12-17-23

Revelation 19:11-21 (2)

Last week we began considering these verses in Revelation. It is the advent season, a time when we specifically consider the two comings of Jesus to this world. These verses consider His second coming, the Parousia, when He will return to the earth in great glory and establish Himself as rightful King. It will be a glorious thing for Christians to witness: Our righteous Lord and Saviour and King will finally take His place and avenge all the wrongs done to us in this life. More importantly, He will pour out the long-awaited wrath of God upon sin and evil and all those who are His enemies.

We established that Jesus is kind and long-suffering; that He is merciful and that He did indeed take on the punishment for all the sins of those who would accept Him. But we must not stop there: Jesus is a Warrior-King. Think about king David, who was not only a man after God’s own heart, but was a type of the coming Christ. David was a warrior-king. In fact, his hands were so bloody that even though he had the acceptable desire to build a temple for God, God would not allow him. Make no mistake, Jesus’ hands will be blooder than David’s; but all the blood He sheds will be in absolute righteousness and carrying out the perfect judgement of God.

We also considered that the book of Revelation, while difficult, should be considered as literal as possible. Old Testament prophecy was literal, there is no reason the prophecy of Revelation should be different. Now, even with literal interpretation, there is still room for metaphor, figurative language, and spiritual application. We just have to be very careful about going this route.

The apostle John begins this section of the vision by seeing heaven open up wider than any other time this has happened in the Bible. It is open wide enough for Jesus and a vast army riding white horses to appear and descend upon the earth. This is an important point for us: we must not allow ourselves to be deceived by any who come claiming to be Christ, even if they can perform miracles. When Jesus comes, it will be in spectacular glory and no one will miss what is happening.

Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey, which was a symbol of Him bringing peace; the peace between God and man. But now Jesus is coming on a horse, a symbol of war. And as the verse tells us, “*in righteousness He judges and wages war*.” Jesus has been given the authority to judge by the Father and He will do so perfectly. Nothing escapes His notice. He also has the authority to wage war against these who have steadfastly rebelled against their creator God. He is the righteous King of all nations.

Verse 13 begins that Jesus is wearing a robe that has been dipped in blood. The indication is that it has blood splattered on it. This would be a consequence of being in war. Now, there are two interpretations of these words that I want to mention. One is that the blood is His own. That Jesus is displaying the blood He shed to save His people. The other is that this is the blood of the saints who have been martyred by the beast, who is the antichrist. This would show that He is bringing the vengeance that they cried out for previously. These views look to some verses earlier in Revelation plus the fact that Jesus is portrayed as having blood on Him before the battle has begun.

These two interpretations are weak. They don’t fit the context of what is happening here and there is no reason for Him to display blood that has already been shed. The fact that He already has blood on His garment is prophetic of what is about to happen. This is definitely the blood of His enemies whom He is about to face.

The prophecy of Isaiah 63:1-6 is important here. I invite you to read it on your own to see how it fits with these passages in Revelation. One of the things brought up in Isaiah is that the lifeblood of God’s adversaries is sprinkled on His clothing. The image is used of a wine press, where the people used to tread the grapes with their feet. Except God is treading the nations who have rebelled against Him. Just as the juice of the grapes would splash on the clothing of the treader of the wine press, so the blood of God’s enemies will be splashed on His clothing. This is what Jesus is here to do.

Next we are given another name for Jesus: The Word of God. So far we have been given some of His names as “Faithful” and “True” and that He also has a name written on Him that no one knows except Himself. This is a name that may be revealed to us one day or it may not. Jesus, in His wisdom will decide that. Here His name is The Word of God. This is actually the first time this name is used in the Bible. Previously He has been called “the Word”, but now “The Word of God.”

We must try to have some comprehension of how important it is for Jesus to be The Word of God. First, as orthodox Christians, we understand that the Bible contains the word of God; we have written down for us the words that God spoke to the people who wrote them down. We know that unlike our words, God’s words have actual power in and of themselves. Paul tells us that the word of God is living and active. The words of the Bible don’t simply lie there on the page, they cause things to happen. The more we study God’s word, the more we understand that it is all about Jesus; who is The Word of God.

Looking back to creation, we see that God spoke all things into being. And in the beginning of John’s Gospel we read, “*All things came into being through [Jesus], and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being*.” All creation came into being through Jesus because He is the Word of God.

Finally, what a person speaks reveals what’s in their heart. Jesus, as The Word of God, reveals the heart of God. And the Bible tells us that Jesus is the revelation of God. So, in Jesus, we see the love and mercy and grace of God toward those who will turn to Christ in faith. But we also see His absolute intolerance of sin and evil and that He will punish it with unparalleled severity.

There are armies that follow Jesus out of heaven. These are most likely the saints who have been completely sanctified in Christ and have received their resurrection bodies. The description of their clothing is very much like that of those who participate in the wedding supper of the lamb; who are the saints. Earlier, in chapter 17 verse 14, we are told that when Jesus wages war against the beast, those who are with Him are “*the called and chosen and faithful*”: in other words, the saints. Now this doesn’t mean that angels won’t be present; they simply aren’t mentioned here.

Notice that these armies of the saints that follow Jesus are wearing “*fine linen, white and clean*.” There is no armor (they are beyond the reach of death or injury), there are no weapons, and there is no staining with blood. They are there to give glory to the King of kings and Lord of lords. They do not participate in the battle. Jesus takes care of the entire horde of the antichrist by Himself.

Next we are told that Jesus has a sharp sword coming from His mouth. This is symbolic; it shows that all He has to do is speak and His enemies will be slain. By His word, God has the power to give life; by His word, He also has the power to take it away. As it says in Isaiah 11:4, “*And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked*.” The army of the antichrist will not stand a chance. Not only will whatever weapons they have be useless against the immortal God and His immortal armies, all He has to do is say the word and their life will be forfeit.

