

“Eater or Eaten?”¹ (Revelation 19:1-21)

There is a well-known story about a man who bought a donkey from a preacher. The preacher told the man that this donkey had been trained in a very unique way. The only way to make the donkey go is to say, “Hallelujah!” The only way to make the donkey stop is to say, “Amen!” The man was pleased with his purchase and immediately got on the animal to try out the preacher’s instructions. “Hallelujah!” shouted the man. The donkey began to trot. “Amen!” shouted the man. The donkey stopped immediately. “This is great,” said the man. With a “Hallelujah!” he rode off, very proud of his new purchase.

The man traveled for a long time through some hills. Soon he was heading towards a cliff. He could not remember the word to make the donkey stop. “Stop!” said the man. “Halt!” he cried. The donkey just kept going. “Bible...Church...Please stop!” shouted the man. The donkey just began to trot faster. He was getting closer and closer to the cliff edge. Finally, in desperation, the man said a prayer. “Please, dear Lord. Please make this donkey stop before I go off this cliff; in Jesus’ name, Amen.” The donkey came to an abrupt stop just one step from the edge of the cliff. “Hallelujah!” shouted the man.

This funny story introduces the “hallelujah” chapter. In Rev 19:1-21,² all of heaven breaks out in praise. The “hallelujah’s of heaven” are a response to three events: the judgment of the “great harlot” (19:1-5), the “marriage supper of the Lamb” (19:6-10),³ and Christ’s return in judgment (19:11-21).⁴ In 19:1-5, we are called to exclaim...

1. Hallelujah for God’s judgment (19:1-5). Verse 1 begins with the familiar “**After these things.**”⁵ This phrase looks back to God’s judgment upon Babylon. John’s attention turns to heaven, where he hears “**the voice of a great multitude.**” Rev 7 informs us that this multitude consists of tribulation martyrs (7:9-10, 14).⁶ This remnant shouts, “**Hallelujah!**” There’s our key word. Can you say, “Hallelujah?” This expression comes from a Hebrew word that means “Praise Yah,” that is, “Praise the Lord.” This term appears in the New Testament only in Rev 19, where it occurs four times.⁷ These martyrs praise the Lord for His attributes and His actions. In 19:1, three of God’s attributes are noted: First, God is praised for “**salvation,**”⁸ which means “deliverance.” In this context, “salvation” is referring to God delivering His people from her enemies. Second, God is praised for His “**glory,**”⁹ that is, His moral excellence, which is seen in His judgment of sinful Babylon. “Glory” is the manifestation of God’s essence. These saints understood who and what God is, in His work of bringing creation to a meaningful conclusion. Third, God is praised for His “**power,**”¹⁰ which is seen in His overthrow of Babylon. They clearly understood God’s ability to do whatever He chooses to do. These three things should awaken worship on the part of believers today too. God’s salvation should awaken gratitude; His glory should awaken reverence; and His power should awaken trust. Can you say, “Hallelujah?”

In 19:2, God is also praised for His actions. The word “**because**” introduces the reason for the great outburst of praise. The multitude in heaven will praise God for His destruction of wickedness. God has executed a “**true**” (fitting) and “**righteous**” (deserved) judgment¹¹ on the great harlot because she was leading the earth astray with idolatry and killing God’s bond-servants. This verse reminds us that in the end, all obstacles to the inauguration of God’s kingdom will be obliterated: Babylon’s “**smoke rises up forever**” (19:3). This will lead all those in heaven to again cry out, “Hallelujah!”

In 19:4, “**the twenty-four elders**”¹² (representatives of the glorified church) and “**the four living creatures**”¹³ (angelic cherubs that serve before God’s throne) reappear. They fall down and say, “**Amen**” (“yes, so be it!”) and “**Hallelujah!**” These worshippers echo Jesus’ words, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10). Then, in 19:5, John hears a voice from the throne, likely that of the four living creatures encouraging all to “**give praise**¹⁴ **to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great.**” This means everyone!

