



## The Final Victory

Leon Morris notes, “The great victory has been won. The power of evil has been broken. There remains only to complete the final ordering of things, by putting the wicked away permanently and introducing the righteous to heaven. The preceding section has prepared us for a vision of the Bridegroom. But, as often, John surprises us. He gives us instead a vision of a Warrior.”

### Read: Revelation 19.19-21

W. Hendricksen comments, “John sees the beast, the persecuting power embodied in world government and directed against Christ and His Church, and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together against the Rider on the white horse and His army. Hence, the apostle sees the whole world of unbelief gathered for the final assault upon the Church. ...the battle itself is not described... The beast (Rev. 13.1ff) is taken. So is the false prophet – that is, the beast out of the earth, the great deceiver (13.13,14). These two are cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone (14.10)... The meaning is that at Christ’s second coming Satan’s persecution of the Church and his power to deceive on earth shall cease forever. Every influence of Satan – whether in the direction of persecution or of deception – goes with him to hell, never again to appear anywhere outside hell. Christ, the Rider upon the white horse, completely triumphs.”

And what is the millennium of 20.1-3? There has been much disagreement about this passage. Leon Morris believes John is taking us behind the scenes to emphasise that “despite the persecution of believers, Christ is not defeated, nor are those who have died for His sake. Our peep behind the scenes shows us martyrs reigning and Satan bound... Later in the chapter John speaks of the release of Satan as the way in which the nations are gathered for the final battle.”

- “The dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books” (20.12b). Does that give a basis for entry into heaven? What is “the book of the living” and how can we be sure of having our name written there?
- It is comforting to know that God’s justice will finally prevail. Yet the picture of hell is terrifyingly real. To what extent should the words of 20.15 impel us more into evangelism during this age of grace?

### Study 6: All Things New, Revelation 21-22.5

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## The Victory of the Lamb

### 5. The Lamb’s Triumph

The teacher has a problem. Two boys have come up to him, both claiming the same apple. Who is the true owner? Who is the thief? A petty crime, but a tricky problem!

Human justice is always imperfect – inadequate information (“at face value, both stories seem plausible”), a biased judge (“that boy is always giving me trouble” or “this boy’s father is president of the P. & C.”), the judge’s image (“I have to act now or the other children will think they can get away with anything”)... And then, what is the punishment that fits the crime – that is fair to the boy who has been wronged, that punishes and deters the offender, that maintains the rules of class and school?

Justice seems clearer to us in the larger crime of murder. But it is still not easy. Often public hatred against the accused is so great that it becomes difficult to conduct a fair trial at all. It is easy to say that a person should be regarded as “innocent until proved guilty”, yet some crimes are so terrible that we cry out, “Guilty! Guilty! Guilty!” before ever the trial begins.

We recall that this was the kind of trial that Jesus underwent. The verdict and sentence were decided beforehand, and every effort was made to secure witnesses and to persuade the judge to that end.

But now the situation is changed. The Lamb that was slain has been offering the peoples of the world the opportunity to repent of their sins. After all, didn’t he cry out, “Forgive them, Father! They don’t know what they are doing” (Lk.23.34)? All this time he has graciously waited and actively sought their response of repentance and faith. But now we see the Lamb in triumph – the Redeemer has become the Conqueror and Judge.

### Babylon, the Prostitute

### Read: Revelation 17.1-6

W. Hendricksen notes, “Let us remember that the harlot, Babylon, is very closely associated with the beast, so closely, in fact, that she is said to be sitting on the beast (17.3). The beast is the entire antichristian persecution movement throughout history, embodied in successive world empires. The beast, very clearly, is past, present and future. (Read Rev.17.8-10). Therefore we conclude that the harlot also represents the



world as the centre of antichristian seduction at any moment of history. That the harlot, Babylon, was present in one form or embodiment in John's day is clear from Rev.17.9: 'the seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits'. Here the reference is clearly to Rome. The imperial city attracted to her pleasures the kings of the nations, the rulers in every domain of life, art, industry, commerce, etc. (See Rev.17.2). The apostle sees the Rome of his own day, filled with vanity, luxury and pleasure. It was a pleasure-mad city. Even the saints were torn to pieces in its circuses for the amusement and entertainment of the public. The harlot was drunk with the blood of the saints (17.6). When, in Rev.18.4, the admonition is given: 'Come forth, my people, out of her, and have no fellowship with her sins', that command was intended not only for people living close to the end of the world's history, but also for believers in John's own day and age; indeed, for believers in every age."

The kings will fight against the Lamb, "but the Lamb, together with his called, chosen, and faithful followers, will defeat them, because he is Lord of lords and King of kings" (17.14) – not just superior but victorious.

- The prostitute sitting on the red beast... We are thankful for the extent to which our Western civilisation has been influenced by Christian faith and principles. But this foundation is now being eroded. What are the evidences that our society is increasingly based on the mind-set of the beast?
- What are the qualities of our society that are thought to be our greatest and most lasting achievements, but which God may brand fit for destruction?

### The Fall of Babylon

#### Read: Revelation 18:4-8

It is important for the Lord's people to know that his judgment is already on Babylon, even though the last judgment – with the overthrow of all that opposes God – has not yet arrived. As believers we are enticed to avoid persecution by compromise, and to become rich, comfortable and secure in "Babylon".

We are supposed to be "in the world" (Jn.17.11) but not "of the world" (v.14). Think of the situation of Lot and his family in the city of Sodom (Gen.19). While he kept his faith and did not approve the actions of the men of Sodom (note 2 Pet.2.7-8), he lived there by choice and had come to terms with what went on. He appears to have had some honour in Sodom

(v.1). But he was in danger of becoming caught up in the Lord's judgment of the place.

So, in this passage, the voice from heaven calls out, "Come out, my people! Come out of her! You must not take part in her sins; you must not share in her punishment!" (Rev.18.4).

- What does it mean to be in the world but not of the world?

There is great sadness at the destruction of Babylon on the part of those who have profited from her. But heaven is glad – so are God's people and the apostles and prophets, "for God has condemned her for what she did to you!" (18.20)

#### Read: Revelation 19.1-4

Note the words brought together in this thanksgiving – "Salvation, glory and power belong to our God" (v.1) and "True and just are his judgments!" (v.2). We have tended in recent times to focus exclusively on God's love and heaven and have said little on God's wrath and hell. Some have even suggested that the God of love couldn't with integrity send anyone to hell. Yet the gospel as expressed in Jn.3.16 certainly brings the two together, and vv.17-21 continue that theme.

### Invitation to the Wedding-Feast

#### Read: Revelation 19.6-9

Once again we are given a glimpse into the future. The marriage-feast is announced, but at this point the final battle is yet to be staged. We come back to the Bride again in chapter 21. Here we note the Bride in "clean shining linen", in contrast to the prostitute dressed in purple and scarlet.

Leon Morris believes that the particular Greek words should not be translated in v.8 "righteous (or good, GNB) deeds". He notes that "the clean shining linen" is "given" to the Bride. He relates it to our justification by the work of Christ. "This clothing is given to the saints. It is not provided by them. The white robes of the multitude in 7.9,14 were not provided by any righteous acts on the part of the wearers, but were the result of washing 'in the blood of the Lamb'. So it is here."

- Do we expect to be at the wedding-feast of the Lamb? On what grounds do we say this?
- What would these words have meant to a church under persecution?



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