

CHAPTER 19

"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war" (19:11).

Chapter 19 presents the glorious coming of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. His kingdom of righteousness is now to be ushered in, to the joy of all who have been waiting for his coming.

Tyrants, despots, and faithless and burdensome governments shall then be no more. Like wild beasts, full of savage instinct for blood and oppression, have the world-powers roamed and ravaged the earth, treading down the nations, their will the only law, the good and happiness of men the furthest from their hearts.¹

The marriage of the Lamb is announced in verses 6-9, but not yet described:

And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude . . . saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"² Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he [a voice from the throne] said to me, "Write: Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!"

Kromminga notes that this is simply an announcement of the marriage, "and as such can antedate or precede the event which it announces."³

Who is the bride of the Lamb? Who are those invited to the marriage supper? Are they one and the same? Vaughan writes,

There are two aspects of this marriage feast. The collective Church is the Bride: individual Christians are the guests. The aggregate of the guests make up the Bride: but the figures of Scripture are manifold and versatile, and each new application brings with it an added light.⁴

Does Ladd agree? He states in plain terms that they are one and the same: "So the church is both the bride and those invited."⁵

1 Seiss, *Lectures*, vol. III, pg. 211.

2 According to Ladd, "Both the AV and the RSV miss the idea, rendering the word in the present tense: **the Almighty reigns**. The Greek verb is a past tense and is what grammarians call an inceptive aorist, emphasizing the initiation of an action. the NEB correctly renders it: 'The Lord our God . . . has entered on his reign!' At this point in the Revelation, the reign of God has in fact not yet been fully established; it awaits the return of Christ, the chaining of Satan, and the inauguration of Christ's messianic reign--all events yet to be described. This is a proleptic statement analogous to the announcements in 14:8 of the fall of Babylon and 11:15ff. of the establishment of God's reign." *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, pg. 246.

3 D. H. Kromminga, *The Millennium*, pg. 40.

4 Vaughan, *Lectures*, pg. 461.

5 Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, pg. 250.

Walvoord is less dogmatic, writing that "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."⁶

What about Seiss? There is much to be admired in Seiss' commentary, but his "multi-stages" rapture theory (a minimum, I believe, of five "raptures," the most faithful going first) is not persuasive. This convoluted theory comes out in his interpretation of the marriage supper. He writes:

Just as the Bridegroom comes not alone, but with attendants, companions, and a long train of rejoicing ones who make up his party, the whole of whom together are called the Bridegroom's coming, whilst, strictly speaking, there is a wide difference between him and those with him; so it is on the side of the Bride. She has her companions and attendants too--"virgins which follow her." They make up her company and train. In coming to wed her the Bridegroom comes also into near and close relation to them. To a blessed degree they share the Bride's honors. And in general terms we must include them when we speak of the Bride, although, in strict language, they are not all the Bride. The Bride has relations to the Bridegroom which belong to her alone, and it is only because of her and their association and companionship with her, and not because they are the Bride in actual fact, that the whole company of the saved Church of God is contemplated as the Lamb's Wife.⁷

Turning to Gundry, we read:

We should not expect to find rigid consistency in the biblical use of metaphors Thus, since Israel as well as the Church is both bride and wife, we should not jump to the conclusion that the Lamb's bride and wife consists of the Church alone. On the contrary, the context indicates that at the marriage supper of the Lamb the bride includes Israel: "Come here, I shall show you *the bride, the wife* of the Lamb. And he . . . showed me *the holy city, Jerusalem* . . . with twelve gates . . . and names were written on them, which are those of *the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel*" (21:9, 10, 12). If, therefore, the marriage supper does not require a pretribulational resurrection and rapture of the Israelitish segment of the bride, neither does it require a pretribulational resurrection and rapture of the Church.⁸

Reese points out that Sir Robert Anderson and several others held the belief that Israel was the bride of Christ.⁹

Could Israel, in fact, be the bride of the Lamb? Are the terms "bride" and "wife" used interchangeably? Turning to the Old Testament, we find that several texts indicate that Israel is a bride. Isaiah 61:10 states, "*I will greatly rejoice in Yahweh, my soul shall be joyful in my God;*

6 Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pg. 273, emphasis mine.

7 Seiss, *Lectures*, vol. III, pp. 220-221.

8 Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, pg. 85.

9 Reese, *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, pg. 263.

for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." Other references to Israel as a bride are found in Isaiah 49:18; 62:5; Jeremiah 2:32; and Hosea 2:19, 20. In the New Testament we find that the church is likened to a wife (Eph. 5:22-33). Nonetheless, the point itself may not be relevant since, as Ladd points out, the word rendered "bride" is literally "wife" (*gune*, not *numphe*).¹⁰

We look next at Psalm 45, which tells of the glories of the Messiah and His bride.

