek: *kai êkousa*). The third clue is the repetition of “as it were, the sound” (Greek: *hôs phônên*). Revelation 19:1 adds that it is a “loud” (Greek: *megalên*) sound. So verse six repeats the transitional language of verse one, but shortens it somewhat. The great multitude of verse one has the added modifier “in heaven” (Greek: *en to ourano*), which does not need repeating in verse six.

I place here the two transitional clauses of 19:1 and 19:6 in English (my translation) and Greek for easy comparison. Rev 19:1: “After these things I heard, as it were, the sound of a great multitude . . .” (Greek: *meta tauta êkousa hôs phônên megalên ochlou pollou*). Rev 19:6: “And I heard, as it were, the sound of a great multitude . . .” (Greek: *kai êkousa hôs phônên ochlou pollou*). The very fact that verse six is so similar to verse one, yet eliminates several words, shows the close relationship between the two clauses. It is not necessary to repeat every word in order to remind the reader of the earlier expression. While the latter part of Revelation is more difficult to structure than the first half, clues like these can be very helpful. Since the content of Revelation 19:9-10 is so different from the preceding eight verses, I have chosen to address Revelation 19:6-8 as a minor, but distinct unit.

In Revelation 19:1-5 a great multitude praises God for the destruction of Babylon that has freed them from oppression and violence (Rev 19:1-2). In Revelation 19:6-8, the same group praises God with a different focus. They now praise God for His salvific work in their lives, resulting in “righteous acts” (Greek: *dikaiômata*), a transformation of life and behavior. They also praise God in anticipation of eternal union between God and the human race, which is illustrated in this passage by the metaphor of marriage. When the bride is ready, the union between God and the human race is confirmed by the marriage of the Lamb.

**Rev 19:6-- And I heard, as it were, the sound of a great multitude, and the sound of many waters, and the sound of loud thunderings, saying, “Hallelujah, because the Lord God Almighty has begun to reign.** The first third of this verse, up to “great multitude”, echos the opening of 19:1, as noted previously. But in the Greek there is a triple “*hôs*” (“like” or “as it were”) further defining what John heard. It is “like” the sound of a great multitude, “like” the

sound of many waters, and “like” the sound of loud thunderings. The latter two phrases elaborate on the first, which is repeated from verse one. These metaphors impress the reader with the sense of an overwhelming and sudden outburst of praise. Tonstad (Revelation, 273) suggests that the reason this rejoicing and praise is so powerful is that it comes against the background of conflict. There is rejoicing because God did not change His character in order to defeat Satan. At the cross and in His defeat of the cosmic Enemy, God remained what He always was in spite of great provocation. As a result, this outburst of praise is full of admiration as well as gratitude.

“Many waters” (Greek: *hudatôn pollôn*) is a Greek expression for a waterfall, raging rapids, or the waves of the sea, which make loud noises when crashing into the shore. “Loud thunderings” (*brontôn ischurôn*), of course, reflects the powerful noise of a thunderstorm. The word Hallelujah (Greek: *hallêlouia*) occurs here for the fourth and last time in this passage. The language of this verse recalls Isaiah 17:12-13, where the peoples of the world who are in opposition to God are described in terms of thunder and the “many waters” of the sea crashing into the shore. Another contrasting reference is that Babylon itself was the one who sits or dwells “upon many waters” (Rev 17:1—*epi tôn hudatôn tôn pollôn*; Jer 51:13 [28:13 LXX]—*eph’ hudasi pollois*). The same expression is used with regard to the voice of Jesus in Revelation 1:15 (Greek: *hudatôn pollôn*).

. . . **because the Lord God Almighty has begun to reign.** The last clause in this verse begins with “because” (Greek *hoti*) as is the case at the beginning of verse two. It introduces the reason for the overwhelming praise that John was hearing, because the Lord God Almighty has “begun to reign” (Greek: *ebasileusen*). The aorist indicative of *ebasileusen* broadly expresses a point in past time. Since the reign of God is not a point in time, but continues from that point on, I have translated *ebasileusen* as an inceptive aorist. It marks the beginning point of God’s reign, rather than the totality of it. This echoes Revelation 11:17, where God is also said to have “begun to reign” (Greek: *ebasileusas*). This is one of the many recapitulations in the book of Revelation. In the author’s mind this “begun to reign” is likely the same moment as the Lamb’s victory in 17:14.

The concept of God Almighty occurs frequently in the Old Testament with “Almighty” expressed by the Hebrew *Shaddai*, which is often left untranslated in the LXX (Greek translation of the OT—Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14, etc.). The Greek translators were content to translate “God Almighty” (Hebrew: *el shaddai*) simply with “God” (LXX: *theos*). What Revelation does is come up with a Greek equivalent for the Hebrew *Shaddai* in *pantokratôr*, a compound of “all” (Greek: *panto*) and “powerful” (Greek: *kratôr*). The expression *pantokratôr* occurs nine times in Revelation (Rev 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22) and only once elsewhere in the Bible (2 Cor 6:18). With this expression John makes clear that the God of the New Testament is not only infinitely gracious, He is all-powerful, well able to achieve victory in the cosmic conflict, even by gracious and self-sacrificial means (see the contrast between lamb and lion in Rev 5:5-6).

**Rev 19:7-- Rejoice, be abundantly glad, and give glory to Him, because the wedding celebration of the Lamb has come and his wife has made herself ready.”** One of the high

points of universal history will be the uniting of Christ and the church described in the language of a wedding. The typical Hebrew countryside wedding would have the following elements. 1) The wedding begins with a betrothal or engagement, which took place on the estate of the bride's father. The prospective groom and his father would come to the house of the bride and her father for the engagement ceremony. 2) The groom returns to his father's house and prepares the place where the young couple will live and farm, usually on the father's property. The bride stays at her father's house to prepare herself to be a fit and honorable bride. 3) The groom goes back to his bride's father's house and brings her to his father's house where the wedding feast takes place.

**Rev 19:7**-- The context here is the time of Jesus' second coming, which fits perfectly with the various elements of the traditional Jewish wedding. At His first coming, Jesus left His Father's house in heaven to come to earth and be engaged to His bride, the church. He returns to Heaven and prepares a place for His bride (John 14:1-3) while she remains on this earth preparing herself. At His second coming Jesus leaves His heavenly home to collect his bride from earth and take her back to His Father's house, where He has prepared a place. When the place and the bride are both ready, the wedding takes place. That the bride has made herself ready is in harmony with the Hebrew wedding and is the focus of this passage.

**Rejoice, be abundantly glad and give glory to Him. . . .** The verse opens with a series of three exhortations to rejoice and glorify God. I use the term "exhortations" because "rejoice" (Greek: *chairômen*), "be abundantly glad" (Greek: *agalliômen*), and "give glory" (Greek: *dôsômen tên doxan*) are not imperatives, they are Greek subjunctives. The Greek language has a series of "moods", which express a statement of fact (indicative), probability (subjunctive), possibility (optative), and command (imperative). Whereas a command (imperative) orders someone to do something, the subjunctive offers encouragement to do. "Let us rejoice and be abundantly glad. . . ." The action is probable, assuming that the subjunctive would be used when the other party seems willing to act, while a command is more appropriate when the other party is unwilling. Giving God glory recalls Revelation 14:7, but there it comes as a command, "give Him glory" (Greek: *dote autô doxan*). This makes sense in 14:7 because the ones being addressed (every nation, tribe, language and people) are the same ones described as under Babylon's control in 13:7. It is a command to the unwilling.

**. . . because the wedding celebration of the Lamb has come . . .** Once again "because" (Greek: *hoti*) introduces the reason the righteous are encourage to rejoice, the wedding celebration of the Lamb has come. The word for "wedding" (Greek: *ho gamos*) can refer to a marriage, to a wedding in general, or to a wedding celebration in specific. The NIV translates "the wedding of the Lamb", the NET translates "the wedding celebration of the Lamb", and many other translations have "the marriage of the Lamb" (ESV, KJV, RSV, NASB). That "wedding celebration" is the best translation in this verse seems evident to me from verse nine, which speaks about being invited to the "marriage supper" (Greek: *to deipnon tou gamou*) of the Lamb. The use of the article for "the" wedding celebration suggests that this event was known and anticipated in the text. But there is absolutely no hint earlier in the book that there would be a wedding at the climax. The excitement expressed in this verse indicates that those who are

invited to the wedding celebration were looking forward to it. Seeing Jesus as the bridegroom at a wedding is anticipated in the Gospel of John (3:29, cf. Mark 2:19; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:31) and seen in its fulfillment here. Frequently in Scripture marriage is a metaphor for the kind of relationship God seeks with His followers (Isa 54:4-6; 61:10; 62:5; Jer 2:32; Hos 2:19-20).

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*). *Ho amnos* is the Passover lamb, which needed to be without blemish, and was usually one year old. *To arnion* is a sheep of any age, but the term in Greek at the time was used only in imagery, such as Revelation’s application of the word to Christ. While Lamb is used more than once a chapter throughout the book, it has not been mentioned since 17:14 and will not be mentioned again until 21:9. So this reference to the Lamb stands out in the context of much destruction and opposition (Rev 18-20).

