

ALL ENEMIES DEFEATED

Revelation 19-20



Intro: Beginning with chapter 12 we were introduced to the enemies of Christ and His people. First, we saw the Dragon, identified as Satan (12.3-4, 7-17). Next we saw two beasts who were in league with the Dragon (chapter 13). Finally, we saw Babylon the great, pictured as a woman sitting on the first beast (chapter 17). Remembering that John was writing about things happening in the 1st Century (1.1), these images depict Satan using the empire of that day (Rome) to persecute God's people. But they would not be victorious! Chapters 18-20 show the defeat of Christ's enemies. First Babylon (chapter 18), then the beast and false prophet (19.20-21) and finally Satan (20.10). These chapters are meant to encourage the saints, assuring them that Christ would be victorious and they would be victorious with Him! Sadly, these chapters have become a source of great confusion. We will address that briefly and then examine the victory described in these chapters.

Premillennial Theory

1. Premillennial teachings have abounded during the entire history of the church, but have come to the forefront of popular religious thought in America. It is outside the scope of this lesson to detail the various teachings regarding what is commonly called the "Last Days". Premillennialism is only one of many doctrines that deal with the end of time on this earth, and there are many variants of teachings that fall under the umbrella of premillennialism.
2. One of the major tenants of this doctrine is that Christ will return to the earth to reign for 1000 years. This directly contradicts such clear passages as 1Cor. 15.50-57; 1Thess. 4.15-5.2; 2Thess. 1.6-10; 2Peter 3.3-10. However, Revelation 19-20 are used as a supposed proof text for the doctrine. They read the passage as a succession of events that occur as follows:
 - a. The 2nd Coming of Christ (19.11-21)
 - b. The 1000 year reign of Christ on the earth as Satan is bound (20.1-6)
 - c. Satan loosed for a final assault on Christ and His people (20.7-10)
 - d. Final Judgment / The End (20.11-15)
3. Of course, there are several problems with how premillennialists use these passages.

- a. They ignore that Revelation is written in symbolic language and that the thrust of the message was about things which would soon take place (1.1)
 - b. They interpret these passages in a way that contradict the meaning of other passages (as listed above)
 - c. They place the events in these passages as occurring on the earth, when that is never indicated in the passage. Remember, these visions take place in heaven (19.11).
4. These passages do not foretell a 1000 year reign of Christ on the earth. But they do picture His complete victory over all of His enemies. They give a message of hope for those living in John's day... and for us.

Christ Victorious (chapter 19)

1. All of the imagery in this chapter emphasizes the victory of Christ. Remember that in chapter 18 the city of Babylon (representing Rome) fell.
2. God is praised for His righteous judgment of Babylon (vss. 1-6).
 - a. The praise found in this chapter seems to come from all those who are in heaven: the multitude (7.9), the 24 elders (4.4) and the 4 living creatures (4.6-7).
 - b. All give praise to God because He had righteously judged Rome (the great harlot), and vindicated the cause of His people (see 6.9-11).
 - c. Remember, God being righteous and just is a comfort to His people. God's nature is what insures His victory over all of His foes. His nature is what insures our victory as well!
3. The bride is made ready (vss. 7-10)
 - a. From the New Testament we understand that the church is the bride of Christ, betrothed to Him now and awaiting the wedding feast (see Matthew 22.1-14; 25.1-13; Ephesians 5.22ff; Romans 7.4; 2Cor. 11.2).
 - b. Note, this passage is NOT saying the wedding feast would occur immediately following the fall of Rome. That is still to come! (see 21.2,9).
 - c. The point of this passage is that it shows Christ's bride as being ready for Him. She has remained pure during the ordeal of Roman persecution and continues to await the wedding ceremony. This is another picture of victory as Christ's people have overcome and will receive what was promised to them!
4. Christ in Triumph (vss. 11-21)
 - a. While premillennialists see this text as referring to the 2nd coming of Christ, they forget that in Revelation Christ has already been pictured in these terms (6.2) and that the battle was already set in motion (16.14). This does not depict an event in the distant future, but events set in motion even as John was writing.

- b. One very plausible explanation of this passage is that it describes in further detail the battle alluded to in 16.14. In that case, it shows the complete destruction of His enemies: the beast and the false prophet.
- c. However, another possibility is seeing this passage in the imagery of a Roman Triumph, the victory parade after the battle.
 - i. Will Durant offered this description of a Triumph: "Only those were eligible for it who had won a campaign in which 5000 of the enemy had been slain... Trumpeters led the march; after them came towers or floats representing the captured cities, and pictures showing the exploits of the victors; then wagons rumbled by, heavy with gold, silver, works of art, and other spoils... Seventy white oxen followed, walking philosophically to their death; then the captured chiefs of the enemy; then lictors, harpers, pipers, and incense-bearers; then, in a flamboyant chariot, the general himself, wearing a purple toga and a crown of gold, and bearing an ivory scepter and a laurel branch as emblems of victory... Last came the soldiers, some carrying the prizes awarded them, everyone wearing a crown... The general mounted the Capitol of the Temple of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, laid his loot at the feet of the gods, presented an animal in sacrifice, and usually ordered the captive chieftains to be slain as an additional thank-offering." (Will Durant. Caesar and Christ. Pages 82-83).
 - ii. Christ is presented victorious and wearing the crowns of His defeated enemies. His robe drips blood, not His blood but the blood of His foes. Christ's armies follow Him as they would in a Triumph. There is even a feast (vss. 17-18)! In this victory feast it is the foes of the Lamb that are consumed.
 - iii. Some may argue that vss.19-21 argue against this being a Triumph, but it was customary that in a Triumph the battles were retold and even set forth in dramatic fashion. That may be the point here.
 - iv. But, the result is the same. Christ is victorious over His foes! The beast and the false prophet are destroyed!
- d. One note on the beast and false prophet. We have contended that they represent ANY world power that Satan had used in persecuting the saints, but that in the context of Revelation and their allegiance with Babylon they would represent the Roman Empire. Thus, it is no coincidence that with the overthrow of Rome (chapter 18), the beast and false prophet are also destroyed. This is what Daniel prophesied in Daniel 7.23-27

