

The Second Coming of Christ

by John F. Walvoord

John F. Walvoord's sermon explores the significance of the Second Coming of Christ, emphasizing the joy and praise of the saints in anticipation of His return.

Topics: "Second Coming", "End Times"

Description

John F. Walvoord preaches on the dramatic change in tone in Revelation 19, marking the end of the Great Tribulation and the transition to the Second Coming of Christ. The chapter highlights the praise in heaven for God's righteous judgments on the great harlot and the avenging of His servants, leading to the ultimate victory of Christ over all evil. The scene unfolds with the twenty-four elders and heavenly beings worshipping God, the announcement of the marriage supper of the Lamb, the blessedness of those called to the feast, the revelation of the King of Kings in His second coming, the battle against the beast and false prophet, and the final doom of the wicked armies.

Transcript

The Alleluia of the Saints in Heaven (19:1-3)

19:1-3 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

In response to the invitation of 18:20, John next hears "a great voice of much people in heaven." The chronological relationship of these experiences is obvious, with the voice in heaven following the destruction of Babylon in all its forms. The time, therefore, must be just before the second coming of Christ. J. Vernon McGee mentions that chapter 19

marks a dramatic change in the tone of Revelation. The destruction of Babylon, the capital of the Beast's kingdom, marks the end of the Great Tribulation. The somber gives way to song. The transfer is from darkness to light, from black to white, from dreary days of judgment to bright days of blessing. This chapter makes a definite bifurcation in Revelation, and ushers in the greatest event for this earth-- the Second Coming of Christ. It is the bridge between the Great Tribulation and the Millennium.²⁹⁴

The reference to "much people" (Gr., ochlou pollou) is to the same group as in 7:9 where "a great multitude" is a translation of precisely the same Greek words. Though the general reference may be to all people in heaven, the allusion seems to be to the martyred dead of the great tribulation. This multitude is heard saying, "Alleluia." The English translation is a transliteration of the Greek word alle,louia, the Greek equivalent for hallelujah, the similar Hebrew word in the Old Testament. The four instances of "alleluia" in the New Testament are found in this chapter (vv. 1, 3, 4, 6). Luther Poellot points out that "Rev. 19:1-6 is the New Testament Hallelujah Chorus."²⁹⁵ The saints here speak with a "loud voice" (cf. 7:10). In addition to the introductory alleluia they express praise to the Lord in three great words: salvation (Gr., so,,te,,ria), glory (Gr., doxa), and power (Gr., dynamis). A fourth word, honor (Gr., time,,), is found in some texts between glory and power but omitted in others. Power is followed by tou theou he,,mo,,n (genitive), literally "of our God." As Scott has expressed it, "The first of the three terms signified deliverance, the second God's moral glory in judgment, and the third His might displayed in the execution of the judgment upon the harlot."²⁹⁶ The article occurs before each of the words: "the salvation, and the glory, and the power of our God."

The judgments of God upon Babylon are declared to be true and righteous (Gr., ale,,thinai kai dikaiiai). God is praised for having judged the great harlot and having avenged the blood of His servants shed by her hand. The ascription of praise is followed by a second alleluia and the statement that the smoke of Babylon will continue to rise forever. This cannot refer to the city itself, but will be fulfilled by a perpetual judgment of the people who engaged in her wicked deeds. Thus is answered the appeal of the martyred saints in 6:10 for God's righteous judgment on those who shed their blood.

The Alleluia of the Twenty-four Elders (19:4)

19:4 And the four and twenty elders and four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne saying, Amen; Alleluia.

The twenty-four elders first introduced in chapter 4 along with the four living creatures then fall down and worship God and add their "Amen; Alleluia." The fact that the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures ("beasts") are introduced as worshiping God in a separate way from the great multitude seems to confirm the earlier suggestion that the great multitude are the martyred dead of the great tribulation who suffered immediately from the wickedness of Babylon in its form just prior to the second coming of Christ. If the twenty-four elders represent the church, they are witnesses of these events from heaven even though they have not participated in quite the same way.