. . . **and his wife has made herself ready.** The word for “bride” (Greek: *hê gunê*) can be used in general for any adult female (Matt 5:28; Matt 9:20; John 2:4). It is from this Greek word that we get the English word “gynecology”, the medical specialty that focuses on the health needs of women. But here, as is often the case in the New Testament, *hê gunê* is used for “wife” or “bride” (Matt 5:31-32; Luke 1:5, 13; 1 Cor 7:2-3). The wedding celebration is possible because the bride has completed her preparations for the wedding. She has “made herself ready” (Greek: *êtoimâsen eautên*). This signals the completion of the second phase of Hebrew marriage outlined above. The marriage of the Lamb to a virgin bride (Rev 14:4-5) stands in contrast with the fornication of Babylon (Rev 17:1-2).

**Rev 19:8-- And it was given to her to be dressed in fine linen, bright and clean (for the fine linen is the righteous actions of the saints).** John here continues with the wedding celebration analogy, focusing on the bride’s dress and its metaphorical meaning. The “fine linen” (Greek *bussinon*) appears earlier in Revelation 18. It does not have metaphorical meaning there, it is simply listing the trade cargoes of Babylon (18:12) and the way Babylon is dressed (18:16, cf. 17:4). A similar use is made in 19:14. But here the use of *bussinon* is clearly metaphorical, with the meaning provided in the last part of the verse, introduced by the Greek word *gar* (English: “for”).

. . . **bright and clean . . .** The bride’s dress is bright and clean (Greek: *lampron katharon*). The term *lampron* means bright, shining or radiant. It describes the dress of the angels in the heavenly temple (Rev 15:6). It summarizes the splendor or radiance of Babylon (Rev 18:14). The river of life is “bright” as crystal (22:1), as is the morning star of 22:16. The term *katharon* means clean and pure literally, but can also be used to express that an action is morally or ceremonially pure. The latter meaning seems the intention in this verse. The cleanness of the garment represents the end-time church’s purity and faithfulness to the End. It is used in Revelation for the dress of the angels (15:6), for that of the armies of heaven (19:14) and the purity of the gold with which the New Jerusalem and its streets were constructed. The connection of the bride’s dress with 19:14 is one reason some scholars consider the armies of heaven to be metaphorical of the church triumphant in the final battle. The dress of the bride, however, is most closely related to that of the angels in 15:6 (“clean and bright”—Greek:

*katharon lampron*).

. . . **(for the fine linen is the righteous actions of the saints)**. The metaphorical meaning of the fine linen is “the righteous actions” (Greek: *ta dikaiômata*) of the saints. The garment represents the character of the wearer. The Greek word *dikaiômata* is based on the Greek stem *dik* whose variations can be translated “just”, “righteous”, “righteousness”, “justify”, “justice”. So it is tempting to see here a reference to righteousness by faith, as expressed by Paul in Romans and Galatians. But the particular form of the word *dikaiômata* is best translated “righteous actions”. The focus is not on the saints’ standing with God, but on the outcome of that standing expressed in righteous actions. The same word is used with reference to God’s righteous actions in resolving the cosmic conflict (Rev 15:4). The righteous actions of the saints are in contrast with the unrighteous actions (*adikêmata*) of Babylon in Revelation 18:5. It is, perhaps, in this sense that the fellow servants and brothers of the souls under the altar are “made complete” (Rev 6:11). Their standing with God at the End is expressed in the kind of life they live. They “keep the commandments of God” (Rev 12:17: 14:12).

In the Old Testament “righteousness” means actions done in harmony with the covenant. Such behavior is ascribed both to the actions of God (Psa 71:16-24) and the actions of Israel (Deut 24:13). The two ideas are even combined in Isaiah 56:1. But Israel never consistently carried out the stipulations of the covenant. So in the New Testament a remedy for Israel’s unrighteousness is offered in the gospel (Rom 1:16-17). God’s righteousness (actions in harmony with the covenant) is revealed through the faithfulness to the covenant of Jesus Christ (Rom 3:21-22). In Christ God demonstrates His own righteousness through the faithfulness of Jesus (Rom 3:25-26). So 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. They are justified by faith alone, but saving faith is never alone, it results in a change of life and actions.

So Revelation 19:8 does not contradict Romans, but focuses on the end-time results of justification by faith. The bride in this verse “was given” (Greek: *edothê*) to clothe herself in white linen (cf. Rev 6:11). This is a typical divine passive in Revelation (Rev 9:1, 3, 5; 16:8; 20:4). The white garment, representing the righteous actions of the saints, is a gift from God (cf. Rev 3:18; 7:9-14). The righteous actions are not the ground of the church’s salvation, they are not meritorious. These righteous actions demonstrate that the process of salvation is complete and the bride is ready for the wedding. They are fitted for heaven because their lives are compatible with the righteous actions of Jesus. The “faith of Jesus” (Rom 3:22) becomes the faith of His people leading them into obedience (Rev 14:12). The saints become so immersed in Christ that their actions imitate those of Jesus (Eph 5:25-31).

The bride of the Lamb, therefore, is dressed in the righteousness of Christ and the corresponding righteous acts that she has done. The linen (*bussinon*) she wears is distinguished from Babylon’s dress (18:14) by being bright and clean, like the New Jerusalem (21:18, 21). The simplicity of the linen garment is in contrast to the garish clothing of Babylon (Rev 17:4). Since the Lamb’s bride is not only described in terms of her actions, she is also associated with the New Jerusalem itself (Rev 21:9-10). The bride of Jesus 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. The two metaphors do not contradict each other. The purpose of a city is to be a dwelling place for many people. So the church and the city are one in the bride of the Lamb.

**Rev 19:9-10 (Introduction)**—This is a somewhat jarring turn within chapter nineteen of Revelation. After the description of Babylon’s fall (Rev 18), the rejoicing over her demise (19:1-5), and the rejoicing over the imminent arrival of the wedding celebration of the Lamb (19:6-8), the scene turns from the great multitude in heaven (19:1, 6) to an interchange between John and an unnamed visionary figure (19:9-10). That figure pronounces a blessing on all who are called to the wedding supper of the Lamb, followed by the declaration that “these are the genuine words of God” (19:9). John then attempts to bow down at the feet of this visionary figure, but is rebuked for doing so. Although verse nine has some relation to 19:6-8, this section is so different from the preceding that it seemed set apart in a structural category all its own. Two structural questions arise immediately: 1) Who is this figure that speaks to John? The antecedent of “he” in “and he said to me” (Greek: *kai legei moi*—phrase occurs twice in 19:9) is unclear within the narrative of chapters eighteen and nineteen. 2) What are the genuine words of God referred to in verse nine? The first part of the verse? Revelation 19:1-9? Everything from 17:1 – 19:9? The entire book? We will address these two structural questions in what follows.

Who is this visionary figure that suddenly appears to John and speaks with him? As noted previously, the antecedent of “he” in “and he said to me” (Rev 19:9-- Greek: *kai legei moi*) is unclear within the context. Several options have been suggested. One is the voice from the throne in 19:5. That is the nearest antecedent, but comes into verse five from a distance, it is not a conversational voice close to John, but booms out from the throne itself. A voice from the throne could be either God or Jesus. And if that is the “he” of verse 9, God/Jesus speak of themselves there in third person: “The true words of God.” When speaking of His word in the Bible God usually uses the possessive: “My Word” (Isa 55:11; 66:2; Jer 1:12; 23:28; Ezek 12:28). So the antecedent of the “he” in verse nine must be sought further back. Some commentators go all the way back to Revelation 1:1, seeing the voice as coming from the mediating angel that has been with John from the beginning. That 19:10 is repeated in 22:8, with John’s companion clearly identified as an angel there, adds weight to the idea that this would be John’s mediating angel. But if that had been John’s intent, he could easily have said so: “The angel who has been with me from the beginning.” So the antecedent of “he” is likely to be closer in the text than 1:1.

Revelation 17:1 seems to be a major turning point in Revelation. Beginning with 17:1, a number of angels appear. There is the bowl angel who offers to show John the great prostitute who sits on many waters (Rev 17:1). That angel doesn’t actually explain that scene until 17:15, where John writes, “and he said to me” (Greek: *kai legei moi*), referring back to the angel of verse one. This phrase is an exact parallel to the opening word of Revelation 19:9. The difference is that in 17:15 the antecedent is unmistakable, and this Greek phrase occurs nowhere else in Revelation except twice in the parallel passage of 22:9-10. In 18:1-3 “another angel” (Greek: *allon aggelon*) comes down from heaven and addresses whoever will listen in a loud voice. Like the voice from the throne in 19:5, this is not a companion angel of John, but is sent on a broader mission. In Revelation 18:4, “another voice” (Greek: *allên phônên*) from

heaven makes another worldwide proclamation regarding Babylon. Finally there is the mighty angel of Revelation 18:21 who takes a stone and casts it into the sea, to illustrate the suddenness and finality of Babylon's fall. So the only natural antecedent of "he said to me" in 19:9 is 17:1, 15. That means that the unseen companion of John, who he tries to worship (19:10, cf. 22:8), is likely the same angel that was introduced in 17:1 and spoke to him in 17:15. After a lengthy description of the fall of Babylon in chapter 18, the interpreting angel of chapter seventeen returns to John in 19:9-10.