But What Happens Next? (chapter 20)

1. I believe that with the conclusion of chapter 19 we have the completed Revelation of how God would defeat His enemies that were oppressing His people at that

time. Babylon fell, the beast and false prophet were destroyed, Christ triumphed and His bride remained pure. But what would happen after that and what about Satan? This chapter answers those questions.

2. The 1000 Years (vss. 1-6)

- a. We must remember that we are dealing with heavily symbolic language (1.1). This passage is not describing an actual 1000 year period of earthly history. Rather, it is describing the victory of Christ's people and the limiting of Satan's power after Rome fell.
- b. During this 1000 years Satan is bound (vss. 1-3). It is important to note that Satan was previously bound by the death of Jesus (see Heb. 2.14-15; Eph 4.8). Now, Satan has been bound in a new way. He can no longer use the beast and false prophet to persecute the saints! "John is not affirming that all the power and influence of the devil would be taken from him. Rather, the persecuting power which is the theme of this book would be destroyed," (Green).
- c. And during this period in which Satan's power is severely limited, Christ and His people reign.
 - i. This passage is not describing an earthly reign. Note that it is the martyrs that are reigning with Christ (vs. 4; cf. 6.9-10). Their cause has been vindicated with the fall of Babylon and the 2 beasts.
 - ii. The exaltation of the martyred saints is referred to as the first resurrection. Note, this is not the resurrection of their bodies, but of their souls. This resurrection is symbolic of the victory of Christ's cause (cf. 11.11). "The figure is not new; OT prophets pictured Judah's and Israel's triumph over idolatry and Assyrian and Babylonian captivity as a resurrection, a return from the dead (Isa. 26:19; Hos. 13:14; Ezek 37:1-14)," (Hailey).
 - iii. And since these have remained faithful to God they 1) have no reason to fear the second death and 2) will serve as priests and reign with Christ for the 1000 years (see 1.6; 5.10).
 - iv. The "rest of the dead" do not rise until after the 1000 years are over. Again, this is not referring to their bodies (that will occur in vss. 12-13). "Their cause which had been advanced through the beast and the false prophet does not prevail until the 1000 years are finished. Then they shall experience a resurrection (figuratively) in Satan's revived effort as described in 20:7-9," (Harkrider).

3. Gog and Magog (vss. 7-9)

- a. After the 1000 years, Satan revives his efforts to destroy God's people. Remember, this is apocalyptic language so we need not assume that Satan was inactive during the 1000 years or that Christ and the saints cease to reign

after the 1000 years. The language is meant to convey an idea: Satan's power to persecute the saints was severely hampered with the fall of Rome. Christ's cause is triumphant and will remain so even though Satan will experience a revival of his powers.

- b. The Old Testament background for Gog and Magog is found in Ezekiel 38-39.
 - i. “ ‘Gog, of the land of Magog,’ was the prince of countries to the north (38:2f), the east, west, and south (38:5). He would command a great horde with which he would invade and cover the land of Israel (38:6-9). His eye would be upon the spoil of the land to take it for himself (38:10-13). He would continue even into the ‘latter days’ — the Messianic period (38:16) – but he would be utterly destroyed, buried in defeat, as the birds would gorge on the carcasses of his forces (ch. 39)” (Hailey).
 - ii. “God said that He had spoken of Gog’s coming, but no prophet ever named Gog or Magog. Yet the prophets foretold over and over of the heathen enemies who would come against Israel and who would be defeated and destroyed by His hand. Therefore we conclude that Gog of the land of Magog symbolized all the heathen enemies of God’s people from the time of the prophets to the Roman Empire, all who sought to thwart His purpose and to destroy His king,” (Hailey).
 - iii. So, it would seem that Gog and Magog represent any force Satan would use in his war against God's people. These could include atheism, materialism, false religion, political persecution, etc.
- c. I believe that we are living in the time described in vs. 9, a time when God's people have been surrounded by all of these forces. Things look bleak, but our victory is assured!

4. All Enemies Defeated (vss. 9-15)

- a. First, all the forces waging war against God's people are destroyed by fire from heaven (vs. 9).
- b. Next, Satan (the enemy who had used the beast, false prophet, Gog and Magog to wage war on the saints) is cast into torment (vs. 10)
- c. And finally, death and Hades are likewise cast into the lake of fire (vs. 14). The final enemy has been defeated! (1Cor 15.26).
- d. And since death has been destroyed, all who were dead rise to be judged. Unlike the resurrections described in vss. 4-5, this is a resurrection of body and souls. This is the resurrection at the end, at Christ's 2nd coming.
- e. All are judged based on their deeds (vs. 12). Those whose names were not found in the book of life, because of their deeds, are cast into the lake of fire to join Satan, the one they had followed.
- f. The rest, the faithful? We read of their reward in chapters 21-22.