On this side of eternity, people like to think of praise in the sense of George Handel's, "*Hallelujah Chorus*," in which "hallelujah" is the triumphant worship of the reigning King. Such a chorus will be seen in 19:6, but first there will be the equally triumphant rejoicing over the downfall of evil at the hand of God. It is unfortunate that many Christians do not want to hear of God's judgment and wrath. They want to hear only of His love and kindness.¹⁵ What a reminder that heaven's estimate of things differs from this world's. The things the world loves most fondly are the objects of God's most intense wrath. Believers should be struck by the reverence and awe of heaven. Unfortunately, many of us have lost a sense of awe and wonder, which is the basis of worship.¹⁶

Some may ask, "Is rejoicing at the judgment of the great harlot a godly thing to do?" After all, the Bible cautions us not to rejoice over the downfall of our enemy (Prov 24:17-18). Yet, in the Scriptures, the righteous do pray for the judgment of the wicked (e.g., the "imprecatory psalms"). They also rejoice when God judges those who are His enemies (Prov 11:10; 21:15).¹⁷ The answer to this question is found in Rom 12:18-20: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,' says the Lord. 'BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD.'"

[We are called by God to exclaim, "Hallelujah for God's judgment." Now in 19:6-10, we will be called to exclaim...]

2. Hallelujah for God's marriage supper (19:6-10). In 19:6,¹⁸ John writes, "**Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder,**¹⁹ saying, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty,²⁰ reigns'" (1 Chron 16:31). Again, the tribulation martyrs ("**a great multitude**") express their praise to God. This is the last song of praise in Revelation. These saints shout, "**Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.**" They praise the Lord because He has begun to rule. This is what all of human history has been building up to.

In 19:7-8, these martyrs call the reader of Revelation to "**rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him.**" Why? The word "**for**" gives the reason: "**for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride²¹ has made herself ready. It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.**" These great verses look forward to the most spectacular wedding of all-time. The Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, is identified as "**the Lamb.**" It is significant that the heavenly wedding is not called "the marriage of the Creator," "the marriage of the Lord," or "the marriage of the King." The title "**marriage of the Lamb,**" more than any other, draws attention to the fact that "Christ...loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Eph 5:25). The Lamb's "**bride**" is the church.²² In 19:9, John writes, "**Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb...These are true words of God.**" This seems to suggest that all the redeemed saints of all ages will be present for this marriage supper.²³ The marriage supper takes place in the millennium²⁴ and will celebrate the union between Christ and His people, that is, the church and Israel.²⁵

John writes that the bride "**has made herself ready.**" This is no reluctant bride. Her wedding gown of "**fine linen**" is described as "the righteous acts [lit., "righteousnesses"] of the saints."²⁶ To be a part of the bride, one must have believed in Christ as his or her personal Savior from sin. But the primary emphasis here relates to the issue of true spirituality that results in rewards or preparation for eternity. Men must personally and responsibly believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior, and then, as believers and as part of the bride of Christ, they must choose to walk by the Spirit of God, according to the Word, by faith, so they can bear fruit or reproduce good works. This is what the statement means, "**makes herself ready.**"

In Revelation, believers are “made ready” by remaining “faithful” (2:10, 13; 13:10; 14:12; 17:14), maintaining their “testimony for Jesus” (1:9; 6:9; 12:11, 17; 20:4), enduring hardship (1:9; 2:2-3, 19; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12), and obeying God’s commands (12:17; 14:12).²⁷ This is where the book of Revelation gets intensely practical (and personal). In your school, are you maintaining your testimony for Jesus? Are you refusing to succumb to peer-pressure? Are you faithfully persevering in the midst of rejection and persecution? In your workplace, are you obeying God’s commands to be a person of integrity? Are you committed to honoring God instead of seeking a promotion or raise? Are you being faithful in your family and church responsibilities? Are you steadily maturing as a disciple? It is wishful thinking to assume that we will be the disciples that God calls us to be in the future when we are not faithful in the present.