The second structural question raised about verse nine is: What are the genuine words of God referred to here? One possibility is that they refer only to the proclamation of the angel to John in 19:9a. The angel is assuring John that the blessings on all those called to the wedding supper of the Lamb are assured. Another option is that the genuine words of God refers to the rejoicing of the great multitude over the fall of Babylon and the assurance of the wedding supper of the Lamb (19:1-9). In that case, this short sentence would represent the assurance that no matter how invincible Babylon may appear, her fall is sure, as is the reward of the saints. A third possibility is that the genuine words of God include the entire outline of Babylon and Babylon's fall from 17:1 until this point. In that case these words would offer assurance that the outline of end-time history is assured, even though these events have not happened yet. Finally, it is possible to see this declaration as an assurance regarding the entire book. While that is possible, a sentence with that purpose would be better located at the end of the book. If the antecedent of "he" in 19:9 is the angel of Revelation 17:1, it stands to reason that the third possibility listed above is the correct one.

While the antecedent of "these are the genuine words of God" may be the entire section of Revelation from 17:1 through 19:9a, I have the sense that it is most pertinent to the declaration of 19:9a rather than a larger block of text. This sense was strengthened in me when I discovered that there is a strong parallel to 19:9b in 21:5. The Greek of "these are the genuine words of God" in 19:9b is *houtoi hoi logoi alêthinoi tou theou eisin*: Literally, "these words true/genuine of God are". In 21:5 the similar phrase is "these words are faithful and true". The Greek there is *houtoi hoi logoi pistoi kai alêthinoi eisin*: Literally, "these words faithful and true are". The Greek word *alêthinoi* can mean true, dependable, genuine or real. It is the same word in 19:9 and 21:5, but translating "genuine" in 21:5 seems awkward in English because of the addition of the adjective faithful (Greek: *pistoi*). These words are both adjectives. They could be applied to God, as in "God is faithful and true". But the fact that "God" is in genitive here ("of God") and "faithful and true" are both plurals means the adjectives apply to "these words" rather than God. In 21:5, the genuine words fit best with the declaration that God is making all things new, so I am inclined to see the genuine words in 19:9 as applying only to 19:9a, but I don't say that with a whole lot of conviction; the author of Revelation leaves us a little short of certainty.

**Rev 19:9-- And he (the angel) said to me, "Write: Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding banquet of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the genuine words of God."** In this verse, the bride of the Lamb (the saints mentioned at the end of verse eight) is invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb. The purpose of this imagery is to describe the

experience of the saints from a variety of aspects. 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). When it comes to figurative language like this, it is easy to press western logic too far and try to make it all fit into a seamless whole. What we are dealing with is a variety of metaphors to explain what cannot be fully understood. In this particular case, the bride of the wedding and the guests of the wedding represent one and the same: Those who have accepted the garment of Christ's righteousness and allowed Him lordship over their lives and behavior. These are two different images for the one people of God at the End. Perhaps the bride represents the church as a whole, while the guests represent the individuals who make up that church.

I have added (the angel) to clarify the conclusion I argue for above; 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. It is possible that the interpreting angels throughout the book (Rev 1:1; 10:8-11; 17:1, 15) are one and the same. In that case, this would be Jesus' messenger angel who delivered the entire book to John (Rev 1:1). But in this verse, it seems to me that it is wiser to go with the nearer antecedent; the bowl angel of Revelation 17:1. By repeating the words "and he said to me" (Greek: *kai legei moi*), the two brief angelic speeches are separated from each other. The angel says two things to John in this verse: 1) "Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding banquet of the Lamb," and 2) "These are the genuine words of God." We will address each of these briefly in turn.

**"Write: Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding banquet of the Lamb."** 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. God here certifies the blessing that will come to all who are called to the wedding banquet of the Lamb and who respond by accepting the linen garment they are given in verse eight. That these words were to be written down makes them irrevocable in a way that spoken words cannot match. Similar calls for John to write are found in 1:11, 14:13, and 21:5. The invitation to this banquet is in direct contrast with the invitation to the vulture feast in Revelation 19:17-18. It also echoes the invitation to dine with Jesus in 3:20.

This is the fourth of seven blessings (beatitudes) in the book of Revelation (1:3; 14:15; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). The wedding banquet is the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to drink the fruit of the vine with His disciples in His Father's kingdom (Matt 26:29). The blessing is a present reality for John's readers, even though they are experiencing hardship and suffering (Rev 1:9) in their daily lives.

**"These are the genuine words of God."** As noted previously, "the genuine words of God" in this verse are probably limited to the statement in the first part of the verse. "Genuine" translates the Greek word *alêthinoi*, which can mean true, dependable, genuine or real. 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.

The word "genuine" (Greek: *alêthinoi*) is frequently combined with "faithful" (Greek: *pistos, pistoi*) in Revelation. Jesus is the "faithful and true" (Greek: *ho pistos kai alêthinos*)

witness in Revelation 3:14. He is simply “faithful and true” (Greek: *pistos kai alêthinos*) in 19:11. The words of “the one seated on the throne” in 21:5 are “true and faithful” (Greek: *alêthinoi kai pistoi*). And, finally, the words of the angel in 22:1-5 are called “faithful and true” (Greek: *pistoi kai alêthinoi*) in 22:6. The words of God or the angel are reliable and trustworthy. Readers are invited to investigate and embrace the claims made in the book of Revelation.

**Rev 19:10-- I fell down at (the angel’s) feet to worship him. But he said to me, “See that you don’t! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God!” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.** This is an interruption of the narrative, with John continuing to engage his interpreting angel. Impressed by the solemn statement, “These are the genuine words of God”, John falls down at the feet of the angel to worship him. But he is reminded of the Jewish conviction that worship is not to be offered to anyone except God alone. In the Jewish mind there is a line drawn between God and the creation. That line signals a vast distance between the Creator 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. They are on the same side of the line between God and His creation. Thus it would be inappropriate for the angel to receive worship from anyone. Part of John’s confusion may lie in the fact that Jesus Himself is probably described in angelic form in the book of Revelation (8:3-4; 10:1-2; 12:7-10?). John may have thought that his accompanying angel was another expression of Jesus, perhaps the Angel of the Lord, that appears often in the Old Testament (Gen 16:7-11; 22:11, 15; Exod 3:2; Num 22:22-35, etc.). After all, previous commands to John to write came from God or Jesus Himself (Rev 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 12; 14:13). It would not be a mistake to worship an angel who is actually Jesus. By including this scene and a similar one in 22:8-9, the author is correcting any tendencies in the churches to worship angels.

**I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who have the testimony of Jesus.** The angel states that he is a fellow servant of John and of John’s “brothers”, who have the testimony of Jesus. That raises the question, what is the testimony of Jesus? The phrase “testimony of Jesus” (Greek: *marturia Iêsou*) can be read in two ways in the Greek; either as a subjective genitive or as an objective genitive (like the English possessive). As a subjective genitive, it would be the testimony that Jesus Himself gives, Jesus’ testimony. As an objective genitive, it would be expressing our testimony about Jesus. Fairly consistently in the New Testament, a phrase like this would be understood as subjective. In other words, this is a testimony from Jesus rather than a testimony about Jesus. Having said that, in both the Gospel of John and in Revelation one can make the case that John often works from a “both/and” perspective. So it is wise not to be dogmatic about this.

The clearest explanation of what the testimony of Jesus might mean in Revelation can be found by examining Revelation 1:2. There the testimony of Jesus is “what John saw.” It is part of a chain of revelation in Revelation 1:1-3. God gives Jesus “the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:1). Jesus gives John “the testimony of Jesus” (1:2). And John writes out “the words of this prophecy” and passes them on to the church (1:3). So the testimony of Jesus is not the book of Revelation itself (Rev 1:3– “the words of this prophecy”), it is the visionary, prophetic gift that

Jesus gave to John (Rev 1:2). So John is here designated as one of the prophets, a special group of spokespeople for God within the churches of Revelation (Rev 11:18; 16:6; 18:20, 24; 22:9).

In Revelation 12:17, the testimony of Jesus appears again. There it is one of the two characteristics of the remnant of the woman's seed. See the excursus on the remnant in the comments on Rev 12:17. The remnant keep the commandments of God and "have" (Greek: *echontôn*) the testimony of Jesus. What is it that they have? In Revelation 1:2, the testimony of Jesus is part of "what John saw" (Greek: *hosa eiden*). It is an expression of the visionary, prophetic gift that John received on Patmos. Revelation 12:17 seems to be saying that the remnant of the end-time will have a visionary, prophetic gift among them, like the one that John had in receiving the messages Jesus wanted him to share. At the time of the End, the church will once again be in possession of a prophetic ministry like the one that John exercised in behalf of the churches of Asia Minor.

