

King of Kings & Lord of Lords

Revelation 19:11-21

(Expanded Sermon Notes)



When we began our time in the book of Revelation 21 weeks ago, we started with a few ground rules designed to help us read Revelation responsibly. Those ground rules were, focus on the timeless principles, not on the timelines, keep the original audience in mind, remember that it is part of a larger literary genre, and finally, keep the main thing the main thing. And, what is the main thing? **Jesus is victor.**

With that main idea in mind, we enter the second half of chapter 19 and, in many ways, reencounter the first vision that John has in the book of Revelation. The first vision in Revelation is not one of an event but of a person: the crucified and risen Christ, the one who could say, “I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever” (1:18).¹ Jesus is victor, and John writes down this vision (because he was told to) so that they would have clarity about the divinity and person of Jesus. John’s message to them and to us is this: grace and peace. In the midst of hostility and pressure, you can know grace and peace because God the Father is Almighty, because God the Spirit is all-present, and because God the Son is all-conquering.² Yet, sharing in the kingdom of Jesus involves sharing in his sufferings. What hope is there? Very little if you looked around you in the first-century Roman Empire. The empire was full of imagery and symbols that dripped with enormous confidence. Everywhere you looked, there were images of power and authority—lions, eagles, gods. The Romans brought the children of conquered nations to Rome because they knew it would overwhelm them and win them over to Roman culture. It was part of the way they assimilated other cultures into their own. Maybe the Christians felt like that. They saw the power and pomp of Rome, and found it intimidating or alluring.³ But Jesus is victor, and because of that, we have hope. And when we come to see him in the reality of his divine power and righteousness, we are reminded of the truth that, **Jesus is in the business of changing lives.** That is a gracious truth that brings relief and inspires faithfulness.

1. The King of Kings and Lord of Lords

- a. We have heard over and over again in Revelation about the supremacy of Jesus and pictures of the victory believers are offered through him. Chapter 19 is no different.

¹ Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, Second Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 59.

² Chester, Tim. *Revelation For You: Seeing history from heaven's perspective* (p. 27). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

³ Chester, Tim. *Revelation For You: Seeing history from heaven's perspective* (p. 21). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

- i. In these 11 verses we are offered several images to remind us of the supremacy and power of Jesus.
 - ii. **Here we have the most expanded description of Christ's defeat and judgment of the ungodly forces at the end of history.** First, Christ and his heavenly armies are described, in anticipation of their victory (vv 11–16), then the imminent destruction of the enemy is declared (vv 17–18), and then the scene is climaxed by the defeat of the beast and false prophet, along with their followers (vv 19–21).⁴
 - iii. **Now Satan and the beasts are bound, and victory belongs to the saints, albeit a victory through suffering.** This is the perspective of heaven. To emphasize that heaven's perspective is the ultimate perspective, each section pushes forward to its climax in the victory of the last day. Nevertheless, it's history that they describe.⁵
- b. **White horse – v.11**
- i. John saw *heaven standing open* (cf. 4:1). And he saw vividly *a white horse*. The color signifies victory (see note on 6:2). In the following description almost everything said of Christ has a parallel or a near parallel elsewhere. The one really distinctive thing is the white horse. The new thought here accordingly is that the Christ now goes to his final triumph. Some identify the rider here with the one in chapter 6, but there seems no reason for this. The only point in common is the color of the horse, and this is not sufficient to prove the point.⁶
 - 1. On v. 14 - Heaven's *armies* followed him, also on *white horses*. Their clothing resembles that of the bride in verse 8 (though here *leukon*, 'white', replaces *lampron*, 'bright', 'splendid'). **Though they are called *armies* there is no mention of weapons and neither here nor elsewhere are they said to take martial action. The victory over evil is won by their Leader alone.**⁷
- c. **Eyes blazing like fire – v.12**
- i. *His eyes are like blazing fire* (as in 1:14). He searches out all things. **Nothing can be hidden from him.** There is also a suggestion of majesty, which is further brought out with the *many crowns* (*diadēmata*, crowns of royalty) *on his head*. He exercised widespread dominion.⁸
 - ii. The metaphor of "his eyes as a flame of fire" evokes Christ's role as divine judge, as is clear from vv 14–21 and from 2:18–23. In ch. 2 the point was that Jesus as "Son of man" (1:13) always knows the spiritual condition of the ungodly who claim to be members of the covenant community, which results in their judgment ("his eyes as a flame of fire") in 1:14, in 2:18, and the phrase's development in 2:23.⁹
- d. **Robe dipped in blood – v. 13**
- i. The rider is portrayed as "clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood," which is a clear allusion to the description of God judging the nations in Isa. 63:1–3: **"with garments of**

⁴ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 948.

⁵ Chester, Tim. *Revelation For You: Seeing history from heaven's perspective* (p. 147). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

⁶ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 218.