After the angel finished sharing this incredible news, John “**fell at his feet to worship him**” (19:10). John was so awed by the message he heard from the angel that he bowed down to worship him.²⁸ John did this again (22:8-9), and in both instances the angel rebuked him and asserted that God alone must be worshipped. Why did John record these failings on his part? The lesson is twofold: He wanted to show his readers how idolatry can infiltrate one’s life through even innocent means. John was about to turn a messenger of the truth into an idol.²⁹ Idolatry is more than burning incense before a man-made statue. It is giving absolute worth and devotion to anything or anyone other than God, even a good cause.

Our natural human tendency is to worship other people. When I was growing up, I had many idols. My first idol was my next-door neighbor, Leonard. He was a big, bad Marine who took a special interest in me when I was between the ages of 3 and 5. From Leonard, I moved to Hans Solo and Luke Skywalker. Then I began to worship athletes, body builders, and rock musicians. Today, all that seems far removed from my experience. But is it really? Even today, I can find it effortless to idolize a great biblical scholar or pastor. It’s easy to place people on a pedestal, isn’t it? Maybe you worship an athlete, an actor/actress, a friend, a spouse, a child, or a boyfriend/girlfriend. Maybe you don’t like me using the terms “worship” or “idolize,” but let’s honestly acknowledge that’s what it is.

The angel that spoke to John responded, “**Do not do that; I am a fellow servant³⁰ of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus³¹ is the spirit of prophecy**” (19:10). There is no place in Christianity for the worship of any but God: not angels, not demons, not dead saints, and certainly not pastors or spiritual leaders, no matter how godly they may be.³² We must always remember the greatest people on earth are no more than God’s servants. Only Jesus Christ “**is the spirit of prophecy.**” This means that the prophecy ultimately reveals Him.

A few weeks ago, a friend of mine invited me to go to a Seattle Mariner’s baseball game. Now I could have spent my time watching the ticket takers. I could have frequented the concession stands and watched. I could have counted rows of seats. But I went to the game to watch the Mariners.³³ Prophecy is like this. It’s easy to get caught up in sensationalism and mysterious knowledge, yet the goal of prophecy is JESUS. He is prophecy’s central feature. He is the main attraction! The goal of the book of Revelation is for you and me to know and love Jesus more.

[We have been called to “rejoice, be glad, and give the glory to God” because of the marriage supper of the Lamb. Now in 19:11-21, we are to exclaim...]

3. Hallelujah for God’s great supper (19:11-21). In 19:11,³⁴ John sees another vision: “**And I saw heaven opened,³⁵ and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.**” John sees the glorified Lord Jesus on a white horse. Today most people think of horses as either farm animals or runners on the racetrack. However, in the ancient world horses were thought of as military machines used in war (Isa 63:13; Jer 12:5; 8:6). Three short observations should be made about the symbolism³⁶ used here of Christ as the warrior King on a white horse.

First, the picture contrasts sharply to that of His first coming. In Jesus' procession into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, He rode on a donkey, a lowly beast of burden (Matt 21:5; cf. Zech 9:9). At Christ's second coming the little domestic animal will be exchanged for the military steed. Second, the scene in Rev 19 stands in contrast to the scene in Rev 6, which refers to another rider on a white horse. That rider is Antichrist, who will bring new levels of evil to the earth, but the rider in Rev 19 will remove that evil. Third, He will ride a white horse. In Revelation the color white symbolizes judgment (20:11) and victory.

In the 1986 film, *Crocodile Dundee*, the Australian hero is in New York with his girl friend. A group of hoodlums tries to rob them. One of them carries a switchblade knife. "Watch out! He's got a knife!" the young woman exclaims. Crocodile Dundee reaches to a sheath at his back and pulls out a monstrous knife and smiles, "That's not a knife; *this* is a knife!" The hoodlums flee. In Rev 19, Almighty God considers the False Christ on the white horse who has terrorized the earth during the tribulation period. "That's not the Christ," He proclaims. "THIS IS THE CHRIST!" And our Lord appears to conquer His enemies.