**For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.** The final clause of this verse is probably not part of the angel's speech, but an interpretive aside from the author of Revelation, explaining what the angel said. In this clause we are offered a different definition of the "testimony of Jesus" than the one given in Revelation 1:2. It says that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Greek: *to pneuma tês prophêteias*). 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. Taken literally into English, the phrase is "the spirit of the prophecy". There are two ways one could take this. One is to see the definite article ("the" prophecy) functioning like a demonstrative pronoun: "The spirit of **this** prophecy". In that case the spirit of prophecy would be the book of Revelation itself. But that would be in tension with Revelation 1:1-3, where the testimony of Jesus is not the book of Revelation itself, but the visionary gift that was the foundation of the book's message. So the other option is more likely. As is the case with German and French, the definite article can signal an abstract concept. In French, the abstract "beauty" is expressed with a definite article, "the" beauty. So the spirit of "the" prophecy likely means prophecy as an abstract concept rather than something concrete like a specific book. That would mean that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit that works through the prophets and inspires prophecy (Eph 3:2-6). 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.

This definition of the testimony of Jesus is confirmed by a comparison of Revelation 19:10 with the parallel scene in 22:8-9. When John again tries to worship the angel who is escorting him through the vision, the angel responds with a similar caution but with a small modification. The angel is a fellow servant with John and with John's brothers "the prophets". There the brothers who had the testimony of Jesus in 19:10 are called "the prophets". Some interpreters prefer to see those who have the testimony of Jesus as "all who keep the words of this book" (Rev 22:9). But that clause is separated from "your brothers the prophets" with a Greek "and" (*kai*). The angel is a fellow servant of John, of John's brothers the prophets, and of all who keep the words of this book. The exact parallel to the brothers who have the testimony of Jesus (19:10) is the brothers who are prophets (22:9). This confirms the definition of the testimony of Jesus in both Revelation 1:2 ("what John saw") and 19:10 ("the spirit of

prophecy”). The testimony of Jesus is the visionary, prophetic gift that John had and remnant of 12:17 would have. John seems to be drawing a distinction between prophets, who bear their testimony to the church, and the wider membership, who have a mission to the world. In the words of Davis Aune, the spirit of prophecy is “the power that allows certain individuals to have visionary experiences and gives them revelatory insights not available to ordinary people” (*Revelation 17-22*, page 1039).

**Rev 19:11-21 (Structure)**-- Revelation 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). In the big picture of Revelation, one can divide this section of Revelation into two parts, the introductory sanctuary vision (Rev 19:1-10) and the main part of the vision itself (Rev 19:11 – 20:15). While the first half of chapter nineteen (verses 1-10) climaxes with the Lamb’s wedding banquet, the second half (11-21) moves from military language to the gruesome feast of the birds. It can be divided into two parts, each of which begins with “and I saw” (Greek: *kai eidon*). Revelation 19:11-16 portrays the rider on the white horse leading the armies of heaven. It describes how God wages war. The armies of heaven come to rescue the righteous and finish the destruction of the unrighteous. Revelation 19:17-21 depicts the armies of earth gathering to fight the one on the white horse and the armies of heaven, but the enemy powers are quickly defeated and then destroyed by birds of prey and a lake of fire.

In the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:13-19; 17:14), the armies of earth were made up of the unholy trinity (dragon, beast, and false prophet—Babylon) and the secular powers of this world, the kings of the earth or the beast (Rev 16:14; 17:8-11). The initial defeat of this alliance is outlined in 17:14, followed by the destruction of Babylon in 17:16 and chapter 18. So Babylon has already been dealt with by the time you get to Revelation 19. But the secular powers of this world remain in play and make one final attempt to defeat the one sitting on the white horse (otherwise known as the Lamb in Revelation). Revelation 19:11-21 portrays that final piece of the conflict before the second advent of Christ. The armies of heaven are on display (Rev 19:11-16) and the armies of earth are defeated and destroyed (Rev 19:17-21). So this passage describes the fate of the secular powers who collaborated with the end-time religious alliance (Rev 17:1-3).

**Rev 19:11-- And I saw heaven standing open, and I observed a white horse, and the one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.** The words “standing open” (Greek: *êneôgmenon*) are an attempt to express the perfect passive form of the Greek word for opening. The perfect expresses the fact that the door was once closed, but has been opened at some point in the past and now stands open. “Heaven standing open” (Greek: *ton ouranon êneôgmenon*) recalls the door standing open in heaven (Greek: *thura êneôgmenê en tô ouranô*) in Revelation 4:1. The language of opening in heaven is found also in 11:19 and 15:5, but there it is the temple in heaven that is seen to be open, not the entrance into heaven itself. At that point in his vision, John was called up through the gate of heaven into the heavenly throne room. In 19:11 Jesus comes down to earth through a

completely open heavenly portal, riding on a white horse as He did in the first seal (Rev 6:2). This pair of parallels makes this scene part of the larger chiasmic parallel between the seven seals and the decisive events of Revelation 19 and 20.

**. . . and I observed a white horse, and the one sitting on it is called Faithful and True . . .**  
. 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. The image of the white horse recalls the white horse of the first seal (Rev 6:2). In neither case is the article used, it is “a” white horse, not “the” white horse. Tonstad (Revelation, 276) suggests that if the white horse of Revelation 19 was intended to be the same as the one in Revelation 6, it would have the article. He wishes to distinguish not only the two horses, but also their riders. For him “deceit” rides the first horse, the rider on the white horse of the first seal portrays the activities of Satan, whereas the rider on the white horse in this chapter is “trustworthy”, clearly Christ Himself. But while Tonstad’s conclusion is possible, this contrast is not obvious in the language of 6:2 and 19:11. In neither case is the rider on the white horse identified in the text. So the identity of that rider must be based on the descriptions in the respective contexts. In my view, the combination of images in the first seal strongly suggests that the rider there is Jesus Christ Himself (see comments on Rev 6:2), with the parallel to Revelation 19 being only a small part of that evidence.

There is even more reason to see the rider on the white horse in 19:11 as Jesus Christ. The first reason immediately follows the mention of the white horse. The terms “faithful and true” (Greek: *ho pistos kai alêthinos*) were used earlier by Jesus to introduce Himself to the church at Laodicea (Rev 3:14), except there the concept of witness (Greek: *ho martus*) was added. In Laodicea, He is faithful and true in His witness concerning Himself and concerning the churches. Here, faithful and true (Greek: *pistos kai alêthinos*) are still adjectives, but are used like nouns. He is not called by His actual name, but in terms of his attributes. They are adjectives of Himself, they are simply stated as at the essence of His character. On “faithful and true,” see the comments on Rev 19:9b. So the two adjectives would be reason enough to identify the rider on the white horse with Jesus Christ. In addition, His eyes are like a flame of fire (cf. Rev 1:14) and He wears many crowns (19:12), has a robe dipped in blood, is called the Word of God (19:13), and is called king of kings and lord of lords in 19:16. The latter titles are the titles of the Lamb in the earlier battle of 17:14. So the identity of the rider in Revelation 19 is indisputable, it is Jesus Christ coming to end the curse of sin on this earth.

As is the case with the first seal, the rider on the white horse in this passage recalls Psalm 45. The psalm as a whole features a wedding celebration that includes the language of a military victory (Psa 45:3-5).

**. . . and in righteousness he judges and makes war . . .** The word for “righteousness” here (Greek: *dikaïosunê*) is the word used repeatedly in Romans for the revelation of God’s righteousness in the gospel (Rom 1:16-17) and the righteousness that comes through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ to all who believe (Rom 3:21-26; 4:3, 5, 13). In Revelation 19, this righteousness is that which belongs to God and is exhibited through the righteous action of Christ. Christ is no more righteous in His gracious acceptance of the ungodly (Rom 4:5) than He is when He judges and makes war. The terms “judges” (Greek: *krinei*) and “makes war” (Greek:

*polemei*) are present indicatives. That means that they are not single actions but descriptions of ongoing character. That He judges and makes war in “righteousness” is a deliberate contrast with the way Satan and earthly powers judge and make war. He does so in a different way than one would expect. He judges and makes war in a way that is appropriate to His character. As with the wrath of God (see Rev 15:1 [the Wrath of God]), His judging and making war is never arbitrary or vindictive, it is done for righteous purposes.’ The vision here adopts the concept of holy war in behalf of justice, on account of the fact that the earth is full of bloodshed and oppression. But in judging the oppressors, Christ does not adopt the methods and the character of the oppressors. It is not a war of ambition, the purpose of this war is to deliver His people from the persecutions of the End-time.