⁷ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 220.

⁸ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 219.

⁹ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 951.

red colors ... garments like the one who treads in the winepress ... their juice is sprinkled on my garments.” John thus affirms Isaiah’s prophecy of God as a warrior and identifies Christ as that divine warrior. In Isaiah the warrior judges to achieve “vengeance” and “redemption” on behalf of his people (so Isa. 63:4), and the same goal is implicit in Revelation 19. Therefore, the stained garments symbolize God’s attribute of justice, which he will exercise in the coming judgment. The allusion to Isa. 63:2ff. will be picked up again in v 15.¹⁰

- ii. **This is surely a reference to Calvary; Christ overcame by shedding his blood.** Most recent commentators hold that it is the blood of a defeated foe, and indeed, Charles says, ‘the idea that the blood on His Vesture is His own ... cannot be entertained’. It is not impossible that both ideas are in mind, but it is more than difficult to hold that John writes of blood without a thought of the blood shed on the cross. **In this book he repeatedly makes the point that it is in his capacity as the ‘Lamb as though slain’ that Christ conquers.** He overcame, not by shedding the blood of others, but by shedding his own.¹¹
- e. **Christ’s Name – King of Kings and Lord of Lords – v. 16**
 - i. There follows the fourth title of this section (with 19:11, 12b, 13b), summarizing the effects of the others. It is not Caesar but Christ who is truly “King of kings and Lord of lords” (the title already given to Jesus in 17:14). **For Rome this meant Caesar was lord over the client kings in control of the provinces, but for Jesus it means he is Lord of the universe. Christ is sovereign over all, and he is now proving this by destroying the world of evil and the cosmic forces over it. The Warrior Messiah is God himself!**¹²
 - ii. The name for Christ was “King of kings and Lord of lords,” a title expressing the idea of “ultimate ruler over all kings.” The name is taken from the LXX of Dan. 4:37, where it is a title for God, and has already been applied to Christ in Rev. 17:14. Just as the Babylonian king was wrongly addressed by this title, so the king of latter-day Babylon (Rome) in John’s day was similarly addressed. **The title in Daniel 4 refers to God as the one who demonstrated his genuine divine sovereignty and revealed Nebuchadnezzar as an empty parody of the name by judging that beastly king of “Babylon the Great.”**¹³

2. Victory is a present and future reality.

- a. How is victory a main theme of Revelation?
 - i. First, it is a main theme that we traced through the book of Revelation as a whole.
 - 1. **Chapter 1** – We were given a vision of Jesus that reminds and clarifies for us his authority. (cf. 1:16)
 - a. ¹⁶**In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.**
 - 2. **Chapters 2-3** – To the seven churches of Asia Minor, they were called to remain faithful and to conquer the desires of the world.

¹⁰ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 957.

¹¹ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 219.

¹² Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 317.

¹³ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 963–964.

3. **Chapter 5** – John weeps because there is no one worthy to open the seven seals and complete God’s redemptive plan for history. Then he sees the Lamb, the one who is worthy. (cf. 5:6)
 - a. **⁶ And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.**
4. **Chapters 12-14** – A longer vision that is aimed specifically at reminding believers of God’s authority over evil and his ability to have victory.
 - a. The picture of God’s victory in these chapters was specifically a call for believers to endure faithfully.
 - b. **12:11 – ¹¹ And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.**
 - c. **13:10 – Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.**
 - d. **14:12 – ¹² Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.**
- ii. **This theme of victory will culminate in chapter 21 with the full and complete redemption of man. (cf. 21:3-4)**
 1. **³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”**
- iii. Revelation gives us a picture of the victory that will come once Jesus returns, but it also reminds of the victory we have experienced now as well.
- b. How do we experience victory now?
 - i. This morning we will celebrate baptisms and a testimony of victory. We will hear stories of how Jesus is changing people’s lives. This will be expressed in three areas: salvation, identity, and over sin.
- c. **Salvation**
 - i. **15:3-4 – Remarkably, the faithful do not sing about their own deliverance but celebrate God’s position as King of the nations. Instead of focusing on the destruction of Israel’s enemies, as does the song of Moses in Exodus 15, the song in Revelation 15 focuses on the conversion of the peoples of the world. ¹⁴**
 - ii. **12:11 – Don’t forget the victory of believers is not something they have earned but is accomplished by the blood of the Lamb. → Jesus grants new life (salvation).**
 - iii. Paul will express it this way in **Rom. 6:12-14** –
 1. **¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.**

¹⁴ Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, Second Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 141.