The Final Alleluia of the Great Multitude (19:5-6)

19:5-6 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

Joining the praise of the tribulation saints, the twenty-four elders, and the four beasts, a voice is now heard coming out of the throne calling upon the servants of God to praise the Lord. It is probable that this is a voice of an angel rather than the voice of God or the voice of the saints. The occasion for the praise of God is His judgment against wicked men who have oppressed the people of God. The expression "his servants" does not refer to a particular group such as the tribulation saints, as J. B. Smith suggests,²⁹⁷ but rather as the passage itself says, to "all ye his servants." In other words, this is an occasion for every true servant of God to praise the Lord. The following expression, "ye that fear him, both small and great,"

is another descriptive phrase applying to the same group. This seems to be supported by the Greek text which links the phrases in apposition without a connective "and" as in the Authorized Version. Hence it reads, "Keep on praising our God, all his servants who fear him, small and great." The verb "praise" is in the present tense and is therefore a command to "keep on praising" the Lord.

In antiphonal response to this call to praise, John hears the voice of the great multitude, that is, the same as in verse 1, accompanied by the majestic sound of many waters and mighty thunderings, saying for the fourth time in this passage, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb Announced (19:7-8)

19:7-8 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

Continuing the praise of the Lord their God, the great multitude now announce a major feature of the Lord's reign upon earth, namely, His marriage to His bride. In verse 7, the great multitude express their joy that the marriage of the Lamb has come and that His wife has made herself ready. William R. Newell is certain that the marriage of the Lamb occurs in heaven. He writes, "Where is the marriage, with its attending marriage supper, celebrated? The answer can only be--in heaven; for the scene is wholly heavenly. No one can read verse 6 without coming to this conclusion."²⁹⁸ The text, of course, does not say where the marriage takes place. It merely announces that the marriage of the Lamb is come. This event is obviously subsequent to the destruction of Babylon, but, if this occurs at the end of the great tribulation which is immediately climaxed and succeeded by the second coming of Christ, the more normal presumption would be that the supper would take place on earth in connection with the second coming to the earth itself.

It is most significant and in keeping with the concept of a pretribulational rapture that those in the great multitude composed of tribulation saints should thus regard the wife of the Lamb as an entity other than themselves. The word for "marriage" is the same as that translated in verse 9 "marriage supper" (Gr., *gamos*).

Though marriage customs varied in the ancient world, usually there were three major aspects: (1) The marriage contract was often consummated by the parents when the parties to the marriage were still children and not ready to assume adult responsibility. The payment of a suitable dowry was often a feature of the contract. When consummated, the contract meant that the couple were legally married. (2) At a later time when a couple had reached a suitable age, the second step in the wedding took place. This was a ceremony in which the bridegroom accompanied by his friends would go to the house of the bride and escort her to his home. This is the background of the parable of the virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. (3) Then the bridegroom would bring his bride to his home and the marriage supper, to which guests were invited, would take place. It was such a wedding feast that Christ attended at Cana as recorded in John 2:1-12.

The marriage symbolism is beautifully fulfilled in the relationship of Christ to His church. The wedding contract is consummated at the time the church is redeemed. Every true Christian is joined to Christ in a legal marriage. When Christ comes for His church at the rapture, the second phase of the wedding is fulfilled, namely, the Bridegroom goes to receive His bride. The third phase then follows, that is, the wedding feast. Here it is significant to note that the bride is already the wife of the Lamb, that is, the bridegroom has already come for His bride prior to His second coming described in 19:11-16. That which

is here announced is not the wedding union but the wedding feast. This has been variously interpreted as relating to the wonderful fellowship in heaven following the rapture or to the millennium itself. Of primary importance at this point, however, is the order of events. The third phase of the wedding is about to take place, namely, the feast, which presumes the earlier rapture of the bride. The translation would be much improved in verse 7 if it would read "for the marriage feast of the Lamb is come."

Another problem of interpretation is the proper inclusion of the term "wife." In the biblical use of the figure of marriage, variations can be observed in both the Old and New Testaments. Frequently in the Old Testament, as for instance in the book of Hosea, Israel is described as the unfaithful wife of Jehovah to be restored to her position as a faithful wife in the future millennial reign. While marriage is often used as an illustration of various truths, the norm for the doctrine is that Israel is already married to Jehovah and has proved unfaithful to her responsibility as a wife. By contrast, in the New Testament the church is pictured as a virgin waiting for the coming of her bridegroom (2 Cor. 11:2). In this case the wedding union is still future as well as the wedding feast. The dispensational distinction between the saints of the present age belonging to the church, the Body of Christ, and saints of other ages, such as those in the Old Testament or those in the future tribulation, therefore seems to be observed in this passage where the wife is distinguished from the great multitude identified in chapter 7 as martyrs out of the great tribulation. The "marriage of the Lamb" is properly the marriage supper of the Lamb, the final aspect of the marriage relationship between Christ and His church.