In 19:12-13, John further describes this rider as "**Faithful and True.**" Jesus is faithful (trustworthy) and true (righteous, the real Messiah; cf. 3:14). He came out of heaven to judge the Beast and to make war with him on earth (cf. Isa 11:3-5). The warrior King from heaven will judge and wage war "**in righteousness.**" John writes, "**His eyes are a flame of fire.**" This speaks of the Lord's ability to see through all pretenses. Nothing can be hidden from the penetrating gaze of the Messiah. He is omniscient (cf. 1:14; 2:18). Many things in human experience are mysteries and unsolved riddles. But the eyes of Christ search and understand all things. There are sins in the lives of people that no one else can see. Yet He sees them all. People rationalize many sins and crimes, refusing to censure them as evil. Christ sees the innermost heart and evaluates everything by the perfect standard of His holiness.

On the Warrior's head John saw "**many diadems.**" The diadem was a royal crown.³⁷ At His crucifixion Jesus received a crown of thorns (Matt 27:29; Mark 15:17; John 19:2, 5). To the soldiers it was an attempt to mock royalty. To His followers, however, it testified of His true kingship, and it anticipated His victory over death and His return to rule the world. The accumulated crowns on Jesus' head speak of accumulated victories and dominions—the greatest of all, by far, being His victorious passion. It says He is the winner of many mighty battles and the holder of much sovereignty. John added that Jesus "**has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself.**" John means that the human mind cannot grasp the depth of Christ's being. There is a lesson here in humility. This name is purposely left in obscurity so people will remember that it is God the Son, of whom John was speaking, and be reminded of the wonder and reverence due Him.³⁸ John wrote, "**He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood.**" This is a reference to the blood of Messiah's foes (see Isa 63). The bloodstained garment points in two directions: ahead to the victory at Armageddon and back over many enemies already vanquished.³⁹ John then mentioned the third name of the Warrior in this section, "**His name is called The Word of God**" (cf. John 1:1, 14). This name is a name that we can know with absolute confidence.

As I reflected on Jesus' name, "**The Word of God,**" I couldn't help but be challenged. If I had to choose one focus of my Christian life over all others, I would choose the reading and study of God's Word. If a disciple is committed to God's Word, he/she will inevitably become a person that will worship God, serve in the local church, fellowship with other believers, and be involved in telling others about Christ. It is the Word that changes peoples' lives. Today, will you commit to spending daily time in God's Word?

In 19:14, John writes, "**And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean,**⁴⁰ **were following Him on white horses.**"⁴¹ The Bible is clear that angels accompany Christ at His second coming.⁴² But Christ's bride is also a part of this army. In 17:14, the Lamb goes to war with an army identified as "the called and chosen and faithful." Furthermore, in 19:8, the bride is dressed in "fine linen, bright and clean," that is, in the same clothing as this army. Those who have been Christ's companions in His rejection now accompany Him at the judgment.

In 19:15-16, John writes, **“From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.⁴³ And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, ‘KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.’”** Christ will strike down His enemies with His Word, symbolized by a long, tongue-shaped sword (cf. 1:16; Isa 11:4; 49:2). He will destroy His enemies with inflexible righteousness that the iron Shepherd’s rod pictures (cf. 2:27; 12:5; Ps 2:9; 45). He will execute the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty that these enemies must drink (cf. 19:13; 14:8, 10, 19-20; 16:19; Isa 63:1-6). God will judge Israel, namely Jews, living when He returns (Ezek 20:33-38), and the Gentiles living then (Matt 25:31-46). The name that Christ bears is the sign of universal sovereignty (cf. Phil 2:9-11). When Jesus Christ returns, He will come with authority to punish rebels and evildoers.

In 19:17-18,⁴⁴ John **“saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, ‘Come, assemble for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.’”** The **“birds”**⁴⁵ will be invited to “the great supper of God” (19:17), a terrible counterpart to “the marriage supper of the Lamb” (19:9).⁴⁶ Jesus told a parable of a big dinner to which all were invited (Luke 14:16-24). That dinner is a picture of the kingdom of heaven. For 2,000 years men and women have been invited to come. Many have accepted the invitation, but many have refused. That feast and the wedding supper of 19:9 picture the same thing. It is a supper of joy. The supper in 19:17, however, will not be one of joy; it will be a supper of judgment.