Listen, O daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your own people also, and your father's house; so the King will greatly desire your beauty; because He is your Lord, worship Him. And the daughter of Tyre will come with a gift; the rich among the people will seek your favor. The royal daughter is all glorious within the palace; her clothing is woven with gold. She shall be brought to the King in robes of many colors; the virgins, her companions who follow her, shall be brought to you. With gladness and rejoicing they shall be brought; they shall enter the King's palace. Instead of your father shall be your sons, whom you shall make princes in all the earth. I will make your name to be remembered in all generations; therefore the people shall praise you forever and ever (Psa. 45:10-17).

Kaiser's remarks on this Psalm are noteworthy:

Verses 9b-15 describe the bride. If the Messiah is the bridegroom, then the bride must be his people, the believing body of the ancient offspring mentioned since the days of Eve, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David.¹¹

The "bride" comes up again in chapter 21. For now, it seems wise not to press the analogy of a bride to strongly. She, in all likelihood, encompasses all the redeemed of all ages--both Jew and Gentile. Yet all the same, I feel the Scriptures teach that there is a *special* place for the nation of Israel, and this may very well be alluded to here in Revelation 19 in the phrase "*His wife has made herself ready.*" The Jewish nation was cast off because of unbelief, but as Paul writes, "*God is able to graft them in again*" (Rom. 11:23). "*Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!*" (Rom. 11:12.) That fullness will be seen, perhaps, at the marriage supper of the Lamb. The Church too will be there, not in that *special* place of blessing reserved for Israel, but nonetheless in a place of blessing: "*Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!*" It will be a time when the Church can graciously and happily repeat those words of the Apostle Paul, "*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!*" (Rom. 11:33.)

Moving on to verses 11-21, John now once again goes back a bit in time and sees the heaven opened and a white horse.¹² The rider is none other than Christ himself. Back in chapter 6,

10 Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, pg. 246.

11 Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, pg. 129.

12 Surely the marriage supper of the Lamb could not occur until after Christ returns. Otherwise, those saints on earth still "overcoming" could not participate. Gundry writes: "Though recognizing the earthly setting of the marriage banquet, Walvoord nonetheless maintains that the bridegroom must

John saw an impostor seated where he did not belong. That rider--Antichrist--would conquer the world with peace, albeit a false peace, and proclaim himself the Messiah. Now John sees Jesus, the faithful and true one, riding the white horse of which He alone is worthy. And in righteousness he judges and makes war.

We recall that back in chapter 6 the riders of the red, black, and pale green horses brought judgment. Only the white horse, according to the view taken in this study, did not. Now we see a white horse and rider coming to judge the world. *"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war"* (vs. 11). Christ does not come alone: *"And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses"* (vs. 14). Can the "armies of heaven" be identified?

Turning first to Gundry, we read:

The white linen worn by the armies has been ascribed to the saints a few verses earlier. It is more natural, then, to assume that the saints are in view here, too. . . . Are we to think that the OT saints, not yet resurrected, will be excluded from these armies? Where are most of the saints, where is most of the Church, *now*? In heaven. Either John does not distinguish living Christians because of the preponderating number of deceased saints, or he sees Jesus descending with the disembodied saints just before those on earth have been raptured. In the latter case he means the designation "in heaven" to distinguish the deceased in heaven from saints on earth who have not yet joined the heavenly train.¹³

Archer claims the armies "include not only the mighty legions of angels . . . but also the glorified saints . . . members of the Bride of Christ."¹⁴ Walvoord agrees with this, seeing no justification for limiting the armies to the Church: "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."¹⁵ Seiss' view is, "These armies are saints, and not angels."¹⁶ We will address this issue again in chapter 20.

A terrible scene is described in verses 17-21. It is the Battle of Armageddon, first mentioned in 16:16. What exactly is it that causes Antichrist and his followers to gather there for battle? Does Christ come to the battlefield first, and then Antichrist rises to the challenge? Or does Antichrist wage a final war against all those who refused yet to worship him, and Christ then comes on their behalf? Verse 19 does not give any particulars: *"And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army."*

have come for the bride before the marriage supper (*BibSac*, 123:102,103). That is true, but the posttribulational advent itself may be the coming of Christ for His bride. A pretribulational argument has to rest on two premises, occurrence of the banquet during the tribulation and a setting in heaven. Both premises are bad." *The Church and the Tribulation*, footnote on pg. 86.

13 Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, pg. 86.

14 Archer, unpublished class notes.

15 Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pg. 277.