In verse 8 a beautiful picture is drawn of the holiness and righteousness of the church in that hour, for the bride is described as arrayed in "fine linen, clean and white." We are not left to imagine what this means, for the interpretation is given: "for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." The word for "righteousness" (Gr., *dikaio,mata*) is the word for righteous deeds and is in the plural. The reference, therefore, seems to be not to justification by faith but rather to the righteousness wrought in the lives of the saints who comprise the wife of the Lamb. It seems that this is the sense of the unusual phrase "his wife hath made herself ready."

In Ephesians 5:26-27 Christ is said to be carrying on a present work with His church "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" with a view to the future presentation in glory as stated in verse 27: "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." The present work of sanctification of the church must be distinguished from justification. Justification by its nature is an act of God by which a believer is declared righteous, in contrast to sanctification, as in Ephesians 5:26, which is the work of God in the believer to bring his spiritual state up to the level of his position in Christ. The righteousness thus wrought in the life of the believer is pictured here as the fine linen which adorns the wife of the Lamb. Though even this righteousness is a product of the grace of God, it is distinguished as being related to human works, an experience, rather than to a divine fiat. The fine linen may, in some sense, be a part of the reward given at the judgment seat of Christ to those who have served the Lord, here seen collectively in the wife of the Lamb.

The Blessedness of Those Called to the Marriage Supper

(19:9-10) 19:9-10 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Following the praise to the Lord and the announcement of the marriage of the Lamb by the multitude, John is now instructed to write that those who are invited to the marriage supper are truly blessed. In this verse, as in verses 7 and 8, the wife of the Lamb is distinguished from the attendants at the wedding, the wife apparently being the church, and the attendants at the wedding the saints of past and future ages. The unfounded notion that God treats all saints of all ages exactly alike is hard to displace in the theology of the church. The fact that the divine purpose is not the same for Israel, the Gentile believers, or the church of the present age is plainly written in the Word of God. Such distinctions, however, should not be made greater than they really are. God does not deal with Israel on the same plane as He does the Gentiles, nor does He deal with the church on the same plane as He does the Gentile saints or Israel. Each has its peculiar advantages and particular place in the divine program. Just as no two individuals have exactly the same destiny, so no two nations or groups in God's program are treated exactly alike. In all these relationships God is completely sovereign, righteous, and wise.

The angel speaking the words of verse 9 is apparently the same one who on other occasions has informed John that he should write (cf. 14:13, but contrast 21:5 where the command is from God). The beatitude here expressed, the fourth beatitude of the book, is enforced by the statement "These are the true sayings of God." While this fact is rather obvious in the context, its statement reinforces the sovereign character of this divine revelation. So awesome is the revelation that, according to verse 10, John falls at the feet of the angel in an attitude of worship. Such a reaction, however, is not appropriate for an angel, and John is rebuked with the statement that the one speaking is "thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus." The word for "servant" (Gr., *syndoulos*) could be translated "fellow slave." It is most significant that not only men who are redeemed are by this token bondslaves of Jesus Christ, but the angels also have a similar obligation of implicit obedience to the Lord. Together they form the body that bears testimony to Jesus. The command "Worship God" means that only God should be worshiped.

The concluding phrase of verse 10 is most significant: "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." This means that prophecy at its very heart is designed to unfold the beauty and loveliness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In the present age, therefore, the Spirit of God is not only to glorify Christ but to show believers things to come as they relate to His person and majesty (cf. John 16:13-15). Christ is not only the major theme of the Scriptures but also the central theme of prophecy. The statement introduces the passage which follows on the second coming of Christ in glory to the earth.

At this point in the book of Revelation the climax of the revelation is reached with the presentation of Jesus Christ as the glorified King of kings and Lord of lords. In keeping with the subject of the book itself, "a revelation of Jesus Christ," all which precedes Revelation 19:11 is in some sense introductory and that which follows is an epilogue.

The revelation of Jesus Christ presented in the book of Revelation is in contrast to the Christ of the Gospels where He is revealed in rejection, humiliation, suffering, and death. His return is to be one of triumph, glory, sovereignty, and majesty. This is anticipated in the judgment upon Babylon in chapters 17 and 18 and in the dramatic introduction of the second coming in 19:1-10. In many respects the scene which now follows, namely, the second coming of Christ, is not only the high point of the book of Revelation but in many respects the high point of all history. Here is the manifestation of the Son of God in glory, the demonstration of the sovereignty of God, and the beginning of the end of human rebellion. How poverty-stricken is any Christian theology which minimizes the second coming of Christ and how limited the Christian hope which does not include this glorious climax to God's announced program of exalting His

Son and putting all creation under His control (cf. Ps. 2).