In 19:19-21, our chapter reaches its climax as **“the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.⁴⁷ And the beast was seized, and with him the False Prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive⁴⁸ into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.”** God originally prepared the lake of fire for Satan and his angels (Matt 25:41). They will be the first inhabitants. Nevertheless, God permits men and women who reject Him to spend eternity separated from Him. This epitomizes the justice of God. People of the world have many answers to the problems confronting society. For some the answer is progress, growth, and development. They say the only thing people need is time and solutions will come, for they have the tools, namely education, science, and democracy. For others the answer is found in various religions and the development of spiritual forces. However, the Bible repudiates all human answers. The solution to the problem of evil in the world is not through some sort of improvement or development of the present order. The solution is the complete rooting up and throwing over of the present order.

Jesus Christ is coming back. Because He is coming again:

1. We should refrain from judging others (1 Cor 4:5).
2. We should remember the Lord’s Table (1 Cor 11:26).
3. We should relate to one another in love (1 Thess 3:12-13).
4. We should restore the bereaved (1 Thess 4:16).
5. We should not neglect the church (Heb 10:25).
6. We should remain steadfast (Jas 5:8).
7. We should reach the lost for Jesus Christ (Jude 22-23).⁴⁹

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Notes

¹ This unique sermon title is an abbreviated revision from Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation: ECNT* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 694.

² Revelation 19:11-22:5 is the classic NT passage on Christ's return. These chapters set forth seven major motifs of biblical eschatology: the second coming of Christ (19:11-16), the defeat of the Antichrist (19:17-21), the binding of Satan (20:1-3), the millennial kingdom of Christ (20:4-6), the loosing of Satan and his final defeat (20:7-10), the last judgment at the great white throne (20:11-15), and the new heavens and new earth (21:1-22:5). The first ten verses of Rev 19 are an introduction to these great subjects. Besides introducing the seven last things, this passage focuses on worship and awe before God and gives Christians reason for looking eagerly for the coming of the Lord. This is the climactic expression of praise in Revelation (cf. 4:8, 11; 5:9-10, 12-14; 7:10, 12, 15-17; 11:15, 17-18; 15:3-4; 16:5-7). The four songs in 19:1-5 look back to the judgment of Babylon, and the song in 19:9-10 looks forward to the marriage supper of the Lamb. The harlot dies, but the bride begins to enjoy new life. See Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 355.

³ For a helpful study on this section, see David J. MacLeod, "Heaven's Hallelujah Chorus: An Introduction to the Seven 'Last Things':" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156:621 (Jan-Mar 99), 72-84.

⁴ "Hallelujah" is implicit in the text.

⁵ Cf. Rev 1:19; 4:1 (twice); 7:9; 9:12; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1; 20:3.

⁶ Some understand this "great multitude" to be a throng of angels. E.g., Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John*: TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 224; Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 355-56. It is argued that they must be angels because earlier songs of thanks involve angels (Rev 4:8-11; 5:11-14), and human believers are called to add their hallelujah in 19:5.

⁷ "Hallelujah" (*hallelouia*) is only used in the NT in Rev 19:1, 3, 4, and 6. It is found in the OT exclusively in the Psalms (Ps 104:1; 105:1; 106:1; 110:1; 111:1; 112:1; 113:1; 114:1; 115:1; 116:1; 117:1; 118:1; 134:1; 135:1; 145:1; 146:1; 147:1; 148:1; 149:1; 150:1, 6).

⁸ "Salvation" (*soteria*) is also used in Rev 7:10 and 12:10.

⁹ "Glory" (*doxa*) is used in Rev 1:6; 4:9, 11; 5:12-13; 7:12; 11:13; 14:7; 15:8; 16:9; 18:1; 19:1, 7; 21:11, 23-24, 26.

¹⁰ "Power" (*dunamis*) is used in Rev 1:16; 3:8; 4:11; 5:12; 7:12; 11:17; 12:10; 13:2; 15:8; 17:13; 18:3; 19:1.