**Rev 19:12-- His eyes are like a flame of fire, and upon his head are many crowns, having a name written which no one knows except him.** Jesus eyes are like a blazing fire. The wording of this sentence, “his eyes [like] a flame of fire” (Greek: *hoi ophthalmoi autou [hôs] phlox puros*), is almost identical to Revelation 1:14 (Greek: *hoi ophthalmoi autou hês phlox puros*). The only difference between the two is that some manuscripts of 19:12 are lacking the word “like” (Greek: *hês*). But even if “like” is missing in 19:12, it is implied in that context, as is the unstated verb “are”. In both 1:14 and 19:12 a predicate nominative is understood. Jesus eyes and “flame of fire” are understood as the same thing in the description. The rider on the white horse in Revelation 19 is the same individual who is called the “son of man” in Revelation 1. The first readers of Revelation would undoubtedly have understood both figures as Jesus. “Eyes like a flame of fire” implies His ability to judge accurately, nothing is hidden from His penetrating insight (Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 563). This theme is reminiscent of Hebrews 4:13 (NKJV), which says that, “all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”

. . . **upon his head are many crowns** . . . The verb is once again understood here, it is not stated in the Greek text. “Upon his head” functions as an adjective to “crowns”. There are two Greek words for crown in Revelation. The Greek word *stephanos* is a victory crown, like the laurel wreath worn by winners at the Olympic games. It signals triumph in battle, athletic contests, or in the spiritual life (see Rev 2:10; 3:11). The other type of crown is the *diadêma*, the royal crown of authority and rulership (Rev 12:3; 13:1). It is from this word that the English gets “diadem”. 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 on the white horse in the first seal is Jesus, there is an advancement in His career symbolized by a change of crowns, from the crown of victory in battle or spiritual life to the crown of settled rule. The “many” (Greek: *polla*) diadems anticipate the title of this rider in 19:16, “King of Kings”. King of Kings is appropriate title for an emperor, whose territory is greater than that of a king, and who has kings ruling under him. He is now king of all the nations. The one who was once crowned with thorns, is now invested with truly royal rank.

The many crowns here recalls the many crowns worn by the dragon in Revelation 12:3 and the sea beast in 13:1. The dragon claims authority on earth. He and his agents wear many crowns. These usurpers claim the crowns that belong to Christ alone. But in the battle of Revelation 19 Jesus demonstrates the falsity of the dragon’s claim. The dragon’s claim of

authority on earth had plausibility up until the cross. Satan claimed to represent earth in the council of heaven and his claim was respected there up to a point (Job 1:6-12; Luke 4:6). Jesus was the true ruler of earth, but many on earth did not acknowledge His claim and there were enough doubts in heaven that God chose to allow Satan's claim to play out. But at the cross, Jesus' right to rule was demonstrated to the universe (Rev 5:6-14; 12:10-11), and the gospel proclamation was the process of sharing that demonstration on earth, in the face of desperate opposition from Satan (Rev 12:12-13). In Revelation 19, Jesus comes back to earth to claim what is His. The downfall of Babylon has opened the way for Jesus to publically reclaim His earthly dominion.

. . . **having a name written which no one knows except him** . . . This last clause is mysterious by its very nature. No one knows the rider's name but the rider on the white horse Himself. But the answer to this mystery is close at hand. 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. God's name and character can only be known by revelation, it is not accessible to science, philosophy, or even human religious perception (see Tonstad, *Revelation*, 277). And that is the whole point of the visionary book that John wrote. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ (Rev 1:1). It makes the same point that John's Gospel puts forward, Jesus is the greatest and clearest revelation of God this world has ever seen. The theme here is reminiscent of Matthew 11:27, where no one knows the Son except the Father and no one knows the Father except the Son, and anyone whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.

**Rev 19:13-14-- He was dressed in a garment that had been dipped in blood, and his name was called "The Word of God." And the armies of heaven were following him on white horses, dressed in fine linen, bright and clean.** The concept of a garment dipped in blood (some manuscripts of Revelation have "sprinkled"—variations of the Greek *errammenon*—which would fit better in a military context) brings at least two possibilities to mind, the blood of Christ's enemies slain in battle, or His own blood shed at the cross. First, with Revelation 14:19-20 in mind, the garment could be stained with blood through a mixed metaphor, the trampling of grapes, which would stain the hem of the garment, combined with the blood of enemies on the garment of a victorious soldier in the midst of battle. The language of war (Rev 19:19), armies (19:14, 19), and slaying with a sword (19:21), point in the direction of the blood-dipped robe being a military image. But the best manuscripts of the Greek have "dipped" rather than "sprinkled", which would work against this interpretation. It is likely that copyists would have made the switch from dipped to sprinkled because they were prone to a military reading of Revelation 19:11-16.

A military reading of Revelation 19 also seems supported by a clear allusion in this passage to Isaiah 63:1-6. The imagery of Isaiah is that of a military rescue of Yahweh's people (Isa 63:1). The Isaiah 63 passage includes the treading of a wine press (Isa 63:2-3), the spattering of the lifeblood of enemies on the garments of the Lord (Isa 63:3) and on the ground (Isa 63:6). If John had Isaiah 63 in mind, a military reading of the garment dipped in blood seems preferable at first glance.

But 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). Just as the powers of the end-time shed the blood of the saints (Rev 17:6; 18:24), so the powers of John's day had shed the blood of Jesus (Rev 1:5; 5:6). This cross-centered interpretation is also supported by Isaiah 63. Early Christians saw an anticipation of Gethsemane in "I have trodden the winepress alone, no one was with me" (Isa 63:3), and "I looked, but there was no one to help" (Isa 63:5). Further support for a cross-centered interpretation of Revelation 19 is the fact that at this point in the narrative, the battle has not yet taken place, so the blood on the robe must be a reference to the cross rather than to the outcome of the end-time battle. As a soldier leading the armies of heaven he is not alone, but at Gethsemane and the cross, He was truly alone. So once again, we have military language in Revelation, but the total image is not one of typical destructiveness, but of one who wins that war in the context of abandonment and rejection.

Tonstad (*Revelation*, 278) sees an allusion here to the story of Joseph. In Genesis 37 his brothers took Joseph's robe of many colors, killed a goat, and dipped his robe in the goat's blood (Gen 37:31). Jacob sees in the robe evidence that his son, Joseph, was violently killed by a wild animal (Gen 37:33). This recalls Revelation 5:5-6, where the lion of Judah turns out to be the Lamb that was slain. The basis for solving the crisis in Revelation 5 was the violent death of the Lamb (Rev 5:6, 9, 12). The way that He overcomes His enemies is not by shedding their blood, but by shedding His own blood at the cross. He defeats His enemies on account of His death which results in a robe as it were dipped in blood. Like the saints, He overcomes through the blood and the word of His testimony (Rev 12:11). As the Word of God, He is the embodiment of what God is like. And He reveals His character through His sacrificial death. In doing so, He is enacting the will and the character of God.

There is one further potential allusion to the Old Testament here. In the Palestinian Targum (an early paraphrase of the Hebrew) to Genesis 49:11 it says, "How beautiful is the King Messiah! Binding his loins and going forth to war against them that hate him, he will slay kings with princes, and make the rivers red with the blood of their slain, and his hills white with the fat of their mighty ones, his garments will be dipped in blood, and he himself like the juice of the wine-press." The written Targums were based on oral, running translations from Hebrew into Aramaic in the synagogue (when Hebrew was no longer understood by most). But the written evidence for these is often from much later than New Testament times, so it is not clear that this particular reading would have been familiar to John.

**. . . and his name was called "The Word of God."** This is the only place outside of the first chapter of the Gospel of John that Jesus is called the Word (Greek: *logos*), so it is, perhaps, an allusion to John 1:1-5. This is one reason to think that the author of John and Revelation might be the same person. The Word of God is truly a unique name for Jesus, as no one else in Scripture is called by that name. Jesus as the Word is the greatest revelation of the character of God (John 1:18; 14:9) the world has ever seen or ever will see. The victory in Revelation 19 is a victory of truth and righteousness rather than a victory by conquest and force.

The "name" of the rider on the white horse is rather ambiguous in Revelation 19. In verse 11 He is called the faithful and true one. But in verse 12 He has a name that no one knows

but Himself. Having said that, in verse 13 the author of Revelation casually announces that His name is called the Word of God. Then in verse 16 His name is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. So is the name that no one knows the Word of God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, or is that unknown name something else? There is one clue that may help settle the issue. In verse 12 the name that no one else knows is “written” (Greek: *gegrammenon*). In verse 16 King of Kings and Lord of Lords is written (Greek: *gegrammenon*) on His robe by the thigh. Neither Faithful and True nor The Word of God are described as “written”, both names are what he is “called” (v. 11—Greek: *kaloumenos*; v. 13—Greek: *keklêtai*). So it is possible that the name no one knows except Him is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. This would evidently not be a reality until the end of the cosmic conflict.

**. . . And the armies of heaven were following him on white horses, dressed in fine linen, bright and clean . . .** Note that the armies of heaven “were following” (Greek: *êkolouthē*) Him. This is based on the Greek imperfect, which indicates ongoing action in the past. The armies of heaven are not a static picture here, they are in motion. And that motion began before the scene being depicted. They were and are “heading into battle”. In Revelation white or “bright” (Greek: *leukon*) 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). So who makes up the armies of heaven which are following the Word of God in verse 14? An obvious option to many is that they are made up of angels (cf. Matt 24:30-31; 2 Thess 1:7; Jude 1:14). Since the loyal angels reside in heaven, it would make sense that they join their commander on His way to earth at the End. So if one were to read this scene in a literal sense, this would be a reference to the Second Coming, when Jesus is accompanied by the heavenly angels. And, in a literal sense, the saints at this time are on earth awaiting translation to heaven (1 Thess 4:16-17).

