

The Book of Revelation

Lesson 14: The Rider on the White Horse; Satan Bound; the Thousand Years; the Last Judgment -- Revelation 19:1-20:15

For chapters you have watched Babylon strut, the great harlot drunk on the blood of the saints, the proud city that bought and sold the souls of men and thought she would never see grief. Last week she fell in a single hour, and the merchants wept while heaven was told to rejoice. Now open chapter 19 and listen, because the sound changes entirely. A roar goes up, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God." It is the only place in the New Testament where that word, Hallelujah, is sung, and it is sung four times in a row, like waves of thunder rolling off a great multitude. The smoke of the fallen city is still rising, and heaven is throwing a wedding. The bride has made herself ready, and the marriage supper of the Lamb is announced. The long courtship of God for His people is ending in a feast.

Then heaven opens. Not a door this time but the whole sky, and a Rider comes out on a white horse. His eyes are like a flame of fire, many crowns are on His head, and He is called Faithful and True. He has a name written that no one knows but Himself, and another name in plain sight, "The Word of God." He is robed in a garment dipped in blood, and the armies of heaven follow Him on white horses, but notice carefully how He fights. No catapults, no cavalry charge, no nuclear fire. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, and with it He strikes down the nations. The weapon of the conquering Christ is the word of His mouth, the gospel that has been going out into all the world, and on His robe and on His thigh is written the name that settles everything: King of kings and Lord of lords. The beast and the false prophet, the two monsters who terrorized the earlier chapters, are seized and thrown alive into the lake of fire. Their reign is over.

Now we come to the most fought-over paragraph in the whole Bible, and we will walk through it slowly and confidently. An angel comes down with a key and a great chain, seizes the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan, binds him, and throws him into the pit for a thousand years, that he might not deceive the nations any longer. John sees thrones, and souls who had been beheaded for their witness, and they live and reign with Christ for a thousand years. He calls this the first resurrection. Many sincere people read those words and build an entire future out of them, a secret rapture, a rebuilt temple, animal sacrifices started up again, a seven-year tribulation, and a literal thousand-year political reign of Christ from a throne in Jerusalem. We are going to show you, gently and from the rest of the New Testament, why that scheme cannot be right, and what these glorious words actually mean. The thousand years is a symbol, ten cubed, fullness and completeness. It is the present age in which the gospel runs free and the redeemed already reign with their Lord.

Then the end comes, swift and final. Satan is loosed for a little while, gathers the nations one last time, and fire comes down and devours them; the devil is thrown into the lake of fire to be

tormented forever. And John sees a great white throne, and earth and sky flee away, and the dead, great and small, stand before God. Books are opened. Another book is opened, the book of life. The sea gives up its dead, Death and Hades give up theirs, and everyone is judged according to what they have done. There is no second chance here, no millennium still to come, no separate timetable for anyone. There is one throne, one judgment, one book of life, and two destinies. Death itself is thrown into the lake of fire. Walk into this lesson and you will walk out steadied: the Lord has already won, He reigns now, He is coming once, and your only true business is to be found written in the Lamb's book of life.

Group Discussion: Premillennial charts and end-times timetables are everywhere in popular Christianity, and many people feel a quiet pressure to map current events onto Revelation 20. As you come to the chapter that supposedly proves a future thousand-year reign, what have you been taught to expect here, and how would it change your reading to discover that the thousand years describes the present reign of Christ and His people rather than a future earthly kingdom?

Personal Reflection: The chapter ends at a great white throne where books are opened and everyone is judged by what they have done, and the only safety is to be written in the Lamb's book of life. Setting aside speculation about the end, ask the more pressing question: if the throne were today, is your name in that book, and is your life, in its hidden corners, the life of someone who belongs to the Lamb? Name one area where you need to make your calling and election sure.