¹¹ God's judgments are also called "true and righteous" in Rev 16:7. Significantly the first occurrence of "Hallelujah" in the Bible is in Ps 104:35, where the context is also judgment. E. W. Bullinger, *The Apocalypse*, 3rd ed. (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1935; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1984), 584.

¹² The 24 elders are found in Rev 4:4, 10; 5:5-6, 8, 11, 14; 7:11, 13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4.

¹³ The four living creatures are found in Rev 4:8; 5:6, 8, 14; 6:1, 6; 7:11; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4.

¹⁴ The verb "give praise" (*aineite*) is a command that indicates the giving of continual praise.

¹⁵ Of all the places in the New Testament we might expect to find "Hallelujah," Rev 19 seems most unlikely. Heaven's rejoicing at the harlot's fate is in contrast to the laments of Rev 18:1.

¹⁶ See Warren W. Wiersbe, *Real Worship*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Oliver Nelson, 1990), 43-44.

¹⁷ Bob Deffinbaugh, *God's Final Word on the Last Times* (unpublished notes).

¹⁸ Rev 19:6-8 have been called "the wedding march of the Church."

¹⁹ Cf. Ezek 1:24; 43:2; Dan 10:6.

²⁰ "The Almighty" (*pantokrator*) appears in Rev 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22.

²¹ Rev 19:7 actually says "wife" (*gune*) and not "bride" (*numphe*). English translators usually render the Greek word *gune*, translated "bride," as "wife," yet here the context clearly shows that a wedding is in view. In the NT the bride/wife metaphor is used of the church in two kinds of passages. In some (Rom 7:1-4; 1 Cor 6:17) the church is seen as the wife married to Christ. In others (e.g., 2 Cor. 11:2) she is seen as a virgin and the marriage is future.

²² See Matt 22:2ff; 25:1ff; Mark 2:19; John 3:29.

²³ See Isa 54:6; Ezek 16:8ff; Hos 2:14ff; Matt 8:11. In the OT, Israel is viewed as the unfaithful wife of Yahweh, who was put away (Hos 2:2) but one day will be reunited to Him (2:19-20; cf. Isa 62:1-5).

²⁴ Bible teachers differ widely over the symbolism of the wedding feast, or "marriage supper of the Lamb." There are at least three views: (1) The marriage supper is millennial. (2) The marriage supper will take place after the millennium in the eternal. (3) The marriage supper will take place in heaven before the return of the Lord to the earth. Several factors suggest "the marriage supper of the Lamb" will occur in the millennial kingdom. This is the feast of which the Savior spoke when He said, "I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (Matt 26:29). He said of the Passover Feast, "I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:16). Jesus also spoke of the day when "many shall come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven"

(Matt 8:11). That the feast will be millennial is also suggested by Luke's parable of a wedding feast (12:35–37) in which the Lord serves supper when He returns from the wedding.

²⁵ See Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993). However, it could be argued that Israel cannot be this bride or part of this bride because this bride comes to earth with Christ, but OT saints will not experience resurrection until Christ returns to the earth (Dan 12:1-2). The fact that the bride in 21:12 and 14 includes Israel indicates that the bride will be a growing body of people that will eventually encompass Israel as well as the church. There the bride is the New Jerusalem. However at this time, just before Christ returns to the earth, the figure of the bride must describe the church alone.

²⁶ Scholars have debated the expression “the righteousneses of the saints.” Some say it refers to the doctrine of justification, whereby a person is acquitted or declared righteous in God's courtroom. It speaks, they say, of the church's holy state before God. Others say John referred to two kinds of righteousness, justification and sanctification. One is the righteousness believers have the moment they exercise faith in Christ. The other is the righteousness believers acquire as they respond in daily obedience to the heavenly Bridegroom. Still others say the “righteousneses” should be viewed in the context of rewards. They point out that the rapture of the church and the judgment seat of Christ will have taken place. They see the bride clothed in her rewards or awards. Other expositors say the “righteousneses” refer to the innumerable acts of faithful obedience that characterize the bride. In other words it speaks of the good works (“righteous deeds of the saints”) performed after salvation, good works enabled by the indwelling Spirit of God. The fact that the same noun (*dikaiomata*) is used of God's righteous acts in 15:4 favors this fourth view. The bride receives the garment as a gift, but she must put it on. A transformed life is the proper response to the call of the heavenly Bridegroom.