But Revelation is a symbolic book, so most things are not exactly as they seem to be. In Revelation, the enemies of God are described as “those who live on the earth” (Rev 6:10; 11:10; 13:8, 14). By way of contrast the saints are those who live in heaven (Rev 13:6; 14:1-3), they are in heavenly places in Christ (cf. Eph 2:6). So it is possible, even likely, that those with the Word of God on white horses are a symbolic depiction of the role the saints on earth will have in the final conflict of words on earth (the everlasting gospel vs. deception). In support of this is the fact that the final battle of earth’s history is waged by the Lamb and His called, chosen and faithful followers (Rev 17:14). This passage is clearly parallel to Revelation 19:16. The identity of the armies of heaven is sealed by the description of their garments, “fine linen, bright and clean” (Greek: *bussinon leukon lampron*). This is an exact parallel with 19:8, where the bride of the Lamb is dressed in “fine linen, bright and clean” (Greek: *bussinon lampron katharon*). (The parallel with the dress of the angels in 15:6 is almost exact except for the Greek *linon* instead of *bussinon* there. And it is more distant from the context of Revelation 19.) The bride of the Lamb represents the end-time people of God in 19:8, the armies of heaven represent the end-time people of God in 19:14. The saints who loved not their lives even unto death (Rev 12:11) here share in the triumph of the King of Kings. His death and their death are linked. If this interpretation is correct, this army is the same as the “kings from the rising of the sun” in Revelation 16:12. The saints in Revelation follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Rev 14:4).

**Rev 19:15-16—And out of (the rider’s) mouth comes a sharp sword, in order that he might strike down the nations with it; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and he will trample the wine press of the furious anger of God Almighty; and He has upon his garment and upon his thigh a name written, “King of kings and Lord of lords.”** The language in this passage is reminiscent of earlier images in the book of Revelation. The sharp two-edged sword recalls the description of the son of man in 1:16 and 2:12. The rod of iron is the means by which the son of man and the male child (presumably different images for the same person, Jesus Christ) rule the nations in 2:27 and 12:5. Interestingly, Isaiah 11:4 rather combines the two ideas when he says that the future son of David will strike the earth with “the rod of his mouth”. The winepress recalls the location where the grape harvest of the earth is crushed and turns into blood (14:18-20). The "King of kings and Lord of lords" occurs previously only in 17:14. The destruction of the nations, which the rider on the white horse has come to accomplish, has been described in other words earlier in the book (Rev 14:17-20 and 16:17-21). The latter half of Revelation 19 returns to this motif as Jesus deals with what is left from the destruction of the great world-wide confederacies in Revelation 17 and 18). In making these connections, John wants to be clear that the rider on the white horse is the same Jesus Christ that has been symbolized in so many ways in Revelation.

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” (*kai*—see translation above). The first three parts are images of destruction, and the fourth part concerns the rider’s written name, “King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The images of destruction include a sharp sword, with which He strikes down the nations, a rod of iron, with which He rules them, and then the winepress of the wrath of God. The first clause of destruction is in the present tense, the sword “comes out” of His mouth. The second clause is in the future tense, He “will rule” them. The third clause is present or future, depending on the accent chosen (Greek: *patei*). I have elected to translate *patei* as a future tense, He “will trample” the wine press.

Images of destruction from God’s hand often seem distasteful in today’s world. But reference to 1 Chronicles 21:12-13 may be instructive. There God invites David to choose the consequence for his rash act in numbering the people. He is offered three years of famine, three months of defeat before his enemies or three days of “the sword of the Lord.” These would seem to be of increasing severity. Yet David chooses the three days in the hands of the Lord, for he reasons, “. . . his mercy is very great.” God would spare every soul on earth if He were only allowed to do so.

**And out of (the rider’s) mouth comes a sharp sword, in order that he might strike down the nations with it . . .** It is a strange image, the sword coming out of the rider’s mouth. If taken literally, a sharp sword coming out of the mouth would be a painful experience. But 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. This may recall John 12:48, where it is the words of Jesus that are the basis of judgment at the last day. People are judged on the basis of how they responded to the words of Jesus (cf. John 3:18-21). The power of His word is illustrated in John 18:5, when

the mob that came to capture Jesus in Gethsemane falls to the ground when Jesus says the words, “I am He”.

. . . **He will rule them with a rod of iron** . . . The word for “rule” (Greek: *poimanei*) is actually the verb for “shepherd”. A shepherd who has a rod of iron is well equipped to protect his sheep (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. Just as smaller predators don’t stand a chance against a shepherd with a rod of iron, God’s people will have a mighty protector in the final battle of earth’s history. In both Psalm 2 and here it is the nations who opposed God and His people that bear the brunt of His protective action. In a crisis situation the rod of iron is not a tool to be trifled with. This sets the stage for the parallel image of final destruction, the trampling of a wine press.

. . . **he will trample the wine press of the furious anger of God Almighty** . . . The image of trampling a wine press recalls Isaiah 63 once more. Tonstad (*Revelation*, 279) notes that in Isaiah 63 God treads the wine press alone. If the rider on the white horse were conquering by violence, there would be many perpetrators of violence assisting Him. But if the image is treading the wine press alone (as in Isaiah 63), the victory here is by a different method than the military imagery would suggest at first glance.

. . . **He has upon his garment and upon his thigh a name written, “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.** 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. In ancient times, people of wealth and power often had their names woven into their garments. That the name is written here recalls verse 12, the name that no one know but the rider on the white horse. Aune (*Revelation*, volume 3, 1062) believes that this clause is the revelation of the secret name mentioned in verse 12. The text has taken the reader from the unknown to the known. Tonstad concludes that the rider is not so much a military figure as a revealer. The title “King of kings and Lord of lords” reproduces Revelation 17:14, but in reverse order. There it is “Lord of lords and King of kings.” This exact verbal parallel cements the strong relationship between the two descriptions of the final battle. See comments on Rev 17:14 for further information relevant to this text. Cf. also Daniel 2:47.

**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 Revelation 19. Revelation 19:11-16 focused on the armies of heaven, led by the rider on the white horse. 19:17-21 depicts the armies of earth gathering to fight the rider on the white horse, but they are quickly destroyed. The author of Revelation does not take the time to describe that actual destruction in detail; that is not important to him. Verses 17-21 move directly to the results of the battle, the completion of the war. These results are graphically described as a banquet for the vultures of the earth.

**Rev 19:17-18**— **And I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice to all the birds that fly in midair, “Come, gather yourselves to the great feast of God, in order that you might eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of generals, mighty men, horses and those**

**that sit on them, and the flesh of everyone, whether free or slave, small or great.”** There is a striking parallel in 19:17 to the first angel of Revelation 14. The angel of proclamation flew in midair (Greek: *mesouranêmati*—“the middle of heaven”—Rev 14:6), a reference to the zenith. That is the place from which the angel delivers his message with a loud voice (Greek: *en phonê megalê*—Rev 14:7) to every nation, tribe, language and people (Rev 14:6). That message is the final proclamation of the gospel. The end result of that gospel message is that God's faithful people attend a feast in heaven to celebrate the marriage of the Lamb (Rev 19:7-8). Here an angel is standing in the sun (likely also high in the sky) and delivers a message (Rev 19:17b-18) with a loud voice (Greek: *phonê megalê*) to all the birds that fly in midair (Greek: *mesouranêmati*). The end result is a feast on earth to celebrate the destruction of the earthly powers that oppressed the saints. The final destruction is the great supper of God—the post-war feast of the vultures. In Revelation 8:13, a vulture threatens, in Revelation 19:17-18 that threat is carried out. The complete destruction of the political confederacy highlighted in Revelation 17 takes place at the second coming of Jesus. This is also parallel to the sixth seal, where the kings and mighty men of the earth cry to the rocks and mountains to fall on them (Rev 6:15).

**And I saw an angel standing in the sun . . .** As noted above, verse 17 begins with “and I saw” (Greek: *kai eidon*), signaling a new turn in the vision. The angel is not just “an angel”, it is “one angel” (Greek: *hena angelon*), using the cardinal number (“one, two, three”). This exact form of the Greek (*hena*) occurs only one time in the book of Revelation, which may indicate special significance for this particular angel. “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 mesouranêmati*). The angel himself must be extremely bright in order to be seen amidst the dazzling splendor of the sun. Being in that position, the angel would be conspicuous to everyone in the world. See earlier comments on the significance of the parallel with the first angel's message. There is an “angel of the waters in Revelation 16:5, perhaps this angel should be seen as the “angel of the sun”.

**. . . and he cried out with a loud voice to all the birds that fly in midair . . .** Crying out with a loud voice (Greek: *phonê megalê*) recalls the first angel of Revelation 14:7. That angel was also flying in midair (Greek: *en mesouranêmati*). But an equally powerful parallel is to Revelation 8:13, where the same Greek words are used to describe a vulture flying in midair and speaking with a loud voice. What is threatened there has become reality here. This is a probably allusion to Ezekiel 39:17-20. There, after the destruction of Gog and Magog on the mountains of Israel, Ezekiel is told to call all the birds and the animals to gorge themselves on the flesh of the princes, soldiers and horses of Gog's armies. Ezekiel 38-39 is one of a number of eschatological prophecies that the New Testament applies to the events just preceding the Second Coming of Jesus. But in Ezekiel, it is not God who destroys the armies of Gog, they take up the swords against each other (Ezek 38:21). The concept of both dogs and birds eating in the aftermath of God's judgments is found also in 1 Kings 14:11, 16:4, and 21:24. The dogs eat those who died in the city and the birds eat those who died in the countryside. Dogs alone in a similar context are mentioned in Isaiah 56:9-11.

