



## Judgment and the End of Time

With chapters 19-22, we reach the end of time—again, and for the last time. This is the third of the three major divisions of the book (Revelation 1-3; 4-18; and 19-22). Though these sections are of unequal length, each begins with a scene of the Glory of God/Christ and is followed by a sevenfold vision. In this last section of the vision, the sevenfold pattern is:

- 1) the return (*parousia* in Greek),
- 2) the last battle,
- 3) the binding of Satan,
- 4) the thousand years,
- 5) the defeat of Gog and Magog,
- 6) the last judgment, and
- 7) the New Jerusalem.

The chorus of praise exalts God for the defeat of Babylon and looks to the marriage feast to come. This hymn then takes up the image of the Christian Church as the Bride of Christ, with the marriage feast being the final fulfillment of Jesus Christ and his beloved church being made one in the age to come.

**The White Horse**—announced in Revelation 19:11-16 Jesus returns as the rider on the White Horse. This is the promised return, or *Parousia* in the Greek of the New Testament. Jesus is the rider (not the rider of the white horse of 6:1-2) as seen by the imagery of a sword coming from his mouth, which signifies the Word of God as vision explicitly tells us in 19:13. His robe is dipped in blood and he is named King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Clearly this is the return of the Messiah. There are parallels in Mark 13, Luke 17 and 21, I Thessalonians 4, II Thessalonians 1, and I Corinthians 15). This is not the Rapture, not a snatching away of some, while leaving others behind. This is The Return and it is this image of Jesus' return that is normative in scripture and Christian expectation (and is similar to current expectations within Judaism). This military-like return of the King of Peace is a bit jarring, yet John has already shown us (5:1-14) that the blood is his own and that the real victory came on the cross.

**The Last Battle**—The great battle of Good vs. Evil is here. Jesus and his army do battle with the Beast and the kings of the earth. Then we get "But the Beast was captured." End of

battle. This is anti-climatic to say the least. What is significant is that it is God who fights and not his followers. God captures the Beast in typical biblical language which uses the passive voice (referred to as the Divine Passive) for actions of God. Saying the Beast was captured means God does the capturing. The battle is not ours to win.

**The Thousand Years**—Satan is now bound and the martyrs reign with Christ for one thousand years. The rest of the faithful are not mentioned, just those who died for their faith. From this thousand years we get premillennialism and postmillennialism. Premillennialist believe that the thousand years that the return of Christ will come first and will be followed by a messianic reign on earth. Postmillennialist hold that Christ's ultimate return comes at the end of the thousand years. There are also amillennialists (such as Augustine of Hippo) who hold that the event happened in the cross and resurrection of Jesus. The most likely explanation is panmillennialism, which means that this thousand year reign thing will pan out in the end just like God plans and its all fine.

**Gog and Magog**—there are attempts to identify this pair with actual nations, but the fault in this is shown in Revelation 20:7-8, "When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore." Gog and Magog are too innumerable to count. This fits interpreting Revelation as being a repeating pattern which applies in some way to all oppressive regimes, even if it is most true of some nations as we near the end of the ages.

**The Last Judgment**—in the judgment, there are books which record our deeds "the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds." There is also the Book of Life, "And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." The scene is harsh, but it also shows that while deeds are weighed, it is having one's name written in the Book of Life that determines one's fate. This is Good News for Christians who know that we get into the Book of Life, not through our deeds or merit, but through faith in Jesus Christ. You can earn your way to damnation, or you can accept life and live.

**The New Jerusalem**—In chapters 21 and 22 of Revelation, we come to the climax of not just the book, but all of scripture. The fulfillment of all creation and all time comes as God declares all things new. The emphasis is on God's direct presence to God's people. In the New Jerusalem,

"The tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."—  
Revelation 21:3-4