16 Seiss, *Lectures*, vol. III, pg. 251.

Seiss has a noteworthy comment:

How they were gathered, we were told in what occurred under the pouring out of the sixth bowl of wrath (chap. 16:12-16). Devil agents working devil miracles were brought into requisition. They went forth "unto the kings of the earth, even of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." It was through these devil oracles that they learned of Christ's coming to unseat and destroy them; and by these devil miracles they were led to believe themselves competent to withstand all the armies of the heaven. . . . Let the Rider on the white horse come; let him be supported by myriads of his white-robed cavalry on their white horses; if he did work miracles in his lifetime, neither he nor his followers ever wrought such as those which the potencies now urging them to armed resistance had shown. . . . "*Strong delusion*" was upon them, "that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned." (2 Thess. 2:9-12.)¹⁷

If we turn to Zechariah chapter 14, we will there find more details of this great battle.

Behold, the day of Yahweh is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then Yahweh will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south. Then you shall flee through My mountain valley. . . . And Yahweh shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be--"Yahweh is one," and His name one (vss. 1-5b, 9).

This text seems to speak of Jerusalem being the object of God's judgment. It is Yahweh himself who gathers the nations to fight against her. Feinberg comments as follows:

There will be an alliance of the northern powers (Eze 38 and 39); a union of the nations in the south of Europe (the revived Roman Empire of Dan 2 and 7, and Rev 13 and 17); the king of the north (Dan 11); and an entente of the kings of the east or sunrising (Rev 16). And the initial stages of the conflict will witness the success of the arms of the enemies of Israel. . . . Then in Israel's plight the great Champion of Israel, the Lord Messiah, goes forth, as kings go forth to battle, Himself to fight against those nations, as He fought in many a battle before this time.¹⁸

One thing we do know: "*Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all*" (Jude 14,15).

¹⁷ Seiss, *Lectures*, vol. III, pp, 252-253.

¹⁸ Charles L. Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, pg. 340.

B. W. Newton, in commenting on the closing chapters of Zechariah, writes:

The prophecies which refer to Jerusalem after the Jews re-gather there in unbelief (some of the most simple as well as most important which the Scripture contain) have been peculiarly neglected by prophetic writers. It is for this reason that I have selected for the first subject of our consideration the concluding chapters of Zechariah. Whatever difference of judgment may exist as to the exposition of particular expressions or verses, I can scarcely conceive that any one can candidly read these chapters without being constrained to allow:

- I. That the Jews will be as a nation converted.
- II. That they will be, at the time of their conversion, in their own Land and City, and consequently must have returned in unbelief.
- III. That they are again punished, after their return, by Gentile nations being once more gathered in siege against their City.
- IV. That the Gentile nations so gathered are *there* (that is to say, in the Land of Israel) to be destroyed.
- V. That they will be destroyed by the personal intervention and manifestation of the Lord in glory.

These are events of no trifling moment. If they be true, if they can be definitely learned from these simple chapters, and be established as ascertained truths, we shall have gained no unimportant light. These facts will be to us as landmarks. They will steadily guide us in our subsequent enquiries, and we may safely say that nothing can be true that contradicts them--every system must be valueless that makes no room for them.¹⁹

Chapter 19 closes with the capture of the beast and the false prophet. "As a token of the final destiny of all who reject the lordship of God, the two leaders (the Beast and the False Prophet) are cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, a thousand years before the rest of unbelieving mankind."²⁰

Let us take to heart these closing words of Joseph Seiss:

"Our contemplations tonight will fail of their end if they do not serve to teach us, and to write it indelibly upon our hearts, that rebellion against God is death; that no weapon formed against Jehovah can prosper; that those who will not have Christ to rule over them must perish! Though the wicked should wield the power of archangels, they cannot withstand the punitive majesty of the Warrior Judge and King who rides upon the white horse. His sword is mightier than Satan, mightier than the Beast deemed invincible, mightier than the command of infernal miracle over nature's laws, mightier than all the forces of earth and hell combined. And that sword is pledged to drink the life-blood of all who neglect his mercy, despise his laws, and stand out against his authority. All may seem well and promising now. People may indulge their unbelief and passions during these days

¹⁹ B. W. Newton, *Aids to Prophetic Enquiry*, pp. 56-57.

²⁰ Archer, unpublished class notes.

of forbearance and grace, and see no disadvantages growing out of it. They may get angry at our earnestness, and account us croakers and fools when we put before them the demands and threatenings of the Almighty. But "*woe to him who strives with his Maker!*" There is a deluge of bottled fury yet to be poured out on them that refuse to know God, and on the families that call not on his name, from which there is no escape and from whose burning and tempestuous surges there is no deliverance. God help us to be wise, that we come not into that sea of death!

*Righteous Judge of retribution,
Grant thy gift of absolution,
Ere that day's dread execution!*²¹

²¹ Seiss, *Lectures*, vol. III, pp. 261-262.