The Revelation of the King of Kings (19:11-13)

19:11-13 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

This passage contains one of the most graphic pictures of the second coming of Christ to be found anywhere in Scripture. Merrill C. Tenney describes the revelation of Christ in His second coming as following

the pattern of a Roman triumphal procession. When a general returned from a successful campaign, he and his legions were granted the right to parade up the Via Sacra, the main street of Rome that led from the Forum to the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill. Mounted on a white horse, the general rode at the head of his troops, followed by the wagonloads of booty that he had taken from the conquered nation, and by the chained captives that were to be executed or sold in the slave markets of the city. The chief captives or rebels were remanded to the Mamertine Prison, where they were usually executed, while sacrifices of thanksgiving were offered in the temple.²⁹⁹

Even a casual study should make evident the remarkable contrast between this event and the rapture of the church. At the rapture Christ meets His own in the air, and there is no evidence of immediate judgment upon the earth. By contrast, Christ here is coming to the earth with the specific purpose of bringing divine judgment and establishing His righteous rule.

Many Scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments anticipate this scene. Zechariah 14:3-4 revealed the event in these words:

Then shall the lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

According to Zechariah's prophecy, when Christ returns He will come to the Mount of Olives, the point of His departure on the occasion of His ascension into heaven recorded in Acts 1. His return to the Mount of Olives, however, will be dramatic, as the mountain will split in half in evidence of His power and authority. The Mount of Olives today has two high points, and what seems to be a natural division between them will be transformed into a great valley stretching toward the east from Jerusalem and extending down to Jericho at the Jordan River. No such event will take place at the rapture of the church.

The second coming of Christ is likewise described in Matthew 24:27-31:

For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with

a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

As is made clear in these prophecies, the second coming of Christ will be a glorious event which all the world will behold, both believers and unbelievers. It is compared to lightning that shines from the east to the west, in other words, illuminating the whole heaven. The second coming will be preceded by the sun being darkened and the moon not giving her light, stars falling from heaven, and other phenomena not only mentioned in Matthew 24 but vividly revealed in the Revelation. The climax to all these events will be the return of Christ Himself in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory and accompanied by the saints. The final revelation of this event is found in Revelation 19.

The dramatic presentation of this awe-inspiring scene is introduced by John's statement "I saw heaven opened." In the vision he beholds a person who can be no other than the Lord Jesus Christ on a white horse. In contrast to the pseudo ruler of the world (6:2), Christ is presented here as the true ruler. The plea of Isaiah as recorded in 64:1-2 is now fulfilled:

Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!

The opening of the heavens is dramatic in itself and to this is added the symbolism of a rider on a white horse drawn from the custom of conquerors riding on a white horse as a sign of victory or triumph. The rider on the white horse in Revelation 6 is described as one who "went forth conquering, and to conquer." Now the true King of kings and Lord of lords is going to triumph over those who blasphemously assumed control over the world. The titles given here to Christ are in keeping with the divine judgment which follows. He is declared to be faithful and true, and to judge and make war in righteousness. This is to be the demonstration of the sovereignty and righteousness of God even as Christ in His first coming demonstrated grace and truth. The titles here ascribed to Christ are previously given in Revelation 1:5 and 3:7, and were anticipated in the prophecies of Isaiah 11:3-4.

H. A. Ironside points out the significance of the three names given to Christ:

"A Name written that no man knew but He Himself" speaks of His essential glory as the Eternal Son, concerning which He declared that "no man knoweth the Son but the Father."... The second name is "The Word of God." [The third title is] "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." In these three names we have set forth, first, our Lord's dignity as the Eternal Son. Second, His incarnation--the Word became flesh. And, lastly, His second advent to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.³⁰⁰

These attributes are demonstrated in the appearance of Christ as described in the following verses. In verse 12 His eyes are as a flame of fire, a term previously used to describe Christ in 1:14 and 2:18. This speaks of His righteous judgment upon sin. His head is crowned with many crowns, or diadems, the symbol of sovereignty. He possesses a name which no man knows, as yet unrevealed. His vesture is declared to be "dipped in blood," as if anticipating the bloodshed to come (cf. Isa. 63:2-3; Rev. 14:20). Christ as the slain Lamb in Revelation speaks of redemption by blood; here blood represents divine judgment upon wicked men. The name given to Christ in verse 13 is "The Word of God" (Gr., ho logos tou theou). The Word of God, who according to John 1:1-3 is the Creator, is here also the Judge of man.