Read Revelation 19:1–20:15

Study Questions

1. Chapter 19 opens with a fourfold “Hallelujah” over fallen Babylon and then announces “the marriage of the Lamb” whose “Bride has made herself ready” in “fine linen, bright and pure,” which is “the righteous deeds of the saints” (19:7–8). Who is the Bride, what is the marriage supper of the Lamb, and how does this picture of the church as Christ's bride shape the way the rest of the passage should be read?
2. The Bride's fine linen is “the righteous deeds of the saints” (19:8), yet the garment is given to her. Where in your own life is your “wedding garment” looking soiled or unready, and what would it mean this week to let Christ clothe you while you actually walk in the righteous deeds He has prepared?

3. Heaven opens and a Rider comes forth on a white horse, called "Faithful and True" and "The Word of God" and "King of kings and Lord of lords," who "judges and makes war" and strikes the nations with "a sharp sword" that comes "from his mouth" (19:11-16). Walk through these titles, and explain why the weapon proceeding from His mouth tells us how Christ actually conquers the nations in this present age.
4. The Rider's robe is "dipped in blood" before the battle even begins, and the supper to which the birds are summoned is grim (19:13, 17-18). Christ conquers not by shedding the blood of His enemies first but by His own shed blood. How does a King who wins by being slain reorder your idea of strength, victory, and how you are to live and witness?
5. An angel binds "the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan," with a great chain and throws him into the pit "so that he might not deceive the nations any longer" for "a thousand years" (20:1-3). In light of Jesus binding the strong man (Matthew 12:28-29), "I saw Satan fall like lightning" (Luke 10:18), "now will the ruler of this world be cast out" (John 12:31), and Colossians 2:15, explain when and how Satan was bound, what the binding does and does not mean, and why it is wrong to push this binding off into a future millennium.
6. If Satan's power to deceive the nations and choke off the gospel has already been decisively restrained so that the nations can now hear and be saved, where in your life are you still living as though the dragon were on the loose and undefeated, fearful, silent, or paralyzed, and what changes when you believe the strong man is already bound?

7. John sees thrones and “the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus,” and they “came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years,” which John calls “the first resurrection,” and over those who share in it “the second death has no power” (20:4–6). Explain why “the first resurrection” and this reign describe the present reign of the redeemed with Christ (especially the faithful dead), the believer’s passage from spiritual death to spiritual life, and not a bodily resurrection that begins an earthly thousand-year kingdom.

8. The martyrs reign with Christ now, and “the second death has no power” over those in the first resurrection (20:6). If the faithful dead are already reigning with the Lord and you, baptized into Christ, have already passed from death to life, how should that present reign change the way you face suffering, the fear of dying, and the small daily choice to remain faithful?

9. After the thousand years Satan is loosed for “a little while,” gathers the nations, and is destroyed; then comes a single “great white throne,” earth and sky flee, and “the dead, great and small,” are judged “by what they had done,” and anyone not found “in the book of life” is thrown into the lake of fire (20:7–15). From the whole New Testament (John 5:28–29; Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15:22–26; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17), explain why there is one second coming, one general resurrection of the just and the unjust together, and one final judgment, and then show specifically why the premillennial and dispensational scheme (a secret rapture, a rebuilt temple, restored animal sacrifices, a literal seven-year tribulation, and a thousand-year political reign from Jerusalem) cannot be reconciled with Scripture.

10. Look back across the whole passage, the Hallelujahs and the wedding, the Rider conquering by the word of His mouth, the dragon bound, the saints reigning now, the one great white throne, and the book of life. Name one specific way the certainty that Christ already reigns and is coming once to judge is reshaping how you will live, endure, and worship this week. Where is Jesus forming hope and faithfulness in you through this passage?

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Matthew 12:28–29, Christ binds the strong man and plunders his house; Luke 10:18 and John 12:31, Satan cast down and the ruler of this world driven out at Christ's coming; Colossians 2:15, Christ disarms the rulers and authorities and triumphs over them at the cross; John 5:28–29 and Acts 24:15, one hour in which all in the tombs, just and unjust, are raised together; Hebrews 9:24–28 and 10:11–18, the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ that forever ends animal sacrifice and forbids any rebuilt-temple system.

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