2. What Paul is expressing in this verse is that in salvation, we have been brought from death to life and in that shift of status, we have been changed.
 - a. **How often do you spend time considering the reality of the victory of your salvation on you're here and now?**
3. There are two ways that the victory of our salvation can be considered on a daily basis.
 - a. Identity – Who you are because of whose you are.
 - b. Sin – You are no longer marked by sin nor are you held captive to it.

d. Identity

- i. Revelation is clear, those who are marked by the Lamb and the Father are marked for life and that they belong to God. This means that their identity is fundamentally changed in Jesus. Paul reminds the church in Corinth of the centrality of their identity change. This was a church that routinely had issues with sin and dysfunction.
 1. **2 Cor 5:17 - ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.**
- ii. **The Bible answers the question of “Who am I?” by asking, “Whose am I?”** → I.e., Do you belong to Jesus or the world? (Those are the only two options.)
 1. We see this all throughout the OT, just consider Deut. 6, a passage that reminds Israel that they belong to God. The era of the prophets called Israel back to an unwavering allegiance to God.
 2. John (the author of Revelation) will tell believers in 1 John 2:6 – “If you are in Christ, then you are to act just like Jesus.”
 3. Revelation has reminded us that there is no neutral ground on this matter. You are either aligned with Christ or you aren't.
- iii. **When I consider my identity, what are the primary markers or adjectives that I would use?**
 1. Do I see myself first and foremost as a child of God and aligned with his kingdom and priorities?
 2. Or, do I see Jesus as part of my identity like that of a patchwork quilt? → I attempt to put mismatching items together to create a cohesive vision for my life. (This is not endorsed by the Scriptures, btw.)
- iv. **Warning:** Do not forget that Revelation was written to seven churches that were all facing calls to compromise their faith, that is, to compromise their identity in Christ. All of them were at risk. Some were holding better than others. But, one of the strongest and gravest warnings of Jesus to those churches comes to the church in Ephesus. Jesus warns them that they are at risk of having their lampstand removed. They were the church with the most robust and accurate theology, yet, they had misconstrued intellectual belief with true faith. **They are a warning to us that we can have the right theology and still have a misunderstanding on our identity in Christ.**
 1. **Reflect:** What idols am I allowing to creep into my life and become key aspects of my identity so that Jesus is sidelined?

e. Over sin

- i. If my identity has been changed and I am now something new, that means I am to have a different approach to sin. We heard it in Paul's words in Romans and we have heard it over and over again in Revelation. → “Those who have overcome the beast.” (cf. 15:13)
 1. The response of the believer towards sin is to give it no quarter. – Sin has no place in the life of a believer because the believer is to be focused on exulting and glorifying Jesus.

- a. Remember, believers are no longer part of the world and are not to revel in it.
 - b. The reality (on this side of heaven) is that we struggle with sin. And that is why repentance is a needed regular rhythm in our lives.
 - c. We must remember that in our struggle, we do not need to just “give in” as if we are powerless. Paul reminds the church in Corinth about this.
- 2. **I Cor. 10:13 - ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.**
 - a. Paul reminds us here that there is always a way out of temptation, and we do not have to give in to temptation and sin.
 - b. The truth is that we all struggle and need help in that struggle against sin. We need to support each other. That is why we ask the question of sharing tough stuff around here.
- ii. **Who shares my tough stuff?**
 - 1. The struggle against sin and the brokenness of this age is not meant to be a solo sport.
 - 2. We need other mature believers that help us through our struggles.
 - a. Reflect: Who is discipling me?
 - 3. We need to be that other mature believer for someone.
 - a. Reflect: Who am I discipling?
- f. **Victory is a future reality** – It is as we will find out and see in the coming chapters the ultimate stat of the believer on the new earth. The substance of that victory is not in the believer’s efforts but in Christ. Here in chapter 19 we are reminded of the confidence that we can have now for that future victory because of whom Jesus is.
 - i. John says nothing about the battle. He proceeds immediately from the drawing up of the armies to the seizing of the beast. **He may mean that there was no battle. Though the forces of evil appear mighty they are completely helpless when confronted by the Christ.** So *the beast* was forcibly *captured (epiasthē)*, and with him *the false prophet* (see note on 16:13). He is still characterized by *the miraculous signs* by means of which he deceived those who had *the mark of the beast*. This was the significant work of the false prophet. But now neither he nor the beast has any power. Both *were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulphur* (mentioned again in 20:10, 14, 15; 21:8). Being cast into the lake of fire signifies utter destruction. All that the beast stood for is no more.¹⁵
 - ii. Yet there is in reality no battle. The armies of the antichrist are waiting in 19:19, but when the sword of judgment comes from the Lord’s mouth (19:15), the battle is instantly over and all the evil forces are dead on the battlefield. In 19:20 the beast and the false prophet are captured. The armies of Christ seemingly take no part in the fighting because there is no fighting! It is over before it even begins. The part the saints play in shattering the nations (according to 2:26–27) is apparently to accompany the Warrior Messiah as he single-handedly decimates the enemy.¹⁶

¹⁵ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 221–222.

¹⁶ Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 318.