²⁷ Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation: ECNT* (Grand Rapids, 2002), 673-74.

²⁸ I believe that John was awe-struck by the realization that the words the angel spoke were a word from God. Since we have never experienced a message directly conveyed from God, we will never be able to fully appreciate John's response.

²⁹ Angels, like humans, can only bear witness to the testimony borne by Jesus (cf. Rev 1:2, 9; 6:9; 12:17; 20:4; 22:9, 20; cf. Col 2:18; Heb 1:14).

³⁰ The lowliness of a slave is emphasized in the Greek text with the emphatic position of *sundoulos* (“fellow slave”). This term is used in Rev 6:11 and 22:9.

³¹ The basic question here is precisely what is meant by the expression, “the testimony of Jesus.” This can mean either that Jesus is the source of prophecy (“the testimony which is from Jesus”) or that He is the subject of prophecy (“the testimony which is about Jesus”). Both expressions are true. The “Revelation of Jesus Christ” in Rev 1:1 is the revelation “which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants.” Thus, the “Revelation of Jesus Christ” is the revelation from Jesus Christ. Other passages, such as 1 Pet 1:11; speak of our Lord as the source of prophecy. Surely we must also agree that prophecy has Christ as its subject as well as its source. It would seem to me that we are not far from the truth to understand the angel's words to convey both ideas that the testimony, which John and the saints hold, is that which has come from Christ and is about Him. See Thomas L. Constable, *Dr. Constable's Notes on Revelation* (<http://www.sonlight.com/constable/notes/pdf/revelation.pdf>, 2003), 175.

³² This was a problem that Paul addressed in 1 Cor 1:12-13. Paul wrote, “‘I am of Paul,’ and ‘I of Apollos,’ and ‘I of Cephas,’ and ‘I of Christ.’ Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” We can appreciate God's gifts and work through one another (1 Thess 5:12), but our worship is to be reserved for God alone.

³³ The basic idea for this illustration came from Tony Evans, *The Best is Yet to Come* (Chicago: Moody, 2000), 29.

³⁴ David J. MacLeod, “The First ‘Last Thing’: The Second Coming of Christ (Rev 19:11-16),” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156:622 (Apr-June 99), 203-220.

³⁵ Previously in Revelation, John saw just a door open (4:1) or the heavenly temple open (11:19).

³⁶ Kelly writes, “None, I trust, would be so foolish as to imagine that, when this blessed scene really comes, it will be a question of horses literally. It is the symbol that passed before the eye of the prophet” (William Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of the Revelation*, rev. ed. [London: Morrish, 1874], 399). As Beasley-Murray put it, “There is no cavalry kept in heaven” (George R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* [London: Oliphants, 1974], 278). Johnson points out that although the horse is not one that might be entered in the Kentucky Derby, the apostle was nevertheless describing a literal, historical event (S. Lewis Johnson Jr., *The Old Testament in the New* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980], 13). Incidentally, Seiss and Thomas do argue for literal horses in Revelation 19:11, 14 (Seiss, *Lectures on the Apocalypse*, 3:249–50; and Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary* [Chicago: Moody, 1995], 387–88). See Constable, *Dr. Constable's Notes on Revelation*, 177.

³⁷ Earlier in Rev, the Dragon, Satan, wore seven diadems (12:3). The Beast or the Antichrist wore ten of them (13:1; 17:12): one for each of the ten kings who will be subservient to him in the tribulation.

³⁸ MacLeod, "The First 'Last Thing,'" 213.