**“Come, gather yourselves to the great feast of God, in order that you might eat the**

**flesh of kings, and the flesh of generals, mighty men, horses and those that sit on them, and the flesh of everyone, whether free or slave, small or great.”** 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. What is particularly striking about this proclamation is the five-fold use of the word “flesh” (Greek: *sarkas*) in verse 18. The Greek is literally “eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of generals, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and the flesh of everyone . . .” This multiple repetition undergirds the horror of the image. There is huge loss of life, leaving only carcasses behind. And it is that these vultures will eat anything and anybody. This exposure to the birds is a fitting counterpart to what was done to the two witnesses (Rev 11:9). In the ancient world, lying unburied was seen as the worst possible misfortune. The word I translate as “general” (Greek: *chiliarchôn*) literally means ruler over a thousand, a regimental commander, often a colonel in current terminology.

. . . **whether free or slave, small or great.** This is universal language, everyone from the freest of the free to the most abject slave, everyone from the least significant to the most significant. Every cultural and socio-economic group is included here. Earthly wars tend to be between one nation or another and one class against another class. But in the end-time war all nations and classes are united against God and His people. The language of small and great, free and slave is used regularly by John to describe the totality of a particular class of humans, not necessarily the whole. In this passage these phrases describe everyone who joined in with the beast and the kings of the earth to oppose the rider on the white horse. The language of free and slave, small and great just happens to occur also in Revelation 13:16-17, in regard to all who receive the mark of the beast. These come to their end here. While “small and great” are not stated in Revelation 6:15, slave and free is combined with great ones, generals, the rich, and powerful. “Small and great” by itself is found in Revelation 11:18; 19:5 and 20:12. The parallel with Revelation 6:15-17 is evidence that the scene of Revelation 19:17-21 occurs in the context of the Second Coming.

**Rev 19:19-- And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered to make war with the one sitting on the (white) horse and with his army.** Up until this point in the second half of Revelation 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. Notice that there is no mention of Babylon. Babylon has passed from the scene in chapter 18. So we are dealing here with the political confederacy that was introduced in Revelation 17, made up of the beast, the kings of the earth, and those who follow them (Rev 17:2, 8-11, 12-14). Since these were the ones who destroyed Babylon (Rev 17:16), the time frame of this verse is after the fall of Babylon and just before the final destruction of all earthly opposition to God. It seems ludicrous that earthly forces might think that they could take on the armies of heaven. But desperate people do desperate things. Rather than repent and be reconciled to God, people will try almost anything.

**And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth . . .** The language of this part of the verse draws on Revelation 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. While Revelation 17:14 and 19:16 use parallel language, these verses seem to be reflected two different phases of the war between the Lamb and the kings of the earth. The first phase of that war occurred before the destruction of Babylon. The defeat of 17:14 is not so much a military one as coming to realize that the beast had chosen the wrong partner in aligning with Babylon. When the beast and his allies realize that Babylon deceived them onto the losing side of the battle, they turn on her with great hatred (Rev 17:16). While Babylon is destroyed at that point, the beast (political alliance) survives for a while longer. The battle of Revelation 19 occurs after the moment of Babylon's fall. The beast and its political allies are alone in the final conflict. Babylon has already been exposed and defeated.

**. . . their armies gathered to make war with the one sitting on the (white) horse and with his army.** This is the final showdown between Christ and the remaining powers of earth. In Revelation 16:13-14, the unholy trinity (religious alliance) use deceptive, demonic influence to gather the kings of the world (secular, political powers) to assemble for the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:16). The united forces of opposition to God are seen in the woman Babylon riding the beast (Rev 17:3). That religious/political alliance lasts for only a short time, however. Soon Babylon falls, and the political confederacy is all that is left in this verse to oppose the rider on the white horse and those who are with him. Since the battle itself is never described, one wonders if the reality of this battle is actually foreshadowed in Ezekiel 38:21 and Revelation 17:16. Just as the forces of Gog end up slaying each other (Ezek 38:21), and the kings of the earth destroy Babylon (Rev 17:16), the battle itself is not described because the powers of evil once more self-destruct.

**Rev 19:20-- And the beast was captured, also the false prophet who performed miraculous signs before him (with these signs he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image). These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with sulphur.** In Revelation 18 the destruction of Babylon was mourned by the kings, merchants and sailors; the political, economic and logistical support system that had empowered Babylon. At the beginning of chapter 19 the destruction of Babylon is metaphorically celebrated by those she had persecuted and killed. But while Babylon has been removed from the scene, the secular political alliance remains to challenge the army of heaven. But reference to the false prophet is a bit puzzling here. The reference to "the" miraculous signs (Greek: *ta sêmeia*), the mark of the beast, and the image recall the land beast of Revelation 13:11-18. The land beast was part of the unholy trinity, which was introduced in Revelation 13. The worship recalled in this text is a present participle (Greek: *proskunountas*). The followers of the false prophet were condemned because of their continuous habit of worshipping the image of the beast. The land beast is renamed the false prophet in Revelation 16:13. The unholy trinity together made up the totality of Babylon (Rev 16:19). The battle of Armageddon destroyed the religious alliance called Babylon, but at least some of its component parts have survived to join the beast in the final battle (Rev 16:19).

**These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with sulphur.** The text moves quickly to the outcome of the battle. The beast and the false prophet are captured and

thrown into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur. The lake of fire may be an allusion to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Jude 1:7). But notice that there is not one word of battle or fighting in this verse. Tonstad (*Revelation*, 280), therefore, points out that fire has been a preferred weapon for the opposing side throughout the book of Revelation. In Revelation 9:17-18, the breastplates of the 200,000,000 soldiers on horseback were the color of fire, and fire came out of the horses' mouths to destroy a third of the human race. In 13:13-14, the land beast brings fire down out of heaven to earth in order to deceive the earth's inhabitants to make an image to the first beast. As part of the fourth bowl-plague, the sun scorches people with fire (Rev 16:8). The beast and the ten horns burn prostitute/queen Babylon with fire (Rev 17:16; 18:8). So fire is a great image for self-destruction. The fire that someone kindles can quickly get out of control and burn the one who started it. The destruction of the beast and the false prophet comes in a series of passives: The beast was caught (Greek: *epiasthê*), the two were thrown (Greek: *eblēthēsan*) into the lake of fire, and those who followed them were killed (Greek: *apektanthēsan*) Rev 19:20-21). A parallel to this text is 2 Thessalonians 2:8, where the lawless one is overthrown by the breath of Jesus' mouth and destroyed by the brightness of His coming.

Reference to the lake of fire here anticipates the lake of fire at the end of the millennium in Revelation 20:10-15. The immediate questions that arise for the reader are three-fold. 1) Are the two lakes one and the same or are they different? Are these lakes references to literal destruction by fire or is their purpose more symbolic or metaphorical? Are the events of Revelation 19 and 20 a repetition of the same event, both at the end of the Millennium? Or are there a thousand years in between this destruction and the one in chapter 20? We will address these questions more definitively when we get to Revelation 20. It will suffice for the moment that I see the events of chapter 19 as just before the Second Coming of Jesus, which ushers in the Millennium, the thousand years of Revelation 20. In that view, the descent of the New Jerusalem (Rev 20:9; 21:2) represents a third coming of Jesus at the end of the thousand years and a final destruction of sin and death. I believe the weight of evidence points to the pre-millennial position on the final events of Revelation. The Second Coming is "pre-millennial", in other words, it comes before the Millennium, Revelation's period of a thousand years.

In the Pre-millennial view, the lake of fire is symbolic of the complete destruction of evil, which occurs in Revelation 19, ushering in the thousand years. At the end of the thousand years comes the resurrection of the unrighteous (Rev 20:7-9), which Jesus called the "resurrection of condemnation" in John 5:28-29 (NRSV, NKJV). The view that these two lake of fire events are at different times in history is supported by the fact that there are different victims in view. In Revelation 19, it is the beast and the false prophet that are thrown into the lake of fire. These do not represent specific persons but are symbolic terms for corporate religious and political entities on earth prior to the Second Coming. The lake of fire is a metaphorical way of describing the defeat of the religious and political institutions that governing the human race in the period leading up to the Second Coming. No human being is described as being cast into the lake of fire here. That only happens at the end of the Millennium.

In Revelation 20:10, the devil joins the beast and the false prophet in this metaphorical

lake, to which are added Death, Hades, and anyone whose name is not written in the Book of Life (Rev 20:14-15). The “lake of fire” is defined in 20:14 as second death, total and final extinction. The power of the current order meet their extinction at the Second Coming. The devil, death, Hades, and all the devil’s followers, meet their extinction at the close of the Millennium. So Revelation 19:20, at the beginning of the Millennium, is a foretaste of the final extinction of death, sin, and Satan. Much more will be said about these things in the comments on Revelation 20.