The Coming of the King of Kings (19:14-16)

19:14-16 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite title nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

Accompanying Christ on His second coming are those described as "the armies which were in heaven." Some, such as J. B. Smith, have limited this army to the church, the Bride of Christ, on the basis that it is described as clothed in fine linen, white and clean.³⁰¹ There is, however, no reason to limit this to the church, though the church is arrayed in fine linen. The church is not alone in having righteousness in the form of righteous deeds, and it is more probable that here not only the saints but also the holy angels are meant. It is well not to impose limitations upon a Scripture text which are not implicit in the text itself. The spectacle, however, of Christ on a white horse with a vesture dipped in blood accompanied by innumerable heavenly beings clothed in fine- linen is a demonstration that now at long last the filthy, blasphemous situation in earth is going to be wiped clean with a divine judgment of tremendous character.

A further description is given of Christ, adding to the picture of divine judgment. Out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, which according to the text will be used to smite the nations and bring them under His rule. The word for "sword" (Gr., hromphaia) indicates a long Thracian sword or one unusually large and longer than most swords. The same word is sometimes used to describe a javelin, a sword sufficiently light and long to be thrown as a spear. Here the word is used symbolically to represent a sharp instrument of war with which Christ will smite the nations and establish His absolute rule. The expression of ruling "with a rod of iron" is also found in Psalm 2:9 and Revelation 2:27, with a similar expression, "the rod of his mouth," in Isaiah 11:4. It represents unyielding, absolute government under which men are required to conform to the righteous standards of God.

The divine act of judgment is also described in the latter part of verse 15 in the words "he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." This is another view of divine judgment portrayed in a similar way in 14:19-20 and anticipated in Isaiah 63:1-6. All of these passages point to the sad conclusion that in the day of judgment it is too late for men to expect the mercy of God. There is nothing more inflexible than divine judgment where grace has been spurned. The scene of awful judgment which comes from this background is in flat contradiction of the modern point of view that God is dominated entirely by His attribute of love.

The concluding description of Christ reveals that on His vesture, previously described as dipped in blood, and also on His thigh a name is written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." Here at last has come One who has a right to rule the earth, One whose power and majesty will demonstrate His authority as He brings to bear His sovereign judgment on a wicked world. It is in anticipation of this ultimate triumph that God the Father holds the nations of the world in derision in their rebellion against the Lord's Anointed (Ps. 2:1-4). God will indeed break the nations with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces and give the uttermost parts of the earth to His Son as His rightful possession. In view of this consummation, how pertinent is the invitation of Psalm 2:10-12 to serve the Lord and kiss the Son while there is yet time to claim the blessing of those who put their trust in Him.

The Battle of the Great Day of God Almighty (19:17-19)

19:17-19 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye

may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

Following the vision of Jesus Christ and His return to earth, the Apostle John sees an angel standing in the sun. Though some have taken this as a very unusual phenomenon, the most natural explanation is that the angel is standing in the light of the sun with the angel himself possibly shining with even greater brilliance. The image is one of brilliant light speaking of the glory of God. The angel John sees cries with a loud voice, signifying something important as impending (cf. 6:10; 7:2, 10; 10:3; 14:15; 18:2). The message of the angel is addressed to the fowls that fly in the midst of the heaven, literally "in mid-heaven" (Gr., *en mesourane,,mati*). The birds thus addressed are invited to gather themselves to the supper of the great God. The contrast to this is found in 19:9 where the saints other than the church are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. The word for "supper" (Gr., *deipnon*), referring to the principal meal of the day, is the same word used in both verses, but the events are in sharp contrast. The birds are invited in verse 18 to eat the flesh of those killed in the battle, that is, the army of the beast. The various classes of men are described in detail as kings, captains, mighty men, including both free and bond, small and great. Even the horses of these men are mentioned. The divine judgment upon the wicked is no respecter of persons or station, and is the great equalizer of all.

There is an evident parallel in this passage to the prediction of Ezekiel 39:17-20 as far as the description is concerned. However, the Ezekiel passage seems to refer to an earlier battle, when the army from the North invaded Israel, whereas in this battle God is contending with the armies of the entire world. The resultant destruction of human flesh and the consumption of it by birds are similar. The actual parallel to the scene in Revelation is found in Matthew 24:28, where reference is made to the carcasses of those who fall in battle and the gathering of the birds to eat them. Care must be exercised in interpreting passages so similar by following the rule that similarities do not necessarily prove identity. Birds of prey are always in evidence where there is death.