³⁹ Christ will come to this final great war not as a raw recruit, but as a veteran in battle. He is the One who fought for Israel (Isa 51:9). He fought the kings of Canaan at Taanach (Judg 5:19–20). He won a great victory over Satan and his hosts at the cross (Col 2:15). He is the One who will have brought down the great powers mentioned earlier in the book (Rev 17:10; cf. Dan 2:21). So He will come wearing the garment worn and stained on many "battlefields." And He will come in the same invincible power. See MacLeod, "The First 'Last Thing,'" 214.

⁴⁰ The clothing of the cavalry that will accompany the warrior King is "white and clean." Their garments are not "dipped in blood" (cf. 19:13). They do not wear armor, nor do they carry weapons. They are still wearing the apparel of festivity, for they are on their way to a wedding feast! On their way they will watch their Commander single-handedly engage in mortal combat. He alone will win the victory against evil.

⁴¹ Jesus Christ will return to earth. MacLeod has collected some impressive quotes from the early church fathers. For example *The Epistle of Barnabas*, probably written in Alexandria between A.D. 70 and 100, states, "When His Son comes He will destroy . . . the wicked one, and will judge the godless, and will change the sun and the moon and the stars, and then He will truly rest." Clement of Rome, writing about A.D. 96, said, "Therefore we must be prompt in well doing: for all things are from Him. For He warns us, 'Behold the Lord cometh, and His reward is before His face, to pay to each according to His work.'" A later church father, Justin Martyr, writing to the emperor in the second century (ca. A.D. 155), said, "Hear, too, how He was to ascend into heaven according to prophecy. . . . And how also He should come again out of heaven with glory." Irenaeus (ca. 130-ca. 200), wrote this in a famous work on heresy: "But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire." The African church father, Tertullian, who lived in the second and third centuries (ca. 160-ca. 225), alluded to 1 Thessalonians 4:17 when he said, "For we shall, according to the apostle, be caught up into the clouds to meet the Lord (even the Son of man who shall come in the clouds [i.e., in glory])." For citation information, see MacLeod, "The First 'Last Thing,'" 205.

⁴² See Matt 13:41; 16:27; 24:30-31; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; 2 Thess 1:7.

⁴³ John's subject in Revelation 19:11–16 is the revelation of Jesus Christ and not the rapture or translation of the church. In the one event (the rapture) God's people will meet Christ in the clouds (1 Thess 4:16–17); in the other (the revelation) they will come with Him to the earth. In the rapture Christ will return with His saints to heaven; at the other He will come with them to earth and will establish His kingdom. At the rapture the saints will put on immortality and incorruptibility (1 Cor 15:53); at the other they will be displayed in glory (Rom. 8:21–23).

⁴⁴ For a greater paper, see David J. MacLeod, "The Second 'Last Thing': The Defeat of Antichrist (Rev 19:17-21)" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156:623 (July-September 1999): 325-35.

⁴⁵ Jesus referred to the same battle and mentioned vultures (*aetoi*) being present (Matt 24:28; Luke 17:37).

⁴⁶ The word "supper" (*deipon*) is used for both suppers.

⁴⁷ How could such an army be assembled to make war on Christ? John wrote of "spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty" (Rev 16:14). No leader could single-handedly bring about such a vast combination of demons and kings for such a purpose. Clearly Satan will be behind this movement. The second explanation is divine. In 2 Thess 2:11 Paul spoke of a "deluding influence" sent by God to blind the followers of the Antichrist.

⁴⁸ The present participle "alive" (*zontes*) stands in an emphatic position in the Greek to add horror to the picture: "Alive the two were cast." The fate of the beast and the false prophet contrasts dramatically and miserably with the fate of two great OT heroes. Both Enoch and Elijah were taken to heaven without dying (Gen 5:24; 2 Kgs 2:11). The Beast and his False Prophet will be cast into the lake of fire without physically dying first. As God intervened and showed mercy to Enoch and Elijah in bringing them alive to heaven, so He will intervene in judgment in casting these two evil ones into the lake of fire.

⁴⁹ See David Jeremiah and C.C. Carlson, *Escape the Coming Night* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1997 [1990]), 226-27.