**Rev 19:21— And the remnant were killed by the sword that came out of the mouth of the one sitting on the (white) horse. And all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.** The word for remnant here (Greek: *loipoi*) is actually plural, but I have translated “remnant” rather than “remnants” because the English word “remnant” can reflect either the singular or a collective, as it is here. The word “remnant” (Greek: *loipos*—often translated “rest”, meaning those who remain) appears eight times in the Book of Revelation. Of these three refer to a positive grouping of people who take God’s side in the issues described in the book of Revelation. The remnant are those in Thyatira who have not followed Jezebel and learned the deep things of Satan (Rev 2:24). In Revelation 11:13 the remnant of the Great City give glory to God, as is commanded in 14:7, so they transfer over to God’s side in the conflict. The remnant of Revelation 12:17 are those faithful to God in the final stages of earth’s history. On the other hand, the term “remnant” can also be used for groupings that oppose God, the remnant of the unrepentant in 9:20, the unrighteous dead in 20:5, and the usage here. See comments on Rev 12:17. See also Rev 14 (Excursus on the Remnant). The “remnant” here represents the army of the beast and the false prophet, those slain by the sword from the mouth of the one sitting on the white horse.

**. . . the remnant were killed by the sword that came out of the mouth of the one sitting on the (white) horse . . .** Jesus, the one sitting on the white horse (who is also the one who died for the human race), here takes responsibility for the destruction of the wicked. He does not delegate it to anyone else. If anyone could possibly employ violence justly, it would be the One who experienced its horror to the fullest. But is this actually active violence or is it something else? As noted in the comments to 19:20, the destruction of the beast and the false prophet comes in a series of passives: The beast was caught (Greek: *epiasthê*), the two were thrown (Greek: *eblēthêsan*) into the lake of fire, and those who followed them were killed (Greek: *apektanthêsan*-- Rev 19:20-21). The agent or agents of these events is not given except that the killing occurs “by the sword that came out of the mouth of the one sitting on the (white) horse”. The one who Himself experienced unjust violence is the one deciding the fate of the unrighteous at the end.

Tonstad (*Revelation*, 280-282) makes the case that the key issue in the book of Revelation is the conflict over God’s character and government (Rev 12:7-11). In that conflict, the role of Satan and his emissaries is grounded in deception (Rev 13:13-14; 16:13-14). As Satan did at the beginning (Gen 3:1-5), he and his agents continue to slander the reputation of God. As a result, God is thought to have acted unjustly in allowing the souls under the altar to be martyred (Rev 6:9-11). But the songs scattered throughout the book echo the opposite refrain,

those who live in heaven celebrate that God has acted justly in all of His actions (Rev 7:10-12; 11:15; 12:10; 15:2-4). That may not have been obvious in the course of human history, but it becomes evident in the final crisis. That God has acted justly is evident by revelation. He has made it up to the victims of unjust violence (Rev 19:1-8). And they judge that in light of the End their sufferings were worth it all.

So it is fitting that the destruction of the unrighteous would be accomplished by a sword coming out of the mouth of Jesus. As Paul says, the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God (Eph 6:17). The end of the conflict comes by revelation more than by violence. The cause of the destruction of Babylon was the revelation that Babylon was a deceiver and had turned the political alliance to the wrong side. In rage the political alliance did what it does best, kill and destroy. In Revelation 19 God captures the beast and the false prophet by means of the sword, the revelation that God has acted justly all along, that attempts to oppose God and His ways were fueled by the Great Deceiver himself. The political alliance itself disintegrates under the weight of this revelation and becomes the means of its own destruction. When the deceived turn on the deceivers, there is a straight line between the crime and its consequences. They are destroyed by the brightness and clarity of Jesus' coming (2 Thess 1:8-10; 2:8), a surprising revelation to them.

**And all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.** Stefanovic points out that this statement reflects a typical ancient post-combat scene. The end result of this vision is that everything that human beings know on this earth is destroyed--churches, cities, nations, entities. When one looks at the collective picture of this destruction, the final events of earth's history include the collapse of the environment. The natural forces of the world to help in the destruction of the unrighteous: earthquake, fire, hailstones, and birds. 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). This was not only an ancient reality, it was one of the curses of the covenant (Deut 28:26). The primary allusion here seems to be Ezekiel 39:17-20. The birds and animals are summoned to a sacrificial feast that God would prepare for them (39:17). They would eat the flesh and drink the blood of soldiers, princes, and their horses (39:17-20). A conditional prophecy of the return from Babylonian Exile is now applied to the end-time New Testament context.

**Rev 19 (Spiritual lessons)**— The first part of this chapter is full of rejoicing (Rev 19:1-8). The best reason for followers of Jesus to rejoice is the mighty acts of God. In the history of Israel written up in the Old Testament, the essence of worship was recounting the mighty acts of God and rejoicing in what He has done. Israel recited God's actions in creation, during the Flood, during the Exodus, and His deliverance of His people from Babylon. For the writers of the New Testament, God's greatest and mightiest act was the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in their immediate past. But the New Testament also looks forward to God's mighty acts in the events leading up to the Second Coming of Jesus. Revelation 19 takes us in vision to the conclusion of those events and portrays the recital and rejoicing that will take place among the people of God when all things have come to a conclusion. The rejoicing of Revelation 19 was designed to inspire readers with a foretaste of God's future mighty acts.

The positive climax of earth's history is described in terms of a wedding banquet. One's everyday walk with Jesus is symbolized in terms of getting ready for a wedding. Getting ready for a wedding takes much preparation and requires practical action. Similarly, those awaiting the return of Jesus are to put God first in their lives (Rev 14:7) and treat others the way God in Christ has treated them (Rev 19:8). The "garment" that they will wear at the time of the wedding (cf. Rev 16:15) is woven with righteous actions in love to God and love to others. We love others according to how we have been loved. We forgive others as Christ has forgiven us. And the best motivation to seriousness of preparation for the wedding is being in love with Jesus. That's why preparation for the Second Coming of Jesus is couched in terms of a wedding banquet. It is about relationship and it is about celebration. Readiness for the wedding is not an obligation, it is a privilege.

The horrific images in the latter part of this chapter (Rev 19:17-21) are not given to satisfy our curiosity about how the unrighteous will come to their end. The purpose of these images is to warn the reader of the consequences of cherishing sin. The turmoil of life often distracts us from ultimate realities. There is a tendency to take sin lightly. "I'm not so bad." "It doesn't really matter what you do." "God isn't that particular." In Revelation it becomes clear that nothing less than full commitment to God will see His people through the challenging events that lie ahead for them. Cherished behaviors that we cling to hinder spiritual growth because they may be exciting, attractive, or meet certain internal needs. One of the best ways to make a break with a cherished sin is to total up the consequences of continuing in them. One way to remind ourselves of the consequences of sin is to take out a piece of paper and write out the "pros and cons" of the direction we are heading. The book of Revelation seeks to clarify the ultimate pros and cons of all of our actions. Walking with Jesus is never easy in this life. But knowing the outcomes can motivate us to make the right choices every day. Revelation was not given to satisfy our curiosity about the future, it was given to motivate right decisions and actions today.

**Rev 19 (Summary)**-- Revelation 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). 19:1-8 serves as a sanctuary introduction to the events in these two chapters. It has many parallels with the sanctuary scene of Revelation 4 and 5, but without specific reference to sanctuary furnishings (see Rev 1:12 (Excursus on the Sanctuary in Revelation)). These two chapters offer a capstone to the work of evil in Revelation.

In Revelation the evil powers appear one at a time. First, there is the dragon in chapter 12, then the beasts from the sea and the land appear in chapter 13, then comes the first mention of Babylon in chapter 14. Interestingly, these four entities pass off the scene in reverse order to that of their arrival. Babylon passes off the scene in chapters 17 and 18. In this chapter the beast and the false prophet (the two beasts of chapter 13) come to their end. The dragon/Satan is not dealt with until Revelation 20.

Revelation 19 is one of several references to the Second Coming of Jesus in the book. The first reference is Revelation 6:15-17. It emphasizes the terror of the unrighteous as the "day of wrath" arrives. It closes with the lingering question, "Who will be able to stand?" A

second reference to the Second Coming is in Revelation 14:14-20. There the second coming is described in terms of two harvests, one of grain, representing the righteous, and the other of grapes, representing the unrighteous. In Revelation 19 the righteous are those invited to the wedding banquet of the Lamb and also the armies of heaven, the unrighteous are those invited to become the gruesome supper of the vultures. In addition to these references are some briefer ones like 1:7, 16:15, 22:11-12, and 22:20. At His coming many will welcome Him and others will experience it in very unpleasant ways.

**Rev 19 (Conclusion)**-- Tonstad (*Revelation*, 282) intones a fitting conclusion to chapter 19 of the book of Revelation. At this point in the narrative, "Readers of Revelation have never had a stronger reason for believing that the conflict now is over. It stands as one of the book's biggest surprises that it is not." 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, Revelation 20.