The destruction of the armies of the beast, however, is the prelude to the destruction of the beast himself and his associates. John in his vision sees not only the carnage but also the beast, referring to the world ruler, the kings of the earth associated with him, and their armies, all of whom gather to make war against Christ and His army from heaven. The beast is to be identified with the one of Revelation 13:1-10, and the kings with the ten kings immediately associated with the beast as well as others who participate in this final battle. There is some evidence that a struggle is going on between the various segments of the world empire at the time of the second coming of Christ; but with the appearance of the Lord in glory and the procession of the armies of heaven accompanying Him, these armies of earth forget their differences and join in battle against the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The Doom of the Beast and the False Prophet (19:20)

19:20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshiped his image. These both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

The consummation of the battle with victory for Christ and the armies of heaven is described in verse 20. The beast of Revelation 13:1-10 is taken and with him the false prophet, the second beast of Revelation

13:11-16. The false prophet is identified as the one who wrought miracles and deceived them that received the mark of the image (cf. 13:12-15). The doom of the beast and the false prophet culminates in their being cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. The lake of fire thus introduced is mentioned again in 20:15. By comparison with other scriptures, it seems that the beast and the false prophet are the first to inhabit the lake of fire. Unsaved who die prior to this time are cast into Hades, a place of torment, but not into the lake of fire, which is reserved for those who have been finally judged as unworthy of eternal life.

Alford observes: "These only, and not the Lord's human enemies yet, are cast into eternal punishment. The latter await the final judgment, ch. xx 11 ff."³⁰² These who were Satan's masterpieces precede Satan himself to this final place of everlasting punishment into which he is cast a thousand years later (20:10). The rest of the wicked dead after being judged at the great white throne will follow the beast, the false prophet, and the devil into this eternal doom.

Ironside comments on the capture of the beast and the false prophet in these words:

Two men, be it noted, are taken alive. They are the two arch-conspirators who have bulked so largely in this book--the beast and the false prophet, the civil and religious leaders of the last league of nations, which will be Satan-inspired in its origin and Satan-directed until its doom. These two men are "cast alive into the lake burning with fire and brimstone," where a thousand years later they are still said to be "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire," thus incidentally proving that the lake of fire is not annihilation, and that it is not purgatorial either, for it neither annihilates nor purifies these two fallen foes of God and man after a thousand years under judgment.³⁰³

The Doom of the Army of the Beast (19:21)

19:21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

In bringing to conclusion the battle of the great day of God Almighty, those not killed in the first stage of the conflict and in the capture of the beast and the false prophet are now put to death. The evidence seems to be that the entire army of the wicked are killed. According to verse 21, "the remnant," that is, the rest, are slain by the sword of Christ, the one mentioned as proceeding out of His mouth (19:15). This act of judgment seems to be exercised by the immediate power of Christ rather than by the armies which accompany Him. There is no evidence that the armies of earth prevail in any sense against the armies of heaven, but there is total defeat of man at the height of his satanic power when brought into conflict with the omnipotence of God. The chapter concludes with a graphic note that all the fowls were filled with their flesh. Such is the abundance of the dead that the fowls are satiated as they consume the fruits of the battle.

The Word of God makes plain that God so loved the world that He gave His Son, and that all who avail themselves of the grace of God are immeasurably blessed in time and eternity. On the other hand, the same Word of God states plainly that those who spurn God's mercy must experience His judgment without mercy. How foolish it is to rest in the portions of the Word of God that speak of the love of God and reject the portions that deal with His righteous judgment. The present age reveals the grace of God and suspended judgment. The age to come, while continuing to be a revelation of the grace of God, will give conclusive evidence that God brings every evil work into judgment and that those who spurn His grace must experience His wrath.

- 294 Reveling Through Revelation, II, 66.
- 295 Revelation, p. 240.
- 296 Walter Scott, Exposition of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, p. 375.
- 297 A Revelation of Jesus Christ, p. 260.
- 298 The Book of Revelation, p. 295.
- 299 The Book of Revelation, p. 94.
- 300 Lectures on Revelation, pp. 326-27.
- 301 Smith, p. 264.
- 302 Henry Alford, The Greek New Testament, IV, 730.
- 303 Ironside, p. 330.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-f-walvoord/the-second-coming-of-christ/>

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