These armies of the antichrist are gathered in an area of Israel called Harmagedon. And this battle is the famed battle of Armageddon. The hordes gathered here under the rule of the beast or the antichrist will be gathered from all the nations, because he has become a world ruler. So Christ will smite the nations with His word and He will rule them with a rod of iron. This event will have world-wide consequences as it will begin the righteous millennial reign of Jesus.

The idea of the wine press being associated with God’s wrath has already been mentioned. It is spoken of in the Isaiah 63 passage where the rebellious are the ones being treaded upon instead of grapes. But there is another level to this. The result of treading grapes is to eventually get wine. When God treads the winepress of His wrath, the resulting wine is His wrath. Psalm 78:8 says:

*For a cup is in the hand of the Lord, and the wine foams;  
It is well mixed, and He pours out of this;  
Surely all the wicked of the earth must drain and drink down its dregs.*

Once again, when Jesus comes back, mercy is no longer an option. The iniquity of the people of the earth will be complete and they will face destruction. They have steadfastly refused God’s grace and deny His rightful place as sovereign King. They have been given the opportunity for salvation and have turned it down. Now they must drink the full cup of the wrath of God, even down to the nasty particles that lie on the bottom.

Another of Jesus’ names is displayed in a prominent place for all His enemies to see and it is certainly a reminder to the antichrist and the kings who are with him: Jesus is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. There is nothing wrong with having the title “king” or “lord”; as long as that person submits themselves to Christ. These kings on the battlefield of Harmagedon have no intention of submitting to Jesus and they are about to pay the price. I should say, they are about to begin to pay the price. Their price will be never ending torment.

There is a slight interruption here as a mighty angel calls to all the birds of the sky to come and eat the flesh of all those here gathered against the Lord. This sounds horrific to us; and it is. But these are devout enemies of our good God and they deserve no dignity in death. To be left unburied was the height of insult in ancient days and it’s still not considered a good thing.

But think what the enemies of Christ had done in the past. If it had been up to the Romans when they crucified Jesus, they would have left Him there until there was nothing left. The Sanhedrin would have at best thrown Him into a common grave. If not for the providence of God through Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, this is what they would have done to Jesus.

Also, Revelation tells us about two witnesses who prophesied in Jerusalem during the last days. The beast finally rose up and killed them. Their bodies were left unburied in the street for three days as the people celebrated their death. But we know that after three days, God raises them up from the dead and takes them into heaven.

As the angel makes clear, it won’t matter how powerful or strong or important the people are in this battle; the birds will feast upon their flesh. The angel refers to this as “*the great supper of God*.” Compare this to the wedding supper of the Lamb that is promised to the saints. What a tremendous difference in the eternal outcome for those who belong to Christ and those who reject Him. And again, it is the same God. His justice will always come through, whether in punishment or in mercy.

In a ridiculous display of arrogance, the antichrist and his army line up in battle array to fight against the almighty God of the universe. Again, this is the first battle of Armageddon. I don’t know how long it will last, but we know the outcome. I invite you to read Psalm 2. Psalm 2 gives a description of the arrogant kings of the earth and the reaction God has to them. Believe me, God is not intimidated.

I find it very interesting how a point is made that the beast, or antichrist, and the false prophet are not killed but thrown alive into the lake of fire. I think of how satan parodies everything of God, twisting it into evil. In Revelation you have satan, the beast, and the false prophet: a parody of the trinity. The beast is the antichrist; he will portray himself as deity and demand worship. The false prophet parodies the Holy Spirit and causes people to worship the antichrist.

Here the beast and the false prophet are taken up alive. It is as if, since they parody everything else, God gives them a parody of the rapture. They are taken up alive; they just don’t end up in heaven.

The rest of those who have followed the beast instead of Jesus will be killed. Their bodies will lie where they fall. Their souls will enter Hades until the final great white throne judgement, at which time they will join the ones they followed in the lake of fire.

Please make sure you are on the side of Christ. That is a very amazing thing for we who are Christians; we will be part of that vast army dressed in white linen and riding white horses; giving glory to Jesus. Give full allegiance to Christ; remember that He is not only your Saviour but He is your Lord and Master and King. That means we belong to Him; again, we were bought with a price, Jesus paid for us with His blood. We owe Him everything.

What a glorious day that will be. Not simply Jesus taking vengeance on His enemies and ours; but it will be the beginning of living on the earth under a righteous ruler. We won’t have to worry about corrupt government. People living on the earth will be taken care of properly and will be able to work without frustration. Life will be good; and we will be there.

Look forward to the Parousia. Pray for it to come and for Jesus to take His rightful place as King. For those of us who are in Christ, it will be a wonderful and good thing. Our God will be properly glorified.

Prayer

Merciful Lord Jesus, when we read passages like this one in Your word, it gives us a better understanding of Your feelings regarding sin. You are very clear Lord; You will not tolerate evil. It is absolutely against Your nature and You cannot let it go unpunished. Let this lesson go deep into our hearts so that we do not trifle with sin ourselves, taking for granted the precious blood of Yours that cleansed us.

Awaken in each of us a longing for the souls of all those who are lost; all those millions who are still in their rebellion against the rightful Lord of all creation. May we reflect the light of Christ to them; may we be an example of the benefits of being a follower of Christ; may we always be ready to give an account of our hope, and an explanation of the precious Gospel of Jesus.

And now, we echo the prayer of Your apostle, “*Come, Lord Jesus*!” May Your Kingdom be revealed upon this earth under Your rightful rule. Take Your place as King, subdue the nations, rule with justice and fairness; and may we Your people serve You with gladness.

Thank You Lord Jesus, for it is in Your name we pray. Amen.